

FREDDIE MERCURY AND QUEEN:
TECHNOLOGIES OF GENRE AND THE POETICS OF INNOVATION

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ABSTRACT

Formed in 1971, Queen, comprising vocalist/pianist Freddie Mercury (born Farrokh Bulsara [1946-1991]), bassist John Richard Deacon (19 August 1951-), guitarist Brian Harold May (19 July 1947-) and drummer Roger Meddows-Taylor (26 July 1949-), sought determinedly to present a diverse array of music in a consistently innovative manner throughout their twenty-year career. Although many examples of Queen's musical heterogeneity exist within their repertory, encompassing styles of glam and glitter rock, hard rock, heavy metal, progressive and psychedelic rock, country, ragtime, opera, gospel, vaudeville, celtic, flamenco, folk, funk and disco, this dissertation critically explores four case studies, probing questions of musical hybridism, genre paradigms and technological implications. By exploring the ways in which Queen employed recording technology as a creative force, mnemonic aid, compositional device and domain for sonic experimentation, I consider the musical ramifications of "Bohemian Rhapsody" (1975), *Hot Space* (1982), "Barcelona" (1988) and *Made in Heaven* (1995). To do so, divergent viewpoints held by musicologists, journalists, the band members and fans are considered comparatively. Primary sources add to the methodological balance, obtained through interviews with John Brough (producer and engineer), Peter Freestone (Freddie Mercury's personal assistant and housemate), Terry Giddings (Mercury's bodyguard and chauffeur), Peter Hince (Queen's longest serving crew member), Reinhold Mack (producer and owner of Musicland Studios), Mike Moran (musical collaborator), David Richards (producer and owner of Mountain Studios), Jacky Smith (chair of Queen's international fan club) and one of Mercury's attending physicians, who wishes to remain anonymous.

KEYWORDS

Freddie Mercury, Brian May, John Deacon, Roger Taylor, Montserrat Caballé, Mike Moran, Reinhold Mack, Mountain Studios, Musicland Studios, Bohemian Rhapsody, Hot Space, Barcelona, Made in Heaven, recording practice, technology, genre, musical hybridism, AIDS.

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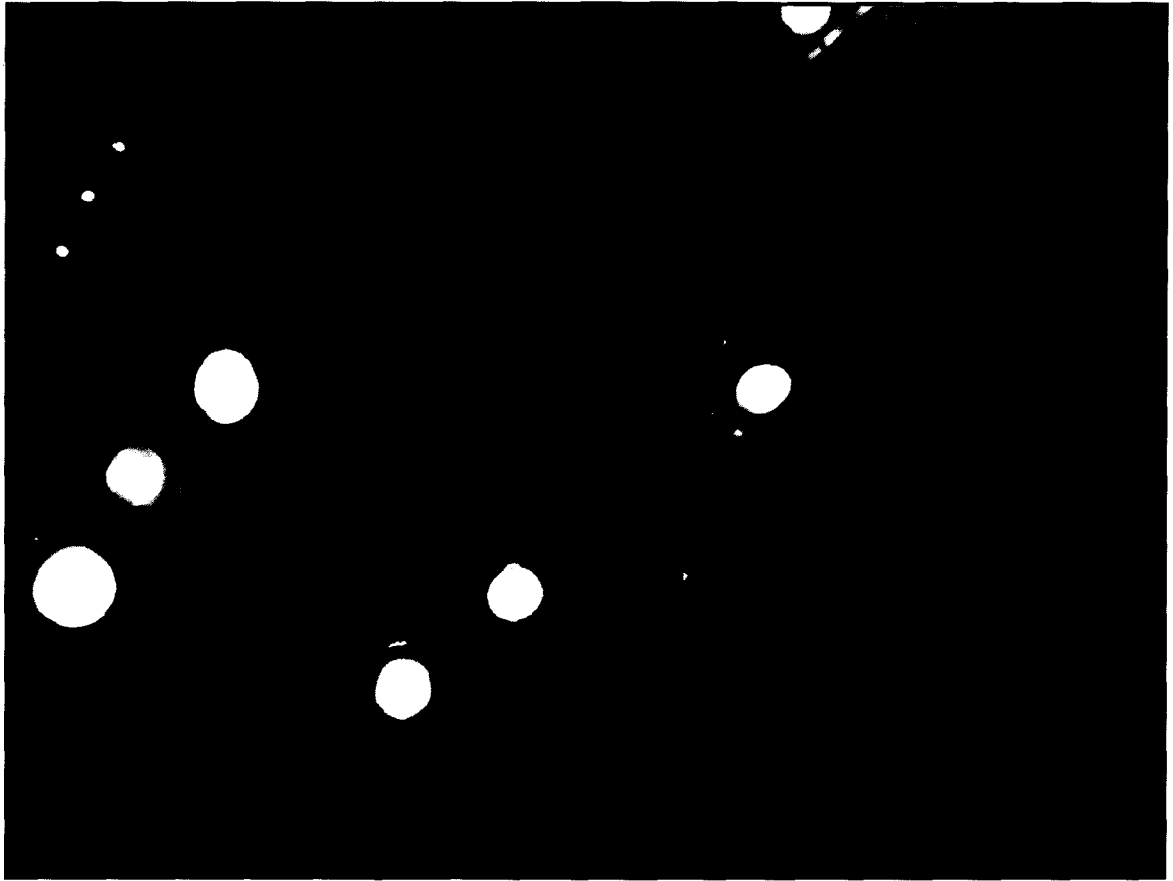
Within the academy, I would like to thank all those pedagogues who, over the course of my musical education, developed my ability to render ephemeral ideas into coherent prose. In fear of exclusion, I thank these significant scholars collectively although, I will say, you know who you are, and I shall continue to remember your profound contributions. To this end, I would like to extend personal thanks to Dr. Jay Hodgson at the University of Western Ontario for his continued moral support, insightful musicological assistance and generous time commitment.

I am eternally grateful to my family for the endless degree of support that they continue to evince unflinchingly. To my brother Dave, the person with whom I performed since the age of twelve, through countless performances and late-night discussions, your fierce musical talent and knowledge provided me with many invaluable ideas. To my parents, Christina and Richard, two of my biggest supporters through the trials and tribulations of the PhD program, your sound advice, humour and strong beliefs in my abilities as a person and scholar always fuelled my desire to gain knowledge and excel to my fullest potential.

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Barry Promane
April 2009



BARRY PROMANE

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CHAPTER 1

Queen, Genre and Technology

*I'm not going to be a rock star, I'm going to be a legend.*¹
- Freddie Mercury

Over the course of his prolific life, Freddie Mercury, lead singer and frontman of the renowned British rock band Queen, along with his bandmates (bassist John Deacon, guitarist Brian May and drummer Roger Taylor), sought untiringly to present an eclectic array of music in a consistently innovative manner. From Queen's formation in 1971 to Mercury's AIDS-related death in 1991, the band's assorted musical pallet drew from glam and glitter rock, hard rock, heavy metal, progressive and psychedelic rock, country, ragtime, opera, gospel, vaudeville, celtic, flamenco, folk, funk and disco, all the while remaining rooted in the visual and sonic formats of rock practices. This list broadly illustrates the difficulties with which one is confronted when attempting to situate Queen categorically in strict genre paradigms, and so the overarching thread that thematically unites this dissertation explores, through synthesis and critical analysis, issues relating to genre and, specifically, its collision with technology. Within the context of Queen and Freddie Mercury's exceptional output, I shall chronologically explore four periods, spanning from 1975 to 1991, each a significant phase that underpins my arguments pertaining to the stylistic plurality of the group's repertory.

Each chapter begins with a historical overview of the work in question to contextualize it in the grander scheme of the band's position within the recording industry. More precisely, the first section of each chapter will discuss, at length, Queen's social status and the events that instigated and contributed to the inception and creation of

¹ Freddie Mercury, *Freddie Mercury: A Life, in His Own Words*, ed. by Greg Brooks and Simon Lupton (London: Mercury Songs Ltd., 2006), 13.

the creative venture. Moving from a macro to a micro level of analysis, the segment that follows shall address the ways in which the band members approach composition and recording in each particular project, exploring their usage of the studio as a creative force, a mnemonic aid, a compositional device and a domain for sonic experimentation. Through models and/or musical analysis, this component discusses specific technologies and the musical consequences they engender. Each chapter will conclude with an in-depth critical consideration of the group's reception, addressing gender issues, particularly those pertaining to Mercury's homosexuality, and their relation to technologies of genre.

Due to the breadth of Queen's enterprise, in no way does this project seek to cover systematically every historical aspect and musical gesture that comprised their lengthy career. Instead, my investigation explores selective case studies as entities within cultural spheres of negotiation. In doing so, I incorporate a range of divergent viewpoints held by musicologists of popular music, the rock press, the band members, devoted fans, distraught critics, gay activists and homophobes. In addition, primary sources contribute to the overall equilibrium of this dissertation, obtained through extensive interviews with persons closely linked to Queen and Mercury, including John Brough (producer and engineer), Peter Freestone (Mercury's personal assistant and housemate), Terry Giddings (Mercury's bodyguard and chauffeur), Peter Hince (Queen's longest serving crew member), Reinhold Mack (producer and owner of Musicland Studios), Mike Moran (musical collaborator), David Richards (producer and owner of Mountain Studios), Jacky Smith (chair of Queen's international fan club) and one of Mercury's attending

physicians, who wishes to remain anonymous.² Using this wealth of information as a foundation on which I premise my arguments, I cultivate an aggregate understanding of Queen to shed some light on the cultural atmosphere in which they were operating.

I adopt the term poetics to explore the ways modes of musical production function in temporal spaces at the hands of musicians, industry gatekeepers and consumers. Thus, I probe the implications of Queen and Mercury's compositional choices, principally in the recording domain, through an exploration of the aesthetic ramifications that their creative endeavours provoked within specific epochs of time. As Igor Stravinsky stated in 1939 during the first of six lectures at Harvard College, "The poetics of music is exactly what I am going to talk to you about; that is to say, I shall talk about *making* in the field of music."³ For Albin Zak in *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records* (2001), the notion of poetics, although it envelops several meanings, predominantly explores the relationship principles of musical composition and aesthetic beliefs.⁴ Similar to Adam Krims's adoption of the term in *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity* (2000), William Echard, in *Neil Young and the Poetics of Energy* (2005), considers the affective nature of compositional choices in relation to the social context from which a work originates. For Echard, intrinsically bound in analytical practices are networks of social history, all of which "enable and constrain the affective energies and aesthetic priorities invested in the music."⁵

² For more information on the research subjects who inform this study, see Appendix A: Biographical Sketches on pp. 303-06.

³ Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons* (Warwickshire: Read Books, 2007), 5.

⁴ Albin J. Zak, *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), xv.

⁵ William Echard, *Neil Young and the Poetics of Energy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 6.

Using the fundamentals associated with poetics and innovation as points of centralization, this study seeks to consider the artistic consequences of Queen and Freddie Mercury's music, correlating the social climate and contextual aspects of place, time and space with various recording practices and modes of composition. To this point, I present previously unknown biographical information on the group, to "set the record straight" so to speak, and correct much of the erroneous and ill-founded information that circulates around Freddie Mercury's courageous battle with AIDS, thus pursuing a secondary theme that correlates the performative nature of Mercury's gender politics with the sonic and stylistic heterogeneity of his music within genre conventions.

The first major work that I investigate is "Bohemian Rhapsody" from *A Night at the Opera*, released in 1975. I chose to include and begin my exploration with this song for numerous reasons. First, it is Queen's best-known and arguably most important work in terms of its lasting cultural significance; second, the circumstances that surrounded the song's creation marked a major shift not only in Mercury's personal life, but equally on musical, professional and aesthetic levels that undeniably changed the trajectory of the band's career; and finally, the piece vividly showcases the fragmentation of genre constructions through the group's innovative use of technological applications. With this in mind, I demonstrate how "Bohemian Rhapsody" moves outside recognizable rock generic markers to include art music in the form of opera. Moreover, I argue techniques such as word-painting, multitrack recording, customized instruments and unconventional notation enabled Mercury to compose his magnum opus, one that built eclectically upon conventions used by the Beach Boys, the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Jan and Dean, Annunzio

Mantovani and Frank Zappa. The disparate nature of the list indicates the wealth of sources on which Mercury and Queen drew.

The second work that I investigate is *Hot Space*, released in 1982. Similar to "Bohemian Rhapsody," the work signaled a perilous move by the band members, who fused elements of funk, disco and rock into a potpourri of sonic and visual contradictions, consequently rendering many of their rock-oriented fans incapable of forging meaningful aesthetic associations with the rather uncharacteristic material. The period not only saw Queen transform sonically, but Mercury began to display overtly modes of signification that alluded to his linkage with the homosexual community, at a time that coincided with the emergence of AIDS, which inevitably contributed to the band's mainstream failure. Therefore, the importance of this segment of Queen's career demonstrates the intersection of key issues of gender and power struggles that intermingle with technology and genre. To this point, I investigate Queen's adoption of synthesizer technology and fabricated drum loops in the place of traditional rock instruments and recording practices, all of which, as I shall argue, engendered ramifications upon the ways in which their works were received.

The penultimate work explored herein is the title-track from *Barcelona*, released in 1988, a solo project that took Mercury outside Queen. "Barcelona," perhaps more than any other song discussed in this study, represents an unorthodox fusion of genres invoked through innovative recording practices. In this instance, Mercury himself not only hybridized sonic signifiers within the rock domain, but also, through a unique collaboration with the Catalan operatic soprano, Montserrat Caballé, equally challenged art music conventions.

The fourth and final work of Queen's career that I consider is *Made in Heaven*, the band's fifteenth studio album, posthumously released in 1995, four years after Mercury's death in 1991. The significance of this project rests primarily on the ways in which the group inventively used technology to assemble a conceptual album, one that eventually came to commemorate Mercury's life. To accomplish this result, Mercury's surviving bandmates defied traditional recording practices as a means to compensate for their singer's absence. Although the album does not overtly fragment genres in terms of its sonic features, the untraditional methodology used by Queen was unquestionably atypical of rock conventions. In addition, *Made in Heaven* embodies a monumental degree of importance within the band's historiography, for it encapsulates Mercury's spirited desire to bequeath a musical legacy upon the world prior to his ineluctable death.

Prior to undertaking the case studies discussed thus far, I shall present my thesis, which explores the relationship that exists between the ways technologies influence and shape discursive constructions of genres, and conversely, how genres reflect the ways in which producers and consumers appropriate, use and manipulate technology. This reciprocal exchange I theoretically entitle technologies of genre.

THEORIES OF GENRE

Debatably, nothing is more definite than the indefinite, and nothing as constant as the inconstant in terms of genre constructs. Although my ideas grapple with genre's ontology as a social and musical construction, I propose that complex categorical and taxonomical conceptions require precise consideration, to reveal the ways in which genre codes operate hierarchically in cultural networks. With this in mind, contemporary discourses in popular music studies oftentimes mirror the ubiquity that genre itself

incarnates, as many scholars, through broad definitions, only verify its effervescent nature. Perhaps the most notable, and most cited, example comes from Franco Fabbri, who argues: "a musical genre is a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules."⁶ With respect to Fabbri's statement, imperative questions emerge that, in my opinion, not only point to the limitations of his own claim, but also, on a more general level, call forth many scholarly quandaries that confront musicologists. First, who defines and accepts "social rules?" Here, as I shall elucidate in my analysis on Queen, one must consider varying degrees of power that key players evince, those cultural gatekeepers, ranging from music journalists to record label executives, who, in part, shape the social norms within temporal spaces. Second, do all genres function equally in all social networks? For example, how are operatic conventions regarded by rock enthusiasts through "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "Barcelona?" The degree to which such vectors apply through the ways commentators perceive genres outside their intended spheres of consumption are key ideas that take on importance within this dissertation. Finally, can one limit the discourse of genres to "musical events, real or possible?" I contend that genre cultures, although deeply rooted in the sonic features of a work, rest, to a degree, upon visual and ideological points of reference, surpassing the tendency to regard musical classifications strictly for their sonorial properties, real or possible. Consequently, genre definitions do not hinge solely upon formal musical analysis, and so, as Jeffery Kallberg contends, to understand the effects of genre, we must reconstruct contexts and traditions, both historical and modern.⁷

⁶ Franco Fabbri, "A Theory of Popular Music Genres: Two Applications," in *Popular Music Perspectives*, ed. by David Horn and Philip Tagg (Exeter: Wheaton, 1981), 52.

⁷ Jeffery Kallberg, "The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor," *19th Century Music* 11 (April 1988):242-43.

Through a critical lens, I approach genre constructs discursively rather than prescriptively, to consider the social context in which, and from which, a work originates. For that reason, understanding genre, as Jim Samson eloquently suggests, should not hinge solely upon formal and technical regulations; rather they must encompass factors pertaining to context, function and community validation.⁸

By evaluating genre formations on a micro level, I utilize a textually-based analytical method, as particular case studies within popular music studies necessitate distinctive attention. And so, similar to Simon Frith's approach, I probe issues pertaining to listeners, musicians and mediating ideologues, through microanalyses, to avoid the shortcomings of an all-encompassing unilateral model.⁹ In doing so, I evaluate differing points of view on their spatial and temporal allocation, by divergent demographic and corporate entities. Undeniably, musical works have the potential to exist in multiple classificatory domains, as taxonomical labels are determined within negotiated and subjective cognitive spaces, by people who possess differing amounts of cultural capital. As I shall reveal, despite the seemingly endless degree of multiplicity that comprise genre formations, it is impossible to imagine, or find, a genre-less text.¹⁰

Similar to my work presented herein, Fabian Holt, examines the dynamics of genre formations at many different levels, through critical models, plural narratives and micro theories, each of which attempts to unveil the musical and social realities through individually designed case studies. His scholarly undertaking, in my opinion, presents the

⁸ Jim Samson, "Chopin and Genre," *Musical Analysis* 8 (1989):213.

⁹ See Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 88-95.

¹⁰ See David Brackett, "(In Search of) Musical Meaning: Genres, Categories and Crossover," in *Popular Music Studies*, ed. by David Hesmondhalgh and Keith Negus (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 66-67 and Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980):81.

most expansive work on genre to date in the field of popular music studies, as it attempts to bring genre scholarship closer to musical practice and experience within the totality of social space.¹¹ Very importantly, Holt is more concerned with understanding than defining genres. This, in my view, is imperative within the popular musicological arena, as I contend genre studies necessitate descriptive rather than definitive forms of inquiry. Although Holt's approach to genre is highly effective as an investigative tool, he problematically argues that audiences and commentators can only establish genre categories if they append a name to the music.¹² Indisputably, perceivers require labels to centralize their subjective thoughts, although I contend that Holt invokes a translational blockade, arising from his propensity to conceive genres verbally, by naming them, through prose. In many instances, even the most skilled musician encounters problems when seeking to find a linguistic equivalent or descriptor for a sonic event, that is to say, using words to describe a non-verbal form of communication. Therefore, it is not necessarily the case, as Holt proposes, that a name must append itself to sonic, visual or ideological signifiers for a person to reference and compartmentalize it within a genre.

By synthesizing the knowledge and viewpoints discussed hitherto, I define genre paradigms as cultural constructs, woven together in negotiated networks and spaces of communication, identified through signifiers, signifieds and social conventions that bear degrees of similitude to one another categorically, embodying the past and reflecting, to some extent, the social milieu in which they find themselves. Moreover, defining vectors of genre are never stagnant, for they function actively through contemporary dialogues. For instance, rock music, as a genre, has transformed over the second half of the

¹¹ Fabian Holt, *Genre in Popular Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

twentieth century, as demonstrated by the sonic, visual and ideological consequences of exemplary artists including Bill Haley & His Comets and Elvis Presley in the 1950s, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones in the 1960s, Led Zeppelin and the Who in the 1970s, Guns N' Roses and Metallica in the 1980s, Pearl Jam and Nirvana in the 1990s and, finally, Coldplay and Radiohead in the new millennium. Though I fully realize the brevity of this listing excludes many important artists who exhibit other modes of signification under the rock canopy, I simply use it to demonstrate rock's transformation, as each artist enters into negotiation with the industry and its audience through shared spaces with all the other artists. If we understand artistic expression in these terms, the discourse from Elvis Presley to Radiohead, for example, demonstrates the normative and transformative essence of genre constructs.

TECHNOLOGIES OF GENRE, GENRES OF TECHNOLOGY

*It is the framework which changes with each new technology
and not just the picture within the frame.¹³*

- Marshall McLuhan

Similar to the matters of contention associated with genre, the discursive parameters of technology are equally fraught with divergent positions. With this in mind, I adopt a rather fluid and broad definition of technology, one that, as I shall present below, ranges from physical objects to organizational practices. In the production, dissemination and consumption of popular music, commentators typically use technology as an overarching blanket term to encapsulate a hodgepodge of tactile, mechanical and electronic devices. Paul Théberge states: "Too often, 'technology' is thought of in terms of machines – sound recording and playback devices, synthesizers, computers, etc. –

¹³ Marshall McLuhan, *Essential McLuhan*, ed. by Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone (New York: Routledge, 1997), 273.

rather than in terms of 'practice' – including not only the various uses of machines but also, in a more general sense, the organization of production and consumption."¹⁴ Like the difficulties that complicate our understanding of genre, technology too is a subjective term, one used normatively by popular musicians, scholars, critics and fans, all of whom apply the label variably. For this reason, in the subsequent section I shall briefly explicate my usage of technology, to define and contextualize it within the boundaries of this dissertation.

By and large, technology in music production is synonymous with mechanical devices such as electric guitars and amplifiers, microphones, consoles and PA systems, many of which are used differently by producers within genre conventions. For example, a Fender Telecaster and Twin amplifier oftentimes correspond to country music, while their counterpart, the Fender Stratocaster and Marshall full-stack amplifier, reflect practices associated with rock music, virtuosity and the iconic guitar hero, arguably first enacted by Jimi Hendrix during the mid-1960s. Similarly, with the decline of disco and funk music in New York during the mid- to late-1970s, rap (and later hip-hop) artists appropriated turntables, transforming the application of these playback devices. Consequently, turntables became signifying objects used as commodities that embodied subcultural homological value, thus opposing mainstream pragmatism.¹⁵ DJs and rappers artistically reconfigured the functionality of an existing mechanical technology by ascribing a new degree of artistic, aesthetic and ideological importance to it. The musical consequences of appropriating technologies outside their customary genre worlds shall

¹⁴ Paul Théberge, "Technology," in *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*, ed. by Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 209.

¹⁵ For the commodification and homological appropriation of objects within subcultural formations that oppose dominant values, see Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979), 18.

premise my arguments on Queen, genre and technology. Therefore, it is noteworthy to state that my usage of the term not only encompasses electric equipment, but also acoustic devices, ranging indefinitely from an upright piano, acoustic guitar and saxophone to a padded piano bench, plastic plectrum and wooden reed, each of which enhances a musician's ability to perform. Moreover, technologies do not present themselves entirely through physical and tactile objects that are tangible and mechanically produced. Rather, the breadth of technology's range varies from a drumstick, to the varnish that encases that drumstick, to the muscle memory in a drummer's arms and fingers.

In his work, Théberge illustrates social infrastructures, including industrial hierarchies apparent in the recording industry, hiring practices and patterns of work, which too encircle the discourse of technology in popular music studies.¹⁶ Therefore, I argue that technology is a flexible concept, one that includes objects, media, social phenomena, systems, discourses and ideologies, ranging from mechanical devices and innovative studio techniques to singing styles and technologies of the voice. To this end, the fundamental thesis of this dissertation argues that a relationship exists between technologies and genres, whereby producers employ particular technologies as they relate to genre conventions, and likewise, consumers forge meaning and relational associations with genres due to the technologies that in turn define them. In other words, on one hand musicians incorporate, appropriate and utilize technologies in a manner that fits the genre under which their productions primarily fall, and so on a basic level, it would be highly unlikely to find a banjo solo in the place of a heavily distorted guitar in the works of Jimi

¹⁶ Paul Théberge, *Any Sound You Can Imagine: Making Music/Consuming Technology* (Hanover: University Press of New England for Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 60.

Hendrix or Jimmy Page, for example. While technological applications set forth by the legendary guitarists whom I cite above denote signifiers ranging from timbre to methodology, these players' endeavours maintain the hegemony of genre conventions, ranging from the guitars on which they perform to the ways in which they position their bodies on stage. A similar paradoxical effect would result if an esteemed operatic singer such as Montserrat Caballé or Luciano Pavarotti performed a rock-orientated piece originally sung by Mick Jagger or Janis Joplin. On the other hand, technologies serve to define conventions and maintain the identity of a genre through their practitioners and consumers. For instance, the advent of magnetic tape and multitrack recording in the post-World War II era demonstrates the potency for a technology to cause a genre to evolve dramatically. Perhaps the most notable example is Les Paul's 1947 piece entitled "Lover (When You're Near Me)," where he separately performed on the electric guitar eight parts, after which he altered their sonic properties in post-production editing. Consequently, mechanical technologies changed the methodological trajectory for producers such as Brian Eno, George Martin, Sam Philips, Phil Spector and Brian Wilson, transforming the ontological nature of the recording process itself and enhancing the sonic results that they provoked. To this point, building upon the ideas of Albin Zak, who contends that recordists and their creative process transform the ephemeral act of musical performance into works of recorded art, and John Andrew Fisher, who, in a similar fashion, argues that the ontological orientation of rock recordings is germane to modes of production, I shall probe the ways in which Queen and Mercury exploit technology to create elaborate non-veridic recordings.¹⁷ In doing so, I argue that

¹⁷ Zak, *The Poetics of Rock*, 2. In his examination of studio practices, John Andrew Fisher differentiates between veridic recordings, which, for him, typify works that are achievable within a live

technologies influence and shape discursive constructions of genres, and conversely, modalities of genre paradigmatically establish the ways in which producers and consumers appropriate, use and manipulate technology. Inherent within this structure are hierarchies of semiotic importance that function operatively by musicians who either adopt a hegemonic, oppositional or negotiated standpoint toward the equilibrium between technology and genre within such divisions. This tripartite manifold encompasses dissimilar views held by musicians and producers who seek to reinforce, fragment or partially reshape genre signifiers through technology.

In closing, the theoretical foundation that I have established thus far shall inform the case studies that follow, exploring the ways technologies shape discursive constructions of genre and how modalities of genre influenced Queen, who manipulated technology unconventionally through non-veridic and autographic techniques. To this end, this dissertation reveals the interchanges and relationships that technologies of genre invoke through an exploration of Queen's musical legacy.

performance environment, and non-veridic recordings, which, due to a high level of mediation in the studio, pose great difficulty for musicians in concert. As I shall demonstrate, notable examples of the latter include "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "Barcelona." John Andrew Fisher, "Rock 'n' Recording: The Ontological Complexity of Rock Music," in *Musical Worlds: New Directions in the Philosophy of Music*, ed. by Philip Alperson (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 115.

CHAPTER 2

"Let Me Entertain You": Queen Primer

*I've never considered myself the leader of Queen –
the most important person perhaps.¹*
- Freddie Mercury

"To thrill you I'll use any device," exclaims Freddie Mercury in "Let Me Entertain You" (on the album *Jazz* of 1978), asserting Queen's profound desire to perform extravagantly, a credo the band evinced through fifteen studio albums and a myriad of live engagements (see Example 2-1 for a complete discography).² Though not officially assembled until 1971, Queen's genealogy branches to 1968 when guitarist Brian May (born 19 July 1947) and bassist/vocalist Tim Staffell (born 24 February 1948), two young Britons inspired by the Beatles, Cream and Jimi Hendrix, decided to form a band.³ To fulfill the duo's need for a drummer, May, a student at London's Imperial College, posted an advertisement seeking a musician influenced by Mitch Mitchell and Ginger Baker.⁴ Shortly thereafter, Roger Meddows-Taylor (born 26 July 1949), a nineteen-year-old

¹ Freddie Mercury, *Freddie Mercury: A Life, in His Own Words*, ed. by Greg Brooks and Simon Lupton (London: Mercury Songs Ltd., 2006), 16.

² Queen, fronted by Freddie Mercury, was active from 1971 to 1991. In Chapter 7, I discuss Queen's revival with Paul Rodgers, with whom the group recorded their sixteenth album, *The Cosmos Rocks*.

³ For detailed biographical accounts of Queen's formation and development, see Jacky Gunn and Jim Jenkins, *Queen: As It Began* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1992); Stephen Rider, *Queen: These Are the Days of Our Lives* (London: Castle Communications, 1993); Jim Hutton with Tim Wapshott, *Mercury and Me* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 1994); Laura Jackson, *Queen and I: The Brian May Story* (London: Smith Gryphon Limited, 1994), *Mercury: The King of Queen* (London: Smith Gryphon Limited, 1996) and *Queen: The Definitive Biography* (London: Piatkus Books, 2000); Rick Sky, *The Show Must Go On: The Life of Freddie Mercury* (New York: Citadel Press/Carol Publishing Group, 1994); Lesley-Ann Jones, *Freddie Mercury: The Definitive Biography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998); Nigel Goodall and Peter Lewry, *The Ultimate Queen* (London: Simon & Schuster UK, 1999); Peter Freestone with David Evans, *Freddie Mercury: An Intimate Memoir by the Man Who Knew Him Best* (London: Omnibus Press, 2001); Mark Hodgkinson, *Queen: The Early Years* (London: Omnibus Press, 2004); Georg Purvis, *Queen: Complete Works* (Richmond, Surrey: Reynolds & Hearn Ltd., 2007).

⁴ John "Mitch" Mitchell (9 July 1946-12 November 2008) and Peter Edward "Ginger" Baker (19 August 1939-) were significant English drummers, the former performing with the Jimi Hendrix Experience, and the latter with Cream.

dentistry student, successfully auditioned, marking the birth of the blues/rock trio, Smile (see Example 2-2).⁵

Example 2-1 – Queen album releases

ALBUM	RELEASE DATE
<i>Queen</i>	13 July 1973
<i>Queen II</i>	8 March 1974
<i>Sheer Heart Attack</i>	8 November 1974
<i>A Night at the Opera</i>	21 November 1975
<i>A Day at the Races</i>	10 December 1976
<i>News of the World</i>	28 October 1977
<i>Jazz</i>	10 November 1978
<i>The Game</i>	30 June 1980
<i>Flash Gordon</i>	8 December 1980
<i>Hot Space</i>	21 May 1982
<i>The Works</i>	27 February 1984
<i>A Kind of Magic</i>	2 June 1986
<i>The Miracle</i>	22 May 1989
<i>Innuendo</i>	4 February 1991
<i>Made in Heaven</i>	6 November 1995
<i>The Cosmos Rocks</i>	12 September 2008

⁵ By Smile's formation, Brian May, after having earned a Bachelor of Science degree and ARCS with Upper Second-Class Honours, remained at London's Imperial College, where, by 1970, he began studying the effects of reflected light and dust velocity in the Solar System at the doctoral level. Shortly following Queen's formation, due to the time demands of the music profession, he elected to discontinue his studies. Though by 2007 May held honorary degrees from the University of Hertfordshire, the University of Exeter and John Moores University-Liverpool, he successfully submitted and defended his dissertation, entitled "Radial Velocities in the Zodiacal Dust Cloud," at the Imperial College. Subsequent to his graduation, held on 14 May 2008, May accepted the post of Visiting Researcher at his alma mater and also was appointed University Chancellor at John Moores University-Liverpool. For more information on May's academic achievements, see Lucy Sherriff, "Brian May Appointed University Chancellor: An Academic Kind of Magic," *The Register* (20 November 2007), online source: http://www.theregister.co.uk/2007/11/20/queen_chancellor

Example 2-2 – Smile



By 1969, the band entered into a contractual agreement with Mercury Records and, soon thereafter, began recording at Trident Studios.⁶ Although the members of Smile embodied an uninhibited yearning to obtain fame and fortune, the group lacked artistic cohesion, recording few songs together. Despite their commercial failure, Smile's existence played an integral role in Queen's formation, as Tim Staffell, who attended Ealing College of Art with Freddie Bulsara (born 5 September 1946), introduced his schoolmate to May and Taylor.⁷ Bulsara, a visual artist, who at the time was lead vocalist of Ibx (later known as Wreckage), often attended Smile's concerts to lend support to his friends and fellow musical colleagues. By 1970, Smile had reached a point of creative

⁶ Constructed in 1967 and located at 17 St. Anne's Court in London's Soho district, Trident Studios was owned and operated by brothers Barry and Norman Sheffield. The site quickly became recognized as a significant recording venue, for it contained state-of-the-art technology. Although many artists were initially attracted to the studio for its eight-track mixing console and Dolby sound, perhaps the most notable group to rent it was the Beatles, who, in July 1968, recorded "Hey Jude." Other prominent musicians who used the facility include Jeff Beck, Marc Bolan, Genesis, Elton John, Manfred Mann, Lou Reed and Carly Simon.

⁷ Farrokh Bulsara was born in Zanzibar, an island located approximately thirty-five miles off the coast of Tanzania in the Indian Ocean, a place that offered him a rich tapestry of East-Indian musical styles. By 1964, Bulsara, along with his family, migrated to England to evade the mounting political unrest that resulted from the Zanzibar Revolution. For more information on the social climate in Zanzibar around the time of the Bulsara's departure, see Anthony Clayton, *The Zanzibar Revolution and Its Aftermath* (North Haven: Archon Books, 1981).

futility, and so Tim Staffell left voluntarily to join forces with Humpy Bong.⁸ Bulsara, who substituted in Staffell's absence, proposed a name change immediately upon gaining admission into the group. Notwithstanding reservations from his new bandmates, Bulsara chose Queen. He explains: "I thought up the name early on. It was very regal and it sounded splendid. It's strong, very universal, and immediate. It had a lot of visual potential and was open to all sorts of interpretations. It lent itself to a lot of things, like the theatre, and it was grand. It was very pompous, with all kinds of connotations. It meant so much. It wasn't just a precise label."⁹

Over an eleven-month period, Bulsara, May and Taylor canvassed for an ideal bassist, performing with Doug Bogie, Mike Grose and Barry Mitchell, none of whom shared the trio's musical vision. By February 1971, Queen's search came to an end, for they completed their roster with bassist John Deacon (born 19 August 1951) a student of electrical engineering, whose placid demeanour gave Mercury plenty of room onstage for his flamboyance (see Example 2-3). Queen's first break came five months following Deacon's admission when May's friend, Terry Yeadon, an entrepreneur setting up De Lane Lea Studios (located at 129 Kingsway in Wembley), provided the band with a much-needed opportunity, to record their music without charge.

⁸ Humpy Bong comprised guitarist John Kelly, drummer Colin Petersen and bassist/vocalist Tim Staffell. Like Smile, Humpy Bong sold few records and eventually disbanded.

⁹ Mercury, *Freddie Mercury*, 17. Unquestionably, the title, as Mercury himself elucidates, embodies many nuances, one of which alludes to his homosexual inclinations, which, as I shall explain through this dissertation, the singer concealed from the general public until his death. Although Mercury used Queen as a vehicle, one where he could enact his homosexuality through glam rock aesthetics, the band, who borrowed heavily from hard rock groups of the time, such as Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix, evinced a form of hypersexuality by adopting stylistic attributes linked with quintessential rock artists who epitomized heterosexuality in rock music.

Example 2-3 – Queen (November 1973)



By 1972, Queen's search for a recording contract was over, as they signed with EMI, which, by 13 July 1973, issued their eponymous debut album. The transformative period, which saw Queen move from amateur to professional status, inspired Bulsara to abandon his surname and adopt Mercury in its place, arguably emblematic of his rather mercurial disposition on stage, which was ever changing, energetic and, at times, erratic.¹⁰

In spite of the difficulties with which the group contended in their quest to secure a record deal, *Queen* received positive reviews from the rock press. In *Rolling Stone*, which, at the time, was considered the most serious magazine covering the popular music scene and youth culture in general, the critical response that Queen obtained instantly established their prominence in mainstream culture. Gordon Fletcher writes:

¹⁰ On Queen's debut album, "My Fairy King" (Side A, Track 4), a piece composed by Mercury and inspired by Robert Browning's "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," concludes with the lines: "Mother Mercury, look what they've done to me / I cannot run, I cannot hide" (2:49-2:59), pointing to the singer's attraction towards the name.

Rumor has it that Queen shall soon be crowned "the new Led Zeppelin," which is an event that would certainly suit this observer just fine. There's no doubt that this funky, energetic English quartet has all the tools they'll need to lay claim to the Zep's abdicated heavy-metal throne, and beyond that to become a truly influential force in the rock world. Their debut album is superb. They're the first of a whole new wave of English rockers, and you'd best learn to love 'em now 'cause they're here to stay. Regal bearings aside, *Queen* is a monster.¹¹

The success of Queen's release provoked their first major British tour, on which they performed in support of Mott the Hoople, a band that Mercury admired profoundly.¹² By August 1973, in their pursuit to sustain momentum, Queen, who recorded the second half of their debut album at Trident Studios, returned to the recording facility to begin working on their subsequent album, *Queen II*, entitled in the numeric fashion of Led Zeppelin's early albums, and on 8 March 1974 they released their work. Inspired, in part, by the success of Pink Floyd's concept album *Dark Side of the Moon* (released on 17 March 1973), Queen used opposing colours to represent underlying themes portrayed sonically, and so in the place of Side A and B, they opted for Side White and Side Black, which the group depicted through photography (see Example 2-4). The repertory on Side White portrayed themes of sentimentality through "Procession," "Father to Son," "White Queen (As It Began)," "Some Day One Day" and "The Loser in the End," most of which were composed by Brian May, with the exception of the final song by Roger Taylor. Conversely, Side Black, including "Ogre Battle," "The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke," "Nevermore," "The March of the Black Queen," "Funny How Love Is" and "Seven Seas of Rhye," five compositions by Mercury, presented themes of mystery, fantasy and escapism, not unlike the subject matter that underpinned much of progressive rock.

¹¹ Gordon Fletcher, "Queen," *Rolling Stone* 149 (6 December 1973):76.

¹² The tour commenced on 8 November 1973 in Victoria Hall in Hanley and concluded on 14 December 1973 at the Hammersmith Odeon in London, over which time the band performed seventeen shows. For a comprehensive concert listing, see <http://www.queenconcerts.com/live>.

Example 2-4 – White and Black photographic depictions for Queen II



Consequently, *Queen II* appropriated musical signifiers associated with glam, progressive rock and heavy metal, demonstrated through extended guitar solos, flamboyant and androgynous imagery and the incorporation of classical, jazz and world music, but only to the degree that left many commentators distressed rather than convinced, for Queen's overt attempt to meld differing styles failed. In his *Rolling Stone* review, Ken Barnes captures this sentiment, as he states:

Queen is a reasonably talented band who have chosen their models unwisely. On "Side Black," they venture into a lyrically muddled fairy-tale world with none of Genesis's wit or sophistication. They've also appropriated the most irritating elements of Yes's style — histrionic vocals, abrupt and pointless compositional complexity, and a dearth of melody. "Side White" is quite an improvement, containing many of the same muddled tendencies, but with the saving grace of timely and well-chosen power chords and some rather pretty tunes. But the album remains a floundering and sadly unoriginal affair.¹³

The negative force of such a review could have jeopardized Queen's standing in the recording industry, but the effervescent mode of performance they presented in concert garnered them considerable praise, not only in their native land, but also in the United States. Immediately following *Queen II's* completion, the band members industriously embarked upon their first headlining tour of Britain, beginning on 3 March 1974 at the Guildhall in Plymouth and ending on 2 April 1974 at Barbarellas in Birmingham. Immediately thereafter, they once again toured in support of Mott the Hoople, this time in the United States, starting on 16 April 1974 at Regis College in Denver and concluding prematurely on 11 May 1974 at the Uris Theatre in New York, during which time Brian May collapsed on stage. Doctors quickly determined that the guitarist had been infected

¹³ Ken Barnes, "Queen II," *Rolling Stone* 163 (20 June 1974):84.

with hepatitis, a highly contagious disease that rendered him unable to complete the tour, and so Queen disappointedly returned to the United Kingdom.¹⁴

Despite the repercussion of May's illness, leaving him unable to participate in band affairs for many months, Queen astonishingly released yet another album on 8 November 1974, only five months after their return from the United States. Aptly titled *Sheer Heart Attack*, the work exhibited a newfound degree of musical maturity by the composers, for it encapsulated a diverse range of genres, interwoven artistically through the medium of a rock album. *Sheer Heart Attack's* divergent repertory consists of the heavy metal hit tracks "Now I'm Here" and "Stone Cold Crazy," the soft lyrical ballad "Lily of the Valley," the one-minute lullaby "Dear Friends," the Jim Croce-influenced ragtime number "Bring Back That Leroy Brown," the Caribbean-influenced piece "Misfire," and finally, arguably the forerunner to "Bohemian Rhapsody," the classically-inspired hit "Killer Queen." I contend that this song, in many ways, exemplifies the generic diversity that became emblematic of Queen's repertory. Through imaginative orchestrations, poetic lyrics and inventive studio applications, Mercury presents characters whose paradoxical existences reflect the musical hybridism of the song, fundamental traits that he considerably embellished in "Bohemian Rhapsody." In relation to "Killer Queen," Mercury touches upon the eclecticism that surrounds his composition:

Killer Queen is about a high-class call girl. I was trying to say that classy people can be whores as well. That's what the song is about, though I'd prefer people to put their own interpretation upon it to read what they like into it. People are used to hard rock energy music from Queen, yet with that single you almost expect Noël Coward to sing it. It's one of those bowler hat, black suspender numbers – not that Noël Coward would wear that.¹⁵

¹⁴ For more details on the circumstances that surrounded May's illness, see Laura Jackson, *Queen and I: The Brian May Story* (London: Smith Gryphon Limited, 1994), 60-61 & 68.

¹⁵ Mercury, *Freddie Mercury*, 69.

Similar to "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Killer Queen" presents the band's zeal to create dense vocal choirs and guitar arrangements, contributing to the autographic sonic result.

Moreover, idiosyncratic editorial techniques, such as the bells effect (heard in "Killer Queen" at 1:48-1:53), typify the high level of importance the band placed on cultivating advancements in recording practices associated with rock music. As such, the band blurs genre boundaries by using complex syncopated rhythms and harmonic structures, in conjunction with unique instruments, to create, in this case, a song that generically echoes the stylistic attributes of vaudeville, cabaret, Broadway show tunes and rock conventions.¹⁶

Both "Killer Queen" and the album simultaneously received enormous commercial success and numerous positive reviews by critics, who regarded the group's eclectic musical output as innovative rather than replicative. Following the album's release, Bud Scoppa writes in *Rolling Stone*:

Queen—on the record and on the jacket, too—makes no concessions to moderation. This quartet, bejeweled and mascaraed, projects a correspondingly shrill surliness in its dramatically technologized rock & roll. And Queen makes unusually crisp, dense recordings — the group's three albums vibrate with multilayered electric guitars and unearthly overdubbed vocal harmonies (which have the unfortunate tendency to sound at times like Uriah Heep's). But there's more to Queen than rouge and chrome. The group's main writers, singer Freddie Mercury and guitarist Brian May, work in a sophisticated, glib style and the material's wittiness lifts the ponderously thick music like flaps on a jumbo jet.¹⁷

As suggested, the musical sophistication that characterized Mercury and Queen's creative output through *Sheer Heart Attack* foreshadowed the diversity that became emblematic of the group, positioning many of their compositions on the fringe of strict genre paradigms. With this result, Queen's fascination with divergent genres, in tandem with a developed

¹⁶ As stated in the album's liner notes, Mercury performs the primary keyboard track on a "jangle piano," to add a vaudevillian flavour to the work.

¹⁷ Bud Scoppa, "Sheer Heart Attack," *Rolling Stone* 186 (8 May 1975):60.

sense of maturity as composers, culminated the following year, through what many consider to be the band's most epic opus, the chart-topping hit "Bohemian Rhapsody," a monumental piece that encapsulated the band's ardent fervor to compose eclectically and record innovatively.

CHAPTER 3

Any Way the Wind Blows: The Case of "Bohemian Rhapsody"

*I am so depressed by these people who still won't admit that everything we do simply drips with originality.*¹

- Freddie Mercury

"Bohemian Rhapsody" sonically personifies the artistic innovation and musical mastery of Queen and the late Freddie Mercury. The song, unlike any other to date, achieved a monumental degree of mainstream success at three different points in time. Released as a single on 31 October 1975, and later appearing on *A Night at the Opera* (Queen's fourth studio album, released on 21 November 1975), "Bohemian Rhapsody" not only changed the trajectory of the band's career by catapulting them to a heightened level of international stardom, but also vividly showcased their desire to fragment genre conventions by fusing elements of glam and progressive rock with those found in musical theatre, opera buffa and vaudeville.² On 8 April 1976, Kris Nickolson of *Rolling Stone* described Queen's auterial position in the recording industry and their diverse repertory:

In less than three years, with four albums, Queen has risen from the heavy-metal minor leagues to a position approaching that of Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple. . . . Like all heavy-metal groups, Queen's most easily distinguished trait is a knack for manipulating dynamics. But what sets them apart is their selection of unlikely effects: acoustic piano, harp, acapella [*sic*] vocals, no synthesizers. Coupled with good songs, Queen's obviously the strongest contender in the field.³

In 1991, sixteen years after the song's conception, "Bohemian Rhapsody" resurfaced on the charts following Mercury's untimely death.⁴ As a commemorative gesture, his

¹ Freddie Mercury, *Freddie Mercury: A Life, in His Own Words*, ed. by Greg Brooks and Simon Lupton (London: Mercury Songs Ltd., 2006), 125.

² In 1975, "Bohemian Rhapsody" rapidly ascended to the top of the UK charts where it sat at the number one position for nine consecutive weeks, and in the United States, it peaked at the number nine position in December. For a comprehensive listing of Queen's chart positions see: <http://www.ultimatequeen.co.uk/homepage.htm>

³ Kris Nickolson, "A Night at the Opera: Queen," *Rolling Stone* 210 (8 April 1976):76.

⁴ Freddie Mercury died at his home, Garden Lodge, in London on Sunday 24 November of bronchial pneumonia brought on by AIDS.

surviving bandmates re-released "Bohemian Rhapsody" as a double A-side single, paired with "These Are the Days of Our Lives" (the latter appearing on *Innuendo* [Queen's fourteenth studio album, released on 5 February 1991]). To satisfy Mercury's wish, Queen donated proceeds to the Terrence Higgins Foundation, a London-based charitable trust formed in 1983, which today continues to campaign on a range of AIDS-related issues.⁵ The rebirth of "Bohemian Rhapsody" provoked alternate connotations that, in light of Mercury's death, went beyond the song's escapist and comedic elements: the piece eulogized Mercury's life and celebrated his prolific and prodigious career. Consequently, through retrospective analysis, some commentators regarded Mercury's magnum opus as an autobiographical testimonial to his homosexuality, correlating his maliciously publicized battle with AIDS to the tragic narrative of the song's text. Finally, in 1992, "Bohemian Rhapsody" appeared in the blockbuster film *Wayne's World* (released by Paramount Pictures on 14 February 1992), through which Wayne Campbell (Mike Myers) and Garth Algar (Dana Carvey) enacted a hypermasculinized style of sardonic comedy, complimenting the already-present humour conveyed by Queen in their eclectic work.

Although "Bohemian Rhapsody" contains a rich tapestry of socio-musical issues worthy of critical attention, I limit this inquiry to probe matters pertaining to technology, genre and gender politics. More specifically, this chapter presents a musical, structural and technological analysis of "Bohemian Rhapsody," not only to explore the complexity of Queen's musical language in association with their inventive studio methodology, but

⁵ In 1991, the record quickly climbed to number one on the UK charts where it remained for five weeks, and in the United States, it peaked at number nine. Information on the Terrence Higgins Foundation can be obtained at <http://www.tht.org.uk/>

also to consider the ways in which their orchestration, instrumentation and antiphonal choral arrangements affect modes of perception. Prior to doing so, I contextualize Queen and "Bohemian Rhapsody" in the popular music continuum of the 1960s and 1970s, and therefore historically consider the influence of their musical predecessors. The penultimate segment of this study investigates the pioneering role of "Bohemian Rhapsody's" promotional video, as its visual language acted as a forerunner that significantly influenced the style of modern-day music videos in the MTV era. Finally, the chapter concludes with an exploration of "Bohemian Rhapsody's" inclusion in *Wayne's World* and the negotiated cultural responses it engendered among members of Generation X.

ANTECEDENTS AND INSPIRATIONS

Though it remains difficult to determine the exact roots of "Bohemian Rhapsody" with precision, referential markers link genre attributes with sonorial and textual signifiers in the piece. Progressive rock bands, particularly those hailing from Britain, indisputably acted as a major source of inspiration for the twenty-nine year old Freddie Mercury, who in the summer of 1975 composed the song. "Bohemian Rhapsody's" musical sophistication and structural complexity explicitly echo progressive rock's vision to break conventions linked with commercial pop. Through episodic and narrative tales, pioneering progressive rockers such as Pink Floyd, Genesis and Yes, pursued provocative topics associated with fantasy, self-discovery and mythology, not unlike those that

underpin "Bohemian Rhapsody."⁶ More precisely, individual songs that, in part, acted as exemplars upon which Mercury and Queen premised "Bohemian Rhapsody" include "Good Vibrations" and "A Day in the Life," two songs that in many ways set the scene for progressive rock of the late-1960s and early 1970s.

Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys in "Good Vibrations" (1966) present varied thematic sections filled with dense orchestration and untraditional instrumentation by using the recording studio as a compositional tool rather than as a strict domain to capture preconceived sound. Oftentimes, Wilson achieved his creative vision by recording small musical sections, many of which required countless hours of editing and perfecting. Most prominent was his meticulous treatment of layered vocals, which as in "Bohemian Rhapsody," produce bountiful artificial choirs. Similarly, the Beatles in "A Day in the Life" (1967) employ the studio to construct an expansive musical work, featuring multi-sectional forms. Much like "Bohemian Rhapsody," the textual subtleties described by the narrator come to the foreground through studio effects and word painting heard in this case when Paul McCartney describes his dream (2:49-3:19). As such, vocal panning functions to personify McCartney's state of mind, a device commonly used by Mercury, who, as I shall reveal, portrays moods and colours through the spatial placement of musical gestures in the mix.

A secondary source of inspiration for Queen came from concept albums. The Kinks' *Face by Face* (1966), the Mothers of Invention's *Freak Out!* (1966), Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973), and most notably, the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* (1966) and the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) demonstrated the

⁶ For select examples drawn from the dozens of albums that Queen would have known and sought inspiration, see Genesis *Foxtrot* (1972), Yes *Tales from Topographic Oceans* (1973) and Pink Floyd *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1973).

effectiveness through which a singular theme unifies an entire album. Queen guitarist Brian May cited "Bohemian Rhapsody's" parent album, *A Night at the Opera*, as their *Sgt. Pepper*.⁷ Like many groups, Queen used the thematic substance associated with their conceptual album to augment the theatricality of their live performances. Bands who did this put forth a pseudo-vaudevillian and quasi-musical theatre experience involving ornate props, rapid changes to the stage set and wardrobes in addition to elaborate lighting displays and detailed choreography, all of which projected themes expressed through the album and its marketing. Not only did these elements of spectacle appeal to Mercury's flamboyant personality, but the context created by glam rockers such as David Bowie and T. Rex also intrinsically fostered a safe outlet where he could blur the lines of gender through androgyny.⁸ With this result, Mercury lived vicariously through his stage persona, all the while concealing the fact that he had inclinations towards pursuing an exclusive homosexual lifestyle, which he did after 1975. Philip Auslander expands upon gender constructs and identity formations in his summation on the performative world of glam. He states:

⁷ Mark Cunningham, "An Invitation to the Opera: Roy Thomas Baker and Gary Langan, the Making of Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody'," *Sound on Sound* (October 1995), online source: http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/1995_articles/oct95/queen.html. Although many prominent artists attribute their musical creations to *Sgt. Pepper*, for Brian May, his compositions on *A Night at the Opera* sonically embody the instrumentational diversity characteristic of *Sgt. Pepper*, and reminiscent of the English ballad tradition. Queen's musical output builds upon the Beatles' stylistic plurality through inventive compositions and unorthodox orchestrations, heard on *A Night at the Opera* in the Dixieland-influenced "Good Company," the science-fiction/skiffle number "'39" and Mercury's "Seaside Rendezvous," the latter featuring vocal interpretations by Taylor and Mercury of orchestral instruments, ranging from clarinets, tubas and trumpets to kazoos.

⁸ See David Bowie performing *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* in the concert film by D.A. Pennebaker (1973) and *T. Rex at the Empire Pool* (18 March 1972) filmed by Ringo Starr and Apple Films.

Glam provided very public images of alternative ways of imagining gender and sexuality, images that audiences seized upon and from which they constructed the musicians' identities and articulated those identities to their own. The demand for the freedom to explore and construct one's identity, in terms of gender, sexuality, or any other terms, is glam rock's most important legacy.⁹

MUSICAL, STRUCTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Prior to considering the ways in which Freddie Mercury encodes gender and sexuality in "Bohemian Rhapsody" on a micro level of analysis, this study commences with a survey of the overall song. I partition the work into six sections, each of which explores elements of tonality, harmony, rhythm, timbre, orchestration and instrumentation, to probe the intricacies of Queen's music in relation to technologies of genre. As a means to familiarize the reader with "Bohemian Rhapsody's" general framework, Example 3-1 provides a time-coded blueprint, which chronologically lists central musical features discussed in this study.

The introduction, or Section 1, begins with Mercury who presents a homorhythmic choral arrangement sung *a cappella* (see Example 3-2 for a complete transcription). During the recording process, Mercury layered his voice many times to achieve the lush vocal result. To do so, he used a piano track as a guide without the aid of a click-track or metronome, which producer Roy Thomas Baker later removed in post-production.¹⁰ In the introductory section, the speaker begins by describing the predicament of his life and the internal strife that plagues his existence. The music signifies these sentiments through neighbouring chords that function to juxtapose reality

⁹ Philip Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 234.

¹⁰ *Classic Albums - Queen: The Making of a Night at the Opera*, directed by Matthew Longfellow (London: Eagle Rock Entertainment, 2006), video recording. Roy Thomas Baker's recording credits include the Cars, Foreigner, Journey, David Bowie, Cheap Trick, Ozzy Osbourne, the Rolling Stones, Free, Alice Cooper, Devo, Santana, Ten Years After, T-Rex, the Who, Yes and Frank Zappa.

with fantasy. The piece commences on a B^{b6} major chord that moves in m. 2 to the chord V^7/V (C^7), which in turn resolves to V^7 in B^b major. The harmony reinforces the landslide of the storyteller's life by using the minor chord Cm^7 in m. 3 (ii^7), resulting from the upper auxiliary motion of the top two voices, to contrast starkly the brilliance of the secondary dominant chord (C^7) from the previous bar. Additionally, the extended asymmetric time signature in mm. 3 and 9 ($5/4$ time) alters the metric pulse, while neighbouring chords move in chromatic motion (mm. 10-11) to capture the unease and angst of the narrator. In this instance, all four voices descend and ascend (B, B^b, A, B^b) in parallel stepwise motion, resolving to chord IV, echoing figuratively the irresolution of the narrator's psyche as he sings: "Because I'm easy come easy go; little high little low." The introduction concludes with a two-bar cross-handed piano vamp that serves a quasi-ostinato function, bridging together Section 1 with Section 2. I would argue that the linchpin of the motif is in the appoggiatura that falls on Beat 3 (mm. 15-16), as it word paints tension through dissonance (see Example 3-3). The preceding vocal line to the figure "Any way the wind blows doesn't really matter to me, to me" demonstrates the unpromising future of the storyteller, paralleling the surreal and hollow quality of the appoggiatura performed on the piano in octaves.

Section 2, or the strophic narrative segment, continues in B^b major until a shift occurs in the harmony at m. 25, where the piece modulates to the subdominant key of E^b major. The motion is seamless due to the descending stepwise bass line (C, B, B^b, A, A^b, G , concluding on a leap of a major 3^{rd} to E^b).

Example 3-1 – Structural framework of "Bohemian Rhapsody"

SECTION	Introduction	
Counter range	0:00 – 0:54	
Measure numbers	1 – 16	
Tonal area	B ^b major	
Instrumentation and times	Voice – a cappella (Mercury multitracking himself) Piano – alternating triads Bass – entrance on Bb	0:00 ... 0:15 ... 0:49
SECTION	Verse I and II	
Counter range	0:55 – 2:34	
Measure numbers	17 – 48	
Tonal area	B ^b major (E ^b major)	
Instrumentation and times	Voice Piano – cross-hand motif Piano – chordal Bass – root notes in whole and half notes Cymbal crash and swell Drums Guitar 1 – harmonics echoing appoggiatura in piano Guitar 2 – plucking strings behind bridge "Shiver" Guitar 3 – distortion descending chromatic line "Going down to face the truth"	0:56 ... 0:55 – 1:16 0:55 – 1:47 0:56 – 1:45 1:19 – 1:21 1:22 – 1:41 1:49 – 1:16 2:02 – 2:03 2:17 – 2:21
SECTION	Guitar solo	
Counter range	2:35 – 3:01	
Measure numbers	47 – 54	
Tonal area	E ^b major	
Instrumentation and times	Guitar – played on the "Red Special" with a sixpence coin Guitars 2⁺ - power chords that are double-tracked to give depth.	2:35 - 3:01 " "
SECTION	Operatic / Antiphonic	
Counter range	3:01 – 4:05	
Measure numbers	55 – 95	
Tonal area	A major to A ^b major (at "I'm just a poor boy")	
Instrumentation and times	Piano – in 3rds that mirror voice Tympani Roger Taylor's voice - high tessitura Vocal cascades - "Let me go" & "Magnifico"	3:01 3:12 3:15, 3:39 3:19 & 3:49
SECTION	Rock "Headbanging"	
Counter range	4:06 – 4:52	
Measure numbers	96 – 116	
Tonal area	E ^b major	
Instrumentation and times	Guitar and Bass – playing the riff at the octave Guitar 2 & 3 – call and response Piano – left hand octaves (mixolydian mode)	4:06 – 4:12 4:35 – 4:43 4:45 – 4:48 4:50 – 4:52
SECTION	Finale / Coda	
Counter range	4:53 – 5:52	
Measure numbers	117 - 132	
Tonal area	E ^b major	
Instrumentation and times	Guitar 1 – fanfare (amplifier constructed by Deacon) Guitars 2⁺ - in 3 ^{rds} doubled Gong	4:53 – 5:00 5:03 – 5:13 5:45

Example 3-2 – Introduction to "Bohemian Rhapsody"

Words and Music by Freddie Mercury
Transcription by Barry Promane

Poco Andante $\text{♩} = 76$

Is this the real life? Is this just fan-ta-sy? Caught in a land-slide, no-es-
cape from re - a - li - ty. O - pen-your - eyes, Look up to the skies and
see, I'm just a poor boy, I need no sym - pa - thy. Be - cause I'm
ea - sy come, ea - sy go, Lit - tle high, lit - tle low. An - y way the wind blows
does - n't rea - lly mat - ter to me, to me.

Example 3-3 – Non-harmonic tone in the piano vamp

appoggiatura

15

Con Ped. simile

I'm just a poor boy, I need no sympathy. Because I'm
easy come, easy go, little high, little low. Any way the wind blows,
doesn't really matter to me, to me.

The timbral quality of Mercury's voice artistically portrays sentiments of fear that Brian May expressively word paints with a glissando on the guitar, adding tension to the tranquil musical backdrop provided through the chordal alberti piano accompaniment. The progression of the story parallels the instrumentation, which too becomes more elaborate and embellished as the song develops. On the bass guitar, John Deacon performs the root of each chord in whole notes as May plays harmonics on the guitar, matching the piano vamp on the appoggiatura and its downward resolution. Additionally, May's performance reflects the speaker's feelings by innovatively using the instrument in unorthodox ways. One notable example follows the line: "Sends shivers up my spine," where he plucks the strings behind the bridge, thus sonically personifying the eeriness and jagged sensation of shivers moving up one's spine. Here, as in many other instances, Queen attempts to marry musical gestures with the thematic sentimentality of the narrator. According to Theodore Gracyk, the interplay between music and text fails in the strophic section as it lacks coherence. He states: "As for the subject, its nihilistic narrator kills a man for no reason and then resigns himself to execution and subsequent damnation. The initial dramatic monologue gives way to outrageous juxtaposition of music and words, so the song veers from melodrama to nonsense."¹¹ As I shall expand below, the murder to which Mercury alludes goes far beyond the literal deduction that Gracyk describes, as death and love figuratively function in tandem, closely mirroring not only the musical sonorities of the song but also the circumstances that surrounded Mercury's personal life.

¹¹ Theodore Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Led Zeppelin* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 65-66.

Section 3, or the guitar solo, remains in E^b major and is built upon the harmonic structure of Verse 2. The autographic musical characteristics of May's sound, in part, stem from meticulous studio experimentation, as recording engineer and record producer Roy Thomas Baker explains: "We used to have a few different types of mics set up, from which we would choose or blend signals for any one given sound, and it's a technique that I still use today. Brian's Vox AC30 amps were backless, so we also set up some mics behind them and near the wall, to capture some ambience and the full spectrum of the guitar sound. There was always a lot of experimentation going on during our sessions."¹² By extension, the timbral distinctiveness of May's performance directly results from the instrument on which he performs the song: the Red Special (see Example 3-4). Laura Jackson discusses the guitar's creation:

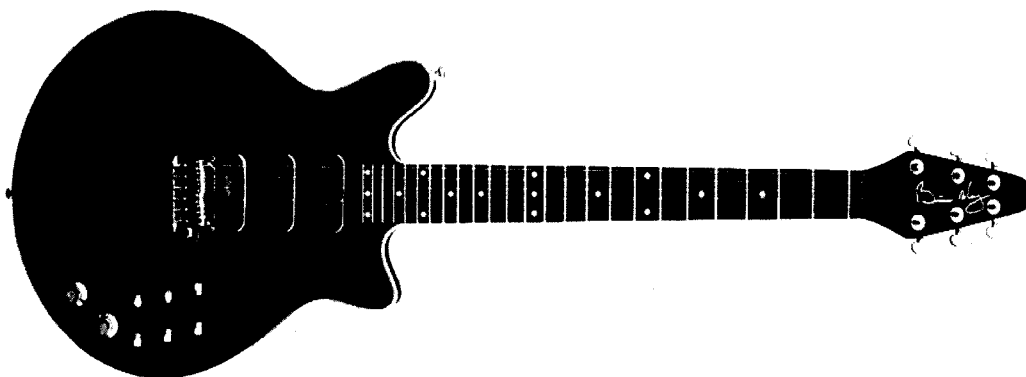
He [Brian May] painstakingly carved the neck of the guitar from an antique solid mahogany fireplace which a family friend was throwing out, shaping it to perfection with a penknife. The body into which the neck would later be fitted was made from a piece of oak, some block board and odds and ends. It was a long, laborious task but both father and son possessed the necessary patience and determination.¹³

In the manufacturing process, May used three single-coiled Burns tri-sonic pickups but rewound them with reverse polarity, which he secured with araldite epoxy to reduce microphonics. May's father, Harold, discusses the importance of these transducers to the overall sonic result.

¹² Cunningham, "An Invitation to the Opera," online source.

¹³ Laura Jackson, *Queen and I: The Brian May Story* (London: Smith Gryphon Limited, 1994), 6.

Example 3-4 – Brian May's Red Special



He states: "The secret of these pickups is in the position that each one is set, because this alters the tonal harmonic effect and by some really clever switching you can have any combination of 24 tones – and that's something that no other guitar manufacturer has ever done commercially at all."¹⁴

Finally, the metallic timbral quality of May's tone, which further adds idiosyncratic attributes to Queen's sound, results from the guitarist's penchant to pluck the strings with a sixpence coin instead of using a conventional plastic plectrum or pick. In effect, the metal strings and the metal pick engender a controlled yet jagged timbre that symbolically represents the volatility of the narrator. The solo concludes with a descending chromatic bass line (F, E, E^b, D, D^b), the D^b belonging to the first inversion chord of B^b minor, preceding a sudden key change to A major. The consonance and momentum of the section unexpectedly concludes with a stop-time, leaving only Mercury playing harmonic 3^{rds} in quarter notes on the piano.

Section 4, or the operatic section, that follows is the pinnacle of the piece for its sonic extravagance and thematic use of parody and tongue-in-cheek humour. Mercury never openly discussed the intention of "Bohemian Rhapsody" and its operatic section to

¹⁴ Ibid., 7.

the general public, media, or even with his fellow band members, although his close friend, Kenny Everett, claims to have received some insight directly from the work's creator: "Freddie told me 'Bohemian Rhapsody' was just random, rhyming nonsense."¹⁵ I argue that encoded in the piece is a multitude of personal factors that go beyond the nonsensical themes that Everett describes, and therefore without knowing the context of their conversation, one cannot authenticate the statement. Much like Bob Dylan and Igor Stravinsky, Mercury prided himself upon challenging his audience by disclosing limited or erroneous information to intrigue and to complicate the discourse surrounding his repertory.¹⁶ Rock journalist John Ingham states: "Queen are the type of group that make a man want to abandon rock writing. They pose questions and never provide answers. They exist in their own space-time continuum, visible and audible but keeping their secrets to themselves. . . . All my instincts as a writer tell me that there is a great story in that band, but after two nights with them I'm hardly any the wiser."¹⁷

Although Mercury may have suggested to Kenny Everett, among other journalists, that "Bohemian Rhapsody" was nothing more than random utterances that bore no semantic value, the fact that Mercury conducted research into the themes and characters demonstrates his will to present an informed storyline. In all likelihood, Mercury chose to include "Galileo" as a token to the seventeenth-century philosopher and scientist Galileo Galilei for Brian May, who studied astronomy at the doctoral level.

¹⁵ Johnny Black, "The Greatest Songs Ever! 'Bohemian Rhapsody'," *Blender: The Ultimate Guide to Music and More* (February/March 2002), online source: <http://www.blender.com/guide/articles.aspx?id=256>

¹⁶ In interviews, Bob Dylan has a tendency to withhold and sidestep responses to distort the meaning of his music and the musicians with whom he worked. See *Rolling Stone* 47, Bob Dylan interviewed by Jann Wenner on 29 November 1969. Igor Stravinsky does much of the same whereby the information he presents in his autobiographical writing sometimes contradicts what he discloses in his collaborations with Robert Craft.

¹⁷ John Ingham, "A Riot at the Opera: Queen Triumphant," *Sounds* (29 November 1975), online source: <http://www.rocksbackpages.com>

Alternatively, the Scaramouche character, originally a buffoon stock character created by Tiberio Fiorelli in the *commedia dell'arte* tradition of Italian theatre, conjoins "Bohemian Rhapsody" to Italian comedy. Similarly, on one hand Mercury's reference to Beelzebub, one of the many names given to the Devil, farcically links the narrator's journey with the escapist storyline of an alternate world, while on the other, the character of Bismillah represents God or Allah for Muslims. Mercury, born Farrokh Bulsara on the island of Zanzibar, may be alluding to the ancient religious views of Zoroastrianism, a denomination that occupied a central role in his upbringing. Jens Finke notes, "Somewhat ironically, given that the Bulsaras fled Zanzibar in the aftermath of the bloody 1964 Revolution, Queen's song 'Bohemian Rhapsody' – which contains the phrase 'Bismillah (in the name of God), will you let me go?' – was embraced by Zanzibari secessionists campaigning for independence from the mainland."¹⁸ Penultimately, the character of Magnifico points to Lorenzo de' Medici (Lorenzo il Magnifico), a fifteenth-century Italian statesman and ruler of the Florentine Republic. Again, Mercury circuitously refers to Italy, the birthplace of comedic opera. Finally, and correspondingly, the character of Figaro is the lead character of Mozart's opera buffa on da Ponte's libretto *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786) and Gioachino Rossini's opera buffa on Cesare Sterbini's libretto *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1816).

As mentioned previously, the musical and thematic hybridism that "Bohemian Rhapsody" invoked unquestionably inspired Queen to name their eclectic album *A Night at the Opera*. Drummer Roger Taylor recalls the band conceived the title quite by coincidence on a Saturday night while enjoying a rather new technological device known as a video player. He states, "I think Roy, our producer, had got the Marx Brothers'

¹⁸ Jens Finke, *The Rough Guide to Zanzibar* (London: Rough Guides Ltd./Pearson PLC, 2002), 99.

movie, *A Night at the Opera*. Fred and I looked at one another and said 'Oh, it's a good title.' Because we had just been doing this sort of mock-operatic thing with 'Bohemian Rhapsody,' everybody just sort of thought, 'yeah, good title, good title.'¹⁹ To the band's surprise, following the album's release, they received a telex from Groucho Marx who requested their presence for a meeting. Soon thereafter, May, Mercury and Taylor joined Marx at his home for lunch, where they sang a version of "'39" accompanying themselves on a Spanish guitar.²⁰ One year following the band's explosive success with "Bohemian Rhapsody" and *A Night at the Opera* (1975), they tried their luck once again and thus named their 1976 release after yet another Marx Brother's film: *A Day at the Races* (1937).

The overall musical precision that, in the end, emblemized the operatic section of "Bohemian Rhapsody" results not only from their inventive sonic experimentation, but duly reflects Queen's untiring patience and perfectionism. This fact is evident from the band's desire to employ numerous recording studios to achieve their musical vision.²¹ Music journalist Rosie Horide experienced a day in the studio with the band during the recording of *A Night at the Opera*. She explains: "Being in the studio with Queen was fascinating, but very long-winded, because they were such perfectionists. One day I spent with them I don't think they did more than about thirty seconds of what actually ended up on a record."²² Music journalist John Ingham points to Queen's extreme yet controlled use of the studio. He states: "It's just so excessive, the way the vocals are all treated and

¹⁹ *Classic Albums - Queen: The Making of a Night at the Opera*, video recording.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Recording began at Rockfield Studio 1 near Monmouth on 24 August 1975, following three weeks of intensive rehearsal in Herefordshire. Queen also recorded at four additional studios SARM (East), Scorpion, Wessex and Roundhouse to create "Bohemian Rhapsody." Cunningham, "An Invitation to the Opera," online source.

²² *Classic Albums - Queen: The Making of a Night at the Opera*, video recording.

things going off backwards and God knows how much overdubbing and multi-tracking on it."²³ May explains the band's fondness for employing the studio as a creative entity that enabled experimentation: "We loved the studio. We always did and I still do because it's an open canvas and you can do anything you want. We were kind of disciples of Hendrix and the Beatles, particularly the way they used the studios almost like an instrument. But, obviously we had more technology than they had, so we could push things a lot further."²⁴ Particularly in the recording sessions of the operatic section, Queen pushed twenty-four track technology to its fullest potential.²⁵ May recalls: "We held the tape up to the light one day – we'd been wondering where all the top end was going – and what we discovered was virtually a transparent piece of tape. All the oxide had been rubbed off. It was time to make hurriedly a copy and get on with it."²⁶ Producer Roy Thomas Baker recollects: "The opera bit was getting longer, and so we kept splicing huge lengths of tape on to the reel. Every time Freddie came up with another 'Galileo,' I would add another piece of tape to the reel which was beginning to look like a zebra crossing whizzing by."²⁷ Baker concludes: "'Bohemian Rhapsody' was totally insane, but we

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *Queen: Greatest Video Hits 1*, DVD Disc 2, directed by Bruce Gowers and produced by Simon Lupton and Rhys Thomas (Burbank, CA: Hollywood Records, 2002), video recording.

²⁵ As Queen recorded their first three albums using sixteen-track equipment, "Bohemian Rhapsody" benefited from twenty-four track technology, although not without a few problems. Roy Thomas Baker states: "We found that the different 24-track machines we used had different formats, but we managed to compensate for that. We just used the one machine, because there was no syncing available to us. We started off at Rockfield on the Studer 24-track, which looked like a huge fish fryer. Then we did the vocal overdubs at Scorpion Studios, where they had a Telefunken machine. Telefunken had this great idea to make their edge tracks (1 and 24) wider than the inside tracks, because they claimed there would be a higher risk of dropouts on the edges, but this made their machine totally incompatible with others. Unfortunately, Telefunken's attitude was: 'We invented the tape machine, we can do what we want!' So we threw that machine out and used a variety of machines from there onwards, including an Ampex which sounded phenomenally good but had transport tension problems; a track would play at a different speed by the end of the reel. The only contemporary machine we never tried was a Stephens." Cunningham, "An Invitation to the Opera," online source.

²⁶ Brian May quoted by Georg Purvis, *Queen: Complete Works* (Richmond, Surrey: Reynolds & Hearn Ltd., 2007), 121.

²⁷ Mark Cunningham, *Good Vibrations: A History of Record Production* (Chessington, MI: Castle

enjoyed every minute of it. It was basically a joke, but a successful joke. It was complete madness. The middle part started off being just a couple of seconds, but Freddie kept coming in with more 'Galileos' and we kept on adding to the opera section, and it just got bigger and bigger. We never stopped laughing."²⁸ Through technological experimentation and the use of modern-day recording equipment, Queen, in 1975, created a song of epic proportion by building upon the fundamental recording techniques, particularly those pertaining to layering, established by their forerunners, including the Beatles, Pink Floyd, Frank Zappa and the Beach Boys.

In the operatic section, only three men sing the antiphonal delivery of the dense choir: Brian May, Freddie Mercury and Roger Taylor. The process involved the trio singing any given part into the same microphone at the same time, which they in turn double- or triple-tracked. The singers did not read from Western notation to execute the difficult passages; rather they followed the guidance of Mercury's imagination. Taylor recalls: "All the elements were in Freddie's mind. He literally had them all lined-up like soldiers. . . . All the harmonies he wrote out in blocks on the back of a telephone directory."²⁹ The outcome was a seemingly mix-gendered choir, which largely is due to Taylor's high vocal tessitura, whose range extended nearly two octaves above middle C. The uniqueness of the trio's voices in conjunction with their desire to develop new techniques in recording became emblematic to the Queen sound. In "Bohemian Rhapsody," one noteworthy example is the "cascade effect," or in traditional jazz a musical device known as the "bells effect." To achieve the musical result, each note of a

Communications, 1996), 227.

²⁸ Rick Clark, "Roy Thomas Baker: Taking Chances and Making Hits," *Mix: Professional Music and Audio Production* (1 April 1999), online source: http://mixonline.com/mag/audio_roy_thomas_baker/

²⁹ *Queen: Greatest Video Hits 1*, DVD Disc 2, video recording.

short melody is sung and held by a separate voice, which in turn causes overlap and harmony. In "Bohemian Rhapsody," the band uses this technique in two instances: the first at the end of the line "let me go" (3:19), and the second on the final syllable of "magnifico" (3:49). Queen borrows the falling cascade effect from Annunzio Paolo Mantovani, a popular conductor of the light orchestral genre during the mid-twentieth century. Mantovani and composer Ronnie Binge developed the practice for strings, to duplicate and create synthetically the sonic properties of echo. May states that upon hearing Mantovani's "Charmaine," the band began experimenting with the idea by multitracking and panning guitars and vocals.³⁰ In "Bohemian Rhapsody," panning adds another dimension to the effectiveness of the cascade by altering the spatial depth and proximity of the rapid entrances created by the multitracked choir. The overall musical effect engenders the placement of compounded phrases (unattainable through mechanized delay units), surrounding the perceiver in a circular or omni-directional manner.

Unsurprisingly, the extensive use of studio multitracking described hitherto posed great difficulty for Queen in live performance. To cope with the problem, the group substituted performing the multitracked section live with a recorded excerpt, played over the PA system from a tape and cued by a sound engineer. Accompanied with a dazzling visual display of pyrotechnics and colourful lighting scenes, audience members maintained interest for the duration of the taped operatic section (1:03 minutes), during which time Queen made a quick change backstage. Brian May expands upon the performative dilemma with which the band was faced. He states: "A lot of people don't

³⁰ *Classic Albums - Queen: The Making of a Night at the Opera*, video recording. "Charmaine" was composed in 1926 by Erno Rapee with lyrics by Lew Pollack. In 1951, Binge arranged an instrumental version, which Mantovani's orchestra recorded.

like us leaving the stage. But to be honest, I'd rather leave than have us playing to a backing tape. If you're out there and you've got backing tapes, it's a totally false situation. So we'd rather be up front about it and say, 'Look, this is not something you can play on stage. It was multi-layered in the studio. We'll play it [on tape at the show] because we think you want to hear it.'"³¹ Queen realized that, due to the magnitude of "Bohemian Rhapsody's" success, they required a method to deliver the song, and its idiosyncratic sonic signifiers, in a live setting that would not tarnish the band's reputation. Tyler Cowen, who compares composer-based genres (including art music) with performer-based genres, discusses this performative paradox:

Electronic reproduction is required for performer-based genres to flourish. Our fascination with the Queen song, "Bohemian Rhapsody," lies in the particular production and presentation of that piece. These features cannot be replicated at home, on paper, or by another group in the studio. Queen even closed its concerts by walking off stage and playing a tape of the recorded song. They could not reproduce their creation accurately on stage.³²

Although Cowen erroneously suggests Queen concluded their performances with a recording of "Bohemian Rhapsody" when in fact, as discussed below, the band terminated their shows with a guitar arrangement of "God Save the Queen," he rightfully discloses the highly mediated nature of the piece and the dilemmas it engendered in live performance. In a similar vein, Kris Nickolson, in the May 1977 issue of *Creem*, discussed the musical quandaries that Queen faced, as they attempted to reproduce their studio works authentically. He states: "Unfortunately they've mastered a studio perfection that does not lend itself to accurate live interpretation. If Queen – without the assistance of tapes – could reproduce their studio sound live, they'd certainly be one of the most

³¹ Brian May quoted by Purvis, *Queen: Complete Works*, 122.

³² Tyler Cowen, *In Praise of Commercial Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 145.

impressive bands on the rock scene."³³ Arguably, Nickolson's discontent echoed the sentiments of many commentators who believed the exoticism and breadth of Queen's studio endeavours significantly surpassed their live concerts, at which four musicians attempted to deliver the seemingly impossible. On 16 February 1975, in his concert review of Queen's performance at the Avery Fisher Hall in New York City, Paul Nelson wrote: "Right now, their studio work is infinitely better than their lifelessness upon the wicked stage."³⁴ In the group's defense, Mercury explains the inherent differences that divide stage and studio aesthetics. He states: "I would say songs like 'Rhapsody' and 'Somebody to Love' are big production numbers – very, very vocal orientated, which is a very heavy aspect of Queen. [In live performance] those kinds of songs have to be arranged differently. I mean how could you recreate a 160-piece gospel choir on stage? You can't. It's impossible."³⁵

In the case of "Bohemian Rhapsody's" live performances and Queen's incorporation of tapes, I contend that the band used the recorded excerpt first to compensate for the lack of performers on stage who, as Mercury suggests, in no way could execute the multitude of vocal overdubs that comprised the recording; and second, the mastertrack ensured the reproduction of the timbral inimitability of the voices and instruments captured in the studio. Mercury concludes: "As far as I know, a lot of the

³³ Kris Nickolson, "Queen: A Night at the Garden, A Day at the Hairdressers," *Creem* 8 (May 1977):42.

³⁴ Paul Nelson, "Queen: Pomp without Circumstance," *Rolling Stone* 185 (24 April 1975):75.

³⁵ Mercury, *Freddie Mercury*, 31. Unquestionably, Queen was not the first band to contend with problems of replication and performativity in a live setting. The Beatles, for example, almost ceased performing live following their concert on 29 August 1966 at Candlestick Park in San Francisco (their last show took place on Thursday 30 January 1969 on the rooftop of Apple Studios in London), partly due to their incapability to duplicate their intricate studio creations. Finally, by the mid-1970s, following the Who's release of *Tommy* (1969), *Who's Next* (1971) and *Quadrophenia* (1973), the band, like Queen, used backing tapes as a means to cope with the performative limitations invoked by four live players. Joe McMichael and Jack Lyons, *The Who Concert File* (London: Omnibus Press, 2004), 164.

people who buy our records are intelligent enough to realise that all the vocals are just the four of us. Therefore, they know that we cannot possibly recreate that on stage, no matter how hard we try. As long as the atmosphere of the song is put across on stage that's what's more important as far as I'm concerned."³⁶

Although the operatic segment of "Bohemian Rhapsody" presents an abundance of studio multitracking that caused havoc for Queen in live performance, the next segment of the work, Section 5, features a much more minimalist musical approach, as it begins with an aggressive hard rock melodic figure played in octaves on the guitar and bass. Many attribute the creation of this motif to guitarist Brian May, although as he suggests, "Freddie is actually pretty good on the guitar and the heavy bit is actually all his idea. This is not my riff, it's Freddie's, the famous head-banging riff."³⁷ In contrast to the serene nature of the strophic section, this part of the song is raw and played fortissimo, featuring the narrator who angrily contests his situation and passionately affirms: "Just gotta get out, just gotta get right out of here." Mercury intensifies the narrative and vocal delivery by double-tracking his voice in unison, causing moments of microtonal dissonance, which are practically imperceptible to the ear.³⁸ Section 5 concludes with a one-bar ascending mixolydian scale in B^b played in octaves on the piano, in free time, bringing to a close the bombast of the rock sound and neatly bridging into the final

³⁶ Mercury, *Freddie Mercury*, 31.

³⁷ *Queen: Greatest Video Hits 1*, DVD Disc 2, video recording.

³⁸ One of the first groups to use this practice in the studio was the popular late-1950s to mid-1960s rock duo Jan & Dean (Jan Berry and Dean Torrence), who penned nearly a dozen songs in collaboration with Brian Wilson, the latter being known for his studio experimentation. Notable Jan & Dean hits with Wilson that used double-tracking include "Surf City" (1963) and "The Little Old Lady from Pasadena" (1964). The importance of these works lies in the depth created by layering vocals in unison, which is the driving force in the hard-rock section of "Bohemian Rhapsody."

section. Section 6, or the final section, once again reflects Queen's desire to forge new sonic paths by using technology innovatively. In this instance, Brian May creates an impressive guitar arrangement by multitracking numerous guitar parts that, in the end, sonically resemble a fanfare of trumpets. Their distinctive timbral quality results from overdriving a small amplifier, which May aptly names the "Deacy Amp," a device fabricated by electrical engineer and bass player John Deacon.³⁹ The regal and triumphant sonorial quality that May captures in a fanfare style also appears on *A Night at the Opera* in his rendition of "God Save the Queen," a piece that not only concludes the album but also ended every Queen show from 1975 onward. Just as the piece gained momentum through the addition of instruments in its early stages, the final section functions to end the song by gradually thinning the density of the accompaniment. Thus, a subtle decrescendo dynamically mirrors the tapering instrumentation, which by its termination leaves Mercury at the piano and May on the guitar. As the music loses its impetus, so does the narrator's desire to carry on. The harmonic progression alternates between minor chords (Cm and Gm) as the narrator states: "Nothing really matters, anyone can see, nothing really matters to me." Common to the conclusion of the majority of sections discussed, the song ends with a descending chromatic line that, in this case, falls from the dominant in E^b major. The piano duplicates the descending vocal line sung by Mercury (B^b, A, A^b, G). The protagonist, in his final statement, exhausted from his

³⁹ *Queen: Greatest Video Hits 1*, DVD Disc 2, video recording.

journey, relents by stating his hopelessness: "Nothing really matters, anyone can see, nothing really matters, nothing really matters to me. Any way the wind blows."⁴⁰

GENDER, INTENTION AND NARRATION

"Bohemian Rhapsody's" title establishes a partition whereby the noun, "Rhapsody," appropriately implies an elaborate episodic one-movement through-composed musical work that features a range of highly contrasting moods, colours, textures and tonal areas. Alternatively, the adjective of the title, "Bohemian," signifies nonconformist artists commonly associated with unorthodox social beliefs, including non-marital sexual relations and voluntary poverty. Judith Ann Peraino expands upon the etymological roots of bohemianism in relation to Mercury's artistic intent. She states:

The word "bohemian" has long been a catchall word for people who live outside the norm on the margins of mainstream society, typically artists, writers, and musicians who were also sexual "free spirits." Mercury intended "Bohemian Rhapsody" to be a "mock opera," something outside the norm of rock songs, and it does follow a certain logic: choruses of multitracked voices alternate with arialike solos, the emotions are excessive, the plot confusing.⁴¹

As I have argued previously, Mercury possessed a keen affinity towards confusing emotions and plots to mystify the discourse of his works, which in turn provoked the same consequence upon his perceived sexuality. This, as John Ingham suggested, frustrated commentators who sought to obtain a glimpse into the depths of Mercury's complexly ambiguous existence. Mercury's overt confidence and flamboyance in

⁴⁰ It is probable that Mercury, who was an avid fan of Frank Zappa, is quoting the song "Any Way the Wind Blows," the latter appearing on *Freak Out!* (released on 27 June 1966) and *Cruising with Reuben and the Jets* (released on 2 December 1968). The phrase emerges in the second line of Zappa's piece "Any way the wind blows, it don't matter to me," and reenters sporadically throughout. Mercury adopts the line as a tribute to him, but makes a slight variation by adding the word "really." Zappa reuses the title *Any Way the Wind Blows* for his 1991 double live CD recorded in Paris (released on 16 July 1991) preceding Mercury's death by months.

⁴¹ Judith Ann Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of Queer Identity from Homer to Hedwig* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 230.

conjunction with his free-spirited beliefs and polymorphic appearance oftentimes aggravated journalists. Mercury states: "I remember back in an interview where I said, 'I play on the bisexual thing.' Of course I play on it. It's simply a matter of wherever my mood takes me. If people ask me if I'm gay, I tell them it's up to them to find out."⁴²

For Freddie Mercury, glam rock was a vehicle through which he could allude to his homosexuality, without having to commit affirmatively or pronounce declaratively his preference towards men. To this end, I argue that Mercury used Queen and their creative works as a window of opportunity, to liberate himself publicly through sexual innuendos and allusions. Perhaps the earliest and most vivid example of Mercury's insistence for the band to embrace an androgynous image is apparent on the cover of *Sheer Heart Attack* (1974) (see Example 3-5). Mercury explains: "God, the agony we went through to have the pictures taken, dear. Can you imagine trying to convince the others to cover themselves in Vaseline and then have a hose turned on them?"⁴³ Although "Bohemian Rhapsody" does not blatantly proclaim Mercury's sexuality, I contend that deeply encoded in the fabric of the song's text is his plea for forgiveness, as he confronts his suppressed past and begins a new life as a liberalized homosexual. Guitarist Brian May states: "Freddie was a very complex person: flippant and funny on the surface, but he concealed insecurities and problems in squaring up his life with his childhood. He never explained the lyrics [of "Bohemian Rhapsody"], but I think he put a lot of himself into that song."⁴⁴

⁴² Rock, *Classic Queen*, 143.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁴⁴ Black, "The Greatest Songs Ever! 'Bohemian Rhapsody'," online source.

Example 3-5 – Sheer Heart Attack (1974)



With this in mind, the piece creates a chronological chain through commentary by the narrator, arguably Mercury himself, who takes the listener on a journey of his consciousness, a journey of self-discovery. To do so, the piece features a singular commentator speaking in the 2nd person, offering an omniscient perspective, while the chorus adopts an ancillary role by interjecting the consciousness of the narrator in 3rd person (see Example 3-6). Additionally, the notion of a musical and psychological voyage presents itself through Mercury's vocal timbre, depicting the vulnerability of the speaker through falsetto and dynamics to accentuate the semantic importance of particular words (see Example 3-7).

Example 3-6 – Narrative and perspective in "Bohemian Rhapsody"

NARRATOR / LEAD	COMMENTATOR (In 2 nd Person)	CHORUS (In 3 rd Person)
<p>Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy Caught in a landslide, no escape from reality</p> <p>I'm just a poor boy, I need no sympathy Because I'm easy come, easy go</p> <p>Any way the wind blows doesn't really matter to me, To me.</p> <p>Mama, just killed a man, put a gun against his head Pulled my trigger, now he's dead Mama, life had just begun But now I've gone and thrown it all away Mama, ooh, didn't mean to make you cry If I'm not back again this time tomorrow Carry on, carry on, as if nothing really matters</p> <p>Too late, my time has come. Sends shivers down my spine, body's aching all the time Goodbye, everybody, I've got to go Gotta leave you all behind and face the truth Mama, ooh, I don't want to die I sometimes wish I'd never been born at all</p>	<p>Open your eyes, look up to the skies and see</p>	<p>(poor boy) little high, little low</p> <p>(Any way the wind blows)</p>
<p>I see a little silhouette of a man</p> <p>Thunderbolt and lightning, very very frightening me</p> <p>Galileo</p> <p>Galileo Galileo figaro I'm just a poor boy and nobody loves me</p> <p>Easy come, easy go, will you let me go Bismillah! Bismillah! Bismillah!</p> <p>Let me go . . . No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Oh mama mia, mama mia. Mama mia, let me go Beelzebub has a devil put aside for me, for me, for me</p> <p>So you think you can stone me and spit in my eye So you think you can love me and leave me to die Oh, baby, can't do this to me, baby Just gotta get out, just gotta get right outta here</p> <p>Nothing really matters, anyone can see Nothing really matters</p> <p>Nothing really matters to me Any way the wind blows</p>	<p>Scaramouche, Scaramouche, will you do the Fandango</p> <p>No, we will not let you go We will not let you go Will not let you go., will not let you go</p>	<p>Galileo</p> <p>Galileo</p> <p>Magnifico . . .</p> <p>He's just a poor boy from a poor family Spare him his life from this monstrosity</p> <p>Let him go! Let him go!</p> <p>(BOLD indicates vocal harmonies with narrator and commentators)</p>

Example 3-7 – Freddie Mercury's vocal duality

LYRICS	HALF VOICE "hopeless"	FULL VOICE "authorial"
Is this the real life Is this just fantasy Caught in a landslide No escape from reality Open your eyes look up to the skies and see	Is this the real life is this just fantasy caught in a landslide no escape from reality open your eyes, look up to the skies and see	
I'm just a poor boy I need no sympathy Because I'm easy come, easy go, little high, little low Any way the wind blows doesn't really matter to me To me	little high, little low To me	I'm just a poor boy, I need no sympathy
Mama, just killed a man, put a gun against his head Pulled my trigger, now he's dead Mama life had just begun But now I've gone and thrown it all away Mama, ooh, didn't mean to make you cry If I'm not back again this time tomorrow Carry on carry on as if nothing really matters	Mama, just killed a man life had just begun but now I've gone and thrown it carry on, as if nothing really matters	all away Mama, ooh, didn't mean to make you cry if I'm not back again this time tomorrow
Too late my time has come Sends shivers down my spine body's aching all the time Goodbye everybody I've got to go Gotta leave you all behind and face the truth Mama, ooh, (any way the wind blows) I don't want to die I sometimes wish I'd never been born at all	I've got to go gotta leave you all behind (any way the wind blows)	face the truth Mama, ooh, I don't want to die

This vocal dualism between Mercury's lighter half-voice (signifying fear and hopelessness) with that of his full-voice (representing reality and authority) serves to personify the sexual paradox with which Mercury was confronted at the time of "Bohemian Rhapsody's" composition in 1975.⁴⁵ Much like the character in the song, Mercury became overwhelmed with desperation at the time of his death. Through retrospective analysis, some commentators wrongfully speculate that Mercury encodes his AIDS-positive status in "Bohemian Rhapsody." As Rob Pope suggests: "The

⁴⁵ This mode of vocal delivery is similar in style to that of Joni Mitchell, who uses high head tones to depict insecurity, uncertainty and vulnerability, and lower chest tones to represent confidence. Notable examples include "A Case of You," "California" and "River," from the album *Blue* (1971). In Queen's repertoire, three songs in particular demonstrate this vocal dualism: "Lily of the Valley" (1974) from *Sheer Heart Attack*, "You Take My Breath Away" (1976) from *A Day at the Races* and "My Melancholy Blues" (1977) from *News of the World*. In "Bohemian Rhapsody," the expressivity of Mercury's dual vocal performance externalizes the plight of the narrator through the imagery of the text.

anticipated death of the 'poor boy' and that of Freddie Mercury through AIDS have tended to be confused in the popular imagination."⁴⁶ In agreement with Pope's observation, I argue that at the time of the song's composition in 1975, in no way could Mercury have been cognizant of a disease that had not yet been medically documented, as the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention only named AIDS on 27 July 1982.⁴⁷ Even as "Bohemian Rhapsody" does not explicitly refer to Mercury's personal battle with AIDS, I contend that a great deal of Mercury's life seeped into the plot. In 1974, shortly before conceiving the song, Mercury was living with Mary Austin, his girlfriend of seven years. Although the couple was inseparable, Mercury was going through an ongoing internal conflict, much in the same way as the narrator of "Bohemian Rhapsody." Tension was building and Mercury was increasingly finding it difficult to cope with his double life. Around this time, Mercury stated: "Lately I've been throwing things around, which is very unlike me. I threw a glass at someone the other day. I think I'm going to go mad in a few years' time."⁴⁸ By 1975, Mercury had realized he was gay, and soon thereafter terminated his relationship with Austin.⁴⁹ With this in mind, an alternative reading of the whimsical, escapist and pastiche aspects of "Bohemian Rhapsody" reveals the song as an autobiographical testimonial to Mercury's binary life. If the perceiver of the piece assumes that Mercury is the speaker, an alternate reading of

⁴⁶ Rob Pope, *The English Studies Book* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 136-37.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Fee and Daniel M. Fox, *AIDS: The Making of a Chronic Disease* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 49.

⁴⁸ Freddie Mercury, "Freddie Mercury on Himself," in *The Q/Omnibus Press Rock N' Roll Reader*, ed. by Danny Kelly (London: Omnibus Press, 1994), 142.

⁴⁹ Laura Jackson, *Mercury: The King of Queen* (London: Smith Gryphon Limited, 1996), 75.

Section 2, or the strophic narrative section, illustrates, in a metaphorical sense, the outing of his homosexual self.

Example 3-8 – Verse 1 of "Bohemian Rhapsody"

Mama just killed a man
 Put a gun against his head
 Pulled my trigger now he's dead
 Mama, life had just begun
 But now I've gone and thrown it all away
 Mama, ooh, didn't mean to make you cry
 If I'm not back again this time tomorrow
 Carry on carry on as if nothing really matters

Beginning with Verse 1 (see Example 3-8), contrary to Ken McLeod's claim, stating Mercury is "imploring his mother to carry on as if nothing really matters," I argue that Mercury is not referring to his literal mother, Jer Bulsara, but rather uses the epithet, "Mama," to signify Mary Austin.⁵⁰ Like many African-American artists of the blues tradition, Hendrix (an artist who profoundly influenced Freddie Mercury) in songs such as "Hey Joe," "Purple Haze," "Manic Depression," "Love or Confusion," "Dolly Dagger" and "Mannish Boy," alludes to his girl as his "Mama." The term was quickly appropriated by many musicians of many races during the 1970s, including Led Zeppelin in works

⁵⁰ Ken McLeod, "Bohemian Rhapsodies: Operatic Influences on Rock Music," *Popular Music* 20 (May 2001):192. In other areas of his article, the author loses the context of the song as he states Queen released "Bohemian Rhapsody" in 1974 when in fact Mercury only began composing the work in the summer of 1975. Additionally, McLeod points to the uniqueness of the work in terms of rock conventions, stating "Bohemian Rhapsody" breaks rock clichés by its six-minute length, which "is twice the length of conventional pop singles at this time." Regarding the song's length (5:56), I feel such a point is difficult to make in the context of mid-1970s radio standards. Had Queen released the work ten years prior, its length surely would have implicated airplay. From the mid-1960s, songs like "Like a Rolling Stone" - 6:09 (1965), by Bob Dylan; "A Day in the Life" - 5:33 (1967) and "Hey Jude" - 7:05 (1968), by the Beatles; "Light My Fire" - 4:40 (radio version) (1967), by the Doors; "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" - 5:12 (1968/70), by Jimi Hendrix; and, "You Can't Always Get What You Want" - 7:31 (1969), by the Rolling Stones, demonstrated the possibility for songs to exceed the three-minute protocol set in the 1950s. Around the time of "Bohemian Rhapsody's" release in 1975, singles of exceptional merit in excess of four minutes regularly received airplay, including "Stairway to Heaven" - 8:02 (1971) and "Kashmir" - 8:28 (1975), by Led Zeppelin; "L.A. Woman" - 7:59 (1971), by the Doors; "Money" - 6:23 (1973), by Pink Floyd; "Don't Let the Sun Go Down On Me" - 5:35 (1974), by Elton John; "Lyin' Eyes" - 6:22 (1975), "The Last Resort" - 7:25 (1976) and "Hotel California" (1976) - 6:08, by the Eagles; and, "Free Bird" - 9:07 (1976), by Lynyrd Skynyrd.

such as "Black Dog" and "Black Country Woman," where they used the appellation to signify a mate (or potential mate) of the opposite sex. To this end, in Verse 1, Mercury, in a declarative manner, informs the perceiver that "'Mama' just killed a man." In this case, Mercury uses death metaphorically to reflect the strangulating hold that his union with Austin had upon his ability to seek same-sex relations. Mercury very convincingly heightens this message by strategically using pronouns to invoke phallic sexual overtones. Judith Ann Peraino states:

This might be a simple story of murder, but it also seems to be a melodrama of homoeroticism. Guns, after all, are phallic; the phrase "*my trigger*" clearly locates "the gun" on the body. The lack of subject pronouns creates confusion over agency: exactly who has pulled the trigger? The son? The other man? The mother? – for the juxtaposition of sexual double entendres with "Mama" invites an Oedipal reading, in which the son has killed the father out of desire for the mother.⁵¹

Although I dismiss much of Peraino's claims, as she asserts a rather unsubstantiated argument by loosely drawing parallels from Freudian psychoanalysis and the Oedipus complex with Mercury's sexuality in "Bohemian Rhapsody," I do agree that personal pronouns indirectly amend the denotations of the text. In the latter part of Verse 1, the narrator is apologetic to "Mama" as he "didn't mean to make [her] cry" but warns that he must leave and may never return, and concludes by asking her "to carry on as if nothing really matters."

⁵¹ Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens*, 231.

Example 3-9 – Verse 2 of "Bohemian Rhapsody"

Too late, my time has come
 Sends shivers down my spine body's aching all the time
 Goodbye everybody I've got to go
 Gotta leave you all behind and face the truth
 Mama, ooh, (any way the wind blows) I don't want to die
 I sometimes wish I'd never been born at all

Continuing in the apologetic tone established in the first verse, the commentator in Verse 2 declares that his time has come (see Example 3-9). He refers to his "body's aching all the time," which has contemporarily been mistaken as a point of reference to AIDS, and could simply reflect Mercury's biological need to pursue members of the same sex. The narrator then poignantly bids everyone farewell as he must leave "to face the truth." When considering Mercury's personal paradox and his resulting decision to leave Austin to pursue a homosexual lifestyle, it is obvious that Mercury's truth is his sexual orientation. Though Mercury may have felt freed by his new life, he remorsefully concludes Verse 2 by stating, "I sometimes wish I'd never been born at all," demonstrating not only his regret for the pain he has caused to Mary Austin, but also the shame he has inflicted upon his family. In her analysis of "Bohemian Rhapsody," Sheila Whiteley states: "[The song] provides an intriguing insight into Mercury's private life at the time, the song's three separate acts reflecting separate turmoils, all, it seems, underpinned by Catholic guilt."⁵² Despite the fact that I agree wholeheartedly with the first part of Whiteley's claim, where she argues "Bohemian Rhapsody" offers a reflective view into Mercury's life, I would strongly oppose her belief that inaccurately connects

⁵² Sheila Whiteley, "Which Freddie?: Constructions of Masculinity in Freddie Mercury and Justin Hawkins," in *Oh Boy!: Masculinities and Popular Music*, ed. by Freya Jarman Ivens (New York: Routledge, 2007), 24.

Catholic guilt with Mercury's religious beliefs, as he was in no way a practicing Christian.⁵³

In conclusion, the degree to which Freddie Mercury implants his life into the fabric of "Bohemian Rhapsody's" text remains unknown, although as I have demonstrated, it is patently obvious that his personal struggle with discovering and confirming his own sexual identity culminated in 1975, exactly corresponds to the moment when he composed his signature work. Similar to Brian May's belief, I assert that Mercury's epiphany and life-changing decision undoubtedly manifested and surfaced in his music, for his art was perhaps his only place of refuge, through which he could voice himself without being persecuted by homophobes. Through "Bohemian Rhapsody," Mercury encoded his story, the brave chronicle of a man who kills his heterosexual self to pursue his homosexual calling, as he ventures into the abyss to "face the truth."

ANTICIPATION AND SKEPTICISM

Although, upon its completion, Freddie Mercury possessed tremendous confidence in what he perceived to be a masterpiece, Queen's record label, EMI, was apprehensive of "Bohemian Rhapsody's" mainstream potential, and so they demanded an edit to ensure radio programmers were not dissuaded by the song's eclecticism when coupled with its length. For its time, the piece was the most expensive single ever produced and thus EMI wanted to ensure a large profit from their investment. Pete

⁵³ In the early part of his life, while living in Zanzibar, like his family Mercury practiced Zoroastrianism. Rick Sky offers a brief history of the denomination: "Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest and most exclusive religions. Founded by the prophet Zoroaster (or Zarathustra) in 600 B.C., it has only 120,000 members worldwide and just 6,000 in Britain. Its followers see life as a battle between two spirits, Spenta Mainyu, the 'Bounteous Spirit,' and Angra Mainyu, the 'Destructive Spirit.' Whichever one a Zoroastrian lives his life by determines where he or she goes to after death. The final resting place is the Zoroastrian equivalent to the Christian heaven or hell." Rick Sky, *The Show Must Go On: The Life of Freddie Mercury* (New York: Citadel Press/Carol Publishing Group, 1994), 8.

Brown, Queen's personal manager, recalls: "I tried to make Freddie see that they were quite mad proposing 'Bohemian Rhapsody' as their next single. I personally thought it spelt the kiss of death, and actually [bass guitarist] John Deacon privately agreed with me."⁵⁴ Though Queen firmly believed in the song's commercial promise, they did not have much bargaining leverage to challenge EMI's protests. Drummer Roger Taylor recalls, "the band was financially not well off at that point having sold little records."⁵⁵ Brian May continues, "I would say Freddie persuaded everybody else because you couldn't argue with Freddie once he got on a roll. But we just totally backed him up and said this has to go in its entirety."⁵⁶

In his attempts to advocate "Bohemian Rhapsody," Mercury approached longtime friend Kenny Everett, a DJ at Capitol Radio, and secretly provided him with a copy of the song. Everett was a flamboyant outgoing person, who like Mercury was involved in a heterosexual relationship, but would later embrace a homosexual lifestyle.⁵⁷ Mercury's ploy to unveil "Bohemian Rhapsody" to an influential DJ proved to be successful; producer Roy Thomas Baker explains: "He [Kenny Everett] played the track fourteen times over the course of the weekend. By Monday, there were hordes of fans going to the record stores to buy 'Bohemian Rhapsody,' only to be told it wasn't out."⁵⁸ Given that Everett's actions demonstrated the viability of obtaining airplay, EMI rather fittingly, and in its entirety, released "Bohemian Rhapsody" as a single on Halloween in 1975 along

⁵⁴ Jackson, *Mercury: The King of Queen*, 75.

⁵⁵ *Queen: Greatest Video Hits 1*, DVD Disc 2, video recording.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Kenny Everett died of an AIDS-related illness on 4 April 1995. Jeremy Simmonds, *The Encyclopedia of Dead Rock Stars: Heroin, Handguns, and Ham Sandwiches* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2008), 344.

⁵⁸ Cunningham, *Good Vibrations: A History of Record Production*, 233.

with drummer Roger Taylor's "I'm in Love with My Car" on Side B. Unsurprisingly, the eclecticism of the piece provoked mixed reviews by reviewers. Andy Davis states: "One critic described it as 'one of the most peculiar singles of the year,' while another coming nearer to the mark than he imagined, called it 'pure nonsense.' The record-buying public thought otherwise, of course, and immediately took 'Bo Rhap' to their hearts."⁵⁹

Regardless of one's personal preference, "Bohemian Rhapsody" unquestionably placed Queen in the limelight of the recording industry as an innovative band who, through technological experimentation and creative modes of composition, were taking rock music in new directions. In 1975, Jon Tiven of *Circus Magazine* stated, "Critical response to the band is now almost unanimously favorable in both Great Britain and the United States, which is quite phenomenal when you stop and think of how anxious many critics were to pan them two years ago." Similar to Kris Nickolson of *Rolling Stone*, Tiven concludes, "Queen have joined the prestigious ranks of the Zeppelins, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones. . . ." ⁶⁰

MUSIC VIDEO

Shortly after its release, "Bohemian Rhapsody's" promotional video aired on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) television program, *Top of Pops*. Queen, who was on tour at the time, could not appear on the show and therefore used the video to replace them. Drummer Roger Taylor explains: "We did everything we possibly could to avoid appearing on *Top of the Pops*. It was one; the most boring day known to man and two; it's all about not actually playing, you know pretending to sing, pretending to play.

⁵⁹ Andy Davis with Jamie Davis, "Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody'," *Record Collector* 167 (July 1993):20.

⁶⁰ Jon Tiven, "Queen Swings Both Ways," *Circus Magazine* 109 (April 1975):58.

We came up with the video concept to avoid playing on *Top of the Pops*.⁶¹ Although "Bohemian Rhapsody" was not the first promotional video of its time (Queen had already made a similar video for "Killer Queen"), the structure and complexity of the video when coupled with the sonic diversity of the song demonstrated the marketing value of substituting videos in the place of live performance on television. The concept of centring music upon a thin plot finds its roots in the animated works of Warner Brothers and Walt Disney during the 1930s. By the 1950s, Elvis Presley foreshadowed the video age by coupling music with theatrics and Hollywood film particularly with *Love Me Tender* (1956), confirming the cross-marketing value for elevating the demand of recorded music through the medium of film and promoting the film through the presence of established music stars singing their repertoire.⁶² In the 1960s, the Beatles in their motion picture *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), directed by Richard Lester, used cinematic and editing techniques to promote themselves artistically in film through ways that exceeded the limitations of live performance. Another noteworthy precursor to Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" was the Doors' promotional video to "Break on Through" (1967), directed by Jim Morrison and Ray Manzarek. The song, when joined with the video sonically and visually, emblemized the quintessential aspects of psychedelic rock through atmospheric lighting, escapist themes and counterculture ideology, which critiqued the Vietnam War. Therefore, although "Bohemian Rhapsody" was novel for its time, many promotional videos preceded its creations, consequently contradicting many historical accounts. Andrew Goodwin suggests, "The most popular candidate for the title of 'first'

⁶¹ Jenny Clover, Harriet Lane and Laurence Ryan, "1000 Number Ones," *The Observer* (12 December 2004), online source: <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/features/story/0,11710,1371715,00.html>

⁶² Other notable films in which Presley starred include *Jailhouse Rock* (1957), *King Creole* (1958) and *Charro!* (1969).

music video is the Jon Roseman/Bruce Gowers six-minute clip for Queen's number-one hit record 'Bohemian Rhapsody,' made in 1975."⁶³ Similarly, R. Serge Denisoff and William Romanowski propagate this belief as they state, "The 'Bohemian Rhapsody' bit is believed by many to be the first 'concept' video produced. MTV inserted the clip in its medium rotation as the single charted."⁶⁴

In 1975, under the direction of Bruce Gowers, who had previously worked with the band recording their live performances, Queen recorded the promotional video to "Bohemian Rhapsody" in four hours. Unlike the elaborate music videos of the mid-1980s, the band members of Queen choreographed their maneuvers and designed a stage set without the assistance of an expansive crew. Roger Taylor explains: "We had a little side-stage and we lit it ourselves with overhead white lights. The *a cappella* stuff was done on the side-stage, and the tricky shots in the centre. The core of the song was captured on a live stage with our stage lights to really sell the idea that Queen, in essence, was a live band."⁶⁵ Following the video shoot, the band went to Liverpool to begin the *A Night at the Opera Tour*. Queen entrusted the editing to Gowers and his technical crew, who diligently completed their task in less than one day. The effects used in the video were basic, cost effective and executed onsite. One visual effect set Mercury's face in an endless sequence of repetition, created by pointing the camera directly into the screen or monitor and thus causing visual feedback (see Example 3-10). The other primary effect used a special lens on the front of the camera, creating a visual prism based on the cover art of *Queen II*, an album that saw minimal sales. The four-faces theme became a

⁶³ Andrew Goodwin, *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 30.

⁶⁴ R. Serge Denisoff and William D. Romanowski, *Risky Business: Rock in Film* (Edison: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 528.

⁶⁵ *Queen: Greatest Video Hits 1*, DVD Disc 2, video recording.

trademark for the band as the artwork came to life through the new medium (see Example 3-11). I would argue that Mercury elected to recycle the image from *Queen II* for "Bohemian Rhapsody's" video, as it visually paralleled the underlying semantic connotations of his own sexuality. Photographer Mick Rock and Mercury initially conceptualized the idea from the film *Shanghai Express*, which featured a stunning pose of the German-born American actor, Marlene Dietrich (see Example 3-12).⁶⁶ In all likelihood, Mercury was inspired by Dietrich, who by 1975 had become an icon within the gay community for her ability to celebrate her bisexuality openly. Mario Ribas states: "Dietrich herself is recognized as bisexual, one who would not conform herself to the imposed limits on gender expression." Ribas continues, "[Dietrich is] a sensual and sexualized woman, not a naive one; one who would dare to challenge the structures, since she would not live according to imposed requirements regarding sexual expression."⁶⁷ Secondly, Mercury, who was a keen admirer of the Beatles, may have been partially inspired to allude to Dietrich on a Queen cover, as she appeared prominently on *Sgt. Pepper's* (see Example 3-13). As the members of Queen had hoped, the vivid imagery and sonic diversity that constituted "Bohemian Rhapsody's" promotional video provoked intrigue, and therefore four days following its airing, the song hit number one on the UK charts.⁶⁸ Not only did a discourse surround the sonic experimental properties of the work, but also fans were equally fascinated by "Bohemian Rhapsody's" visual components, praising it as a legitimate short film. As a result, home viewers were able to see snippets of a pseudo-live performance intermingled with fast video edits and an array of

⁶⁶ Rock, *Classic Queen*, 60.

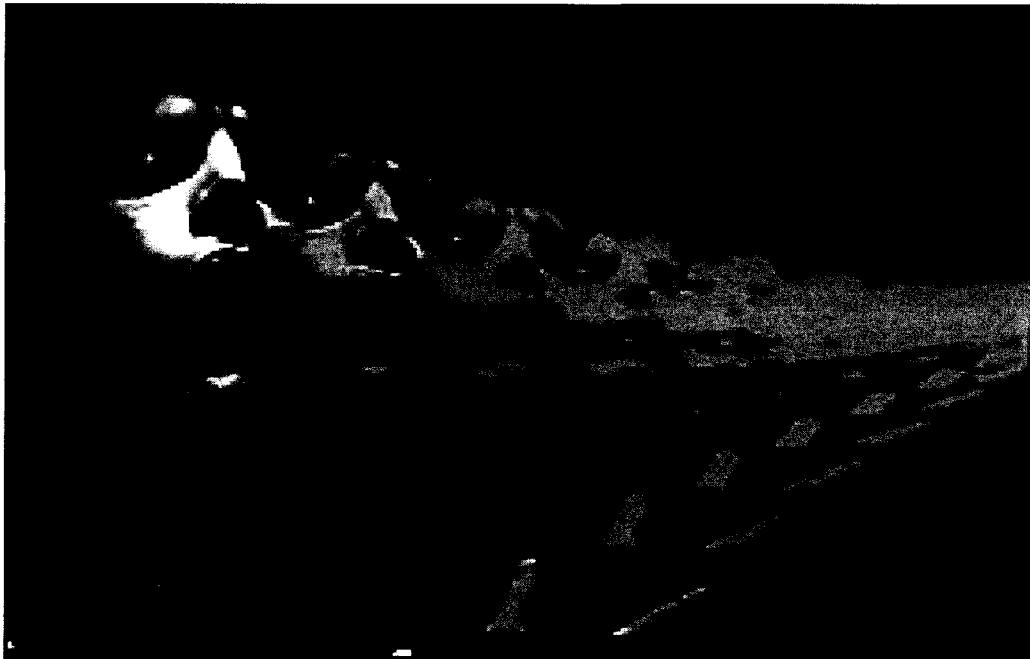
⁶⁷ Mario Ribas, "Liberating Mary, Liberating the Poor," in *Liberation Theology and Sexuality*, ed. by Marcella Althaus-Reid (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 134.

⁶⁸ Jackson, *Mercury: The King of Queen*, 82.

supplemental images. Brian May concludes: "We made a big splash with video early on in England when nobody was really doing it. It was a reaction to having to go on the normal programs and do the normal mime, so we told our story with 'Bohemian Rhapsody'."⁶⁹ Tony Barrow and Julian Newby offer a succinct summation on the binary marketing deployment of the song and video.

The epic single came with an epic video, a video, made for just £5000, which is widely credited not just for keeping the single at the top of the charts for such a long time, but also for persuading the music industry that videos sell records. It was a stunning record, with an equally impressive video.⁷⁰

Example 3-10 – Video feedback in the "Bohemian Rhapsody" promotional video



⁶⁹ Brian May quoted by R. Serge Denisoff with William L. Schurk, *Tarnished Gold: The Record Industry Revisited* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1986), 348-49.

⁷⁰ Tony Barrow and Julian Newby, *Inside the Music Business* (London: Routledge, 1994), 91.

Example 3-11 – "Four-faces" artwork from Queen II (1974)



Example 3-12 – Marlene Dietrich in Shanghai Express (1932)



Example 3-13 – Marlene Dietrich on the cover of the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967)



REINCARNATION AND CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCE

The most notable resurgence of "Bohemian Rhapsody" came in 1992, through its inclusion in the motion picture, *Wayne's World*. Much like Mercury's musical masterpiece, the movie uses a high level of parody and tongue-in-cheek humour. Jeff Smith summarizes "Bohemian Rhapsody" and Queen's revival in the context of the Hollywood blockbuster film and its accompanying soundtrack. He states:

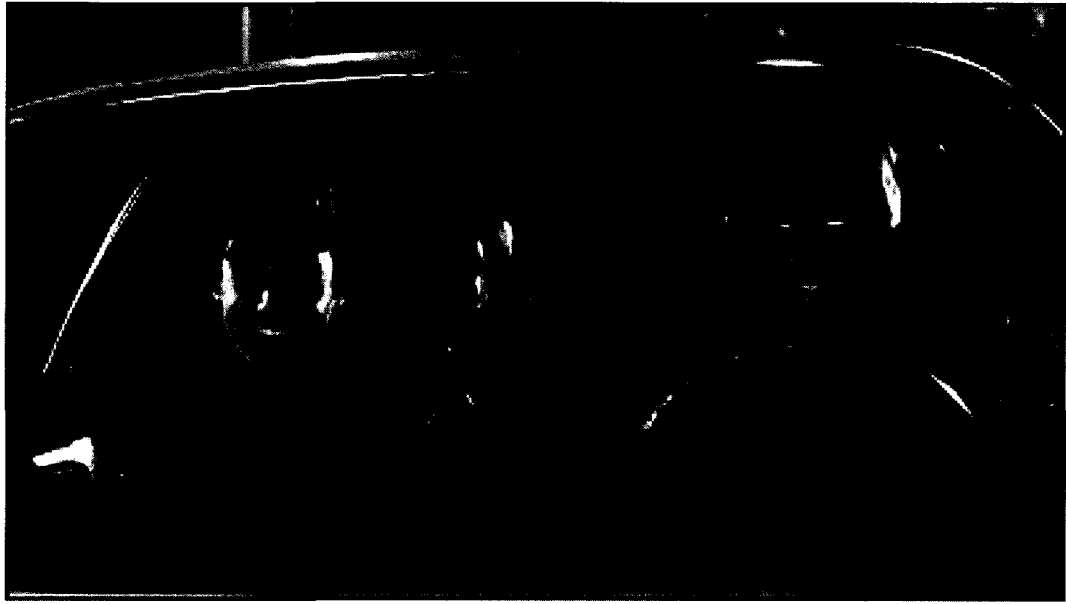
The album was not only a best-seller on *Billboard's* charts but also revived interest in the rock group Queen, spurring sales of the group's greatest hits package and bringing the single "Bohemian Rhapsody" heavy radio play more than fifteen years after its initial release. The latter's success came in large measure from the way it was featured in the film. With the art-rock chestnut booming out their car stereo, Wayne, Garth, and friends bopped their way down suburban streets in a comic piece that is in many ways the equivalent of the song and dance numbers of classical Hollywood musicals.⁷¹

⁷¹ Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 1.

In the scene described by Smith, five young male teenagers consume the song in an old AMC Pacer known as the Mirth Mobile, as they drive wonderingly through the streets of Aurora, Illinois (see Example 3-14). The musical excerpt begins at the operatic section where Wayne and Garth sing along spoofing the already present elements of comedy through the characters that Queen present. The scene features the two protagonists, Wayne Campbell (Mike Myers), an impoverished rock musician who lives at home with his parents, does not have a job, and loves to indulge in concerts and parties, and Garth Algar (Dana Carvey), a similar rock junkie whose nerdy appearance parodies rock ideology through his long bleached-blond scraggly hair and faded rock t-shirts, for veteran rock artists like Van Halen, Aerosmith and Hendrix (see Example 3-15).⁷² The cultural artifacts (posters, instruments and t-shirts), when combined with the mannerisms of the main characters, function to validate comically their status as rock connoisseurs in contemporary culture. The duo's musical advocacy embraces rock's past by worshipping classic rock groups whom they find artistic and authentic versus those they label trendy sell-outs. Thus, the primary theme in *Wayne's World* conveys the need to maintain artistic autonomy and avoid the corrupting forces of corporate agendas, echoing, of course, Mercury and Queen's desire to retain authority over "Bohemian Rhapsody" when confronted by their record label who sought to make edits to secure airplay.

⁷² Among the numerous hockey references in the film, in all probability Mike Myers' character, Wayne Campbell, signifies two hockey trailblazers: Wayne Gretzky (playing for the Edmonton Oilers [1979-1988], the Los Angeles Kings [1988-1996], the St. Louis Blues [1996] and the New York Rangers [1996-1999]) and National Hockey League referee and president (1946-1977), Clarence Campbell.

Example 3-14 – The Mirth Mobile



Example 3-15 – Mike Myers and Dana Carvey in Wayne's World (1992)



In order to comprehend fully the reception of "Bohemian Rhapsody" in the context of the film, it is important to understand the youth culture to whom the movie was targeted, their tastes, customs, modes of behaviour and rhetoric, to probe overarching issues of authenticity in Queen and 1970s rock ideology. The film mainly appealed to 1990s youth culture, a demographic and social category labeled Generation X, a term conceived by Douglas Coupland to represent the cohort born between the early 1960s and the late-1970s.⁷³ Rebecca Huntley almost seems to be speaking of the central characters in *Wayne's World* when she describes Generation Xers as "a generation who saw the world through grey-coloured glasses. We grew up fearing nuclear annihilation, unemployment and AIDS, with little confidence in the future of the world or our own."⁷⁴ By the end of the 1980s and through the mid-1990s, members of this social group gained a reputation for being unmotivated, cynical and alienated as they embraced an unfastened anti-capitalism vision, put forward in *Wayne's World* by the protagonists who, in their ongoing battle with Benjamin Oliver (Rob Lowe), attempt to resist commercialism and the cliché of selling-out. In music, this sentiment correlates to the *raison-d'être* of the grunge aesthetic, originating in Seattle, Washington, whose poster child, Kurt Cobain of Nirvana, campaigned his anti-capitalist and grassroots approach through slogans such as "corporate magazines still suck."⁷⁵ Like Wayne and Garth, some members of Generation X wore flannel shirts and adopted a minimalist visual presentation, opposing the glam and hair metal of the previous generation. Jim DeRogatis states: "That wonderful fuck-you spark has been missing for some time now – it was muted at best during the

⁷³ Rebecca Huntley, *The World According to Y: Inside the New Adult Generation* (St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2006), 6.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ See Nirvana on the cover of *Rolling Stone* 628 (16 April 1992).

alternative era of the early '90s, as Gen X's antiheroes struggled with an irresistible penchant for irony and their own ambivalence toward stardom (cf. Nirvana and Pearl Jam)."⁷⁶

"Bohemian Rhapsody" in the context of *Wayne's World* served many functions. First, the piece held an element of nostalgia for Mike Myers, who was deeply affected by the song upon its initial release. He explains, "There are few things in my life that I'll never forget from my adolescence: hanging out at the airport and watching airplanes land, playing road hockey, when Team Canada beat the Soviet Union in 1972 in a hockey series, and the first time I heard 'Bohemian Rhapsody.'"⁷⁷ For Myers, the headbanging ritual in the car scene found its way into his life long before conceiving *Wayne's World's* script: "I was in my brother's Toyota Corolla that had exhaust problems and 'Bohemian Rhapsody' came on the radio. We were like, 'what the hell is this?' It's cod opera and heavy metal. I remember having a stiff neck for three weeks."⁷⁸ Although Myers in the film plays up the comedic aspects of "Bohemian Rhapsody," he uses the song as a form of homage to Mercury and Queen.⁷⁹ Following the release of *Wayne's World*, Myers received a letter from the band thanking him for using the song. Myers responded by saying: "More like thank you for letting us touch the hem of your garment."⁸⁰ He often described the piece as a Picasso in the rock world. Of the thirteen tracks featured on the

⁷⁶ Jim DeRogatis, *Milk It!: Collected Musings on the Alternative Music Explosion of the 90's* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003), 376.

⁷⁷ *Champions of the World*, directed by Rudi Dolezal and Hannes Rossacher, produced by Jim Beach and Queen (Burbank, CA: Hollywood Video and PMI/Parlophone, 1995), video recording.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Similar to the car scene out of which "Bohemian Rhapsody" emerges in *Wayne's World*, *The Love Guru*, a film written by Mike Myers and Graham Gordy (released on 20 June 2008 by Paramount Pictures) portrays Myers (as Guru Maurice Pitka) in a similar scenario: as a passenger preoccupied with providing a suitable musical selection for the voyage. In this instance, the Guru Maurice Pitka engages in an intense debate with his driver, Darren Roanoke of the Toronto Maple Leafs (played by Romany Malco), over what constitutes good music. As the pair comically, argumentatively and rapidly change the radio's presets, one of Myers' selections includes "Bohemian Rhapsody."

⁸⁰ *Champions of the World*, video recording.

Wayne's World soundtrack, "Bohemian Rhapsody" enjoyed the most popularity for its humour and sonic eclecticism, which was heightened when coupled with the plot of the film and the actors who personified the characters found within the piece (see Example 3-16). Myers could have used other successful hard rock 1970s hits, such as Deep Purple's "Smoke on the Water," Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" or BTO's "Takin' Care of Business," but he chose "Bohemian Rhapsody," first to capitalize upon the already present comedic features contained within the work, and as an autobiographical note reflecting the impact the song had on him as a youth. This fact points to the collapse of Mike Myers as writer versus Wayne Campbell as fictitious character. Kevin J. H.

Dettmar and William Richey explain:

One must assert a distance between Mike Myers as writer and Wayne Campbell as narrator. This is doubly difficult because part of the dynamic in *Wayne's World* is that Myers is himself a late boomer rather than a Generation Xer: his character, Wayne, however, is an Xer, a slacker, all dressed up in black T-shirts and blue jeans but with no place to go.⁸¹

For many Generation Xers, the meaning and context of "Bohemian Rhapsody's" reception differed considerably from its 1975 debut. Through *Wayne's World*, 1990s cultural references conjoined to the piece establishing new trends and customs. Slogans and sayings such as "we're not worthy" and "not!" represented some members of Generation X, who viewed "Bohemian Rhapsody" as a spoof.

⁸¹ Kevin J. H. Dettmar and William Richey, "Musical Cheese: The Appropriation of Seventies Music in Nineties Movies," in *Reading Rock and Roll: Authenticity, Appropriation, Aesthetics*, ed. by Kevin J. H. Dettmar and William Richey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 317.

Example 3-16 – Wayne's World soundtrack

TRACK	SONG TITLE	ARTIST
1	Bohemian Rhapsody	Queen
2	Hot and Bothered	Cinderella
3	Rock Candy	Bulletboys
4	Dream Weaver	Gary Wright
5	Sikamikanico	Red Hot Chili Peppers
6	Time Machine	Black Sabbath
7	Wayne's World Theme	Mike Myers/Dana Carvey
8	Ballroom Blitz	Tia Carrere
9	Foxy Lady	Jimi Hendrix
10	Feed My Frankenstein	Alice Cooper
11	Ride With Yourself	Rhino Bucket
12	Loving Your Lovin'	Eric Clapton
13	Why You Wanna Break My Heart	Tia Carrere

Therefore, a demographic division arises, separating the baby-boomers, who originally consumed the work in 1975, from Generation Xers. Stephen Rachman expands upon this notion as he states:

As with *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984), it is both a joke and a celebration of the distinction between parody and reality becomes generational (older rockers to view it as a parody; newer ones, reality). Nevertheless, whether parodic or mimetic, through the performance of ecstatic listening, what was formerly Queen becomes "classic" Queen; *Wayne's World* not only spawned the contemporary commercial revival of "Bohemian Rhapsody" it imitated through an example of ritual listening the song's canonization.⁸²

The homosocial ritualism that Rachman discusses has recently been a point of interest for contemporary commentators who correlate Mercury's gender politics to "Bohemian Rhapsody's" reception in *Wayne's World*. Theodore Gracyk argues: "The musical payoff that allows a feminist to feel conflicted about liking the Rolling Stones is the same

⁸² Stephen Rachman, "The Wayne's Worlding of America: Performing the Seventies in the Nineties," in *The Seventies: The Age of Glitter in Popular Culture*, ed. by Shelton Waldrep (New York: Routledge, 2000), 43.

process that allows a homophobic teenage boy to feel conflicted about loving Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody,' allowing the latter to identify with queer identity and, perhaps, to become open to it."⁸³ Although this may be the case for a very small percentage of Generation Xers in 1992, I believe that many teenage viewers, including myself, did not perceive "Bohemian Rhapsody's" inclusion in the film as a parable to homosexual identity and pride. Gracyk continues with, what I perceive as, a rather contrived and improbable scenario. He states:

Wayne and Garth might be surprised to find that their cruising ritual centers on an anthem of gay pride. I doubt that the others in the car would be so open to the musical choice if Wayne had prefaced the music with the remark, "Gentlemen, let's go with some anthems of gay pride to get ourselves ready for the club scene." I am not making the point that everyone will somehow magically empathize with gay men and AIDS victims when they bob their heads to "Bohemian Rhapsody." But if they do come to know that the song expresses the worldview of a gay man, then they have already imaginatively entered into a worldview that may be richer and more complicated than they bargained for. Like someone who falls in love with a house and buys it without investigating the condition of the roof and plumbing, Wayne and Garth have unknowingly placed themselves (and us) in the position of having bought into something that may have unexpected consequences.⁸⁴

I find Gracyk's arguments flawed on many levels. First, "Bohemian Rhapsody" only became an "anthem of gay pride" retrospectively, when Mercury was finally outed by his ultimate illness, and so Gracyk's statement is not only ahistorical but also false. Second, how would Wayne and Garth, two fictitious aficionados that epitomize rock stereotypes, be surprised by the fact that a closeted homosexual composed "Bohemian Rhapsody?" This, in 1992, was not exactly confidential or classified information. As Rebecca Huntley suggested above, AIDS was at the forefront of public cognizance for Generation Xers,

⁸³ Theodore Gracyk, *I Wanna Be Me: Rock Music and the Politics of Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 236-37.

⁸⁴ Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Led Zeppelin*, 66.

who through Mercury's death saw the devastation that the disease engendered upon society. To this end, Myers' decision to include the piece points to his ambition to topple indirectly the antiquated ideological views centred on maleness and homophobia by poking fun at rock clichés through the characters themselves. Third, Gracyk fails to consider the polysemic nature of meaning for audiences who embrace songs differently according to their demographic, geographic, racial and social position in society. Simply because a homosexual man composed "Bohemian Rhapsody," this, in effect, does not invoke a unilateral degree of aestheticism for everyone who consumes the work. In other words, the piece does not metaphorically lasso every heterosexual listener and drag her or him into ideological terrain "that may be richer and more complicated than they bargained for." Consequently, Gracyk's bizarre comparison of a faulty home with "Bohemian Rhapsody" vividly echoes rock's ideology to approach the song apprehensively, as through retrospective analysis many regard the piece as the quintessence of AIDS and homophobia, which as Gracyk concludes, "may have unexpected consequences." What those mysterious consequences provoke are yet to be found. Similar to Gracyk's anxious appraisal, Kevin Dettmar and William Richey ponder: "How bad can a song be, finally, if it allows adolescent males to connect in the midst of a homophobic atmosphere that forbids absolutely any such engagement?"⁸⁵ The tendency for commentators to regard "Bohemian Rhapsody" a gay anthem or conduit, linking the social deviance associated with homosexuality (during a time when AIDS preoccupied a central place in the media) with the normalcy appended to heterosexuality, points to their affinity to regard continually and retrospectively the song as a public statement of

⁸⁵ Dettmar and Richey, "Musical Cheese: The Appropriation of Seventies Music in Nineties Movies," 317.

Mercury's sexuality. Rather, although AIDS was one of the harsher realities with which Generation Xers contended, a fact that unquestionably coloured their reception of the song in the aftermath of Mercury's death, the symbolism that Mercury's legacy invoked did not unilaterally reinforce the gay lifestyle that so many observers wrongfully presuppose.

CONCLUSION

Beyond the genre politics that analysts affix to "Bohemian Rhapsody's" contemporary reception, over the past three decades, the song has consistently intrigued music enthusiasts universally. Although the piece's sonic eclecticism spawned a degree of controversy and negative criticism, many music journalists, scholars and fans regard Mercury's magnum opus as a progressive work, one that changed the face of popular music. In 1977, shortly following the song's release, the British Phonographic Industry named "Bohemian Rhapsody" as the best British single from 1952 to 1977. More recently, in 2005, the Guinness Book of World Records named "Bohemian Rhapsody" the top British single of all time. In a special ceremony, the book's editor, Dave Roberts, unveiled the top ten finalists (see Example 3-17). The criteria upon which the awards were based rested solely on a quantitative measurement determined by the duration the artist in question remained on the charts (Example 3-18, demonstrates, in descending order, the total weeks for each musician). With reference to Queen, Roberts said in a statement: "Given that Queen's chart career has been much shorter than those of the Beatles and Elvis, this is an incredible achievement and serves to cement their legendary status."⁸⁶

⁸⁶ CBC Arts, "Guinness Book Names Queen Champion of UK Charts" (5 July 2005), online source: <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/story/2005/07/05/queenchampion.html>

Example 3-17 – The Guinness Book of World Records' top ten singles of all time

RANK	SONG TITLE	ARTIST
1	Bohemian Rhapsody	Queen
2	Imagine	John Lennon
3	Hey Jude	the Beatles
4	Dancing Queen	Abba
5	Like a Prayer	Madonna
6	Angels	Robbie Williams
7	Penny Lane/Strawberry Fields	the Beatles
8	Wannabe	the Spice Girls
9	Yesterday	the Beatles
10	Let It Be	the Beatles

Example 3-18 – Artist ranking in descending order

ARTIST	NUMBER OF WEEKS
Queen	1,322
the Beatles	1,293
Elvis Presley	1,280
U2	1,150
Dire Straits	1,136
Simon and Garfunkel	1,114
Madonna	1,032
David Bowie	1,005
Elton John	989
Michael Jackson	966

Following the gala, May and Taylor were asked how Freddie would react if he were here today. Taylor said, "He would shrug it off I think, and say 'thank you very much,' then he'd sod off for a good lunch." Brian May added, "he'd say 'it was nothing darling; got plenty more of those.'"⁸⁷

⁸⁷ *Queen: Greatest Video Hits 1*, DVD Disc 2, video recording.

The modesty of Mercury and Queen cannot undercut the thunderous impact that "Bohemian Rhapsody" had on their careers as well as the music industry. Its release in 1975 heightened Queen's level of stardom, gaining them praise as musical auteurs internationally (particularly in America, Japan, Britain and Australia). The musical syncretism and thematic parodying used by Mercury appealed to diverse audiences, at various points in time, who were taken aback by the song's overall ambiguous and eclectic character. Men and women of diverse demographic and cultural groupings consumed, and continue to consume the piece for its wit and musicality. The song remains a staple in Queen's repertoire and continues to enchant and entertain people around the globe, particularly through Queen's musical, *We Will Rock You*. At the time of Mercury's death, he considered "Bohemian Rhapsody" to be one of his greatest accomplishments, all the while having no idea of its forthcoming resurgences. At the MTV Awards in September 1992, when Queen won "Best Video from a Film," Brian May stepped up to the microphone and solemnly said: "I would just like to say that Freddie would be very pleased."⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Andrew G. Reid, "Brian and Roger at MTV Music Awards." (September 2004), online source: <http://www.pemcom.demon.co.uk/queen/articles/mtv.htm>

CHAPTER 4

Sounding Disco, Selling Rock and Performing Gender: Hot Space

I think Hot Space was one of the biggest risks we've taken, but people can relate to something that's outside the norm. I'd hate it if every time we came up with an album it was just the norm.¹

- Freddie Mercury

Through the trials and tribulations of their distinguished career, Queen continually aspired to transcend modes of categorical standardization, which, as Freddie Mercury elucidates, entailed composing innovative works that defied conventional generic paradigms. Although the ramifications of such endeavours possess the capability to revolutionize music industries, they can equally incite skepticism and criticism, oftentimes provoking debilitating effects upon an artist's professional standing and reputation. While the previous chapter explores the musical and cultural consequences of "Bohemian Rhapsody" (1975), an unparalleled work that verified Queen's ability to go beyond standard rock conventions, the current chapter investigates a creative venture that largely precipitated the converse effect, for its stylistic plurality engendered a backlash from which the band never fully recovered. Released on 24 May 1982, *Hot Space* signaled a bold stylistic shift by Queen, as they fused elements of funk, disco and rock into a potpourri of sonic and visual contradictions. Greg Prato contextualizes the work as he states:

¹ Freddie Mercury, *Freddie Mercury: A Life, in His Own Words*, ed. by Greg Brooks and Simon Lupton (London: Mercury Songs Ltd., 2006), 25.

By taking the better part of 1981 off to work on the follow-up tour to their big 1980s hit *The Game*, Queen fans were confident that the band's next release would follow in their winning tradition of classic albums. Unfortunately, this would not be the case. Unlike its predecessor, *Hot Space* was an inconsistent effort, marred by unfocused songwriting and material that was simply not as strong as their earlier work.²

I contend that *Hot Space* not only symbolized a crucial musical intersection in Queen's existence as a collective, a time of conflict and disagreement, but like "Bohemian Rhapsody," it pointed towards Mercury's sexual orientation.

As a point of departure, this chapter commences with a comprehensive historical overview, through which I reveal hitherto unknown biographical information on the band members, to contextualize *Hot Space* in the grander scheme of Queen's enterprise and their position in the recording industry. To this end, I shall begin by addressing the importance of technological resources at various recording facilities, namely Mountain and Musicland Studios, for they directly affected the group's propensity to record innovatively. In addition, I argue that the social climate of Montreux, and later Munich, greatly shaped musical vectors, heard through sonic gestures and thematic content, thus reflecting the environments in which the band members found themselves. The arguments that I shall present herein stem from a series of extensive interviews with Queen's closest affiliates, including Peter Freestone (Freddie Mercury's personal assistant), Peter Hince (Queen's longest serving crew member) and Reinhold Mack (producer of *Hot Space* and owner of Musicland Studios). Moving from a macro to a micro level of analysis, I refine the scope of this study, to analyze critically two songs, "Under Pressure" and "Staying Power," each of which characterizes the blatant musical

² Greg Prato, "Queen: Hot Space," in *All Music Guide: The Definitive Guide to Popular Music*, ed. by Vladimir Bogdanov, Chris Woodstra and Stephen Thomas Erlewine (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2001), 904.

partition of the album. Penultimately, I offer a concise examination of disco, its formation and subsequent collapse, in order to comprehend contextually the genre's collision with rock music through *Hot Space*. Lastly, and as touched upon above, I shall discuss Mercury's performative gender acts and their modes of subcultural signification, by considering the implications of the New York homosexual community and, more specifically, the gay macho/clone. Although, in Mercury's absence, one cannot overtly correlate his cognitive intentions with the musical consequences of *Hot Space's* A-side, as they relate to his sexual penchants, I argue that the composer adopted the visual cues of the gay clone (associated with the Greenwich Village scene), which, in tandem with *Hot Space's* disparate stylistic character, would allow some members of the audience to superimpose queer associations upon the work, and thus wonder whether Mercury was himself gay.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

By June 1981, following a series of epic performances in Japan, Argentina and Brazil, Queen convened in the serene lakeside town of Montreux, Switzerland, to begin recording their tenth studio album, *Hot Space*.³ Although the band members found the locale monotonous and secluded, it was home to Mountain Studios, their privately owned recording facility.⁴ In 1978, the band acquired the studio, not for its technological

³ Queen began their 1981 concert season in Tokyo, Japan, at the Nippon Budokan (12 & 16-18 February). Shortly thereafter, they became the first major rock band to deliver enormous outdoor concerts in Latin America, where they performed to 479,000 people over the course of seven shows. In Argentina, their concert schedule commenced in Buenos Aires at the Estádio José Amalfitani de Velez Sarsfield (28 February & 1 March), continuing in Mar del Plata at the Estádio José María Minella (4 March), in Rosario at El Gigante de Arroyito (6 March), and a return to Buenos Aires at the Estádio José Amalfitani de Velez Sarsfield (8 March). Queen's tour itinerary concluded in Sao Paulo, Brazil, at the Estádio do Morumbi (20-21 March). For a comprehensive listing of Queen tours see: <http://www.queenconcerts.com/live>

⁴ Housed in the Montreux Casino, Mountain Studios was located at 8 Rue du Théâtre in Montreux, Switzerland. Following the studio's closure in the summer of 2002, Mountain Studios relocated to 26 Chemin des Jardins in Attalens, Switzerland. David Richards, email to author, 10 November 2008.

sophistication or practical design, but as a tactical means to evade Britain's strict income tax laws. In short, the legislation stipulated that if a Briton remained in the United Kingdom for fewer than sixty-four days per annum, their out-of-country earnings, including those generated from album sales and tour revenues, would not be subject to internal taxation.⁵ Beyond the legal benefits incurred from its geographical location, Mountain Studios served two additional purposes. First, it produced supplementary income for the band, who continuously rented the studio to other professional musicians, including David Bowie, AC/DC, Iggy Pop and Chris Rea; and second, it provided Queen with a place where they could confer and record unreservedly, for they were the studio's sole proprietors.⁶ Regardless of this perquisite, the band, up until the time of Freddie Mercury's AIDS diagnosis in 1987, recorded in Montreux infrequently. Queen producer Reinhold Mack comically recounts a meeting he observed between Mountain Studios' resident engineer David Richards and Freddie Mercury. He states: "Dave was very excited when he heard Queen purchased the studio and was its new owner. Shortly after, he asked Fred what he should do with the place. Fred simply said, 'Darling, push it in the lake.'"⁷ Mercury's aversion towards Queen's investment resulted, on one hand, from the studio's impractical layout, as its control room and isolation booths were located on separate floors, thus rendering visual contact for performers and recordists unachievable; and on the other, the studio was terribly undersized, and so a lounge was awkwardly situated under a narrow flight of stairs, and the control room, which was equally

⁵ Reinhold Mack, email to author, 23 December 2008.

⁶ Notable works recorded at Mountain Studios include David Bowie, *Heroes* (1977), *Lodger* (1979), *Tonight* (1984) and *Never Let Me Down* (1987); AC/DC, *Fly on the Wall* (1985); Iggy Pop, *Blah Blah Blah* (1986); and Chris Rea, *Water Sign* (1983), *Wired to the Moon* (1984), *Shamrock Diaries* (1985) and *On the Beach* (1986). See <http://www.mountainstudios.com> for a complete index.

⁷ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 21 November 2008.

confining, allowed little room for the band and their personnel to manoeuvre comfortably. Therefore, between sessions Mercury sought reprieve and space in the rear parking lot, where he smoked cigarettes in the presence of onlookers.⁸ I shall return to my discussion of Mountain Studios in Chapter 6. During the band's time in Montreux, spanning from July to September 1981, Queen recorded "Under Pressure" with David Bowie, and segments of "Las Palabras de Amor (The Words of Love)," "Calling All Girls" and "Put out the Fire," the predominantly rock-oriented repertory that comprised *Hot Space's* B-side.⁹ By the end of September, the group had grown tired of studio life, and so they embarked upon a brief tour, encompassing Venezuela, Mexico and Canada.¹⁰

In December 1981, following two concerts at the Forum in Montreal, Queen assembled at Musicland Studios, located in the Bogenhausen neighbourhood of East Munich.¹¹ Situated inconspicuously in the depths of the Arabella House (5 Arabella Street), an immense high-rise structure containing 440 hotel rooms and 558 apartment suites, Queen and their crew gained access to the studio via an entrance at the north-west side of the edifice, where a dimly-lit two-tiered stairwell led to the site where they

⁸ Ibid.

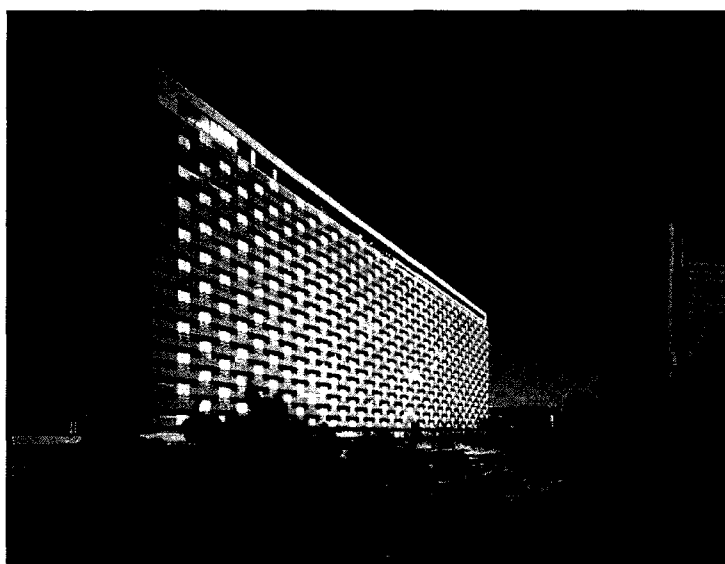
⁹ Mack, email to author, 3 January 2009.

¹⁰ In 1981, Queen performed in Caracas, Venezuela, at the Poliedro De Caracas (25-27 September). In Mexico, the band's concert schedule began in Monterrey at the Estádio Universitario (9 October), ending in Puebla at the Estádio Cuauhtémoc (17-18 October). Queen continued their short tour at the Forum in Montreal, Canada (24-25 November), the venue at which they captured video footage later used in *Queen Rock Montreal*, released by Eagle Rock Vision on 29 October 2007. Importantly, this concert saw the first public performance of "Under Pressure" and witnessed the last time Queen appeared on stage as a quartet, as for their *Hot Space Tour* they became a quintet, first with keyboardist Morgan Fisher of Mott the Hoople and later with Canadian keyboard virtuoso Fred Mandel (Peter Hince, interview by author, telephone conversation, 20 November 2008). On a symbolic level, the date of Queen's Montreal performance, on 24 November 1981, marked the last decade of Mercury's life, as he died of bronchial pneumonia at his London home on the evening of 24 November 1991.

¹¹ Designed by Sandy Brown and founded by disco recording pioneer Giorgio Moroder, Musicland Studios opened in the summer of 1973 (see Example 4-3). Located within the Arabella House, the studio was initially situated next to the boiler room on the second basement level, but due to excessive heat and disruptive sound pollution, Moroder relocated his enterprise to the first basement (closest to ground level) (see Example 4-4). Prominent artists who have used the facility to record include Led Zeppelin, T. Rex, Uriah Heep, Deep Purple, Electric Light Orchestra, Elton John, the Rolling Stones, the Sparks and Donna Summer. Mack, email to author, 25 November 2008.

composed and recorded the remainder of *Hot Space* (see Examples 4-1 & 4-2).¹² Though Musicland's cosmopolitan ambience, pragmatic design and technological sophistication influenced Queen's decision to rent the facility, perhaps the linchpin rested upon the fact that the studio was outfitted with an asset they simply could not resist: the esteemed German record producer, Reinhold Mack.¹³ Queen's professional relationship with the veteran recordist began in mid-May 1979, when, at Giorgio Moroder's urging, Mack traveled from Los Angeles to Germany after receiving a brief memorandum stating, "Please call Musicland Studios in Munich - are you available for a recording session with Queen?"¹⁴

Example 4-1 – The Arabella House

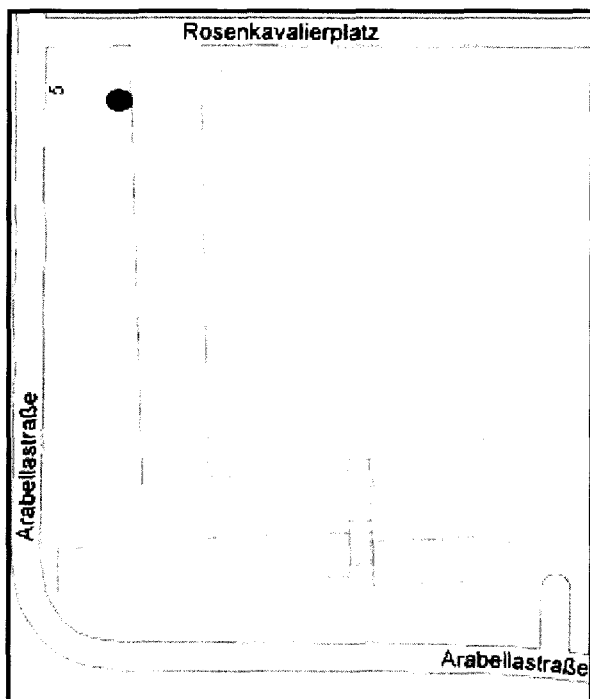


¹² To obtain a visual representation of Musicland Studios, see the music video of "One Vision," from Queen's *A Kind of Magic* (1986). Interestingly, it commences with Queen's legendary four-faces artwork (used on the cover of *Queen II* and in the video of "Bohemian Rhapsody"), which changes from the photograph captured in 1974 by Mick Rock to a depiction of the band in 1985. Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 21 November 2008.

¹³ Reinhold Mack began working at Musicland Studios in 1973 with Giorgio Moroder, and his first project entailed recording Marc Bolan and T. Rex's hit "20th Century Boy" (released in March 1973), a piece inspired by, and dedicated to, the birth of Mack's first son, Julian. In February 1984, Mack became the owner of Musicland Studios where, until the facility's disbandment in 1992, he recorded numerous professional bands. According to Mack, the studio's closure resulted from sound pollution caused by a newly developed rail line and the plummeting value of the Deutsche Mark. Mack, email to author, 4 January 2009.

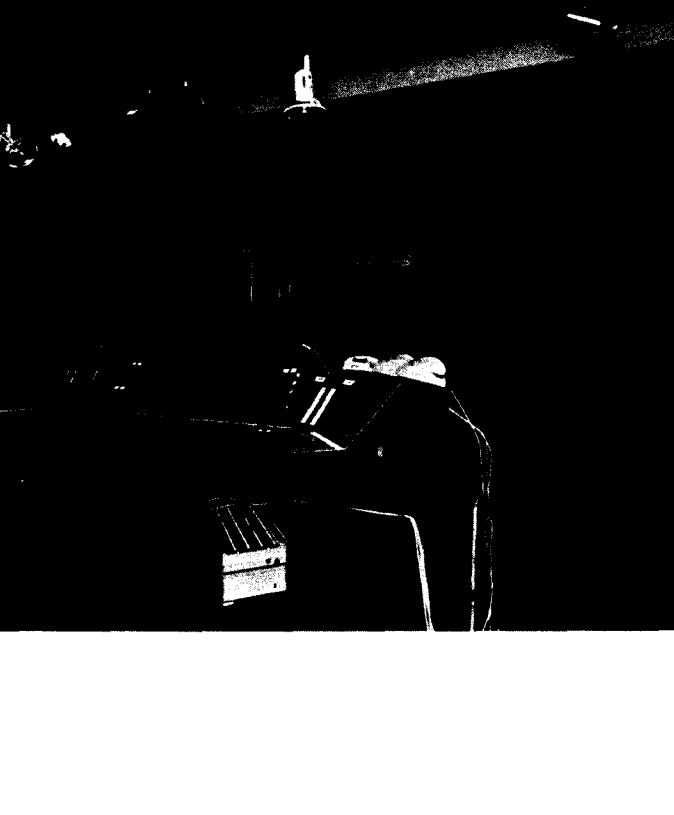
¹⁴ Mack, email to author, 5 January 2009.

Example 4-2 – Aerial model of the Arabella House (red marker indicates Musicland entrance)

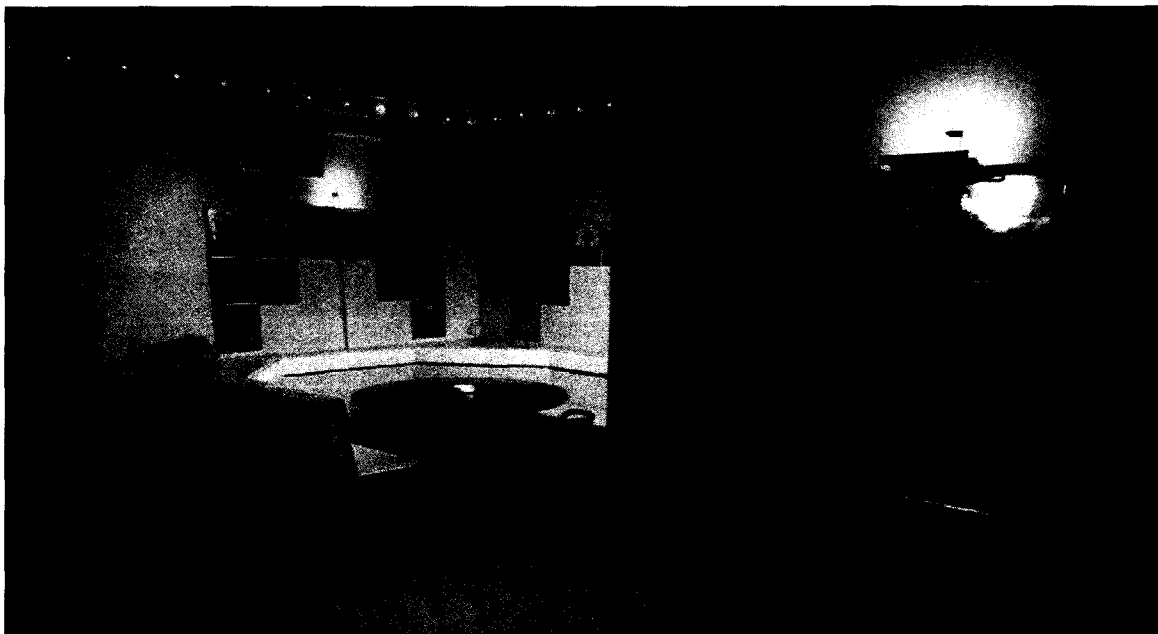


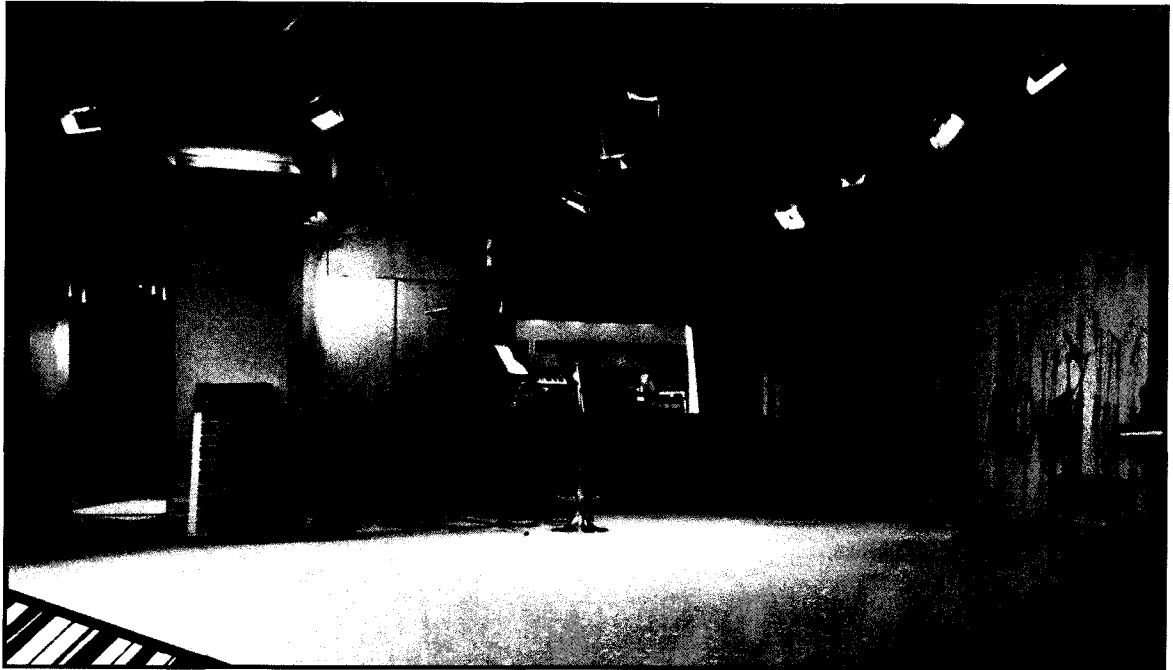
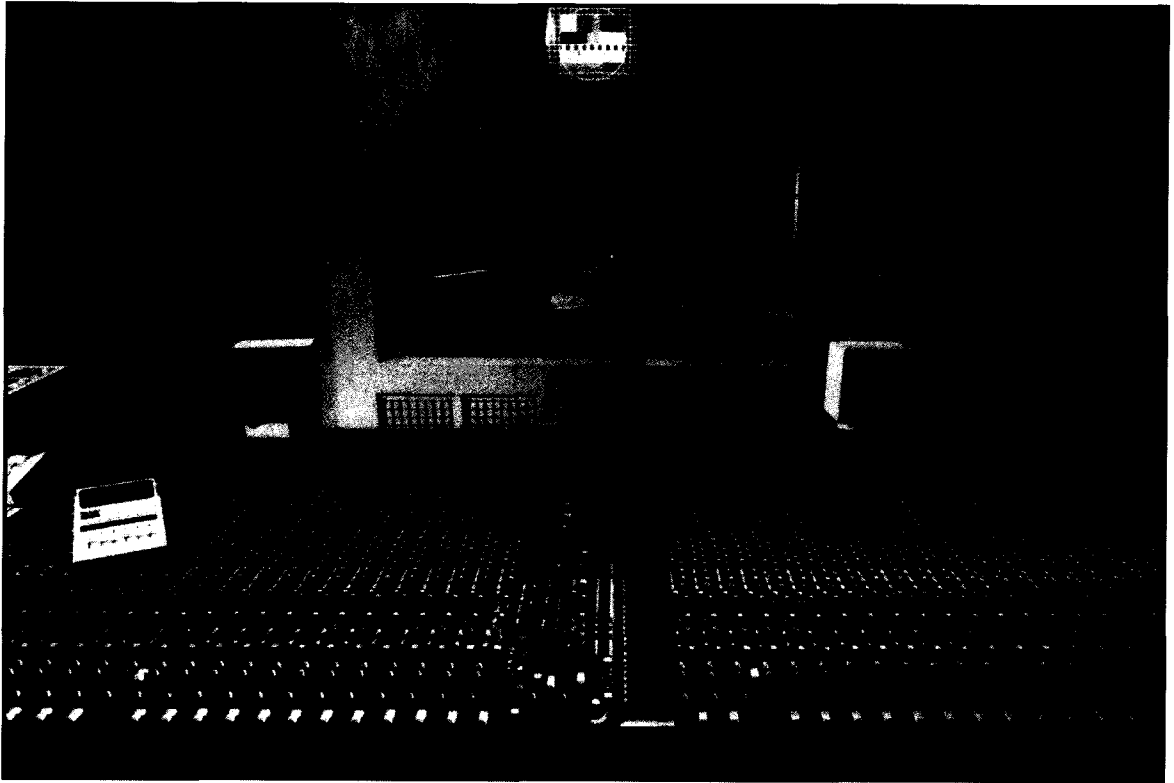
Example 4-3 – Musicland Studios (initial site)



<p>STUDIO I Recording room: 105 sqm Booth I: 11 sqm Booth II: 4 sqm Control room: 35 sqm</p> <p>TECHNICAL DETAILS: Quadraphonic Console by HELIOS-Electronics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 Line and Mic.-inputs 24 Channel outputs 8 Group outputs 2 Cue Systems 8 Compressor/Limiters Audio and Design-Universal Audio Various external Filters 1 16-Track STUDER A 80 4 Stereo Recorders, STUDER/TELEFUNKEN, with varispeed Dolby System on all tracks 2 Echo-chambers, EMT and AKG Echo CADAC monitor speakers, Mics: NEUMANN/AKG/SENNHEISSER/SHURE/SONY/BEYER <p>INSTRUMENTS: Yamaha grand, Sauter upright, Fender piano, Hohner clavinet, guitars, etc. Fully airconditioned recording and control rooms, Dimmers on all lighting</p> <p>STUDIO II Recording room: 22 sqm Control room: 14 sqm</p> <p>4 Track DEMO and rehearsal rooms</p> <p>Special feature: First studio in the world working with the new „Ear to ear“ system, (microphone head that enables full quadrophonic recording on basic stereo system).</p>	
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Example 4-4 – Musicland Studios (primary site)





Upon his arrival in Munich, the producer traveled 5.2 miles from the Munich-Riem Airport to Musicland Studios where his interest was further suspended, as although he found mounds of musical equipment, no physical presence of a musician was apparent. Moments thereafter, from the long corridor emerged a person who would occupy a central role in Mack's life as an employer and dear friend: Freddie Mercury.¹⁵

From the onset of their musical undertakings, Mack and Mercury worked industriously together, complementing each other's strengths and supplementing each other's weaknesses. Peter Freestone explains: "Very much like Mike Moran, Mack could see two or three steps ahead of where Freddie was going, and could anticipate what was going to happen. That worked well because Freddie loved people who could help him like that."¹⁶ Following their introduction in 1979, the artistic chemistry that Mack and Mercury shared quickly became evident, as over the course of a four-hour period, they compiled and recorded the musical segments of the neo-rockabilly hit "Crazy Little Thing Called Love."¹⁷ In an interview around this time, Mercury, when asked to share his thoughts on Reinhold Mack, declared: "Mack is an absolute genius, an ABSOLUTE genius. I personally would not want to work with anyone else, and if I was doing any solo project, or anything outside the format of Queen, I would use him."¹⁸ In the same tone, Queen guitarist Brian May confirms: "He is excellent. Mack was a big shot in the arm for

¹⁵ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 21 November 2008.

¹⁶ Peter Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 18 November 2008.

¹⁷ Queen released "Crazy Little Thing Called Love" as a single on 5 October 1979, and the song later appeared on *The Game*, released on 30 June 1980. *The Game*, recorded and produced by Mack, remains the only Queen album to reach the number one position in both Britain and the United States.

¹⁸ *Queen on Fire: Live at the Bowl*, DVD Disc 2, directed by Gavin Taylor, produced by Andrea Wonfor and filmed by Rudi Dolezal for DoRo Productions (Burbank, CA: Hollywood Records, 2004), video recording. In response to this quotation, thirty years following his first encounter with Queen, Reinhold Mack explained to me that, to this day, he has never worked with anyone who has demonstrated the same degree of talent as Freddie Mercury. Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 21 November 2008.

us in the studio, because we just got to the point in our career when we thought we knew it all; we had our own methods, our own way of miking things. At first, we found it hard to work with him, but we now have a much bigger scope. . . . Without a doubt he has the best drum sound in the world."¹⁹ Although Queen's desire to record *Hot Space* in Germany incontestably reflected Reinhold Mack's aptitude as a producer, not to mention the expansiveness and comfort of Musicland Studios itself, the band members were equally allured to Munich by the city's vivacious nightlife. Unlike the isolation and tedium they experienced in Montreux, the Bavarian capital provided Queen with an assortment of clubs and bars, which they frequented on a nightly basis during *Hot Space's* formation.²⁰

For its elegance and centrality, Queen and their crew lodged at the Hilton Munich Park Hotel (7 Tucher Park), geographically situated 1.5 miles from Musicland Studios and approximately 2 miles from the entertainment district, an ideal locality because the musicians evenly divided their lives between work and extra-curricular activities (see Example 4-5).²¹ Concerning the band's accommodations, Peter Freestone comically explains: "In Munich we were staying at the Hilton where there was the PPP and the HH, the Presidential Poofter Parlour and the Hetero Hangout. Guess who was billeted where?"²² The division to which Freestone alludes mirrored the band members' varied predilections toward certain establishments, based primarily upon sexual orientation.

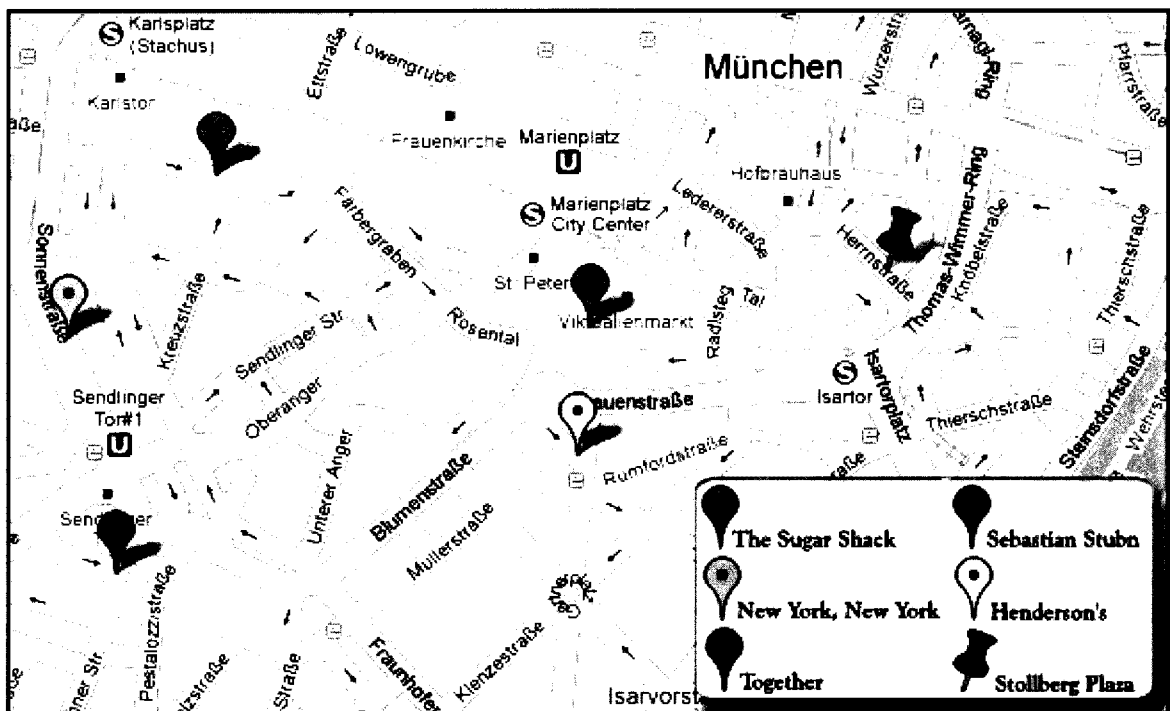
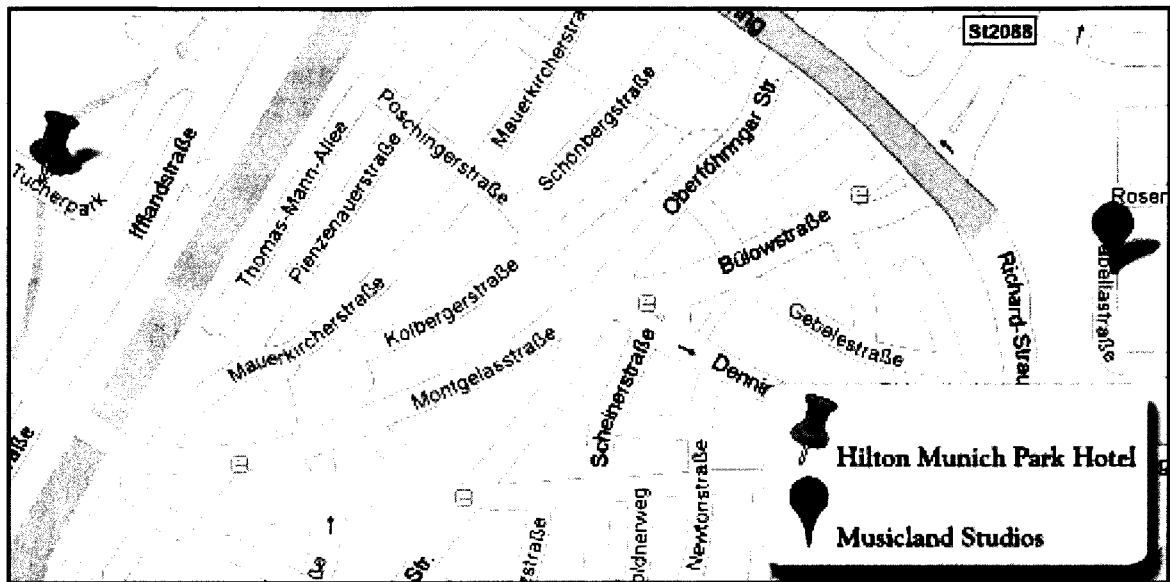
¹⁹ *Queen on Fire: Live at the Bowl*, DVD Disc 2, video recording.

²⁰ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 21 November 2008.

²¹ Following the completion of *Hot Space*, Mercury resided at the Stollberg Plaza (2 Stollberg Street) for approximately one year (see Example 4-5). Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 21 November 2008.

²² Peter Freestone with David Evans, *Freddie Mercury: An Intimate Memoir by the Man Who Knew Him Best* (London: Omnibus Press, 2001), 83.

Example 4-5 – Landmarks in Munich



Guitarist Brian May, drummer Roger Taylor and bassist John Deacon frequented bars such as the Sugar Shack (6 Herzogspital Street), a place whose attendees were principally of the heterosexual persuasion while, on the other hand, Mercury and his entourage enjoyed Munich's vibrant homosexual scene (see Example 4-5).²³ Though Mercury's nightly excursions were not limited to gay bars, as he did enjoy assembling with his musical colleagues at the Sugar Shack, he spent most of his leisurely time at venues that catered to a homosexual clientele, some of which included Together (10 Thalkirchner Street), New York, New York (25 Sonnen Street) and Henderson's (7 Utzschneider) (see Example 4-5).²⁴ In the midst of his nightly adventures, Mercury became romantically involved with Winnie Kirchberger, a restaurateur who owned Sebastian Stubn (7 Viktualien Market) (see Example 4-5).²⁵ In his memoir, Peter Freestone expands upon the uniqueness of Kirchberger and Mercury's union:

How this relationship ever really got off the ground I think must be down to [Freddie's close friend, the German actor] Barbara Valentin, in that Freddie had about as much German vocabulary as Winnie had English. By that you can deduce that the relationship was largely based on sex. They both made as much effort as the other – like, none – to learn each other's languages so the eventuality was much 'pidgin' and waving arms from both parties.²⁶

Although, for a brief time, Mercury enjoyed a fixed relationship, the excess that Munich offered did not commingle with a monogamist arrangement, and so the singer, like some of his bandmates, became consumed by the decadence associated with rock ideology.

²³ In "Dragon Attack" (*The Game*), composer Brian May alludes to the Sugar Shack in Verse 2 (1:23), stating: "Take me to the room where the black's all white and the white's all black take me back to the shack." Interestingly, in Chorus 1 (0:54) May refers to Reinhold Mack, stating: "Gonna use my stack, it's gotta be Mack, gonna get me on the track, got a dragon on my back."

²⁴ The footage used in the video of "Living on My Own" was captured at Henderson's. The song appeared on Side 2, Track 4, of Mercury's first solo effort, *Mr. Bad Guy* (Columbia), produced by Mack and Mercury, and released on 29 April 1985. Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 21 November 2008.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Freestone, *Freddie Mercury*, 213. Around 1989-90, Kirchberger lost his life to AIDS. Mack, email to author, 8 December 2008.

Peter Freestone states: "There was a second life in Munich. It gave them the opportunity to do things they could not do at home, as part of the rock 'n' roll lifestyle, so to speak. Brian and John were married and Roger had a long-term partner." Freestone continues, "Some people found out they did not have the will power they thought they had. The extra-curricular activities were taking up more time than they should have, and because people hadn't experienced that sort of freedom before, they did not deal with it properly."²⁷ The band member who became most entrapped was guitarist Brian May, who himself states: "We moved out to Munich to isolate ourselves from normal life so we could focus on the music, and we all ended up in a place that was rather unhealthy. A difficult period. We were not getting along together and we all had different agendas. It was a difficult time for me, personally – some dark moments."²⁸ The turmoil that May describes reflected not only the impending dissolution of his marriage, but also echoed the escalating disorder within the band, as musical diversity and personal distress would reap havoc upon Queen's stability as a collective.²⁹

QUEEN UNDER PRESSURE: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST, CLASHES OF GENRE

Through *Hot Space's* creation, Queen's primary source of tension emerged from bassist John Deacon and singer Freddie Mercury, who, on one side, sought to explore funk and disco experimentally, while on the other, guitarist Brian May and drummer Roger Taylor dreaded the prospect of pursuing genres that could potentially tarnish the band's reputation within the rock world. For Deacon, the overwhelming success of "Another One Bites the Dust," released on *The Game* (1980), confirmed and validated his

²⁷ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 18 November 2008.

²⁸ Brian May quoted by Georg Purvis, *Queen: The Complete Works* (London: Reynolds and Hearn Ltd, 2007), 56.

²⁹ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 21 November 2008.

advocacy for the group's stylistic shift. Anthony Miccio argues, "Following their massively successful 1980 album *The Game*, Queen's *Hot Space* is often considered a failed attempt to exploit the dance market they reached with 'Another One Bites The Dust.'"³⁰ The soft-spoken bassist premised his composition upon a motif appropriated from "Good Times," a disco piece by the band Chic.³¹ Following its release, "Another One Bites the Dust" not only obtained a significant degree of praise within the rock community, but also gained popularity among disco and funk enthusiasts, as demonstrated by the song's presence in the R&B category of the Billboard charts. To this end, I contend that Deacon's gratification emerged primarily from his composition's soaring commercial success within divergent markets, and secondarily, by way of the musical ramifications the work bestowed upon his prominence within Queen, for disco and funk's rhythmic centrality inexorably placed Deacon at the focal point of the mix, a point to which I shall return below.

Like John Deacon, Freddie Mercury wholeheartedly welcomed disco and funk into Queen's repertory, though I would argue his motivations for doing so differed, in part, from those of his bandmate. Unlike Deacon, Mercury frequented gay clubs in Munich and New York, places at which he gained exposure to the sonorial qualities and historical connotations of the music. To contextualize disco's development, Anthony Thomas states:

³⁰ Anthony Miccio, "On Second Thought: Queen, Hot Space," *Stylus Magazine* (23 November 2004), online source: http://www.stylusmagazine.com/articles/on_second_thought/queen-hot-space.htm

³¹ Composed by Bernard Edwards and Nile Rodgers, "Good Times" appeared on Side A, Track 1, of Chic's third album, *Risqué*, released by Atlantic Records on 30 July 1979.

Although the disco pulse was born in the small gay black clubs of New York, disco music only began to gain commercial attention when it was exposed to the dance floor public of the larger predominantly gay white discos. *Billboard* only introduced the term *disco-hit* in 1973, years after disco was a staple among gay Afro-Americans, but – as music historian Tony Cummings has noted – only one year after black and white gay men began to intermingle on the dance floor.³²

Although Mercury enjoyed disco as a consumer primarily within homosexual clubs, we should remember that despite disco's roots, the genre quickly gained prominence by the heterosexual majority. Beyond the sexual inferences, Mercury, like Deacon, was intrigued by the musical potential of fusing disco and funk with rock music. Similar to the risk Queen faced in 1975 with "Bohemian Rhapsody," the eclecticism and originality of *Hot Space* prompted anticipation, which only served to fuel Mercury's exhilaration. He explains, "We were finding out different areas and outlets, therefore we were sort of channeling our energies in different ways. We were still the same four people, but in many ways, the music was fresh. I was quite excited. Was the album going to get into the black charts? Was it going to get the disco following? We didn't know."³³ In addition to Mercury's viewpoint, Peter Freestone states: "The easiest thing in the world would be to write twenty-three different versions of 'Bohemian Rhapsody,' but that was not what Freddie was about. He concerned himself with creating music, the music that was going on in his head at that particular moment in time."³⁴

In contrast with Mercury and Deacon's musical aspirations, Brian May and Roger Taylor sought to remain firmly rooted in the rock tradition, as they feared a stylistic

³² Anthony Thomas, "The House the Kids Built: The Gay Black Imprint on American Dance Music," in *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Essays on Popular Culture*, ed. by Corey K. Creekmur and Alexander Doty (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 439.

³³ Mercury, *Freddie Mercury*, 24.

³⁴ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 18 November 2008. Around *Hot Space's* conception, artists whose music figuratively played in Mercury's mind included Donna Summer, Grace Jones, Candi Stanton, Prince and Aretha Franklin. Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 21 November 2008.

departure could antagonize their fans. The duo's retention of the rock idiom on *Hot Space* and their objection to the funk/disco styles supported by their bandmates arguably reflected the longevity and depth of their relationship (professional and personal), which they established before Mercury and Deacon's admission into Queen through Smile, a partnership that, as I shall discuss in Chapter 7, remains at the bedrock of Queen's 2004 reincarnation. According to Queen crew member Peter Hince, "Of all the people in the band who disliked *Hot Space*, Roger disliked it most."³⁵ Beyond some of the sexual innuendos invoked by Queen's embracing disco, I would argue that Taylor's distaste for *Hot Space* reflected the genre's musical configuration, as it relied heavily upon extended and uncomplicated drums loops, which radically opposed the uninhibited percussive freedom he exuded in Queen's rock repertoire, exemplified in songs such as "Now I'm Here" from *Sheer Heart Attack* (1974) and "I'm in Love with My Car" from *A Night at the Opera* (1975). Similarly, Brian May experienced the performative restrictions that Taylor found distressing, for the general instrumentation of disco employed extended guitar soloing sparingly. May states:

I haven't found it that easy to accustom myself to the new stuff. A lot of the music which Freddie and John want to do is more R&B-oriented, and it's hard for me to do that because my playing is a reaction to that style, in a sense. I used to listen to people plucking away on Motown records, and I really didn't like it. I always thought to myself, "That's the kind of thing I don't want to play. I want the guitar to be up there speaking."³⁶

In the above quotation, May alludes to the musical effects disco imposed upon his liberty as a rock guitarist. As such, the musical changes that *Hot Space* provoked placed May outside his acclimatized domain of rock music, rendering him unmotivated and uninspired to contribute artistically. He explains:

³⁵ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 18 November 2008.

³⁶ Brian May quoted by Purvis, *Queen*, 56.

I enjoy the live stuff a lot more. There are moments in the studio that I enjoy, but most of the studio is sheer misery. The writing and arranging of material is such a painstaking process these days for us. I can get in and play a solo anytime, but that's not the majority of the work that's done. The majority of it is real soul-searching and wondering whether a song is right. It's painful.³⁷

The impassioned animosity that arose among the members of Queen, rooted mainly in their musical differences, greatly influenced their ability to function collectively in the studio. May continues:

In one track called "Backchat" [*sic*], there wasn't going to be a guitar solo, because John Deacon, who wrote the song, has gone perhaps more violently black than the rest of us. We had lots of arguments about it, and what he was heading for in his tracks was a totally non-compromise situation, doing black stuff as R&B artists would do it with no concessions to our methods at all, and I was trying to edge him back towards the central path and get a bit of heaviness into it, and a bit of the anger of rock music.³⁸

Peter Freestone concludes: "In *Hot Space's* formation, there came a point when one band member would not go into the studio if another member was there."³⁹ As a result, the rate at which the group progressed diminished considerably. In one instance, following an exhaustive recording session, Reinhold Mack proclaimed to Freddie Mercury: "It would probably be easier to conceive and give birth to a child than to finish *Hot Space*."

Ironically, on 16 February 1982, Reinhold Mack's wife, Ingrid, gave birth to a baby boy, whom she and her husband fittingly named John-Frederick, as a token to the child's godparents: John Deacon and Freddie Mercury.⁴⁰

STAYING POWER: CAPTURING HOT SPACE

Though Queen's metaphoric "staying power" was deeply tested during *Hot Space's* formation, professional understanding and artistic compromise enabled the band

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Stuart Grundy and John Tobler, "Queen: Brian May," in *The Guitar Greats* (London: BBC Books/Random House, 1983), online source: <http://www.rocksbackpages.com>

³⁹ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 18 November 2008.

⁴⁰ Mack, emails to author, 4 & 10 January 2009.

to work determinedly through contention, delivering in May 1982 their long-awaited album. Prior to addressing the work's reception, I shall build upon the aforementioned historical details by discussing Queen's studio methodology. In doing so, I critically explore *Hot Space's* sonic division, delineating Deacon and Mercury's aspiration to incorporate disco and funk, contrasting the musical intentions of their bandmates, May and Taylor, who sought to pursue rock exclusively. To elucidate the album's overt stylistic plurality further, I refine the scope of this chapter to analyze and juxtapose two songs, "Under Pressure" and "Staying Power," the former illustrative of Queen's standard rock repertory on Side B, and the latter exemplary of the band's move towards dance music on Side A (for a complete track listing of *Hot Space*, see Example 4-6).

As a point of departure, in order to grasp Queen's approach to composing and recording, one must consider the tremendous wealth they had accrued by 1981, which unquestionably affected their creative autonomy. In short, the freedom Queen evinced at Mountain and Musicland Studios during *Hot Space's* development reflected their seemingly endless flow of monetary capital, as their productivity, although at times debilitated by artistic difference, was never bound financially. Unlike many musicians who, due to economic and time constraints, typically employed studios to record their preconceived and polished material expeditiously, Queen, on the other hand, presented themselves with no inclination as to the artistic direction they would take in their forthcoming venture, using the studio as a domain to cognize their ideas.⁴¹

⁴¹ We should remember that although many bands could not afford to use the studio in the way I outline, Queen were not the first to spend copious amounts of time in a recording facility to compose, perform and mix their works. Artists like the Beatles (*Sgt. Pepper*) Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys (*Pet Sounds*) and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young (*Déjà Vu*) used the studio as a compositional instrument.

Example 4-6 – Hot Space – track listing

TRACK	SONG	COMPOSER(S)	LENGTH
1	Staying Power	Mercury	4:10
2	Dancer	May	3:46
3	Back Chat	Deacon	4:31
4	Body Language	Mercury	4:29
5	Action This Day	Taylor	3:33
6	Put Out the Fire	May	3:15
7	Life Is Real (Song for Lennon)	Taylor	3:39
8	Calling All Girls	Taylor	3:53
9	Las Palabras de Amor (The Words of Love)	May	4:26
10	Cool Cat	Deacon/Mercury	3:26
11	Under Pressure	Queen/Bowie	4:02

Once the formal recording process began, due to divergent personal schedules and unconstrained access to the studio, band members rarely attended sessions collectively.

Peter Freestone explains:

I was initially surprised that even at this point in their career [during the late-1970s] seldom would all four members of the band be in the studio at the same time. When they were, it was often for a band meeting. We would joke that Queen must be the only band in the world who would pay a thousand pounds to have a band meeting; the most expensive in the world, maybe? ⁴²

In the creation of *Hot Space*, Queen rented Musicland Studios under the terms of lockout, a leasing arrangement used principally by professional bands. As the term suggests, lockout involves one artist occupying a facility for a contractually set period, consequently "locking-out" and rendering the studio unavailable to any other band. At a

⁴² Freestone, *Freddie Mercury*, 77.

rate of \$1400 per day, Queen leased Musicland Studios for a six-month period, approximately totaling \$252,000 (USD).⁴³

Due to the expansiveness of the group's enterprise, the first week of their time involved the staff's allocating equipment. Producer Reinhold Mack, who recorded the band in Munich and Montreux for the *Hot Space* sessions, explains: "Queen's crew would arrive on the morning of the first day in many semi-trucks, containing eight to ten drums kits, twenty AC30s [guitar amplifiers] and eighty or so guitars and basses."⁴⁴ Once the band arrived and commenced working, each member was assigned two crew members, one for their technical/musical needs, and the other to tend to their personal care.⁴⁵ Typically, in Munich, because of Queen's nightly excursions, which often concluded in the early hours of the morning, the band began recording later in the day. Freestone states:

For Queen, a general studio day started at two o'clock in the afternoon. That was when the producer would be sitting in the chair waiting to see who would show up. Even if Freddie stayed up until 5:00 a.m., he would go in and work on a track. If after a couple hours he felt as though he was not getting anywhere, he would put it away and go home but, on the other side of the coin, he could go in and work for fourteen to fifteen hours.⁴⁶

In contrast with Queen's recording schedule in Munich, and during the first phase of *Hot Space's* conceptualization in Montreux, the band assembled more frequently, first due to the seclusion of the town itself, having little to offer in terms of nightlife, and second, because musical differences had not culminated to a point of conflict. Similar to the

⁴³ Mack, email to author, 23 December 2008.

⁴⁴ Although guitarist Brian May oftentimes favoured his customized guitar, the Red Special, he traveled with numerous instruments to experiment with different sonic possibilities. Similarly, Deacon, Mercury and Taylor, all of whom were proficient guitarists, would, at times, use some of the many instruments to compose their works. Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 21 November 2008.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 18 November 2008.

process that Freestone expounds above, in Montreux many of Queen's songs manifested from lengthy sessions, one of which generated "Under Pressure."

Considered by many to be *Hot Space's* most outstanding work, "Under Pressure" emerged quite unexpectedly when, late one evening in July 1981, David Bowie, who at the time resided nearby, made an unannounced visit to Mountain Studios.⁴⁷ Upon his arrival, he, along with the band, consumed copious amounts of mood-enhancing substances, which, in part, provoked an impromptu jam session.⁴⁸ Bassist John Deacon's short, introductory two-note motif, performed at the twelfth fret on a Fender Precision, prompted each musician to enter successively and provide a complementary musical response to the ostinato (see Example 4-7).⁴⁹ The lucidity of the gesture results from the register at which Deacon performs, as this region of a Fender Precision is known for its sonorial warmth, thus providing a degree of directness to the overall timbral result that unquestionably contributes to the memorability of the riff itself.

Example 4-7 – Bass Riff of "Under Pressure"



Mercury, on the piano, performed descending parallel fifths, mirroring the intervallic hollowness of the perfect fourth heard in the bass motif, and thus offering a response to the stable rhythm (set at 114 beats per minute at the quarter note) established by Deacon (see Example 4-8).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 21 November 2008.

⁴⁹ On 28 August 1990, American hip hop artist, Robert Matthew Van Winkle, better known as Vanilla Ice, released *To the Extreme* (SBK Records), featuring "Ice Ice Baby," a piece that blatantly appropriated John Deacon's signature bass motif.

Example 4-8 – Piano Ostinato of "Under Pressure"



To embellish the stark instrumentation of the introduction, Reinhold Mack superimposed incidental sounds, obtained by recording David Bowie, John Deacon and Freddie Mercury collectively snapping their fingers. In addition to this percussive gesture, drummer Roger Taylor thickened the texture by simultaneously striking and opening the hi-hats, anticipating the downbeat in alternating measures. Mack recalls Bowie painstakingly requesting that Taylor "make the hi-hat speak," which the latter arguably accomplished, as the effect provides a type of vocalized interjection to the seamless flow of the introductory passage. Brian May contributes musically by performing inverted arpeggiated triads that move in a descending stepwise motion, beginning on the tonic and moving through dominant and subdominant chords in D major. The timbral quality of May's guitar resembles the sound properties of a sitar, which, as Reinhold Mack states, the guitarist achieved by using the "fireplace," a nickname for May's handcrafted guitar, the Red Special. With the addition of chorus and reverb, and by strategically setting the instrument's pickups out of phase, May inventively generated the idiosyncratic sonic consequence.⁵⁰

Following hours of experimentation and deliberation, the instrumentalists completed their respective parts, enabling the vocalists to devise and record a melody. Puzzled by the method they would use to distribute vocal assignments, Mercury proposed that he and Bowie separately perform three consecutive takes, each of which Reinhold Mack would record to tape. For Mercury, the exercise was to furnish each musician with

⁵⁰ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 27 December 2008.

an undisturbed space, one in which they could formulate preliminary ideas. To ensure the singers were not persuaded by one another, Mercury proposed that their parts be sung in isolation, after which point the duo could assess the recorded material collectively.

Mercury, who started the process, delivered three consecutive takes in an improvisatory fashion using falsetto and vocables. Upon completion, Bowie entered the isolation booth where he avidly sang renditions of the melody he envisaged. Because Mercury had already submitted his musical input, he attentively listened to Bowie from the control room. Shortly following the session's commencement, Mercury became astounded by the similarities between Bowie's ideas and those he had sung moments prior. Over a cigarette in the parking lot, Mercury expressed to Mack that he was flabbergasted by Bowie's musicality and brilliance. At that point, Mack confessed that Bowie had broken the duo's pact, for he had eavesdropped on Mercury's entire performance. Intending to deliver a fiery retort, Mercury stormed up to the studio where a comical scene transpired, as Bowie, who judging from Mercury's impassioned entrance, knew his surreptitious ploy was uncovered. As a result, Mercury and Bowie broke into exuberant laughter.⁵¹

By evening's end, although Queen and Bowie had completed the majority of "Under Pressure," some work on vocals and mixing remained, and so in the latter part of the same week Reinhold Mack and Freddie Mercury flew to New York, to convene with David Bowie in Studio B at the Power Station (located at 441 West 53rd Street in West Midtown, Manhattan) (see Example 4-10 on page 119).⁵² The lighthearted and spirited nature of the group's evening in Montreux had, to a degree, dissipated, as Mack describes

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² In May 1996, the Power Station was renamed Avatar Studios. The facility has been the site where many prominent musicians have recorded, some of whom include Aerosmith, Marc Anthony, the B-52's, Tony Bennett, Bon Jovi, Chic, the Counting Crows, Duran Duran, John Lennon, George Michael and Neil Young.

his professional relationship with Bowie in New York as "water on fire."⁵³ Through the trials and tribulations of their efforts, with Mercury occupying the role of musical director and arbiter, the trio produced a musical creation that, in the end, appeased all parties involved. Shortly thereafter, EMI and Elektra Records released "Under Pressure" as a single on 21 October 1981, marking Queen's first collaboration with another musician.⁵⁴ Prior to doing so, the artists entered into a contractual agreement, stipulating that profits generated from the song would be divided in half: fifty percent to Bowie and fifty percent to Queen. Consequently, on an individual basis, Bowie benefited most from the arrangement, as Queen's half of the revenue was further portioned into quarters.⁵⁵

I would argue that "Under Pressure's" ensuing success stemmed not only from the memorability of the song, resulting principally from the bass ostinato and the unique timbral effect produced by Bowie and Mercury's voices, but also from the nature of the collaboration itself. By 1981, because Bowie and the members of Queen occupied a central position in the recording industry, a degree of intrigue encircled the work, as many fans were captivated by the way the featured artists' talents commingled. Therefore, "Under Pressure" is the outcome of a super group, whose combined ingenuity produced a work of considerable proportion. Secondly, the song's commercial success can be partly attributed to its instrumentation, length and mix, integral components that in no way obscured systems of commerce, nor did they fragment genre codes for rock audiences. That is to say, in contrast with the disco-oriented pieces that comprised Side A

⁵³ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 21 November 2008. According to Mack, the majority of the conflict stemmed from David Bowie's exorbitant use of cocaine.

⁵⁴ Appearing on the UK Charts for a total of eleven weeks, "Under Pressure" occupied the number one position for two consecutive weeks. See <http://www.ultimatequeen.co.uk/Statistics/queenwbw.htm>

⁵⁵ David Bowie's releases that feature "Under Pressure" include *Bowie: The Singles 1969-1993* (1993), *The Singles Collection* (1993), *Best of Bowie* (2002), *The Platinum Collection* (2005), *The Best of David Bowie 1980-1987* (2007).

of *Hot Space*, through "Under Pressure," Queen and Bowie maintained the stylistic elements that defined its generic placement within rock conventions.

The song's instrumental accompaniment vividly demonstrates Queen's return to their rock roots. Markedly, Brian May presents a guitar part that occupies a rhythmic rather than a lead function within the piece. Unlike his elaborate guitar orchestrations, which by 1982 emblemized Queen's soundscape, May through "Under Pressure" provides a rudimentary performance, one that he could deliver with ease in concert, for it was not the result of excessive studio manipulation. In the piece, and particularly in the verses and choruses, through riffs that use distortion, May's musical contributions double the bass, a hallmark custom of standard rock music. Similarly, in the place of the lavish artificial choirs that characterized the group's generic eclecticism, Mercury and Bowie put forth a minimalist vocal presentation whereby one singer covers each part, and so "Under Pressure," like many traditional rock songs, did not engender performative difficulties resulting from high levels of mediation. Therefore, in the place of expansive studio manipulation, Queen and Bowie delivered a work that showcased their competence as rock performers in a manner that more closely resembled their live productions and not their customary deployment of the studio, a milieu where they oftentimes experimented *ad infinitum*. With this result, from "Under Pressure's" commencement until its conclusion, the piece's momentum gravitates around memorable motifs and melodies, set over an active rhythmic foundation by Roger Taylor, whose performance reinforces standard rock drumming aesthetics, as he provides an unwavering 4/4 rhythm centred upon a strong backbeat produced by the snare.

In "Under Pressure," the group's overt demonstration of artistic fervor functions to depict thematically the tenuousness of the libretto. In the place of escapist and fantastical lyrics that often contributed to Queen's stylistic plurality, as discussed in the previous chapter, "Under Pressure," like many rock songs, encapsulates real-life topics that apply universally to many listeners. In the piece, Bowie grippingly makes his entrance by singing: "Pressure pushing down on me, pressing down on you, no man ask for" (0:30-0:36). The duet continues with Mercury echoing this sentiment, stating: "Under pressure, that burns a building down, splits a family in two" (0:39-0:43), concluding with both performers singing in unison: "puts people on streets" (0:43-0:46). Through precise mixing, Mack fades seamlessly between the vocalists, thus contributing to the overall musical and conversational result achieved between Mercury and Bowie's commentary. In addition, through a form of call and response, the vocalists' registers (Bowie [baritone] and Mercury [tenor]) accentuate the musical effect produced by the interchanging narrative. Perhaps the area in which this notion is best exemplified occurs in Verse 2, where Mercury sings in falsetto: "Chippin' around, kick my brains around the floor. These are the days it never rains but it pours" (1:21), supported by Bowie who sings backing vocables, which escalate as the verse progresses, culminating at the chorus where he sings: "It's the terror of knowing what this world is about. Watching some good friends screaming 'let me out'" (1:46-1:54). As the momentum of the instrumentation augments, mirroring Bowie's vocal intensity, Mercury emphasizes the potency of the last statement, singing in octaves with the former: "let me out" (1:54). Bowie and Mercury's respective vocal timbres heighten the impact of the text, which work closely in tandem with the sonorial elements of the instrumental accompaniment, as they function to

juxtapose sonically the varying sentiments conveyed thematically within the work. To this point, Bowie, through his raspy and richly-deep voice produces a timbral result that echoes the dilemmas of the narrator, who describes people under pressure, while in opposition, the musical consequences of Mercury's timbre, which is crisp and flowing, adds an insightful and pensive quality to Bowie's forthright vocal presentation.

Unlike the stylistic homogeneity that Queen evinced through "Under Pressure," exemplary of the band's output in Montreux, in the second phase of *Hot Space's* formation, led by Deacon and Mercury, the group fused aspects of divergent musical idioms, in tandem with technology, to compose an eclectic repertory. Of the numerous songs that exemplify this synthesis on *Hot Space's* A-side, I shall limit the scope of my exploration to consider critically one piece, "Staying Power." Featured prominently as *Hot Space's* opening track, "Staying Power" situates the album upon unstable generic terrain, as Queen normally began their albums with an upbeat rock-oriented piece. Hence, upon hearing *Hot Space's* opening track, Queen fans would have been somewhat disoriented by the band's sudden adoption of synthesizers in the place of standard rock instrumentation. We should recall that up until *The Game* (1980), Queen, through their liner notes, authenticated their musical abilities by pronouncing their intolerance towards synthesizers, a claim appealing to the authority of playing only "real" instruments. Although synthesizers were certainly instruments in many senses, I contend that they did not carry the same ideological weight of an electric bass or guitar, for example. Through a form of physical virtuosity, which drastically opposed the perceived stimulatory essence of analogue keyboards, Queen prided themselves upon their reputation as a live touring act, legitimating their competence as musicians through their ability to execute

their musical *oeuvres* artistically, without the aid of synthesizers. Therefore, in many ways, Queen's adoption of disco reinforced the unimaginable in terms of their own particular aesthetic, for they had succumbed to technologies that they themselves had regarded as inauthentic. Although this view occupies a central place in *Hot Space's* disparagement, the band used the technology not to nullify their advocacy of synthesizer technology, but instead to participate actively in a genre that, by the early 1980s, necessitated their usage.

Arguably, some Queen fans were profoundly troubled by the blatant musical shift that Queen put forth through "Staying Power," for, as I have discussed above, the sonic consequences of substituting synthesizers, samplers and drum loops in the place of *live* players seemed to negate the beliefs espoused not only by certain members of the rock community, but by the band members themselves. Peter Freestone states, "At the time, people were just not comfortable with *Hot Space*. I don't think the paying audience was happy to hear them going in a different direction from their rock roots."⁵⁶ Peter Hince continues, "I know Freddie was very proud of a lot of the stuff, although I think he felt the timing wasn't right. Disco was viewed as an easy way out because it was perceived to lack craft and musicianship. For *The Works* [1984], the band went back to a more traditional Queen sound."⁵⁷ The ramifications of Queen's return to rock arguably prompted their resurgence at Live Aid, as they reclaimed their position as a leading rock band, and not as a disco/rock hybrid.

Through the course of Mercury's experimentations with disco and rock, his proficiency for new technologies was limited, and so he relied heavily upon the genius of

⁵⁶ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 18 November 2008.

⁵⁷ Hince, interview by author, telephone conversation, 20 November 2008.

Reinhold Mack to auralize his objectives. Mack states: "The band and Freddie did not have much experience with the new keyboards. Freddie was not all that interested in the technicalities, he just wanted something he liked. Between my assistant and me, manipulating the technology was not a problem."⁵⁸ Of the many devices used in *Hot Space's* formation (see Appendix 4-1 for a complete listing), the Roland Jupiter 8 occupied a central role, as heard prominently in "Staying Power." Mercury, who composed the song, performed the memorable introductory motif on the Jupiter 8, first to capitalize upon the timbral inimitability of the sound, constructed by Reinhold Mack who altered the parameters of the preset; second, to expand the band's sonic canvass by incorporating timbres associated with other genres, namely funk and disco; and finally, to exploit the performative advantages of a keyboard instrument, as the line itself would be quite difficult to perform on an electric bass guitar at 116 beats per minutes, set at the quarter note (see Example 4-9). The musical effect produced firmly establishes the song within disco, as its overall sonic attributes bear no resemblance to Queen's archetypal sound. Arguably, many listeners might have great difficulty initially associating the introductory motif with the band, that is, at least, until Mercury makes his vocal entrance. The opening segment sonically captures the essence of disco, for it embodies the genre's mandate to use technological wizardry in the place of traditional instruments to produce a bass dominated dance song. This methodology results from Reinhold Mack's colleague, Giorgio Moroder, who inventively produced synthesized arrangements in Donna Summer's seminal work, "I Feel Love."⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 27 December 2008.

⁵⁹ Appearing on Side 2, Track 4, of the concept album, *I Remember Yesterday* (released on 13 May 1977 by Casablanca), "I Feel Love" was the first disco song recorded with entirely synthesized instrumental accompaniment. Resulting from Giorgio Moroder's studio mastery, the song, which featured a

Example 4-9 – Introductory Bass Riff of "Staying Power"



In contrast with the acrimonious sentiments articulated by Roger Taylor and Brian May, who arguably felt Mercury was substituting technological devices in their place, John Deacon, however, enthusiastically welcomed Mercury's experimentation. As a result, Deacon, for the first time, played the electric guitar in the place of the electric bass, which perhaps only fueled Brian May's level of discontentment, for he was evermore losing his importance and position as a virtuosic player in Queen. In "Staying Power," Deacon performs blues-style interjections on a Fender Stratocaster, amplified through a Fender Twin (audible at 0:06 and 0:14) while Brian May doubles segments of the keyboard motif in octaves on his Red Special (audible at 0:09). In addition, May uses treble booster and Boss chorus through a Vox AC30 amplifier, from which Mack obtained a straight signal from the device's left channel, supplemented by five-millisecond delay and a modulation obtained from the right channel.⁶⁰ The musical effects of varying guitar tracks, performed by Deacon and May respectively, add a conversational element to the densely concentrated texture. Unlike typical rock songs, particularly those representative of Queen's repertory, the guitar entrances are sparse, their durations are short and their timbral sonorities are characteristic of funk, contrasting immensely May's autographic and frequent use of distortion.⁶¹ I argue that the primary

persistent synthesized bass line, incited many artists, including Mercury through "Staying Power," to adopt its sonorial qualities in styles associated with dance music.

⁶⁰ Mack, email to author, 16 January 2009.

⁶¹ Conceived by African-Americans such as James Brown, funk prominently featured complex syncopated rhythms played on the guitar. Unlike May's melodic performance style in other areas of Queen's repertoire, such as "Bohemian Rhapsody," funk guitarists typically played repetitively in a chordal fashion,

reason May's guitar work enters intermittently stems from the way in which the guitarist recorded the tracks. Similar to May's account above, Reinhold Mack explains that May "was simply at a musical loss. Brian would obliterate the tracks with excessive guitars parts that just did not work."⁶² The guitarist's inability to perform in a manner demanded by the style of the song, arguably resulted from his penchant towards rock traditions, as emblemized by guitarists such as Jimi Hendrix and Jimmy Page whose playing was central to May's formation as a musician. Consequently, in the mixdown sessions, Mack incorporated the material cautiously, to avoid over saturation, and therefore used various musical segments as interjections to the predominantly synthesizer-based motifs.

Although John Milward in *Rolling Stone* erroneously attributes the influence of dance music to drummer Roger Taylor, he, like many Queen fans, expresses grief towards the omission of May's signature guitar arrangements. He states: "Queen has always been ruled by sound instead of soul, and Brian May's orchestral guitar creations are what captured – and has kept – the group's hard-rock following. But on *Hot Space*, with the John Deacon/Roger Taylor rhythm section continuing to write funky songs and with a vocal contribution from David Bowie, Queen offers a bit more than bluster."⁶³

The lack of musical autonomy that May found distressing was equally felt by drummer Roger Taylor, whose despondency arose from disco's dependence upon rhythmic repetition, oftentimes achieved by looping drums continuously for lengthy durations. At Mercury's urging, Reinhold Mack constructed such loops for *Hot Space's* repertory by implementing technologies and methodologies associated with the disco

accentuated by memorable riffs, performed in a melodic style on the bass, as heard most notably by James Jamerson of the Funk Brothers.

⁶² Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 27 December 2008.

⁶³ John Milward, "Hot Space: Queen," *Rolling Stone* 371 (10 June 1982):63.

genre. This system involved Taylor's performing various patterns and grooves, which Mack would then configure accordingly. To do so, the latter edited in a tactile manner, involving a razor blade and splicing tape, to obtain a utilizable two-bar segment. The producer would then record the short musical part to a multitrack machine. Following the creation of this central rhythmic track, Mack would then capture cymbal crashes, supplemental snare hits and other incidental sounds separately, many of which were triggered in the song by MIDI devices. In other words, Mack inventively created the drum parts from bits and pieces recorded by Taylor, supplemented by sounds Mack himself generated from a MIDI device.

Interestingly, like many funk artists, Freddie Mercury elected to include a live horn section, first to incorporate technologies associated with the genre (i. e. trumpets used as interjectory instruments, adding "hits" and "jabs" to the melody), and second, to balance the song's instrumental accompaniment, by complementing the plethora of synthesized sounds with acoustic instruments. Mercury, who was an avid fan of Aretha Franklin and Quincy Jones, decided to contract Arif Mardin of Atlantic Records in New York, a producer who worked with both musicians, to compose and record the horn component.⁶⁴ Because of the geographic distance that separated New York and Munich, Mercury never formally met Mardin, although, due to the producer's impressive résumé, Mercury held a high degree of confidence that the end result would be outstanding. Mardin received Mercury's instructions from Munich in two ways: the first comprised a tape recording, containing a rough rendition of "Staying Power," over which Mercury

⁶⁴ Over his impressive career, eleven-time Grammy Award winner Arif Mardin (15 March 1932-25 June 2006), worked with many professional musicians, including Anita Baker, the Bee Gees, David Bowie, Judy Collins, Culture Club, Roberta Flack, Donny Hathaway, the Manhattan Transfer, Bette Midler, the Rascals, Diana Ross, Carly Simon, Ringo Starr and Barbra Streisand.

sang a guide vocal, while the second involved Mercury singing to Mardin over the telephone. To ensure the recording's safe and expeditious arrival, Peter Freestone transported and delivered it to Mardin personally. He explains:

One night I was told that the following morning I was booked on the eleven o'clock flight to New York to take a slave/master tape of "Staying Power" to Arif Mardin in the Atlantic building. I gave Arif the tape at about six p.m. He worked overnight so that he could record the brass arrangement he had written in order that I should be able to leave the morning after to return it for further work by the band in Europe.⁶⁵

Upon receiving the tape from Freestone, Mardin composed a horn arrangement within a few hours, after which time copyists generated parts for six studio musicians.

Interestingly, following Mardin's work, and prior to the recording's return to Munich, no one from Queen communicated with the producer to ensure that the musical result was to their liking. This fact is somewhat surprising considering, as Reinhold Mack states:

"Queen spent more money on the horn arrangement than most bands spend on an entire album."⁶⁶

On the next morning, before commencing his lengthy return to Munich, Peter Freestone collected the completed recording from Arif Mardin. Due to the financial value and musical importance of the parcel, Freestone took every precautionary measure to ensure its safe delivery to Mercury and Queen at Musicland Studios. Freestone states:

"Passing through the security metal-detectors and the hand baggage X-ray on four separate occasions was no fun, trying to get officials to believe that what I was carrying was what it was and could not be exposed to possible electronic damage."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Freestone, *Freddie Mercury*, 83.

⁶⁶ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 27 December 2008.

⁶⁷ Freestone, *Freddie Mercury*, 83.

Delighted by Freestone's return, Mercury and Mack promptly listened to Mardin's arrangement, during which time their elation was quickly replaced with dissatisfaction. Mack explains: "When the tape returned, it was impeccable in terms of craftsmanship, but lacked enormously in terms of what Freddie expected musically. We were very disappointed, as we expected something outrageous, but Arif's version was very plain. He probably needed a little more guidance."⁶⁸ Rather than dispensing additional time, effort and money employing a composer/arranger and studio musicians, Reinhold Mack and Freddie Mercury opted to disassemble and reconfigure Mardin's creation by using advanced editorial techniques in tandem with state-of-the art technology. Mack explains: "I removed the part from the multitrack and chopped into phrases, in lengths of thirty to forty inches of tape. I would then splice the tape and run it through the playback machine. At times, the musical events occurred unplanned and sounded great; the parts were in the wrong key but they fit with what was happening underneath."⁶⁹ Mercury worked on these parts the way he usually did, by using an aural and oral mode of exploration, to compose incrementally as a song progressed. In this way, Mack and Mercury manipulated and arranged Mardin's horn section. Mack summarizes the process by stating: "We kept what sounded good and tossed the rest."⁷⁰ By using Mardin's work as a point of departure, the duo recomposed an arrangement that fit agreeably with what Mercury envisaged for the piece. The musical result encapsulates the rhythmic flare associated with funk music's partiality towards highly syncopated horn arrangements that served an interjectory purpose.

⁶⁸ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 27 December 2008.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

In addition to the dialogistic musical effect created by the horn section, Mercury, through his vocal performances, adds to the song's many musical discourses by recording several differing vocals segments. By using an AKG 414, a microphone introduced to Mercury by Mack during the "Crazy Little Thing Called Love" sessions, the singer recorded three vocals tracks: the first features the primary melody, the second doubles the aforesaid, and the third, adds infrequent and supplementary vocal statements. These musical snippets, sung using vocables by Mercury (such as "hmmm," "ha," "yah" and "hey," to name a few), contribute to the conversational quality of the piece, arguably corresponding to the participatory nature of disco.⁷¹ The lyrical themes that Mercury presents, not only through "Staying Power," but also through the other disco-oriented works on *Hot Space* (such as "Dancer" and "Body Language"), vividly reflect disco's tendency to celebrate one's sexual freedom through communal unity. To this end, Mercury through "Staying Power," originally entitled "Fucking Power," describes his libido and sexual prowess, as he begins by stating: "See what I got, I got a hell of a lot" (0:30-0:33).⁷² Mercury later in the song describes himself as a "regular dynamo" with a

⁷¹ Prior to 1979, Mercury typically used a Neumann U87 microphone to capture his voice in the studio. For Mercury, the Neumann U87 and AKG 414 engendered diverse sonic results. As Reinhold Mack explains, the U87 generally favours midrange frequencies, producing a more "honky" effect, while the AKG 414 generates an "airy" timbral outcome, sustaining subtleties in higher frequencies. The former employs a pressure gradient transducer as its acoustical operating principle, using omnidirectional, cardioid and figure-eight patterns to capture the projected sound, whereas the latter uses an externally polarized condenser as its transducer principle. Similar to the U87, this microphone's polar patterns are omnidirectional, cardioid, hypercardioid and figure-eight. Both devices have a frequency range spanning from 20 Hz to 20 kHz. Although, for many, the results may be difficult to distinguish, Mercury, as Mack suggests, was able to differentiate the microphones' qualities by using his own voice as a point of reference. Mack, email to author, 25 February 2009. Despite the fact that the AKG 414 is a tremendously common device in the recording industry, Mack suggests its musical outcome varies, as producers adopt different methodological approaches within the overall recording process. He continues, "I put twelve 414s, eight pre-amps and three different cables (oxygen free) in a lengthy try-out session. I did that for an extremely picky singer who was willing to endure this shoot-out for the benefit of 'perfected pureness.' All the combinations had very different results. In Freddie's case it was a psychological aid. Since he did not need a microphone to sound good, he was flattered that I went through all this trouble to make him shine." Mack, email to author, 5 April 2009.

⁷² Freestone, *Freddie Mercury*, 84.

"fire down below" (2:30-2:32), declaring instructively to "blow baby blow, let's get down and go go" (3:33-3:37) thus alluding metaphorically to drug use, most notably cocaine, and sexual acts. The combination of Mercury's unconcealed physical transformation (which as I shall discuss below denotes homosexual signifiers), his adoption of disco (a genre originally rooted in queer culture) and sexually-charged lyrics (descriptive in some capacity of themes relating to impassioned sex and not intimate love) caused not only an upheaval within Queen, but also began to jeopardize greatly the band's popularity, as Mercury, through his image and music, represented the homosexual community at a time concurrent with the emergence of AIDS.

FREDDIE MERCURY: SOUNDING DISCO, PERFORMING GENDER

The backlash that Queen experienced through *Hot Space* is not unlike the confrontational actions set forth a few years earlier by anti-disco protesters, many of whom felt compelled to reply angrily against disco's dominance within the recording industry, as it imperiled rock music's hegemony. Therefore, by openly embracing disco in the early 1980s, Queen inescapably triggered tumultuous responses for selective audience members who were troubled not only by the apparent sonic differences associated with divergent genres, but equally by the underlying sexual inferences, correlating Mercury's visual transformation with disco's germinal link to homosexuality. As I shall reveal below, the problems of reception with which Queen contended did not intrinsically surface from their embracement of disco, *per se*, but rather from the time period in which they decided to do so. We should keep in mind that although disco emerged from funk, a markedly African-American subgenre of R&B, popularized initially in the gay clubs of New York and San Francisco, by the mid-1970s, particularly through *Saturday Night*

Fever, disco moved beyond the boundaries of queer identification as many mainstream, white, suburban, heterosexual audience members consumed and enjoyed the genre uninhibitedly.⁷³ In his account of disco's rise and fall, Tim Lawrence explains, "The 'in' taste of a minority group had been transformed into the dominant, commercialized code without anyone spending too much time thinking about where all of the black divas, macho men, pounding rhythms, and romantic strings had got their break. The moment of realization, however, couldn't be postponed indefinitely."⁷⁴ By the end of the 1970s, as a means of protectionism, mainstream rock artists and fans fought vigilantly to regain prominence. Craig Hansen Werner states, "The attacks on disco gave respectable voice to the ugliest kinds of unacknowledged racism, sexism, and homophobia. Driving disco from the charts, the alliance also succeeded in destroying the last remaining musical scene that was in any meaningful sense racially mixed."⁷⁵ To this end, although Queen, through "Another One Bites the Dust," were able to fuse successfully aspects of funk (associated with African-American artists such as James Brown, Sly & the Family Stone and the Isley Brothers) and rock music (associated but not limited to predominantly white musicians including the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Who and Led Zeppelin), by 1982, Queen's incorporation of disco fueled a homophobic response emblematic of the diversity that separated rock and disco. Despite the fact that through the 1970s many rock

⁷³ Starring John Travolta (as Tony Manero) and Karen Lynn Gorney (as Stephanie Mangano), *Saturday Night Fever*, released on 14 December 1977 by Paramount Pictures, reinforced and augmented disco's popularity in the North-American mainstream youth market. The film's musical soundtrack comprised primarily of songs performed by the English trio, the Bee Gees, and featured other songs performed by Yvonne Elliman, Walter Murphy, Ralph MacDonald, David Shire, Kool & the Gang, KC and the Sunshine Band, MFSL and the Trammps, prominent artists whose repertoires were broadly consumed before *Saturday Night Fever's* release. Consequently, the soundtrack appealed to the youth market as it sonically paralleled a typical disco of the mid-1970s.

⁷⁴ Tim Lawrence, *Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970-1979* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 334.

⁷⁵ Craig Hansen Werner, *A Change is Gonna Come: Music, Race & the Soul of America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 211.

purists critiqued disco for its playfulness and lack of artistic sincerity (such as Frank Zappa's "Dancin' Fool"), the growing hatred towards the genre culminated on 12 July 1979 at Comiskey Park in Chicago, during a baseball game between the Chicago White Sox and the Detroit Tigers.⁷⁶ Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor explain:

During the hate- and violence-filled "Disco Demolition Derby" at the Comiskey Park baseball stadium in Chicago in 1979, thousands of disco records were smashed and burned in public, with the event degenerating into a riot. Although disco had reached its zenith in terms of exposure and sales, signs of this hostility were everywhere, from "I Hate Disco" car stickers to radio jocks' antidisco rants.⁷⁷

According to Craig Hansen Werner, "Most of the Comiskey Park rioters were young white men. While nobody conducted a survey of their sexual preferences, they certainly projected a distinctly straight male energy. Most of the disco stars were black, female, and/or gay. The conclusions are inescapable."⁷⁸ Though I feel it is imperative to note that generalizations seeking to compartmentalize disco as distinctly black, gay or feminine fail to encapsulate the social heterogeneity of the 1970s, I do contend that anti-disco movements escalated sentiments of racism, sexism and homophobia, which grafted on the existing musical quandaries.

For Queen, a band whose members plied their trade as rock musicians, *Hot Space's* A-side hinted towards issues of race and sexuality, core elements rooted at the crux of the Comiskey Park Riot, and so the band could not redeem itself in the eyes of its principal, rock-oriented fan base with Side B. In other words, Queen's affiliation with disco, a genre that epitomized the hatred projected towards certain minority groups,

⁷⁶ Originally released on 3 March 1979, *Sheik Yerbouti* (Zappa Records) featured "Dancin' Fool" on Side 3, Track 4. Prior to this live album's release, Zappa, on 10 October 1978, performed the song on *Saturday Night Live*.

⁷⁷ Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor, *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 235-36.

⁷⁸ Werner, *A Change is Gonna Come*, 211.

resulted in some fans grappling with Mercury's shifting personae. In relation to the chronology of disco and Queen's position within the mainstream recording industry, Peter Freestone astutely concludes, "It was late in the day. Disco by that point had become a generic term, one that encompassed many subsections, and Queen could not have fit in any of them."⁷⁹ In agreement with Freestone's summation, I contend that Queen's fan base had difficulty with the connotative aspects of the repertoire, as they alluded strongly to a genre that, by 1982, was fashionably despised. As such, mainstream rock listeners struggled to align their identity formations with the thematic, music and visual implications of Mercury's persona. Philip Auslander argues: "Performers are valuable to a particular audience not because they can demonstrate definitively that they belong to the same identity category as the members of that audience but because they give those audience members materials from which to construct the performers' identities in terms of their own identities and desires."⁸⁰ Consequently, because Mercury *implied* queerness, the majority of the rock world could not identify their views with those projected by the band. At one point, Brian May, who was terribly concerned by Mercury's propensity to endorse homosexuality through the auspices of Queen, voiced his concern to the singer. May states:

In fact, I can remember having a go at Freddie because some of the stuff he was writing was very definitely on the gay side. I remember saying, "it would be nice if this stuff could be universally applicable, because we have friends out there of every persuasion." It's nice to involve people. What's not nice to do is rope people out. And I felt kind of roped out by something that was very overtly a gay anthem, like "Body Language."⁸¹

⁷⁹ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 18 November 2008.

⁸⁰ Philip Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 233-34.

⁸¹ Brian May quoted by Lou Ann Lucero, "Brian May," *Guitar World Magazine* 10 (October 1998):32.

By 1982, although disco's social prominence had dissipated, a new threat emerged that victimized the gay community. In the United States, shortly prior to *Hot Space's* release, a social panic began to gain momentum, linking homosexual activity with the spread of a killer disease. In 1981, Lawrence Altman of *The New York Times* writes:

Doctors in New York and California have diagnosed among homosexual men 41 cases of a rare and often rapidly fatal form of cancer. Eight of the victims died less than 24 months after the diagnosis was made. Dr. Curran said there was no apparent danger to nonhomosexuals from contagion. "The best evidence against contagion," he said, "is that no cases have been reported to date outside the homosexual community or in women."⁸²

The ill-founded view of homosexuals as carriers of a self-induced plague only served to isolate further Queen in America. Within one year of the album's release, a social division emerged that continued to separate the straight and gay community, as AIDS spread unremittingly. By March 1983, LGBT activist Larry Kramer, through his seminal front-page article in *The New York Native* (the city's first publication covering queer culture) entitled "1,112 and Counting", urgently called for immediate action by homosexuals, as he declared: "If this article doesn't rouse you to anger, fury, rage and action, gay men may have no future on this Earth."⁸³ Arguably, Mercury, who resided in New York prior to, and following *Hot Space's* formation and release, used the album as a vehicle to demonstrate his allegiance with the homosexual demographic.

In the early part of the 1980s, during Mercury's many visits to New York, he stayed at the Berkshire Hotel, after which time he purchased an apartment, located at 425

⁸² Lawrence K. Altman, "Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals," *The New York Times* (3 July 1981), H1.

⁸³ Larry Kramer, "1,112 and Counting," *The New York Native* (14 March 1983), 1. Published from 1980 to 1997, *The New York Native* was the first newspaper devoted entirely to topics relating to homosexuality. For more information on *The New York Native*, see Craig A. Rimmerman, *From Identity to Politics: The Lesbian and Gay Movements in the United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 99.

East 58th Street (see Example 4-10). For Mercury, the primary purpose for visiting the city was to indulge in its bountiful nightlife. Freestone explains:

New York nights began generally with Freddie and I going out to eat on our own around nine o'clock. A favourite haunt of his was a small restaurant in Greenwich Village called Clyde's after which a fairly structured routine would be followed. Depending on which night of the week it was, any of Freddie's friends would know where to find him and, of course, his oxblood-coloured car [a Lincoln Town Car Sedan] would always be parked some fifty yards or so from the entrance to whichever bar or club he was in and was another beacon for them to find him.⁸⁴

Indubitably, Mercury's frequent expeditions to New York put him at the nucleus of a scene that celebrated the disco genre, as it signified cultural codes emblematic of the homosexual population, and so Mercury accrued knowledge of the subcultural landscape by developing his gay sensibilities, a term defined by Jack Babuscio as: "a creative energy reflecting a consciousness that is different from the mainstream; a heightened awareness of certain human complications of feeling that spring from the fact of social oppression; in short, a perception of the world which is colored, shared, directed, and defined by the fact of one's gayness."⁸⁵ As Reinhold Mack recalls, one of Mercury's favourite locales was the Saint, an establishment that catered to one's wildest homosexual fetishes and fantasies.⁸⁶ Peter Freestone states:

It was an old theatre on the Lower East Side which was *the* state-of-the-art nightclub for gay New York. I was able to get an honorary membership as an out-of-town resident so that Freddie's name didn't appear on the books. Getting a membership was easy but to get the all-important locker, you had to join an ever-growing waiting list. The locker was necessary so that you could change from street clothes to fetish clothes and dancing gear as well as to stash your night's supply of drugs.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Freestone, *Freddie Mercury*, 182-83.

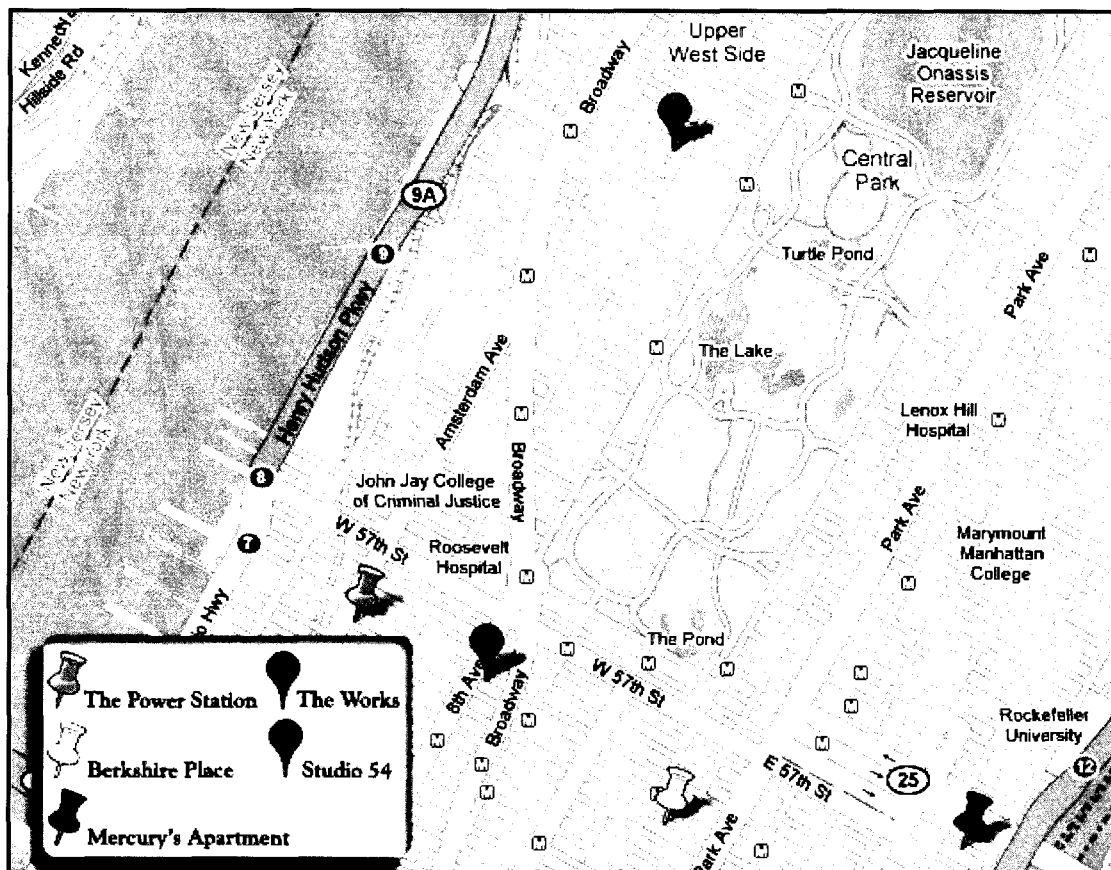
⁸⁵ Jack Babuscio, "Camp and the Gay Sensibility," in *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality*, ed. by David Bergman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 19.

⁸⁶ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 27 December 2008. In our conversation, Mack explained that he accompanied Mercury to the Saint on a few occasions, and on each visit, due to the exotic and extreme nature of the establishment, bodyguards escorted him to ensure his safety.

⁸⁷ Freestone, *Freddie Mercury*, 186.

Other establishments that Mercury regularly frequented in New York included the Works (428 Columbus Avenue), Studio 54 (254 West 54th Street), the Eagle (554 West 28th Street), the Spike (120 11th Avenue), the Anvil (599 West 14th Street) and the Mineshaft (825 Washington Street) (see Examples 4-10 & 4-11).⁸⁸ In New York, the general animosity conveyed by city officials towards homosexuals and the establishments in which they gathered socially closely mirrored the sentiments with which Queen contended upon releasing *Hot Space*, as homosexual activity was perceived as a threat to public health.

Example 4-10 – Landmarks in Uptown/Midtown Manhattan, New York



⁸⁸ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 27 December 2008 and Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 18 November 2008. Interestingly, Queen's subsequent album, entitled *The Works*, was arguably inspired by the eponymous bar, located in New York's Upper West Side.

alluded to his sexual orientation. Similar to Judith Butler's postulate that regards gender as a series of culturally constructed and stylized utterances performed through behaviours, Mercury encodes signifiers of gayness through bodily gestures. As Butler suggests, "acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core of substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications*, manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means."⁹⁰ The bodily gesticulations and signals that Mercury evinced were undoubtedly culturally loaded with levels of signification, as the so-called "look" that Mercury embraced around *Hot Space's* release carried tremendous ideological weight for certain members active within the homosexual community, particularly those located in Greenwich Village in New York. Richard Smith describes Mercury's physical transformation in relation to *Hot Space*:

In the Seventies he was all flowing shirts, long hair and painted nails, a look that in the context of Glam wasn't that outrageous. In 1980, he began spending much of his time in big, butch Munich and his style changed accordingly. He cropped his hair, grew a moustache and was often photographed in a Muir cap and Mineshaft t-shirt. The album *Hot Space* was the first that showed the influence of Disco. It dutifully bombed in the States and their career never really recovered from this nadir over there.⁹¹

As demonstrated in Example 4-12, the Mineshaft was one of the many homosexual havens in Greenwich Village that Mercury frequented until the bar was shutdown by city officials.⁹² Interestingly, the image of the stealthy man depicted on the bar's poster bears

⁹⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 185. The italicized words in the quotation are Butler's emphases.

⁹¹ Richard Smith, *Seduced and Abandoned: Essays on Gay Men and Popular Music* (London: Cassell, 1995), 237.

⁹² The New York City Department of Health closed the Mineshaft in 1985. For more information on the club, see Tim Gray, "Bring Back the Beefcake, and Add Some Flowers Too," *The Villager* 74 (July 2004), online source: http://www.thevillager.com/villager_63/bringbackthebeefcake.html

an astonishingly high degree of similarity to Mercury, who, as Richard Smith describes, changed his appearance to reflect the social climate in which he found himself. Peter Freestone explains: "The look was coming into fashion in the early 1980s. It gave Freddie an excuse to get rid of the long hair and it made him easier to blend in at bars, so he didn't stand out like a sore thumb."⁹³ The physiognomy to which Freestone alludes, one that he and Mercury shared during the early part of the 1980s, was known within the homosexual underground as the clone look. Martin Levine explains:

The clone was, in many ways, the manliest of men. He had a gym defined body; after hours of rigorous body building, his physique rippled with bulging muscles, looking more like competitive body builders than hairdressers or florists. He kept his hair short and had a thick mustache or closely cropped beard. There was nothing New Age or hippie about this reformed gay liberationist. And the clone lived the fast life. He 'partied hard,' taking recreational drugs, dancing in discos until dawn, having hot sex with strangers.⁹⁴

As its title suggests, the gay clone involved homosexual men tailoring their physical appearance to a point whereby they possessed extraordinarily similar physical features, as their metaphoric gender performances revealed their subcultural affiliation through body acts (see Example 4-13). Arguably, the clone look (synonymous with the macho look), was introduced to the general public by the Village People, a pop-disco group formed in 1977 by French music producer Jacques Morali who, incidentally, died of an AIDS-related illness on Friday 15 November 1991, eight days before Mercury's death. In its inception, the Village People targeted a homosexual demographic by projecting personae associated with gay fantasy (see Example 4-14).⁹⁵ Michael DeAngelis states:

⁹³ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 18 November 2008.

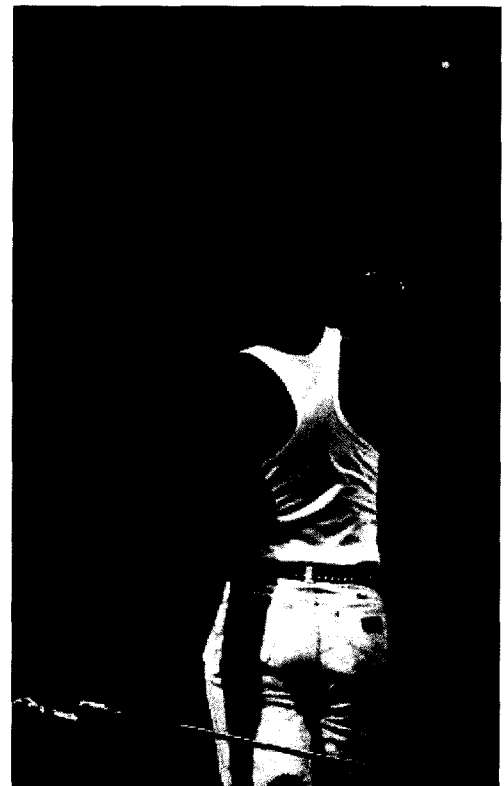
⁹⁴ Martin P. Levine, *Gay Macho: The Life and Death of the Homosexual Clone*, ed. by Michael S. Kimmel (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 7-8.

⁹⁵ Robert Aldrich and Garry Wotherspoon, *Who's Who in Contemporary Gay and Lesbian History: From World War II to the Present Day* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 424.

One indication of the influence of the macho look upon mainstream culture was the tremendous popularity of the Village People, a group that incorporated several exaggerated versions of rugged, elemental masculinity (including the construction worker, the leatherman rebel, and the cowboy), and that worked exclusively in that musical genre that, by 1978, had already made a successful gay-to-straight crossover: disco.⁹⁶

Of the six differing personae in the Village People's original line-up (including military officer Alex Briley, construction worker David Hodo, biker Glenn Hughes, cowboy Randy Jones, American Indian chief Felipe Rose and police officer Victor Willis), Mercury's friend, David Hodo, whose physical appearance astoundingly resembled that of Mercury's around *Hot Space's* release, introduced the gay clone/macho image to the mainstream (see Example 4-15).

Example 4-12 – The Mineshaft promotional poster and Freddie Mercury at Live Aid



⁹⁶ Michael DeAngelis, *Gay Fandom and Crossover Stardom: James Dean, Mel Gibson, and Keanu Reeves* (London: Duke University Press, 2001), 136.

Example 4-13 – Gay Macho/Clone look



Example 4-14 – The Village People



Example 4-15 – Freddie Mercury and David Hodo



Although the reception of Hodo's persona by the pop-disco community might have partly differed from that of Mercury's by the rock world, the connotative social implications were incontestably equivalent. In his account of the discursive nature of masculinity, Richard Dyer discusses the gay clone/macho image's appropriation by homosexual minorities. He states:

Much of the gay repertoire of the seventies and eighties drew upon two traditional arenas for the forging of (straight) masculine identity: work and sport. Jeans, short hair, boots are practical gear for men's work (by the same token, there was even for a crazed moment the wearing of construction workers' hard hats at discos); muscles are a product of both work and sport, something (real) men just have.⁹⁷

Although many members of the general public would have been familiar with David Hodo and his cartoonish portrayal of the macho gay construction worker, I argue that Freddie Mercury, who along with his thick moustache, slicked hair and a lean and muscular physique sported tight blue jeans, muscle shirts and various athletic outfits, was not regarded outwardly as a gay rock celebrity. Because the gay clone signified a certain

⁹⁷ Richard Dyer, *The Culture of Queers* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 67-68.

type of homosexual, many Queen fans were not able to decode the inferred levels of signification. Conversely, for those advocates whose intuition persuaded them of Mercury's rather clandestine sexual orientation, they may have opted towards willful blindness, for during the 1980s, a time steeped in homophobia and AIDS, no place existed within the rock domain for an openly gay icon.

Incontrovertibly, much like the sonic partitioning of the album and Mercury's image, embedded within *Hot Space's* artwork are a range of signifiers representative of divergent musical traditions and sexual orientations (see Example 4-16). Through their cover, Queen maintained allegiance to the rock domain by employing graphic elements of *Let it Be* (1970) by the Beatles. The members of Queen unmistakably pay homage to their musical antecedents, whom they admired profoundly, as their graphic placements align with those of the Beatles, structured by the instrument on which they perform. That is to say, featured in the same position within the quadrants are vocalists Freddie Mercury and John Lennon (top left), bassists John Deacon and Paul McCartney (top right), drummers Roger Taylor and Ringo Starr (bottom left) and guitarists Brian May and George Harrison (bottom right) (see Example 4-17). While the Beatles' cover depicts the band members via photographs, Queen opted to use cartoon drawing, which arguably reflects the artifice associated with disco, for its highly constructed yet playful characteristics. To capture the essence of *Hot*, invocative of the album's title, Mercury incorporated vivid colours to parallel graphically the inferred metaphoric climate.⁹⁸

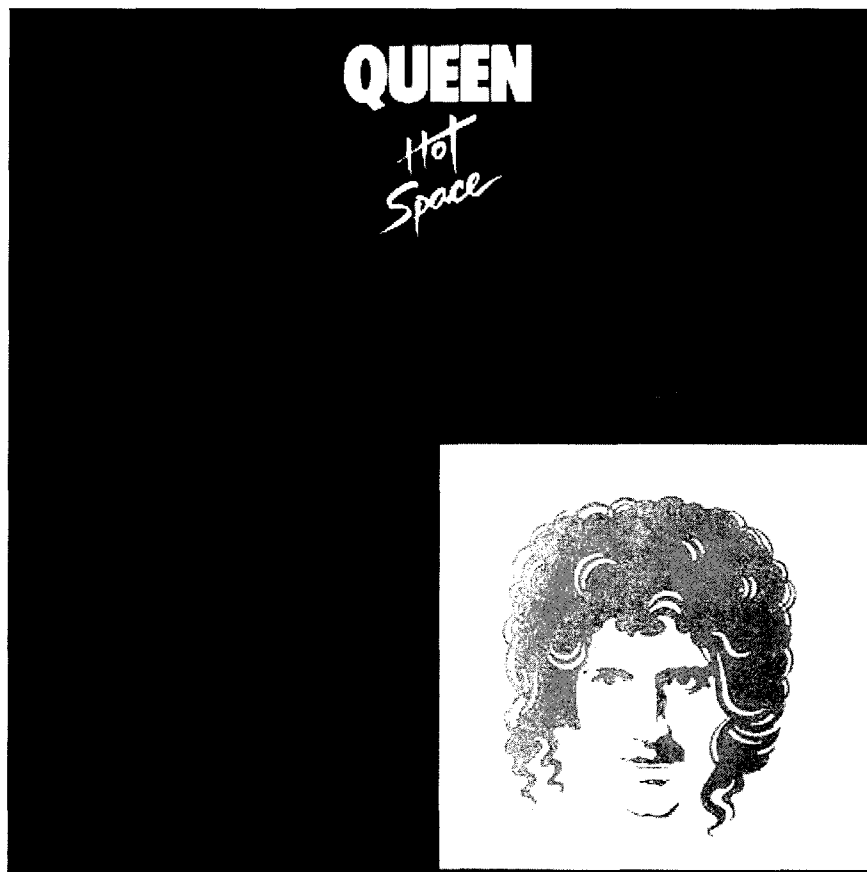
⁹⁸ Mercury began working on the *Hot Space* cover in his suite at L'Ermitage in Los Angeles. Subsequently, Elektra Records assigned art directors, Norm Ung, John Barr and Steve Miller, to assist with the project. When Mercury presented his conception to the band, Freestone recalls, "I don't remember them being particularly impressed, although the idea grew on them" (Freestone, *Freddie Mercury*, 135-36). Reinhold Mack confirms that Mercury was primarily responsible for conceiving *Hot Space's* artwork, and that he obtained direct inspiration from Mondrian (Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 27 December 2008).

Inspired by the captivating works of Piet Mondrian (7 March 1872-1 February 1944), which as demonstrated in his "Composition A" (1920) consisted of grids of horizontal and vertical lines filled invariably with primary colours, Mercury fused elements of *Let it Be* (1970) with twentieth-century art to project, through graphic design, the towering allegorical heat that radiated from the unorthodox work (see Example 4-17). As such, Mercury figuratively portrayed the essence of *Hot*, through colours associated with gayness and the derogatory notion of flaming, to encapsulate the disco fever that had, for many, already burned out. To this end, the notion of hot spaces not only encompasses the minimalism associated with Queen's instrumental arrangements, but also reflects the nightclubs that Mercury frequented, and therefore hot (a term used in popular culture to describe elative sexual acts) serves an adjectival function, to modify spaces, which, in this context, conjoins space with place to describe locales.

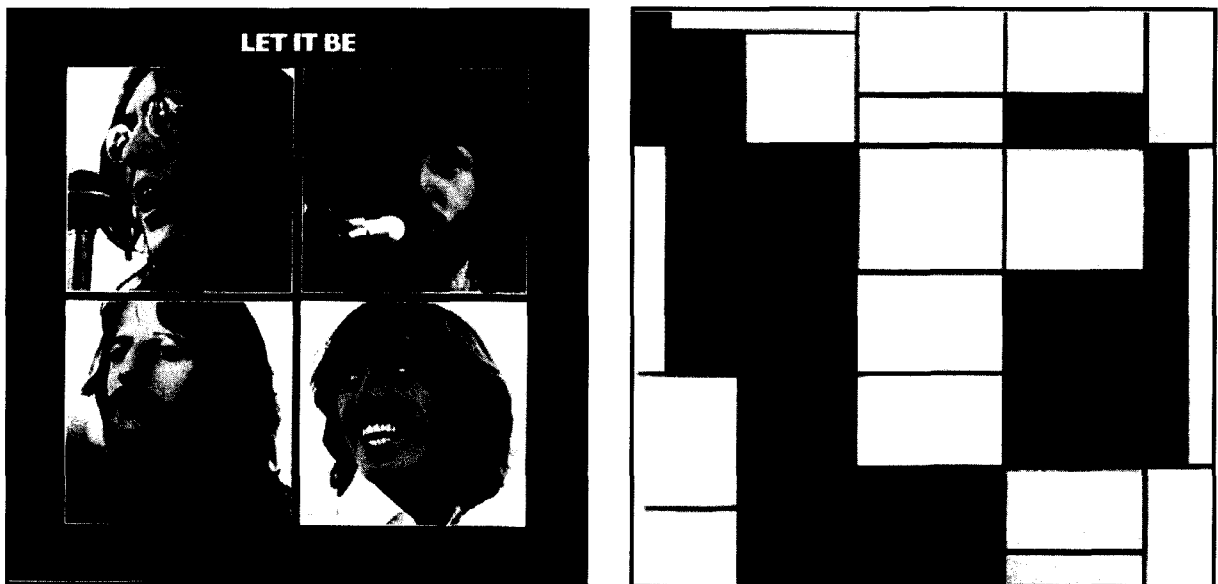
Through his unvarying discontentment towards *Hot Space*, Brian May uses the work's title and its inferences to produce a play on words, as he describes sarcastically his impression of the band's reception. In a mocking tone during the *Hot Space Tour*, May states: "The tour has been very good. I can't wait until we get to the end and we will be 'hot', so watch out. We've sold a lot of tickets and we've had not many complaints, it's been good . . . very hot."⁹⁹ Although the album received devastating reviews, Queen's 1982 world tour earned the band a significant, and surprising, degree of praise (see Appendix 4-2 for a complete tour listing). Richard Harrington of *The Washington Post* observes:

⁹⁹ Brian May Interview in Munich, *Queen on Fire: Live at the Bowl*, DVD Disc 2, video recording.

Example 4-16 – Hot Space by Queen



Example 4-17 – Let it Be by the Beatles and "Composition A" by Piet Mondrian



Although some of Queen's newer songs have yet to attain the comfort of familiarity, there is a spectacular energy at the heart of its repertoire. Queen's blatantly disco hits were overwhelming but not particularly convincing as funk, making Mercury come across as a plugged-in George Chakiris. Still, with remarkable sound and light systems to back them, Queen was a model of crunching efficiency and polished professionalism seldom matched in the rock arena.¹⁰⁰

Harrington's account of Queen's performance highlights two primary points that epitomized the *Hot Space Tour*. First, the songs featured in Queen's setlist from their new album prompted skepticism by many attendees, as their sonic characteristics stylistically contrasted the rock repertory that many fans paid to hear; and second, due to Queen's seemingly endless flow of capital, they were able to deliver a stage show that put them beyond the scope of even the most professional of bands. To expand briefly upon these points, in the first case, concertgoers staged mild protests in tandem with the rock press, who continually disparaged the band for their disco efforts, and so prior to performing the *Hot Space* disco/funk repertory in live performance, Mercury would often give a preamble to legitimize the music. On 5 June 1982 in Milton Keynes, England, he stated: "Most of you know that we have some new sounds out. For what's it worth, we are going to do a few songs from the funk/black category or whatever you call it. That doesn't mean we've lost our rock 'n' roll feel, OK! I mean, it's only a bloody record. People get so excited about these sorts of things."¹⁰¹ At a previous concert, in remonstrations of Mercury's moustache, concertgoers threw plastic disposable razors on stage, after which time Mercury aggregately asked the audience if he should keep his moustache or lose it.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Harrington, "Queen's Flashy Rock," *The Washington Post* (Tuesday 27 July 1982), C11.

¹⁰¹ *Queen on Fire: Live at the Bowl*, DVD Disc 2, video recording.

In response, many fans loudly shouted: "Lose it!" and so Mercury, in a comical tone, retorted: "Fuck off! I'm keeping it!"¹⁰²

During the performance of the disco-oriented songs, which, on the *Hot Space Tour* often included "Staying Power," "Dancer" and "Body Language," and despite the fact that the band hired an auxiliary keyboardist to assist with the performative problems produced from their highly-synthesized studio epics, Queen in concert played the repertoire using standard rock instrumentation. The sonic consequences positioned the material stringently within rock conventions, contrasting drastically the drums loops and many synthesizers heard on the record. Brian May explains: "We don't want to recreate the record on stage, we want the stage to be an experience on to itself. If the songs demand a different treatment on stage then they get a different treatment on stage."¹⁰³ Unlike traditional disco, which as Virgil Moorefield argues was dubbed the producer's genre, as songs often resulted from the technological wizardry of producers, engineers and studio musicians, rendering the final product inconceivable to achieve in live performance, Queen, on the *Hot Space Tour*, maintained the liveness associated with conventional rock aesthetics by delivering their disco/funk/rock hybrids on instruments, or technologies, emblematic of rock concerts and not disco clubs.¹⁰⁴ Consequently, unlike the concessions described in the previous chapter on "Bohemian Rhapsody," whereby Queen inserted a taped segment in their performance to compensate for their inability to replicate the profound degree of studio experimentation that constituted their creation, the band, as May explains above, performed the disco-oriented songs more like rock songs.

¹⁰² Mercury, *Freddie Mercury*, 148.

¹⁰³ Brian May Interview in Munich, *Queen on Fire: Live at the Bowl*, DVD Disc 2, video recording.

¹⁰⁴ Virgil Moorefield, *The Producer as Composer: Shaping the Sounds of Popular Music* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 80.

On 15 September 1982, Queen performed at the Forum in Inglewood, California, marking the band's final live appearance in the United States, for they never truly recovered from the hostile responses that *Hot Space* provoked.

Although the album dissatisfied critics, disenchanted fans and, to a degree, alienated the band members, one cannot dismiss its importance as an influential antecedent that inspired musicians in the mid- to late-1980s, many of whom expanded the breadth of their musical landscape by implementing recording practices associated with dance music in rock contexts. Reinhold Mack explains: "*Hot Space* was very ahead of its time, very underrated and really hi-tech; a commendable effort that influenced the likes of Michael and Janet Jackson and Olivia Newton-John. Quite a few people modeled their work on the stylistics of *Hot Space's* tracks."¹⁰⁵ Though regarded by many observers as a commercial catastrophe, *Hot Space* represents Queen's spirited ambition to explore uncharted musical domains, as they exhaustively sought to fragment conventions associated with genres and technology. In essence, they contributed to the linking of 1970s disco and 1980s dance music through their album by using advanced technological applications to create a sonic canvass centred around dance-based forms of entertainment heard in clubs, but which they delivered in stadia, thus merging disco's transformation to dance/electronic music with rock's renaissance in the 1980s mainstream market. With this in mind, although the work was received with skepticism, *Hot Space* acted as a vehicle through which disco and rock melded uniquely, at a point in time that preceded the formation of commercial and non-commercial dance-oriented music, the latter comprising many micro genres, including house, techno, electronica and trance. While the majority of Queen's pioneering studios techniques were laborious and tactile, many of

¹⁰⁵ Mack, interview by author, telephone conversation, 27 December 2008.

their dance/rock successors built upon the sonic result of their endeavours, but, arguably, did so with greater ease, as the advent of new devices and operating systems, namely MIDI, enabled them to set predetermined computations through a central processing unit, which activated studio mechanisms remotely and in synchrony.¹⁰⁶ Beyond the technological precedence that Queen established by fusing characteristics associated with rock and dance music, Mercury's gender acts provoked some artists to project a similar degree of sexual ambiguity through their stage personae, some of whom include Boy George (Culture Club), Neil Tennant (the Pet Shop Boys), Annie Lennox (the Eurythmics), Pete Burns (Dead or Alive) and Madonna.

As I have argued herein, *Hot Space* encapsulates an array of divergent signifiers, comprising contradictory levels of signification through rock's fusion with disco and funk, not to mention Freddie Mercury's gender politics, which inadvertently coincided with the emergence of AIDS. As a result, many rock enthusiasts could not forge meaningful associations with *Hot Space*, and so they regarded the work as a hodgepodge of incongruent features through which Queen failed at every level to hybridize convincingly disparate genres. This notion, as I have suggested in Chapter 2, is not unlike the reviews the band received with *Queen II*, as many observers perceived the 1974 release as a tapestry of unconnected musical styles. With reference to *Hot Space*, Benjamin Ray exemplifies this general viewpoint, as he states:

¹⁰⁶ MIDI (Music Instrument Digital Interface) was developed in 1982. The application had a revolutionary effect for music producers who, unlike Mack and Mercury, could use multiple devices in tandem to perform and edit musical segments.

Sadly, the entire first half of the album is dedicated to drum machines, simple love words and cheesy production. Even Freddie's powerful voice sounds so out of place amidst this pseudo-dance music. The only song worth hearing on the first side is "Dancer," because the harmonies recall old-school Queen in the chorus. The rest is way too cheesy and incredibly dated, but stops short of being a parody of other cheesy dance bands because the hooks aren't as strong. It's sad to watch this happen to a once-great band.¹⁰⁷

Boo Browning of *The Washington Post* concludes, Queen's 1982 release is the quintessence of "hot spaces blowing like calculated drafts through icy-cool progressions."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Benjamin Ray, "Hot Space: Queen," *Daily Vault Album Reviews* (22 October 2004), online source: <http://dailyvault.com/toc.php5?review=2650>

¹⁰⁸ Boo Browning, "A Glorious Queen, A Humble Squier," *The Washington Post* (23 July 1982), C9.

APPENDIX 4-1

Technological devices used to create Hot Space

CATEGORY	DEVICE
Piano	Yamaha C3 - 6' 1" Conservatory Grand Piano
Synthesizers	Kurzweil 250
	Fairlight II
	Roland Jupiter 8
	Oberheim OBX
	Linn 9000
	Linn Drum II
	Simmons sequencer
	Akai S 1000 sampler
Atari Computer with Notator Software	
Guitars	Brian May's Red Special
	Fender Squire
	Fender Stratocaster
Basses	Fender Precision
	Musicman
Amplifiers	Vox AC 30
	Fender Twin Reverb
Drums	Ludwig
Cymbals	Zildjian
	Paiste
Microphones	Brüel & Kjær 4011
	AKG 414 (lead vocals)
	Neumann U87i (backing vocals)
	Sennheiser MKH 415 (piano)
	U 47 kick (bass drum)
	AKG 414 (snare drum)
	Neumann U87 (toms)
	Beyer M280 ribbon (drums)

	Schoeps (cymbals)
	Shure SM 58 (guitars)
	Neumann KM 84 (guitars)
Tape/Synchronization/Noise Filtration	Studer A 80 1/2 '
	Studer A 80 1/4"
	AGFA PEM 468 tape +4db @ 250 nWb
	Dolby SR Noise reduction
	Audio Kinetics synchronizer
	Frienchip (clock & trigger)
Offboard Units	AMS DMX
	TC 2240
	EMT 240 gold plate reverb
	EMT 250 digital reverb
	Quantec room simulator
	Quantec Yardstick

* Information obtained by the author from Reinhold Mack on 25 November by email.

APPENDIX 4-2

The Hot Space Tour

DATE	CITY	COUNTRY	VENUE
9 April 1982	Gothenburg	Sweden	Scandinavium
10 April 1982	Stockholm	Sweden	Stockholm Isstadion
12 April 1982	Drammen	Norway	Drammenshallen
16 & 17 April 1982	Zurich	Switzerland	Hallenstadion
19 April 1982	Paris	France	Palais des Sports
20 April 1982	Lyon	France	Palais des Sports
22 & 23 April 1982	Brussels	Belgium	Forest National
24 & 25 April 1982	Leiden	Netherlands	Groenoordhallen
28 April 1982	Frankfurt	Germany	Festhall
1 May 1982	Dortmund	Germany	Westfalenhalle
3 May 1982	Paris	France	Palais des Sports
5 May 1982	Hannover	Germany	Eilenriedehalle
6 & 7 May 1982	Köln	Germany	Sporthalle
9 May 1982	Würzburg	Germany	Carl-Diem Halle
10 May 1982	Stuttgart	Germany	Sporthalle
12 & 13 May 1982	Vienna	Austria	Stadthalle
15 May 1982	Berlin	Germany	Waldbühne
16 May 1982	Hamburg	Germany	Ernst-Merck-Halle
18 May 1982	Kassel	Germany	Eissporthalle
21 & 22 May 1982	Munich	Germany	Olympiahalle
29 May 1982	Leeds	England	Elland Road
1 & 2 June 1982	Edinburgh	England	Ingliston Showground
5 June 1982	Milton Keynes	England	National Bowl
21 July 1982	Montreal	Canada	Montreal Forum
23 July 1982	Boston	United States	Boston Garden
24 July 1982	Philadelphia	United States	The Spectrum
25 July 1982	Washington	United States	Capital Centre
27 & 28 July 1982	New York	United States	Madison Square Garden

31 July 1982	Richfield	United States	Richfield Coliseum
2 & 3 August 1982	Toronto	Canada	Maple Leaf Gardens
5 August 1982	Indianapolis	United States	Market Square Arena
6 August 1982	Detroit	United States	Joe Louis Arena
9 August 1982	East Rutherford	United States	Brendan Byrne Arena
10 August 1982	New Haven	United States	New Haven Coliseum
13 & 14 August 1982	Hoffman Estates	United States	Poplar Creek Music
15 August 1982	Saint Paul	United States	Civic Center
19 August 1982	Biloxi	United States	Civic Center
20 August 1982	Houston	United States	Summit
21 August 1982	Dallas	United States	Reunion
24 August 1982	Atlanta	United States	Omni Coliseum
27 August 1982	Oklahoma City	United States	Myriad
28 August 1982	Kansas City	United States	Kemper Arena
30 August 1982	Denver	United States	McNichols Arena
2 September 1982	Portland	United States	Portland Coliseum
3 September 1982	Seattle	United States	Seattle Coliseum
4 September 1982	Vancouver	Canada	PNE Coliseum
7 September 1982	Oakland	United States	Oakland Arena
10 September 1982	Phoenix	United States	Veterans Coliseum
11 & 12 September 1982	Irvine	United States	Irvine Meadows
14 & 15 September 1982	Inglewood	United States	The Forum
19 & 20 October 1982	Fukuoka	Japan	Kyuden Gymnasium
24 October 1982	Nishinomiya	Japan	Nishinomiya Stadium
26 October 1982	Nagoya	Japan	Port Messe Nagoya
29 October 1982	Sapporo	Japan	Tsukisamu Green Dome
3 November 1982	Tokorozawa	Japan	Seibu Lions Stadium

CHAPTER 5

Montserrat Caballé, Freddie Mercury and Mike Moran's Musical Encounter: "Barcelona"

*You can't put it under a label, can you?
The worst thing they could call it is "rock opera" – which is so boring.¹*
- Freddie Mercury

For Freddie Mercury, 1987 marked a time of tremendous professional risk and personal struggle, a transformative period that saw the thriving vocalist not only achieve his greatest musical triumphs but also succumb to his deepest fears. Though by this point, Queen had reclaimed their reputation as a world-class rock group with *The Works* (1984), their performance at Live Aid (13 July 1985) and *A Kind of Magic* (1986), the band members had grown tired of perpetual disagreement, and therefore unanimously decided that a brief hiatus was in order. The break provided Mercury with a window of opportunity through which he could venture outside rock music to pursue a collaborative effort with someone he profoundly admired, the Catalan operatic soprano, Montserrat Caballé.² As Mercury garnered an immense degree of artistic gratification from the project that ensued, his excitement was counterbalanced with sadness, resulting from a medical diagnosis he received in April 1987, which revealed an inconceivable fate. Queen's championed singer would lose his life prematurely, for he had contracted the deadly HIV virus.³

¹ Freddie Mercury, *Freddie Mercury: A Life, in His Own Words*, ed. by Greg Brooks and Simon Lupton (London: Mercury Songs Ltd., 2006), 96.

² Peter Freestone recalls: "I think Freddie really enjoyed this collaboration because the end results were achieved without confrontation whereas so much of Queen's work, although superb, was coloured with the memories of confrontation and conflict. It was because of the prospect of argument and disharmony that on occasion Freddie would refuse to go to the studio." Peter Freestone with David Evans, *Freddie Mercury: An Intimate Memoir by the Man Who Knew Him Best* (London: Omnibus Press, 2001), 98.

³ Peter Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 8 December 2008.

Through a series of interviews with Mercury's closest affiliates and musical colleagues, including John Brough (record producer and engineer), Peter Freestone (personal assistant), Terry Giddings (bodyguard and chauffeur) and Mike Moran (composer and performer), this chapter presents the historical context around which "Barcelona" was conceived. The song, released on Monday 26 October 1987, obtained a significant level of success at two different points in time. Initially, "Barcelona" remained on the UK Charts for nine consecutive weeks and peaked at the number eight position. Following Mercury's tragic death on 24 November 1991, the song was re-released on Monday 27 July 1992, not only to memorialize Mercury's life, but also to celebrate the Summer Olympic Games held in Barcelona, Spain, during which time it remained on the UK Charts for eight weeks, reaching its zenith at the number two position.⁴

Following a comprehensive historical exploration surrounding the central events and significant people who influenced "Barcelona's" creation, the second section of this chapter probes the musical ramifications of Mercury and Caballé's tailored methodology. I argue the success of the duo's endeavour hinged upon a third musician, Mike Moran, who bridged the communication gap between the two iconic performers.⁵ Subsequent to investigating the negotiated uses of technological applications in relation to genre conventions at the level of production, I explore issues of performativity, authenticity and replication by considering the difficulties with which the trio contended, as they

⁴ The Summer Games of the XXV Olympiad were held in Barcelona, Spain, from Saturday 25 July to Sunday 9 August 1992. For a comprehensive listing of Queen's UK Chart positions see: <http://www.ultimatequeen.co.uk/homepage.htm>

⁵ While appearing as a guest on Dave Clark's musical, *Time*, in 1986, Mercury met Moran and became immediately captivated by his musical ingenuity and technical virtuosity. Peter Freestone explains, "Freddie and Mike had been in the music business for approximately the same amount of time and they were equals. While Freddie had the more meteoric rise, Mike Moran had been a mainstay and continual presence behind more famous artists than himself. Mike was also quite content to allow Freddie to do the shining in public." Freestone, *Freddie Mercury*, 98.

attempted to deliver their epic work live, first in Ibiza on Friday 29 May 1987, and finally in Barcelona on Saturday 8 October 1988. Moving from the level of performance to reception, I conclude by evaluating conflicting viewpoints held by commentators who struggle to situate "Barcelona" within the continuum of rock and opera traditions, arising primarily from the work's stylistic eclecticism. Therefore, I argue that, although upon its release "Barcelona" sat on the fringe of standard constructions of genre, the piece acted as a seminal antecedent for several crossover artists in the 1990s and beyond, including the Three Tenors, Andrea Bocelli, Zucchero, Paul McCartney, Sarah Brightman and Charlotte Church.

"I HAD THIS PERFECT DREAM": "BARCELONA'S" INCEPTION

From the time he composed "Bohemian Rhapsody" in 1975, Freddie Mercury's fascination with opera continued to flourish, as he developed a profound appreciation for the technical precision evinced by operatic singers. Peter Freestone states:

Up until 1981, Freddie had a passion for the voices of operatic tenors, mainly Luciano Pavarotti. He was always taken aback at the control that tenors maintained over their voices, the only operatic vocal range in which at that point he had any interest. He realized that this was the culmination of years of training for most of them and was fully appreciative of the result, particularly the way some could produce high notes extremely softly.⁶

In January 1981, Mercury and Freestone attended a production of Giuseppe Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* (*A Masked Ball*), conducted by Bernard Haitink and performed at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in London, featuring Pavarotti in the role of Riccardo. Shortly after the opera's commencement, Mercury's attention was unexpectedly drawn to the fifty-four year old soprano, who made her captivating entrance in Act 1, Scene 2. Freestone gives his account of Mercury's vibrant reaction:

⁶ Ibid., 100.

Freddie watched and listened spellbound. The soprano sailed and soared through the trio which exploited her talent and range and power. At the end when the heroine slips away, Freddie's jaw had dropped and he applauded wildly. Once the applause stopped, he broke all opera house tradition and started talking, asking me, "Who is this woman? What's her name? Tell me." His words almost tumbled out, so excited he had been. I looked in the programme just to double-check. It was indeed, as I had thought, Montserrat Caballé.⁷

Following this memorable evening, Mercury began compiling Caballé's recordings, as his adoration for her voice intensified. While recording at Musicland Studios in Munich, Mercury would spend his breaks listening to her albums at an earsplitting decibel level, "to hear her sing softly, loudly," explains Freestone. He concludes, "The volume was set so high you could actually hear chairs squeaking and the orchestra turning the pages of their scores."⁸

Although she left a lasting impression upon Mercury for many years, he would not meet Caballé until 1987, six years following his evening at Covent Garden. The catalyst that prompted their union was a Madrid-based concert promoter, Pino Sogliocco, who conceived the idea from a public comment made by Mercury during Queen's *Magic Tour*.⁹ While in Barcelona on 1 August 1986, when asked by a Spanish radio reporter to identify the singer whom he most admired, Mercury quickly exclaimed "Montserrat Caballé!" He animatedly stressed his choice had nothing to do with the fact that she was Catalan and he was in Barcelona. For Sogliocco, Mercury's statement triggered the initiative to have the superstars come together. He immediately contacted Carlos Caballé

⁷ Ibid., 101.

⁸ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 8 December 2008.

⁹ On the *Magic Tour*, Queen performed in Spain on 1 August 1986 in Barcelona, Madrid on 3 August 1986 and Marbella on 5 August 1986. For a listing of their complete tour dates consult: <http://www.queenconcerts.com/live/queen/magic.html>.

(Montserrat's brother and manager) and Jim Beach (Queen's manager) to orchestrate the meeting.¹⁰

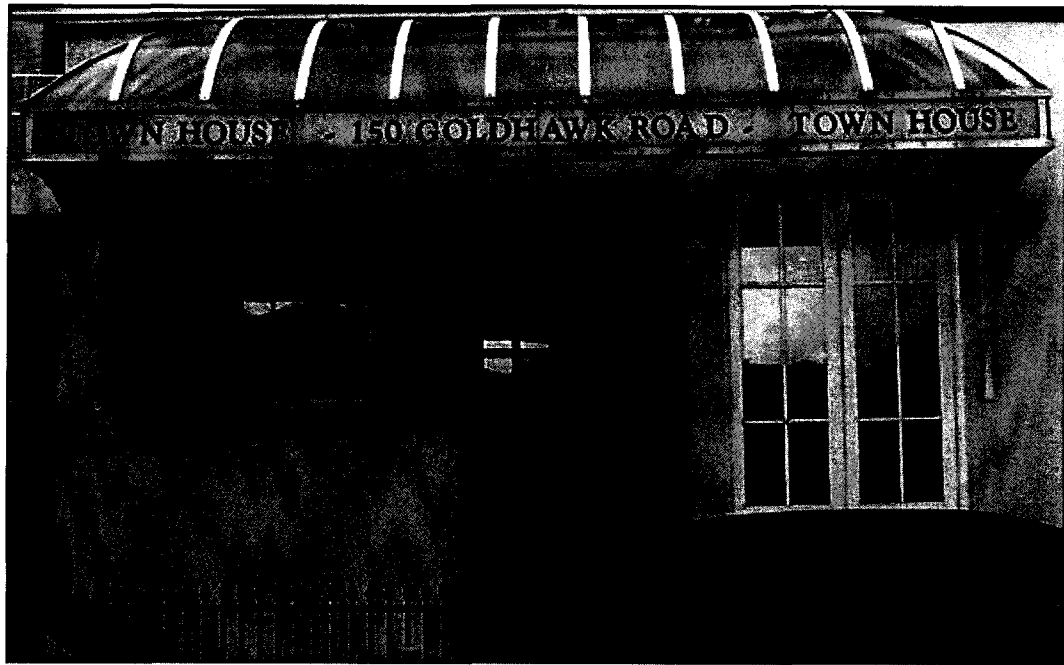
Following their intensive *Magic Tour*, ending on 9 August 1986 in Stevenage, UK, Queen went on a temporary hiatus. From September 1986 to March 1987, Mercury worked on a solo project with Mike Moran at the Townhouse Studios, located at 150 Goldhawk Road, in West London (see Example 5-1).¹¹ Upon receiving notification from Jim Beach that Caballé wanted to meet him formally, Mercury called Moran and requested his presence for the forthcoming journey to Barcelona, the place where Mercury would finally have the opportunity to make Caballé's acquaintance. On Monday 23 March 1987, Mercury, accompanied by Jim Beach, Peter Freestone, Terry Giddings and Mike Moran, flew by private jet to Barcelona. Upon the group's arrival in the Catalonian capital city, they traveled for eleven miles by limousine to the Ritz Hotel, located at 668 Gran Vía Corts Catalanes. The next day, Mercury's assemblage gathered in the Garden Room, a large private suite equipped with audio playback equipment and a piano, to await Caballé's arrival. Peter Freestone explains, "We were down in the room at 12:55 p.m. and I have never seen Freddie so nervous. At his frequent requests, I had to keep popping my head out to see if she had arrived. Finally, shortly after 1:00 p.m., Montserrat sailed through the doors and into Freddie's life forever."¹²

¹⁰ Mike Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

¹¹ Founded by Virgin Records entrepreneur Richard Branson and designed by Sam Toyashima, the Townhouse studios, located in West London's Shepherd's Bush, opened its doors in the late-1970s. Through the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, many notable artists used the facility to record, including Frank Zappa, Duran Duran, Bryan Ferry, Oasis, Coldplay and Queen. Following a thirty-year legacy, in March 2008, the Townhouse Studios closed, after which point its contents were auctioned online. John Brough, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 December 2008.

¹² Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 8 December 2008.

Example 5-1 – The Townhouse Studios



Terry Giddings continues, "To be honest, Fred was very star struck. He was a big fan and was quite nervous to meet her, as was Montserrat to meet him. They had a great deal of respect for each other. She obviously knew of Fred and his talents."¹³

Mercury thought it would be fitting to bring one of his own musical selections for Caballé to hear, one that would act as an icebreaker for its comedic value. The piece he chose was "Exercises in Free Love," released on 23 February 1987 as the B-side to "The Great Pretender."¹⁴ The song developed late one evening when Mercury instructed Moran to perform something flashy on the piano, over which he would improvise using non-lexical vocables.¹⁵ Moran comments that Mercury, "who could spout out lyrics at the

¹³ Terry Giddings, interview by author, telephone conversation, 25 November 2008.

¹⁴ Mercury's version of "The Great Pretender" was a cover of the 1956 hit by the Los Angeles group, the Platters. The song peaked at number four on the UK Charts and was re-released in 1993 on the album *Remixes*.

¹⁵ In music, non-lexical vocables are short words or fragments of words that do not carry any semantic meaning. In the jazz tradition, vocables characterize scat-singing. During later Queen concerts, Mercury used vocables in call and response with the audience.

drop of a hat, came up with the title at 4:00 a.m. following an extensive studio session."¹⁶ To Moran's knowledge, the title had no significance as the song contained no words. As such, Mercury performed the piece as a vocalise using falsetto. Although the exact reason that Mercury selected the title remains speculative, one can only hazard a guess that "Exercises in Free Love" reflected his broadminded sexual lifestyle.

At the long-anticipated meeting on Tuesday 24 March 1987, when Moran and Mercury presented the song to Caballé, Mercury said, "This is me trying to sing like you." Moran recalls, "Montserrat got this all wrong. After hearing the piece she replied, 'You wrote this for me? I love it! I will give it its world premiere at Covent Garden.' She turned to me and said, 'and you will perform it with me on the piano.'"¹⁷ Over lunch, in the presence of all the attendees, Caballé, Mercury and Moran excitedly discussed the upcoming concert, but no mention was ever made of embarking upon a formal musical project together. At this point, Caballé requested a score from Moran, so that she could rehearse the piece prior to their scheduled concert. Moran, who usually traveled with staff paper, did not have any on this particular occasion, but the concierge of the hotel quickly found some, and so he was able to make a transcription from the recording to conventional notation. The attendant immediately arranged for Moran to use the grand piano in the master ballroom where, over the course of a three-hour span, Moran expeditiously transcribed the vocal part. Upon completion, the hotel's staff politely asked Moran if their guests could now enter the room. Moran laughingly recalls that he had no idea a scheduled event had been postponed to ensure his work was not disturbed.¹⁸

¹⁶ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

On the afternoon of Sunday 29 March 1987 at Covent Garden, Moran and Caballé convened to rehearse "Exercises in Free Love," during which time Caballé asked Moran and Mercury where they would like the song to appear in the programme. Moran politely responded: "It is your show, place it where you'd like." Mercury musingly stated, "How about you do it as an encore number so it does not disrupt the flow of your planned performance?" Caballé humourously questioned, "Which encore? I typically do eight or nine of them!" Mercury replied, "Well put it at three or five, or something."¹⁹ Later that evening when the house lights went down, Mercury, Moran, Terry Giddings, Peter Freestone and Jim Hutton (Mercury's partner) found their seats in the audience. During the encore segment, when it came time to perform the song, Caballé announced, "Now I must say, I have met two new friends over the past week. They have composed a beautiful piece of music and tonight I will give its world premiere. I want to introduce one of the writers, Mike Moran, who will play the piano for me, and the other is sitting over there, who you all may know as a gentleman named Freddie Mercury."²⁰

Following the unforgettable performance, Mercury invited everyone to his palatial home, Garden Lodge, for a celebratory dinner. Prior to departing from Covent Garden, Carlos Caballé advised Montserrat's company not to keep her up late, as she was to catch an 8:30 a.m. flight and perform the next evening. Contrary to his cautionary words, Caballé, Mercury and Moran were up until the early hours of the morning performing their musical ideas around the piano. According to Montserrat Caballé, "It was a very

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Interestingly, at the recital, Caballé never introduced the title of the song. Arguably, she opted not to do so because "Exercises in Free Love" had no direct relevance to the concert; like Mercury, she sang the piece as a vocalise. Alternatively, perhaps she sidestepped the title entirely to avoid endorsing such *risqué* thematic material for a performance that had already become rather unorthodox. The song would later appear on the Barcelona album under the title "*Ensueño*" ("Dream").

very special night, a wonderful night. It was so wonderful that we didn't realize that the time had passed so quickly. I think it was six o'clock in the morning when I left. There were a lot of people in the streets surprised that I had spent the night at Freddie's home."²¹

On that memorable evening, with Moran on the piano, Mercury and Caballé improvised a range of musical styles, some of which included rock, jazz, opera and gospel. The impromptu jam session was unlike anything that Caballé had ever done. Rehearsals in her musical domain were organized and premeditated, allowing little room for casual improvisation. During the session, the trio, in their musical experimentations, played sections of what would become the eponymous track to the *Barcelona* album.²² Over Moran's piano lines, Caballé and Mercury sang in a call and response manner using vocables. The unique artistic chemistry that enabled Mercury and Moran to work efficiently throughout *Barcelona* became vividly apparent that night. Peter Freestone states: "Mike would play the piano while Freddie was talking and telling him where to go. Because they got on so well, Freddie did not have to open his mouth half the time. Mike could almost gauge the direction of the music instinctually."²³

Though the trio performed the nucleus of the piece, Moran stresses that no mention of composing "Barcelona" emerged at Garden Lodge. While at the encounter, Mercury and Caballé did discuss the possibility of performing and recording one song together, they did not agree upon the specifics. Moran states that a myth has arisen whereby commentators speculate that Caballé asked Mercury and Moran to compose a piece about her native land. This, he professes, was not the case. Moran affirms: "We all

²¹ *Lover of Life, Singer of Songs: Freddie Mercury*, DVD Disc 1, directed by Rudi Dolezal and Hannes Rossacher, produced by Jim Beach and Rudi Dolezal (Burbank, CA: Hollywood Records, 2006).

²² Segments from the improvisatory session at Mercury's home, including sections of what became "Barcelona," are heard on *Freddie Mercury: The Rarities Vol.2 (The Barcelona Sessions)*, 1998.

²³ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 8 December 2008.

departed as the best of friends and that was it."²⁴ Following the festivities, Mercury and Moran reconvened at the Townhouse Studios to continue working on what was set to become Mercury's second solo album, although during this time, Caballé called persistently to inquire about the possibility of commencing a formal collaboration. Mercury finally told Moran: "She is absolutely serious about this, we have to do something. We have to interrupt our work and write something that the pair of us can do."²⁵ For Mercury, the invitation to perform with Caballé corresponded rather fittingly with his ambition to produce an album that did not sonically or stylistically resemble the Queen repertory. Mercury states: "I was planning to do my second solo project, and I really did not want to do another album with a bunch of songs. I wanted this to have something different. It had to have another sort of stamp, something that spearheaded the damn thing. Suddenly, 'Barcelona' emerged and swallowed me like a tidal-wave."²⁶ The composers agreed that the first thing they required was a theme. Much like the conception of "Exercises in Free Love," Mercury quickly blurted, "We will call it Barcelona, because that is where we met!"²⁷

"LET THE MUSIC PLAY": CAPTURING "BARCELONA"

Even though Mercury and Caballé may have had similar views on musical aesthetics, their *raison-d'être* as performers in terms of genre conventions shared few if any commonalities. The working methodologies within their respective fields, the venues in which they sang and the repertoires they performed, were to a degree antithetical.

²⁴ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ David Wigg, "Interview with Freddie Mercury," Ibiza, Spain, September 1987.

²⁷ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008. Record producer John Brough confirms this fact, stating: "From the initial outset, the song was not for the Olympics, it was just a fact of doing a track, and then Freddie decided to call it 'Barcelona' because that is where he met her." John Brough, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 December 2008.

Despite the fact that by the mid-1980s there was a certain merging of audiences for art and popular music patrons, many of whom attended concerts and built record collections rather eclectically, consumers autonomously distinguished presentations, live or on record, with sets of genre criteria that separated Mercury and Caballé's musical worlds. Caballé, an accomplished classical performer, who by 1987 was renowned for her *bel canto* technique, would require few rehearsals with an orchestra, conductor and other singers to execute a performance successfully. Although she was at liberty to make musical allowances through her interpretation of a work, the notated score imposed boundaries upon her flexibility to deviate from the preconceived framework established by the composer. Alternatively, for Mercury, like many rock musicians, his art not only mandated live performance but also necessitated creative compositions and inventive recording techniques, none of which resulted from formalized training. Mercury and Queen used the studio as a mnemonic aid in the place of Western notation, and therefore the configuration of a song, in its harmonic, melodic and rhythmic construction, did not emerge from a score. To this end, the primary mode of musical discourse for the members of Queen was aural and oral, rooted in the ways folk, country, blues and rock musicians typically communicated. Predictably, Mercury and Caballé would have to amend their conventional and preferred working methods in order for each to communicate and execute their collaboration. The duo had to find a way to satisfy Caballé's dependence on a notated score and Mercury's aurally-based system for composing, performing and learning music. Because Caballé had no experience or desire to venture into the domain of composition, Mercury (with Moran) accepted the position willingly. In 1987, Mercury expressed his eagerness to confront the challenge and

confirmed the need for a methodological shift from the way he approached songwriting with Queen. He states: "It's such a challenge. It's going to be great. I've never thought of writing songs in that way. Now she said she wants to do duets with me. I have to think in a totally different way."²⁸

Unsurprisingly, Mercury's lack of formal training and experience for orchestrating symphonic instruments posed great difficulty. By 1975, though he had mastered the art of arranging voices through dense multitrack recording, by no means did Mercury possess the necessary theoretical foundation to orchestrate a large symphony orchestra (real or synthesized). As "Barcelona" presents a joint venture between Mercury and Caballé, two superstars in their own right, I argue that their partnership hinged upon Mike Moran's prodigious contribution (see Example 5-2). Moran explains, "The reason Fred and I did this album was because there were things that I could do that he couldn't, and quite patently, things that he could do that I couldn't."²⁹ Consequently, the duo fused Moran's literate working method with Mercury's aural/oral mode of composition, to formulate and articulate their ideas. Moran continues, "It was the mad instinctive against the schooled musician, but we always found a middle path. Some things that made no sense to me on paper Fred insisted we try. At times, they would not work and I would say 'see.' At other times they worked wonderfully and he would say 'see.'"³⁰ Recording engineer John Brough vividly recounts one specific instance that illustrates the composers' divergent musical backgrounds.

²⁸ *Lover of Life*, DVD Disc 1.

²⁹ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Example 5-2 – Freddie Mercury and Mike Moran



He states:

I remember on one occasion an argument developed with Mike and Fred over a single note. While Freddie was very pleased about the way the note ended the phrase, for Mike it was simply not an option, because it did not fall within the range of a cello. Mike was quite furious actually. In response, Freddie asked him, "So when did Moses etch in the commandments that a synthesized cello could not play this note?"³¹

While Moran relied heavily upon his training to determine proper orchestrations, Mercury, on the other hand, used his intuition to compose in a manner that he found sonically pleasing. In other words, Mercury did not make musical decisions based on voice-leading principles or the range and registers of instruments. Expectedly, when it came time to compose Caballé's vocal parts, Mercury employed an oral/aural mode of self-instruction, to determine how to write fittingly for the soprano voice. He explains: "I had to do research to get some sort of operatic knowledge, to make sure that I was using her voice in the right way. I spent a long time talking to her and listening to a lot of her

³¹ Brough, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 December 2008.

records to find out her finer points, so that I could actually use them in the music."³²

Because Caballé was unavailable to partake in these creative sessions (mainly due to her demanding performance schedule), Mercury approximated her voice by using his own to sing her parts in falsetto, which would be recorded to tape. These recordings, as Moran explains, would not necessarily be the finished product in terms of all the backing instruments and layered backing vocals, thus contradicting Jacky Gunn and Jim Jenkins' account.³³ Rather, the arrangements and parts were about eighty percent complete, and of course, the balance and levels resembled that of a preliminary mix.³⁴ Mercury and Moran would send tapes to Caballé, accompanied by a manuscript that contained her tentative part, transcribed by Moran himself. He states, "By this point, every single note in the score would be accounted for, with the exception of the odd cadenza that was left up to her discretion, although I would specify the note on which the passage should start and end."³⁵

I contend that Moran and Mercury elected to accompany the score with a recording to offer a grander scheme of the sonic canvas they envisioned as, oftentimes, Western notation does not capture microtonal pitches and rhythmic inflections that characterize a work. Notation in the context of popular music fails to depict graphically overtones and colours, not to mention the uniqueness or 'grain' of one's voice, studio technologies (some of which employ handcrafted instruments or custom-made effects units) and the methods used to obtain unique timbres through dense layering. Thus, Mercury and Moran sent Caballé's parts in notation for her to read and learn, but equally

³² Mercury, *Freddie Mercury*, 95.

³³ Jacky Gunn and Jim Jenkins, *Queen: As It Began* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1992), 212-13.

³⁴ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 18 March 2008.

³⁵ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

emphasized the musical backdrop over which she would be singing via the recording. They did so first to compensate for Western notation's inability to capture successfully the highly innovative and elaborate sonic collages that they created, and second, to enable her to contextualize and situate her voice in the overall scheme of the work.

Mercury and Moran created the soundtrack over which Caballé sang by using synthesizers and samplers to recreate the sonic properties of a large orchestra. This enabled the composers to avoid employing symphonic players for days or weeks at a time. Moran states, "In fact, Fred was entirely against hiring an orchestra. He believed that once we hired an orchestra we were committed and that changes would be impossible to make."³⁶ John Brough continues, "The way this project was evolving and changing, I think Mike felt that, although we could record with an orchestra, the song might change so drastically that parts would have to be re-recorded in a week's time. By using synthesizers, this allowed us to go step-by-step, bit-by-bit, and it allowed Freddie to be more involved."³⁷

The primary device that Moran used to create the synthetic orchestra was the Emulator II, a sampling unit that came with 5.25-inch floppy disks containing factory sounds, each of which, as Moran recalls, took fifteen to twenty seconds to load, consequently making the procedure very tedious.³⁸ In addition, Moran employed synthesizers, including, the Prophet 5 and the Korg M1, to add elements of sonic contrast in places where he felt the Emulator II lacked high fidelity timbres. His extensive training

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Brough, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 December 2008.

³⁸ The Emulator II is an eight-voice polyphonic sampler that many consider the first sampling workstation. The unit's internal processing speed matched and sometimes surpassed most home computers of the period. For its time, the unit was very pricey (£10,000) and therefore it was used primarily by established professionals like Moran and Mercury. This piece of equipment marked an enormous improvement from previous synthesizer technology.

as a composer and his literacy in recording technology enabled Moran to auralize the sonic result that he sought to attain. That is to say, if one device could not satisfy his musical ambition, he would fuse sounds from a variety of secondary mechanical or human sources, together with incidental sounds, such as taps and scrapes, to give the illusion of bowing.³⁹ Moran explains that when he composed the song, he treated it as an orchestral work from the onset of the project:

The secret for making a keyboard sound like an orchestra is that you must play each and every part individually. In other words, if you get the orchestral unions right, if you double up cellos with bassoons etc., the end result will resemble what a typical orchestra would sound like. Even today with the great samples that exist, if you put a fist full of notes down, they sound like a keyboard player playing a fist full of stringy type sounds. If you play the sounds individually and then add the spiky down-bows, you have an orchestra.⁴⁰

To ensure "Barcelona" projected a high level of sonic pragmatism, Mercury and Moran contracted five musicians, who, coincidentally, were Moran's friends (Homi Kanga, violin; Laurie Lewis, violin; Deborah Ann Johnston, cello; Barry Castle, horn; and Frank Ricotti, percussion). The composers employed these musicians for two days at the Townhouse Studios, following the addition of Caballé's vocal parts and prior to the mixdown sessions in post-production, to add depth and realism to the sampled score.⁴¹ Moran states, "Samples are much more varied and complete these days, but twenty years ago it was a mission to put in bowing accents and the general ambient noise that accompanies a live player." For Moran, the inclusion of live musicians enhanced rather than dominated the overall balance of the piece. He concludes, "We couldn't have them too prominent because it would be apparent that there were not many of them."⁴²

³⁹ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 18 March 2008.

⁴² Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

In "Barcelona," the idiosyncratic sonorial quality of the instrumental section produced by Moran is paralleled by Mercury's ability to produce dense artificial choirs, achieved through multitracking his own voice. Moran explains, "As we got to know each other, I soon realized that Fred had a peculiar notation of his own and liked to record the voices in his own way. Fred would tell me, 'write what you think will work in my notation and then we will try it.'"⁴³ Mercury's notation involved Moran's writing out stacks of note names in blocks with no rhythmic value. That is to say, these notes did not appear on a staff but instead as their letter names, Bb-D-F, etc., for example. Moran continues, "He used a system for remembering harmonies whereby the named notes were written down like figured bass (i.e., vertically but with no rhythmic indications). It was simply a memory prompt, one that we could refer back to quickly. I would write out the harmonies in proper score form for my own reference but jot it down in his form for him to take into the studio."⁴⁴ Mercury then recorded each respective line in short segments, which he triple- or quadruple-tracked, starting from the lowest note and building upwards. Moran concludes, "Fred's level of ingenuity came once the process was nearly finished. He would listen to the passage and say 'something is missing.' He would then add a ninth or eleventh, or some other note that I would never have guessed to add, and then before you knew it, it was Queen."⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Moran, email to author, 11 February 2008.

⁴⁵ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

MUSICAL ANALYSIS AND THE ONTOLOGY OF RECORDED WORKS

In the opening section of "Barcelona," Mercury begins with a triumphant densely-voiced choir, a vocal introduction not unlike his work with Queen.⁴⁶ Though Mercury could have easily hired a choir to sing the opening section of "Barcelona," he chose to sing the parts himself first to give the work an autographic quality; second, to maintain creative autonomy; third, to avoid potential time constrictions that often result from working with large numbers of people (i.e., choirs, recording crews, food caterers, etc.) not to mention finding and leasing a big enough rehearsal/recording space to house the personnel; and finally, to implement and fuse the potency of multitrack layering and subordinate effects, conventional parameters with which he was familiar through rock recording practice.⁴⁷ The piece, set at 111 beats per minute at the quarter note in 4/4 time, begins on an E^{b add9} chord, featuring Mercury's layered voice singing jubilantly the word "Barcelona." The line occurs on three more occasions in the introduction (built on chords D^b, E^b in first inversion and G⁷ respectively). The musical outcome created accentuates the semantic importance of the word and foreshadows the chorus through repetition. These vocal parts culminate with a climactic B^{b7} chord, on which Mercury's many voices sing "Viva" (0:38-0:47). The result produced by the exultant chord is further heightened by the sonic properties of the artificial choir. Synthetic reverberation, phasing and stereo panning (which moves from centre to far left to far right) contribute to the chord's musical effect. In the next section, subordinate effects alter the sonic properties of

⁴⁶ Many of the band's songs commence with an elaborate a cappella vocal exposition to stamp the work with their sonic seal, some of which include "Bohemian Rhapsody" from *A Night at the Opera*, "You Take My Breath Away" from *A Day at the Races*, "Fat Bottomed Girls" from *Jazz*, "It's a Hard Life" from *The Works* and "Breakthru" from *The Miracle*.

⁴⁷ Although Mercury's voice comprises the majority of the artificial choir, Moran explains that he, along with Queen drummer Roger Taylor, sang on the track. The members of Queen were supportive of Mercury's solo project and they all made cameo appearances on the album. To this end, due to contractual agreements, only two members of Queen could appear on any given track.

Caballé's voice when she makes her entrance on a high B^b (0:57-1:03), a musical fragment taken from the end of the piece (5:07 -5:15). Moran explains he took the note from one of the cadenzas and placed it at the beginning of the song for its purity and beauty.⁴⁸ In the introductory passage, what appear to be tubular bells enforce the victorious character of the piece (1:13-1:23). Interestingly, Moran obtained the sonorial result quite by accident. He states, "You will never guess how I created the tubular bells part. You know how overbearing the bells can be with all their overtones. I had a Fender Stratocaster sound up on the Emulator II, which by the way sounded nothing like a Strat. By playing triads on the upper register of the instrument, and with some reverb I created the effect."⁴⁹

On many occasions, Moran and Mercury used reverb, among other effects that came from off-board units, to alter the timbral and spatial properties of voices and instruments. In Verse 1, when the singers make their formal entrance (1:51), the spatial dimensions of the performance resemble that of a large cathedral or hall. By using a Sony reverb unit in tandem with plate echo, delay lines and a small amount of compression, Moran and Mercury superimposed the ambient and acoustic properties of an illusive musical venue over their work. This result provides the listener with a pseudo-operatic experience in a grand venue, characteristic of an opera house (such as Covent Garden), rather than capturing the sonic deadness of Studio 4 at the Townhouse Studios. Not only did effects contribute to the overall sonic dimensionality of the work, but they equally served a musical function; Mercury used them to word paint the text. In Verse 2, using his breath control to create a smooth legato, he sings, "The wind is a gentle breeze,"

⁴⁸ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

which he then personifies through sung vocables (2:24-2:30). In doing so, he sonically impersonates the airiness of wind first by multitracking his voice, and second, by panning the voices to give them motion similar to the way in which the wind swoops and passes. Caballé echoes this gesture over the next two measures. Immediately following her vocal line "*Él me hablo de ti*" ("It spoke of you"), referring to the wind, she cleverly word paints its characteristics by using vocables on a trill that she too layers (2:32-2:35). According to Moran, this was the first time that Caballé multitracked her voice, and she was very pleased with the result.⁵⁰

Mercury and Caballé interject their respective lead vocal parts in a call and response manner between the lush density of the multitracked choirs, which, consequently yield dramatic moments in the piece. One notable example is audible following the line "And shake the foundations for the sky," whereby another choir of Mercurys enters using a vocable on "ah," followed by the line "Shaking all our lives" (4:11-4:20). The choir quickly dissipates and reappears, heightening the subtlety of the line. The exactitude of the decrescendo and crescendo is only made possible through complex studio mixing. Moran explains that he and Mercury would have mass mixdown sessions where each would be responsible for a section to pan in realtime. These tactile exercises required them to turn rotary knobs and move faders manually to position sounds cleverly in the stereo mix. Moran concurs that Mercury believed strongly in the effectiveness of using stereo to its fullest potential to create a poignant tapestry of sonic events that never remained idle.⁵¹ It is important to note that recording practices of orchestral music around 1987 would never have allowed for this degree of sonic

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

manipulation in post-production. The musical effect that this level of mixing engenders places the listener outside the realm of any plausible authentic concert experience. As Adam Krims suggests in his discussion of contemporary classical recordings, home listeners obtain a privatized space unlike the sonic properties of the original site where the concert took place.⁵² Krims states:

The combination of closely-placed microphones, spacious stereo imaging and highly resonant space offers a telling illustration of precisely what is at stake. The activity of each instrument jumps out in unprecedented detail, in a way that complements the highly articulated phrasing and instrumental projection; but the acoustic resonance opens out a performance space behind and around the instrumentalists, in dramatic contrast to the more consistent acoustic space favoured in most earlier organ concerto recordings. The close miking of each instrument would seem to place the listener directly in front of each instrument simultaneously, but the proportional volume of the reverberation implies a greater distancing. Rather than mimetically referring to any possible live concert experience, the recording describes an abstract musical space unachievable outside the mediating presence of the recording itself.⁵³

The high level of mediation that characterizes these recordings invokes issues of authenticity for purists who cannot decipher the degree to which technological manipulation occurs. As in the case of "Barcelona," the perceiver's ability to disentangle the level of mediation through the density of Mercury's vocal layering, the synthetic orchestra created by Moran, and the use of subordinate effects units, blur the lines between a live orchestral performance and a studio rock album. Andrew Goodwin states: "The most significant result of the recent innovations in pop production lies in the progressive removal of any immanent criteria for distinguishing between human and

⁵² Contemporary recordings that use this technique include the London Symphony Orchestra and Deep Purple's eponymous release (2000), and more recently, the Netherlands Metropole Orchestra performing with Steve Vai on *Sound Theories* (2007).

⁵³ Adam Krims, "Marxism, Urban Geography and Classical Recording: An Alternative to Cultural Studies," *Music Analysis* 20 (2001):352-53.

automated performance. Associated with this there is of course a crisis of authorship."⁵⁴ For Queen fans, Mercury's use of layering in the studio points to his craftsmanship as a composer, arranger and producer who innovatively capitalizes upon the recording environment. Conversely, in the operatic domain, this type of sonic maneuvering is less than tolerated by many who scrutinize a performance for its level of skill and authenticity. To this end, although classical recording producers use splicing and other editorial techniques to manipulate sound, the degree to which sound editing appears in "Barcelona" (echoed by the way in which Moran and Mercury employ the studio as a compositional force rather than a strict domain to capture the realism of certain instruments and voices), exceeds classical conventions for building a piece out of separately recorded and heavily altered sonic events.

"I WANT ALL THE WORLD TO SEE": LIVE PERFORMANCE AND AUTHENTICITY

Montserrat Caballé, Freddie Mercury and Mike Moran decided to keep "Barcelona" a secret until its world premiere on Friday 29 May 1987 in Ibiza, Spain. The trio, accompanied by orchestra and choir, headlined a performance at the largest outdoor club in the world, the Ku Club, which today goes by the name Privilege (see Example 5-3).⁵⁵ The Radio Televisión Española broadcast the concert by television in Spain (and offered a feed to many other European broadcasters) to celebrate Barcelona's acceptance to host the 1992 Summer Olympic Games. Some of the performers included Spandau

⁵⁴ Andrew Goodwin, "Sample and Hold: Pop Music in the Age of Reproduction," in *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word*, ed. by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (London: Routledge, 1990), 263.

⁵⁵ For the Ibiza performance, Mercury and his entourage (Freestone, Giddings, Hutton and Moran) stayed at the Pikes Hotel on Camí de Sa Vorera, located 5.4 miles from the Ku Club. This secluded boutique hotel, owned by Mercury's friend, Tony Pike, was the site of numerous parties, for which Mercury rented the entire complex. Mercury initially saw the establishment through the music video to "Club Tropicana," a song by the British pop duo Wham!. Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 8 December 2008.

Ballet, Marillion and Duran Duran. Mike Moran estimates four thousand people attended the show and millions watched it live on television.⁵⁶ Upon receiving Pino Saggiocco's formal invitation to perform, Mercury and Moran realized they confronted a multitude of logistical difficulties. How could they go about reproducing the sonic properties of their studio work in live performance? Moran confirms that there was no way a small choir of Spanish-trained singers could ever replicate the timbral quality of the choruses produced by Mercury's voice. Similarly, the studio effects that were paramount in the recording would not be viable to duplicate in a live mix. Beyond the musical quandaries were technical obstacles that further impeded their ability to deliver the piece effectively.

Example 5-3 – The world premiere of "Barcelona" in Ibiza, Spain



⁵⁶ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 17 January 2008.

Moran recalls that in the planning stages, he received a phone call from Sagliocco who said, "I can't find tubular bells and we can't get timps to Ibiza because they will not fit through the door of a Learjet."⁵⁷ A secondary technical issue arose when the stage crew came to the realization that a set-change would be unfeasible to execute in a fifteen-minute span. "Barcelona's" performance was to close the show, following the penultimate act, Duran Duran, and the stage and amplification system would require a degree of reconfiguration that was unobtainable in the allotted timeframe. The organizers were concerned that an extended pause in the show could compromise the flow of the live broadcast and cause restlessness for audience members. In response to the logistical problems, Caballé, Mercury and Moran decided (well prior to the event) that, due to the sonic and technical infeasibilities of a live performance, they, along with a medium-sized orchestra and choir, would sing and play to the mastertrack (the studio recording).⁵⁸ Contrary to popular belief, this was not a last-minute decision. John Potter suggests that Mercury mimed the performance because he lost his voice.⁵⁹ Laura Jackson propagates the myth by stating: "It is impossible to tell whether it was nerves or ill health, but just prior to joining Caballé on stage, Mercury complained of a sore throat and insisted that they should mime."⁶⁰ Jackson goes so far as to quote Pino Sagliocco falsely, who according to her states, "I honestly never found out why it was suddenly to be mimed."⁶¹ In one of my interviews with Moran, he adamantly states this was never the case. To confirm his position he posed a question to me: "If miming the performance was such a

⁵⁷ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ John Potter, *Vocal Authority: Singing Style and Ideology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 189.

⁶⁰ Jackson, *Mercury: The King of Queen*, 179.

⁶¹ Ibid., 179-80.

last minute decision, why did we rehearse it that way in the afternoon?"⁶² John Brough confirms Moran's position, as he states: "It was determined to use the recording very early on. Freddie was a perfectionist and the fact that the show involved performances by so many artists allowed too much room for error."⁶³ It is important to note that neither Potter nor Jackson cite the sources from which they obtained their data.

Moran, who played the song on piano and conducted the orchestra, explains that all the musicians had a proper score from which they read (see Example 5-4).⁶⁴ He transcribed each part himself and had copyists generate scores. Thus, I should stress that although the orchestra was not amplified, it would be erroneous to consider their performance as a form of simulation or type of audience deception.

Example 5-4 – Moran performing and conducting in Barcelona, Spain



⁶² Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

⁶³ Brough, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 December 2008.

⁶⁴ Moran also appeared in the "Barcelona" video as the conductor where he is often mistaken for Queen guitarist Brian May. Moran explained to me that in the video the fragile neon tube that he used as a baton was wired through his tuxedo to two twelve-volt car batteries.

The same notion applies to Caballé and Mercury's performance. Though the duo did not have microphones and amplification as such, they sang their respective parts avidly on stage, which, as Moran suggests, seeped into the mix through ambient microphones placed above and around the stage to capture the audience.

Caballé, Mercury and Moran used the same approach on Saturday 8 October 1988, for what would be the second and final performance of "Barcelona."⁶⁵ The concert took place at the *La Nit* event in front of the Montjuïc Castle in Barcelona (see Example 5-5). Although this concert was not televised, over 125,000 people attended the spectacle, including the King, Queen and Princess of Spain.⁶⁶ Similar to the concert in Ibiza, Mercury and Caballé headlined the show and this time not only performed "Barcelona," but also included two new selections ("The Golden Boy" and "How Can I Go On"), which would appear on the Barcelona album, released on 10 October 1988. Other musicians who performed at the concert included Dionne Warwick, Jerry Lee Lewis, Eddie Grant, Spandau Ballet and José Carreras.⁶⁷ The purpose of *La Nit* was to celebrate the arrival of the Olympic flag from Seoul, South Korea.⁶⁸ Due to the magnitude of the concert in conjunction with "Barcelona's" huge success as a single (released on 21 September 1987), Mercury, Moran and Caballé once again elected to mime the piece. By this point, the majority of the attendees would have been familiar with the song and thus sonic variances and inconsistencies with the recording could have potentially fuelled criticism.

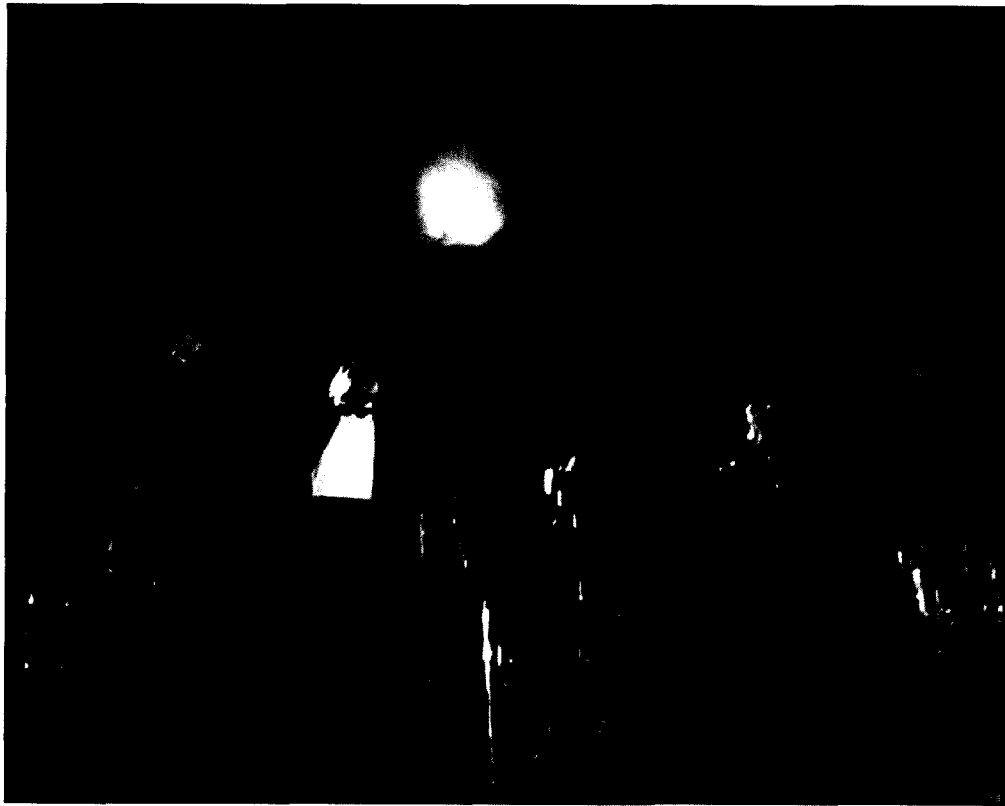
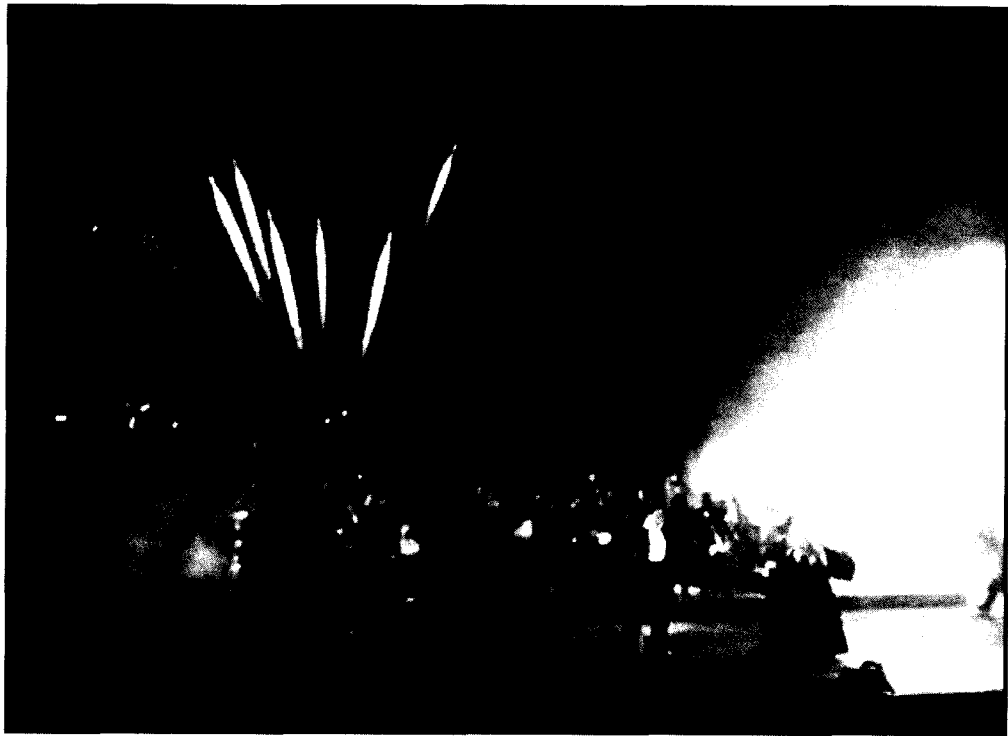
⁶⁵ In Barcelona, Mercury stayed at the Ramada Barcelona, where he rented the entire tenth floor for himself. This opulent suite provided a breathtaking panoramic view of the city. Brough, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 December 2008.

⁶⁶ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

⁶⁷ Brough, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 December 2008.

⁶⁸ Giddings, interview by author, telephone conversation, 25 November 2008.

Example 5-5 – The final performance of "Barcelona" at the Montjuïc Castle



In both performances of "Barcelona," no microphones are evident, which for some spectators may have triggered alarms as to how the sound traveled from the singers on stage to the PA system. Moreover, the absence of certain audible instruments in the live presentation (in Ibiza the tubular bells and timpani, for example) may have provoked moments of doubt. As I have already discussed, in no way were the musicians imitating the performance, nor were they attempting to compensate synthetically for their lack of musical aptitude. The situation resembles live performances of "Bohemian Rhapsody," in which the mastertrack supplied concertgoers with a high-fidelity representation of the operatic section, one that would be unachievable in live performance due to the high degree of studio experimentation and manipulation that constituted its creation. Largely, audience members accepted the compromise, as their gratification hinged upon hearing a musical presentation that closely resembled the studio work. As in the live performances of "Barcelona," dazzling fireworks, pyrotechnics and colossal lighting displays accompanied the mastertrack and thus offered visual stimulus that overrode the strict need to hear the performers sing the work. In addition, although Mercury and Caballé mimed the song, audience members did not require the same degree of validation through live performance that they otherwise might from a younger artist whose career they had not witnessed over decades of development. Many of the attendees came to the concert with preconceived notions of the performers whom they regarded as legitimate, regardless of their personal tastes. Equally, for some spectators, a degree of novelty and intrigue encircled the performance, emanating from the prospect of seeing Mercury and Caballé perform together, two icons from different performing universes.

"A MIRACLE SENSATION": ICONICITY AND RECEPTION

Freddie Mercury and Montserrat Caballé's musical encounter symbolized divergent codified behaviours, institutions and cultural histories, for their success as performers depended upon the rules of engagement created and reinforced by the hegemony of genre systems. Thus, "Barcelona" posed a high degree of risk for Mercury and Caballé, who parted from discursive constructions of genre. Some rock audiences may have found "Barcelona" too operatic; conversely, for some operagoers the work may have overly resembled the sonic characteristics of rock music. As in the case of the critical risk with which Mercury contended in 1975 through his eclectic magnum opus, "Bohemian Rhapsody," Mercury firmly believed in "Barcelona's" potential for obtaining praise as a legitimate work. Mike Moran recalls:

Polydor, the record company had no idea what we were doing. These poor people had been financing the project and Fred would not let them listen to it. Finally, when we had finished they turned up and we played it. Fred nonchalantly said, "There you are, we'll put it out as a single." I said, "Are you sure about this Fred? You may attract a bit of flack from this." He looked at me as if I was a mad man and said, "Do you like it?" I responded, "I think it is amazing." Fred replied, "Are you proud of it?" I said, "Absolutely!" He questioned, "Why on earth should it not go out then?"⁶⁹

The uncertainty that Moran contemplated was to an extent shared by Caballé and Mercury who pondered the way that they would deliver the piece convincingly in live performance. The pair would have to find a common ground that maintained their respective stage personae but did not exceed the boundaries of performativity set forth by genre conventions. That is to say, Mercury had to present himself as a rock performer but in doing so could not suppress Caballé's mandate as an operatic diva. For Mercury, he

⁶⁹ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

would have to make changes to his customary stage attire and mannerisms in order to ensure he did not overstep his role as an equal entity in the performance. Mercury states:

I was a wreck, but then so was she. I was bringing her into my rock 'n' roll world and so she was shaking like a leaf, saying, "Will they accept me?" She asked me how we should do it [present the live performance] and I said, "Oh, we should just stand there and deliver the song," which is how operatic recitals are done. I had to sort of restrain myself too. I had to keep in mind that I couldn't do all my usual ballet stuff, none of those prancy poses, and all that. No, I had to just deliver it in a fucking tuxedo – which I'd never done in front of an audience before – and just go for it!⁷⁰

Soon after the performance started, Mercury's apprehension and reserved demeanour quickly dissipated. Mike Moran explains:

I remember Fred saying to me, "I can't go on stage and do my usual thing, because she is an opera singer. Maybe I'd better tone down the act." Of course, what he'd temporarily forgotten was this was an operatic diva. When she went on stage, she was like a bloody volcano. As soon as she started, he looked over at me and said, "Bloody hell, I've got competition here." It was actually quite a fiery combination.⁷¹

Whereas their experimental modes of composition and performance invoked diversity in the studio, the same effect is evident in the duo's dynamic union on stage. Although Mercury and Caballé only performed together a few times, it was clear they created a visual narration that portrayed their respective musical fields. For Mercury, although he delivered the song in a tuxedo, which as he suggests was in contrast to his standard apparel in Queen shows, he maintained aspects of his rock stage persona by enacting idiosyncratic gestures that defined him as a performer (see Example 5-6). Arguably, this fusion of sonic and visual markers generated skepticism for audience members and critics who found the degree of syncretism inauthentic and thus regarded the work as a pastiche of unconnected musical and visual gestures. One week following *La Nit* in Barcelona,

⁷⁰ Mercury, *Freddie Mercury*, 97.

⁷¹ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

The Times published an article entitled "Mercury Falls for a Classical Trap," arguing the work lacked centrality.

To be fair, Mercury has cleverly spread the load by again teaming up with the real thing: the same illustrious Spanish diva, Montserrat Caballé, whom he first inveigled into a duet 18 months ago on the hit single Barcelona. Now Barcelona has grown into an album of the same name for which this decidedly odd couple has devised seven more fortissimo workouts. Largely written by Mercury himself, they bear the hallmarks of that overblown cod-operatic manner he has been toying with ever since Queen hit the jackpot in 1976 [*sic*] with the grandiosely-titled Bohemian Rhapsody, a fanciful and intricate piece of nonsense.⁷²

Philip Hensher of *The Guardian* asserts the notion that "Barcelona" falls short of a genuine classical piece for its short length and lack of dynamic contrast. He states:

Tempted by the idea of gestures they thought of as "operatic" or "symphonic," their technique has tended to stick there. Monserrat [*sic*] Caballé duetting with Freddie Mercury on Barcelona may sound "operatic," but it is only a three-minute song of banging and crashing - all climax and no crescendo. Some of Wagner's single musical structures last over two hours - and no rock musician has a clue how to start constructing something like that.⁷³

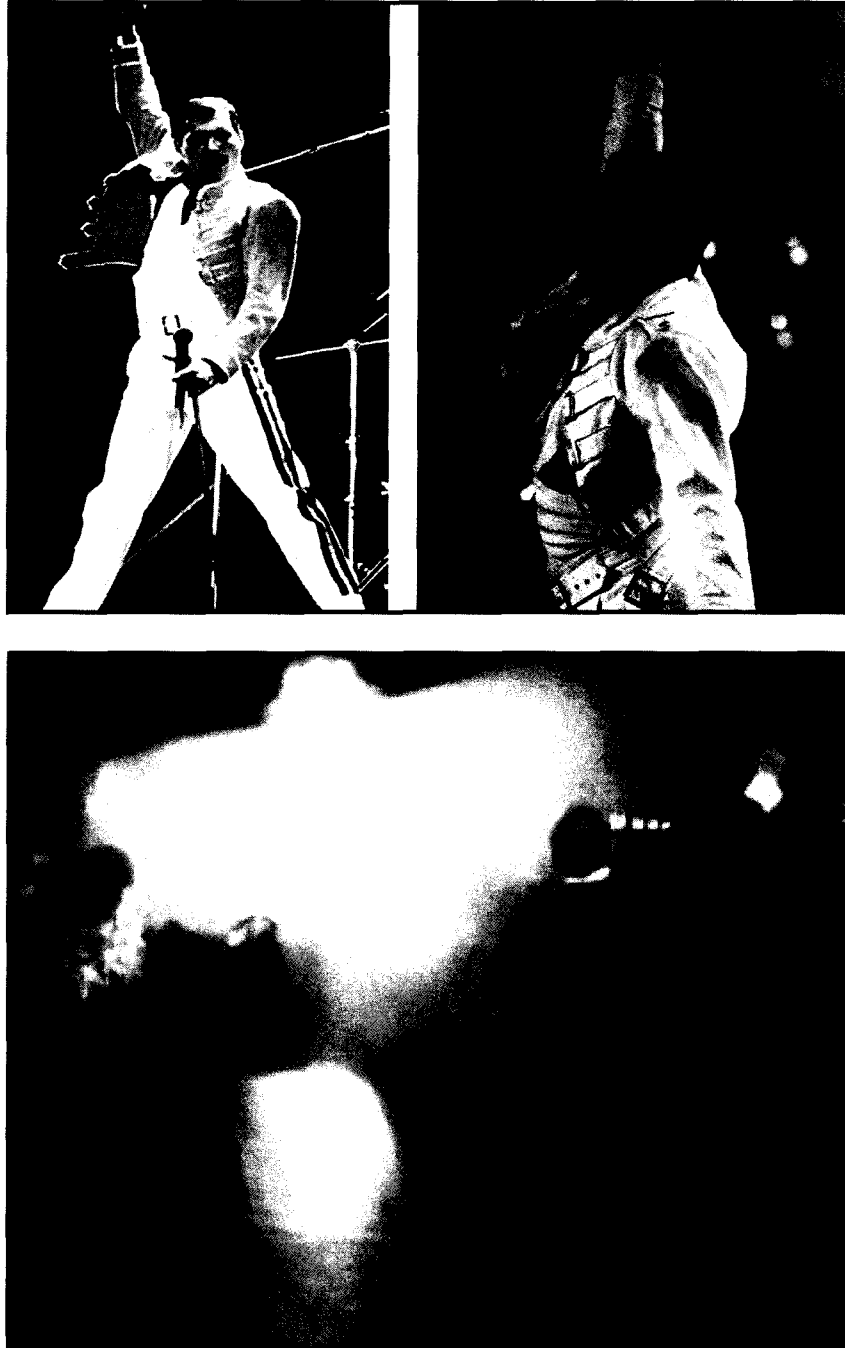
Similar to "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Barcelona" encapsulates diverse musical styles that reflect much more than an unplanned musical potpourri. The antiquated and normative modes of analysis that I cite above reveal the inability for commentators to regard the work as one that does not sit firmly in the cultural and social norms of the past. I argue that Moran and Mercury's mode of composition differs considerably from that of Richard Wagner's, therefore making the comparison contrived. Many critics fail to consider technological, ideological and socio-musical factors that form and define the work in its

⁷² Queen Archives, "Mercury Falls for a Classical Trap," *The Times* (16 October 1988), online source: <http://www.queenarchives.com/viewtopic.php?t=472>

⁷³ Philip Hensher, "C sharp? What's C sharp?" *The Guardian* (26 October 2006), online source: <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/features/story/0,,1931560,00.html>. In his article written nearly twenty years following "Barcelona's" release, Hensher argues, "Whether it's Streisand tackling lieder, Sting playing a lute or McCartney's oratorio, pop-classical crossovers are always grim." Hensher's article uncovers what he calls five decades of musical disasters, one of which includes "Barcelona." For Hensher, "Barcelona" is "quite possibly the campiest three minutes ever recorded." He continues, "This proved too over-the-top even for Madame Caballé's demented entourage of opera queens. If you want to give yourself nightmares for life, simply try to envisage the opera this 'operatic' duet might have been extracted from."

reception. These observers must situate the piece as one that borrows equally from rock and art music conventions through the iconic figures who construct and deliver the work.

Example 5-6 – Freddie Mercury enacting his legendary pose



"MAKE THE VOICES SING": VOCAL STYLE AND IDEOLOGY

In the early stages of their musical collaboration, Mercury and Caballé determined that they must maintain the timbral qualities of their individual voices to avoid compromising musical integrity. Although the highly eclectic scope of their project prompted them to step outside their learned musical domains, Mercury and Caballé insisted that the delivery of their vocal styles should encapsulate the musical traditions from which they originated. In the preliminary discussions of the project, Moran explains that he raised this concern with Mercury.

If we are going to do a song or make a record, two things must be paramount. One, she does not sing a note that could be construed as her trying to sing rock 'n' roll. Conversely, you do not sing anything that can be remotely interpreted as you trying to sing opera. The most important thing is that you maintain your own integrity. You are still one of the world's greatest rock singers and divas and she is one of the world's great classical sopranos and divas. Let's try and figure out some way that we can make a song that does not compromise anyone's artistic integrity.⁷⁴

The criteria that define musical and artistic integrity for Mercury, which stem from sets of musical and ideological expectations, differ considerably for Caballé. Modes of pedagogy that constitute Caballé's world of art music are the antithesis to Mercury's career as a rock performer. The legitimization of one's vocal grain in rock exceeds formalities of technical accuracy achieved through extensive training, practice and refinement. This notion is exemplified by iconic rock singers including Janis Joplin, Bon Scott and Brian Johnson of AC/DC, Robert Plant of Led Zeppelin, David Lee Roth and Sammy Hagar of Van Halen and Axl Rose of Guns N' Roses. Allan Moore outlines the dichotomy that separates modes of vocal performance and pedagogy in classical and rock music.

⁷⁴ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

The "trained" voice is apt to sing tempered pitches precisely "in tune," to employ an even, full-throated tone with rich vibrato, and to have little use for other intonational and embellishing techniques. Although found in a range of older popular musics, it is not commonly found in rock, for its strongest connotations are those of legitimized music. Against this norm, the "untrained" ("natural") voice is important in the ideology of rock as signifying "authenticity," since the trained voice is clearly held to have been tampered with.⁷⁵

Mercury confirms this mode of self-instruction and exploration that Moore elucidates.

With reference to his own voice, Mercury states:

I had no operatic training at all and it's too late for me to start now, dear. I've never had any kind of formal training actually. It just comes through extensive singing all these years. I don't think rock 'n' roll singers have any kind of training, their training is playing on the road. My voice has had enough beating, so it's a bit late to go and have any kind of training. I mean this is my voice and that's it.⁷⁶

In his analysis of "Barcelona," John Potter argues that Caballé is constrained by the formal rigidity of her training while Mercury is at liberty to make musical allowances that grant him the ability to deliver the song emotionally.

Once the singers begin their duet, two things are immediately obvious: firstly, you can hear every word of Mercury's text, whereas it is difficult at times to tell even what language Caballé is singing in much of the time (she sometimes repeats Freddie's English and sometimes sings a Spanish translation); secondly, Caballé's delivery is governed entirely by her technique, from which she cannot depart without risking her *raison d'être* as a singer. She is concerned above all with making beautiful sounds in the conventional singerly way. Mercury's delivery is much more dynamic; he sings with the directness of speech and his performance reflects his personality: he declaims the text in whatever way will make the greatest effect. He does not have the ideological baggage of several hundred years to restrain him.⁷⁷

I find Potter's observations and arguments highly problematic for numerous reasons.

First, although slight variances on attack transients resulting from microphone placement techniques may have slightly degraded Caballé's audibility, I contend that

⁷⁵ Allan F. Moore, *Rock, the Primary Text: Developing a Musicology of Rock*, 2nd edition (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), 45.

⁷⁶ Mercury, *Freddie Mercury*, 95.

⁷⁷ Potter, *Vocal Authority*, 188-89.

comprehensibility of Mercury's text in comparison with Caballé's depends upon one's fluency in English and Spanish. I am inclined to think that Potter's inability to understand Caballé's part does not stem directly from her articulation and diction, but rather from his own incapacity to grasp the Spanish language. This is evident by the fact that he believes Caballé is simply repeating exact translations from Mercury's English text (for a complete translation of "Barcelona" see Appendix 5-1). Perhaps to a Spaniard, the converse effect would occur whereby they would understand Caballé but not Mercury. Second, Potter insinuates that Caballé's ability to perform in a "singerly" way becomes restricted by her formalized technique from which she cannot depart. This may be true, but how does this notion bypass Mercury? As Moran stated, Mercury and Caballé came to the project as iconic singers who represented divergent cultural customs and modes of performance. Although Potter argues Caballé's musical training saddles her with "hundreds of years of ideological baggage," impeding her ability to perform convincingly, I would suggest that Mercury too carries ideological weight rooted in sets of culturally and musically coded signifiers from which he cannot depart. Potter concludes that Mercury's delivery "reflects his personality," from which I infer that either Potter knew Mercury on a personal level or his vocal style somehow purely embodies the artifice of his stage persona. In either case, the terms are vague. I am unclear on Potter's analytic method that enables him to make such a specific observation. There is an unempirical view that the grain of a rock singer's voice has the ability to deliver the emotionality that she or he possesses. Motti Regev asserts this rather narrow perspective by stating, "In the context of rock music, the grain of the voice has become a prominent aesthetic component in the evaluation of music. The interpretation of singing as credible

and authentic, as reflecting the performer's genuine emotions, points to the singer's voice as evidence."⁷⁸ In my view, one's ability to hear or see genuine emotion is nearly impossible. This concept differs and should not be compounded with modes of vocal delivery or ways of singing in terms of genre conventions. Mercury's vocal delivery, which at times finds him singing in the very upper register of his voice, may be regarded as a passionate display of his dedication to the piece as a performer, but in no way does it point to any form of 'genuine' emotionality or sentimentality carried through the 'grain' of his voice to the exclusion of other modes of vocal performance.

"START THE CELEBRATIONS": TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND EMBEDDED MEANING

Contrary to popular belief, Mercury and Moran did not compose "Barcelona" for the Summer Games of the XXV Olympiad. They were not commissioned by the Olympic Committee or the Spanish Government to create the work, nor were they persuaded by Caballé to write a piece about her native land. Through retrospective analysis that stems from the song's adoption by Spain, some commentators wrongfully believe that it directly reflects the City of Barcelona and the festivities that surrounded the 1992 Summer Games. Conversely, I argue that the thematic content found within "Barcelona" signifies Mercury's encounter with Caballé at the Ritz and the profound relationship that transpired from their evening at Covent Garden and Garden Lodge. Robert Pullen and Stephen Taylor perceptively acknowledge this notion, and in doing so point to the influence Caballé had upon Mercury.

⁷⁸ Motti Regev, "Producing Artistic Value: The Case of Rock Music," *The Sociological Quarterly* 35 (1994):96.

Freddie himself had sung in falsetto, making numerous alterations and mixing a number of Spanish words into the otherwise English lyrics. These bear a moment's consideration, particularly since it has always been assumed that the text is a conventional paean of praise to Barcelona itself. Yet how could, "The moment that you stepped into the room / you took my breath away?" and "If God is willing / friends until the end" be said of a city? It seems clear on the strength of these and other sentiments that it is not a city that is here being apostrophized, but a human being: Caballé herself. It is self-evident that in the context of a homage to Barcelona, Freddie was also paying a loving tribute to his favourite singer.⁷⁹

In Verse 1, Mercury begins by revealing his "perfect dream," which to him signified meeting and collaborating musically with Caballé. In an interview with David Wigg in 1987, Mercury confirms this sentiment as he states: "I am totally in awe, in awe of her and in awe that the whole thing has actually taken off. Every now and again I have to pinch myself, as I wonder if I am actually doing this."⁸⁰ In the song, Mercury states he "wants all the world to see," their "miracle sensation" that is "slowly coming true." Caballé interjects similar themes that mirror those portrayed by Mercury, as she professes "a dream enveloped her" ("*Un sueño me envolvió*"). As such, Caballé follows her instinct to find Mercury ("*Un instinto me guiaba*").

In the second verse, through metaphor and word painting, Mercury depicts the circumstances of his encounter. He explains, "The wind is a gentle breeze," to which Caballé artfully responds, "It spoke of you" ("*Él me hablo de ti*"). He continues with a parable that the ringing bells are calling them together and guiding them forever. Mercury confirms his state of bliss by wishing that his dream might "never go away." In this line, Mercury may be pointing to the fact that he was AIDS-positive and knew his time was

⁷⁹ Robert Pullen and Stephen Taylor, *Montserrat Caballé: Casta Diva* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), 305.

⁸⁰ Wigg, "Interview with Freddie Mercury," Ibiza, Spain, September 1987.

limited.⁸¹

In the first chorus, the recurring line stating "Barcelona" signifies the geographic and symbolic importance of the place where they met. Following the first declamatory "Barcelona," Mercury confirms, "It was the first time that we met." Following the second "Barcelona" he points to the semantic value of their meeting, as he recalls, "The moment that you stepped into the room you took my breath away." Mercury solemnly concludes the chorus with a plea, stating, "And if God is willing, we will meet again someday."

Here Mercury presents his vision to see Caballé again in an alternate world, one to which he must go due to his terminal illness.⁸²

The somber mood that concludes Chorus 1 changes drastically with the triumphant tone of Verse 3. Mercury calls for the songs to begin, the voices to sing and the celebrations to start. Unquestionably, these declamations align perfectly with the events that surrounded the Olympics. It is probable that Mercury, in this context, is referring to his collaboration with Moran and Caballé, which he hopes "shakes the foundations from the sky." The foundations to which Mercury may be referring are unclear. One potential reading of the phrase could imply the musical foundation on which they premise their work.

In the final chorus, Mercury and Caballé reflect upon the magnificence of

⁸¹ Moran explains Mercury knew of his AIDS-positive status during the recordings and performances of "Barcelona," but never let it get in the way of his professional relationship with him or Caballé. Moreover, Moran states, "no visible signs in Freddie's appearance or health signaled the fact that he was ill." Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

⁸² Laura Jackson at various points in *Mercury: The King of Queen* (1996) and *Queen and I: The Brian May Story* (1994) suggests that in Ibiza, Mercury was showing signs of having AIDS, presumably Kaposi's sarcoma. Terry Giddings states: "Fred was fine then, because his condition was managed very well. No one would have been able to tell he was sick by looking at him" (Giddings, interview by author, telephone conversation, 25 November 2008). Peter Freestone adds, "If Freddie hadn't been diagnosed with AIDS, he wouldn't have known he had the disease" (Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 8 December 2008).

Barcelona in the literal and metaphoric sense. Mercury comments on the beautiful horizon and uses a simile to compare it with "a jewel in the sun." He concludes by repeating the poignant line, "If God is willing." The potency of the line is accentuated through repetition, concluding with Mercury's wish that he and Caballé remain "Friends until the end." The line is interrupted by the omnipresent Mercury who, through dense choirs of himself, triumphantly declares "Viva" ("Live").

"FRIENDS UNTIL THE END": CONCLUSION

Within their spheres of musical production, Montserrat Caballé and Freddie Mercury symbolized ideological, cultural and musical vestiges that defined their personae and denoted respective ties to genre conventions. Through "Barcelona," I contend that they acted as socio-musical ambassadors to these genres, but collaboratively fragmented them at the same time. As discussed above, with Moran as musical conciliator, Caballé and Mercury's studio technique borrowed from differing, and often conflicting, musical practices, as they developed a *modus operandi* that equally catered to Mercury's orally-based mode of composition and performance with Caballé's literary dependence upon notated scores. Consequently, each artist made provisions and compromises as, through the collaboration, the other ventured into foreign musical territory. For example, Mercury, like most rock singers, typically sang and recorded vocals in the studio using headphones as a monitoring system (to avoid unwanted sounds known as "bleeding"), while recording for Caballé entailed capturing her voice naturally, at the venue in which she performed live. To this end, because Caballé had no experience recording with technologies associated with rock conventions, she found headphones unnatural and uncomfortable. As a conciliatory gesture, producer John Brough installed a loudspeaker

in the isolation booth to create an intermediary sound world, one that typified, in part, the customary venues in which she sang, all the while ensuring technical variances did not encumber the sonic consequences of the recording itself.⁸³ Moran too elected to blend methodologies and technologies associated with genres, encapsulating characteristics emblematic of both art and rock music. As discussed above, the veteran arranger used synthesizers and samplers in the place of a live orchestra, primarily to foster a domain where he and Mercury could experiment *ad infinitum*, but in doing so ensconced his ideas by developing elaborate orchestrations through Western notation. As a means to counterbalance the extensive mediation invoked from the synthesization symptomatic of rock aesthetics, Moran recorded "Barcelona's" piano accompaniment on an acoustic instrument, one of outstanding quality. John Brough recalls: "The day before we were set to start recording 'Barcelona,' I was at the studio working with another artist, and I was told that some gear might be arriving from Queen's crew. Before they turned up, movers from Steinway presented themselves with an enormous concert grand ordered by Mike Moran. For every subsequent recording session, Mike had the piano brought in and tuned."⁸⁴ Though Studio 4 at the Townhouse contained a multitude of keyboards and upright pianos, Moran arguably opted to use a Steinway because it embodied the cachet and sonic distinction prototypical of the classical concert stage.

In tandem with the technological hybridism outlined above, "Barcelona's" instrumentation and orchestration borrowed interchangeably from art and rock precepts. As I have argued, while Mercury's bountiful choirs and Moran's rich orchestra astoundingly resemble the sonic properties associated with art music, we should

⁸³ Brough, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 December 2008.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

remember that they are forms of simulacra. That is to say, although flutes, horns, strings and vocal choirs broadly signify the musical lexis of classical customs, I argue that in the case of "Barcelona," because the instrumentation is the product of extensive studio manipulation achieved synthetically with keyboards, samplers and effects units, the overall process more closely resembles the editorial techniques and sophisticated studio practices common in rock aesthetics than those used in classical modes of performance. Perhaps the most notable example includes the way in which Moran obtained the tubular bells effects, which he achieved on the Emulator II.

In live performance, signifiers of rock and art music commingle and fuse as the singers deliver a bombastic performance of "Barcelona" at an ear-splitting decibel level, amplified through an immense PA system, which, incidentally, was the same sound system used by Queen in stadia.⁸⁵ Correspondingly, the spectacle features performance rituals emblematic of rock concerts, such as thunderous fireworks and dazzling pyrotechnics, to which the audience responded with unreserved cheering, although, at the same time, the performers adhere to the formality and dress codes associated with art music. Finally, on a symbolic level, the visual and ideological presence of Caballé and Mercury fragments stereotypical views of male dominance in the rock sphere of influence, for the duo stands united, possessing an equivalent degree of sovereignty within the work, and thus engendering traditional views of male hegemony to collapse.

Irrefutably, many of Caballé and Mercury's musical antecedents were blurring, rewriting and willingly crossing all kinds of classificatory lines among jazz, rock and art

⁸⁵ At Mercury's urging, the Olympic committee hired G. L. S. Productions from Los Angeles (owned and operated by Queen's tour manager Gerry Stickells) and Clair Brothers Productions from Pennsylvania (a sound company that Queen employed for all their tours), to supply the PA and lighting systems for "Barcelona's" performances. Brough, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 December 2008.

music, but not to the same extent evinced through "Barcelona."⁸⁶ We should remember that most of the trio's musical predecessors within the rock world, who found inspiration in art music by way of its form, length, structure, instrumentation and orchestration, counterpoint and harmonic construction, rhythmic patterns and polyrhythms, and motifs and themes, composed music for rock band and orchestra solitarily; their endeavours did not constitute a comprehensive collaborative effort that commenced in composition and extended through performance between rock and classical music icons.⁸⁷ That is to say, popular musicians essentially composed rock songs that were arranged for orchestra, which should not be confused with the way in which Moran and Mercury conceived and executed Barcelona with Caballé. Mike Moran himself contextualizes "Barcelona," as he states:

Many artists employed symphony orchestras, particularly those artists who were used to events on a grand scale (Deep Purple and Yes, for example) but they tended to be complementary to an existing style rather than a new concept. We were aware as we were making "Barcelona" that it was a distinctly original piece that embraced both rock and classical in a way that had never been done before.⁸⁸

Arguably, one of the few artists whose musical efforts mirrors the collaborative relationships found in "Barcelona" is Frank Zappa, and his musical association with Pierre Boulez.⁸⁹ From January to April 1984, Zappa recorded *Boulez Conducts Zappa*:

⁸⁶ One notable example is "Perhaps Love" (1981), performed by John Denver and Plácido Domingo, which arguably inspired Mercury to collaborate creatively with an operatic singer on a much larger scale.

⁸⁷ Noteworthy artists who accomplished this fusion include the Moody Blues *Days of Future Passed* (1967), Deep Purple *Concerto for Group and Orchestra* (1969), Yes *Time and a Word* (1970), Procol Harum *Live with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra* (1972), Electric Light Orchestra *Eldorado, A Symphony* (1974) and Emerson, Lake and Palmer *In Concert* (1977).

⁸⁸ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 17 January 2008.

⁸⁹ Prior to the commencement of their project in 1984, Zappa throughout his prolific and experimental career employed symphonic players to expand the breadth of his sonic palette. Zappa's first solo album outside the Mothers of Invention, *Lumpy Gravy* (1968), consisted of orchestral music and spoken dialogue, interspersed with sound effects and rock influenced sections. In 1983, he released *London Symphony Orchestra, Vol. 1*, featuring the London Symphony Orchestra performing four of his

The Perfect Stranger (released in August 1984 by Angel Records/EMI), an album that featured Zappa's music, conducted in part by the esteemed French contemporary classical music composer and conductor, Pierre Boulez. On the album, Boulez conducts "The Perfect Stranger" (a work that he commissioned), "Naval Aviation in Art?" and "Dupree's Paradise," all of which were performed by his Ensemble InterContemporain. Similar to Moran, Mercury and Caballé, Zappa sought to present artfully a work that defied a generic label within rock music. As James Grier states, "The preeminent sign of Zappa's eventual acceptance by the art music community took the form of collaborations, first with Pierre Boulez, directing the Ensemble InterContemporain, and later with the Ensemble Modern [1993], on concerts and recordings of his own."⁹⁰ Through this musical effort, Zappa innovated by making a meaningful fusion of rock, jazz and modern art music, as *The Perfect Stranger* exceeded simplistic arrangements of rock songs. Zappa's works, like "Barcelona," encompassed elaborate scores, keyboard computers (mainly the synclavier) in conjunction with traditional orchestral instruments and incidental sounds (including those captured from a vacuum cleaner), to fuse rock, electronic and art conventions pluralistically. Consequently, by obtaining legitimization not only by the rock advocates but also segments of the art music community, Zappa, Moran, Mercury and Caballé's matchless collaborative efforts spawned a series of artists who acknowledged the economic and artistic potential for hybridizing musical and commercial elements common to art and popular music. As such, musicians began to emerge who exploited various forms of musical syncretism, achieved through genre

compositions and, four years following this album, he released a follow-up of the same concert with different musical selections, *London Symphony Orchestra, Vol. 2* (1987).

⁹⁰ James Grier, "The Mothers of Invention and 'Uncle Meat': Alienation, Anachronism and a Double Variation," *Acta Musicologica* 73 (2001):90.

blurring and genre crossovers. One of the earliest examples of an artist who utilized the marketing potential of performing art music repertoires in venues outside the classical arena was Luciano Pavarotti, on his recording of Giacomo Puccini's "Nessun dorma" (1990), which obtained pop status as the theme song for the World Cup.⁹¹ Through his "Pavarotti and Friends" charity concerts, the veteran operatic tenor performed with many popular musicians, including Eric Clapton, Elton John, Sting, Bono, Lionel Ritchie, B. B. King, Ricky Martin and Sheryl Crow. Pavarotti's willingness to collaborate with popular musicians is somewhat surprising considering he felt personally compelled to inform Montserrat Caballé that her collaboration with Freddie Mercury was the biggest mistake of her career.⁹² During the 1990s and through the 2000s, as a direct result of the 1990 World Cup, Pavarotti through inventive marketing strategies that borrowed heavily from rock concert aesthetics, performed with the Three Tenors (Plácido Domingo, José Carreras and himself), an exemplary group who commercialized art music at an unprecedented level by delivering concerts in stadia around the globe.⁹³

⁹¹ Similar to "Barcelona," the piece was also used as an anthem in the Olympics. In his last performance, Pavarotti sang "Nessun dorma" for the celebrations of the 2006 Winter Games held in Torino, Italy.

⁹² Peter Freestone, who maintains a close relationship with Montserrat Caballé and Mike Moran, recalls the instance when "Pavarotti told Montserrat that the worst possible thing she could have done was teamed-up with Freddie. After he saw the success of 'Barcelona,' he quickly changed his tune and began his 'Pavarotti and Friends' concerts. Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 8 December 2008.

⁹³ Although the Three Tenors sang operatic arias almost exclusively (with a few songs from the larger classical repertoire and a select few pop songs intermixed in their setlist), many popular musicians attempted to capitalize upon the crossover potential for delivering classically-influenced pop music. On 11 October 1991, Paul McCartney released his *Liverpool Oratorio*, composed in collaboration with Carl Davis (conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra) to commemorate the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's 150th anniversary. In 1992, Andrea Bocelli through his collaboration with the Italian rock singer Zucchero (who also worked with Pavarotti in 1992 on *Miserere*) developed a reputation for his synthesis of classical and popular modes of performance. In 1995, Sarah Brightman abandoned her career in musical theatre and established herself as a crossover artist who utilized classically-influenced vocal techniques with pop-inspired instrumentations and arrangements. Notable albums of Brightman's that demonstrate this fusion are *Fly* (1995), *Eden* (1998) and *Classics* (2001). Following in the musical footsteps set forth by Brightman's success, Charlotte Church in 2001 released her debut album, *Voice of an Angel*, displaying a collection of sacred and traditional pieces intermingled with opera arias. By 2003, Church ventured further away from classical music by collaborating with Jürgen Vries (Darren Tate), an

In closing, one cannot deny the influence that "Barcelona" had upon the music industry. It is a piece of music that personifies the minds of three musical revolutionaries: the late Freddie Mercury, Mike Moran and Montserrat Caballé. As the project began in Barcelona on that memorable day in March of 1987 at the Ritz, so it would end in Barcelona. In front of 125,000 people, Mercury delivered what would be his last performance, marking the conclusion of the trio's collaboration and the end of Mercury's career as a stage performer.⁹⁴ He sought to leave his musical legacy by metaphorically "shaking the foundations from the sky," something he arguably accomplished in his final performance. In true regal fashion, from the top of a cliff that housed the Montjuïc Castle, "Barcelona's" performance lit the skies and filled the air with Mercury's "perfect dream."

established producer and DJ, on a single entitled "The Opera Song." Finally, in 2005, prior to her acting career, Church released her most pop-influenced project; an album entitled *Tissues and Issues*.

⁹⁴ In an interview viewable on *Lover of Life*, DVD Disc 1, Montserrat Caballé says that due to her profound friendship with Mercury, and the sentimental significance that "Barcelona" carries, she could never perform the piece with anyone other than him. Mike Moran confirms that Caballé has, to date, never performed the piece with anyone other than Mercury. Georg Purvis states that at the 1992 Opening Ceremonies, Caballé performed the piece with José Carreras. Although Caballé and Carreras did perform a short medley of arias, Purvis' account of the event is incorrect (see Georg Purvis, *Queen: Complete Works* [Richmond, Surrey: Reynolds & Hearn Ltd., 2007], 116.). Purvis does not cite a source noting where he obtained the information, but on 7 December 2007, in an email to the author, he revealed that the source from which he obtained the data was Jacky Gunn and Jim Jenkins' *Queen: As It Began* (1992). In the email, and contrary to what he writes in his book, Purvis states: "But, with the research that you have done, and that Montserrat had emphatically denied that any other singer would perform the song with her, I would say that you are absolutely correct that she did not sing 'Barcelona' with Jose Carreras!" Subsequent to the 1992 Summer Olympic Games, Caballé on one occasion did deliver a mimed performance of "Barcelona" at the 1999 UEFA Champions League football final (Camp Nou Stadium), but did so accompanied by video footage of Mercury.

APPENDIX 5-1

MERCURY	CABALLÉ	MERCURY & CABALLÉ
INTRODUCTION (0:00-1:44)		
Barcelona (4x) Viva		
VERSE 1 (1:45-2:23)		
<p>I had this perfect dream</p> <p>This dream was me and you</p> <p>I want all the world to see</p>	<p><i>Un sueño me envolvió</i> (A dream enveloped me)</p> <p><i>Tal vez estás aquí</i> (Maybe you are here)</p> <p><i>Un instinto me guiaba</i> (An instinct guided me)</p>	<p>A miracle sensation My guide and inspiration Now my dream is slowly coming true</p>
VERSE 2 (2:23-2:54)		
<p>The wind is a gentle breeze</p> <p>The bells are ringing out</p>	<p><i>Él me hablo de ti</i> (It spoke of you)</p> <p><i>El canto vuela</i> (The song flies)</p>	<p>They're calling us together Guiding us forever Wish my dream would never go away</p>
CHORUS 1 (2:55-3:39)		
<p>Barcelona It was the first time that we met Barcelona How can I forget The moment that you stepped into the room you took my breath away Barcelona</p> <p>Barcelona</p> <p>And if God willing</p>	<p>Barcelona</p> <p><i>La música vibró</i> (The music resonated)</p> <p><i>Y ella nos unió</i> (And she united us)</p>	<p>We will meet again, someday</p>

VERSE 3 (3:40-4:20)		
Let the songs begin	<i>Déjalo nacer</i> (Let it be born)	
Let the music play		
Make the voices sing	<i>Nace un gran amor</i> (A great love is born)	
Start the celebrations	<i>Ven a mí</i> (Come to me)	
And cry	<i>Grita</i> (Shout)	
Come alive	<i>Vive</i> (Live)	
And shake the foundations from the skies		
Shaking all our lives	Our lives	
CHORUS 2 (4:21-5:38)		
Barcelona Such a beautiful horizon Barcelona Like a jewel in the sun	Barcelona	<i>Por ti seré gaviota de tu bella mar</i> (For you I will be the gull of your beautiful sea)
Barcelona	<i>Suenan las campanas</i> (The bells have been sounded)	
Barcelona	<i>Abre tus puertas al mundo</i> (Open your doors to the world)	
If God is willing	If God is willing	
Friends until the end <i>Viva</i>		If God is willing
Barcelona		

CHAPTER 6

Living for Music, Dying with AIDS: *Made in Heaven*

I certainly don't have any aspirations to live to 70. It would be so boring. I will be dead and gone long before that. I'll be starting a new life somewhere else – growing my own pomegranates.¹

- Freddie Mercury

For Freddie Mercury and Queen, 1988 to 1991 was a time of immense struggle, profound creativity and intimate reclusion, marking the final chapter of the band's impressive career as a collective. Following a brief hiatus, the group reconvened in November 1988 to record prolifically for the remainder of Mercury's life, producing three albums, two of which Queen released prior to Mercury's death (*The Miracle* [1989] and *Innuendo* [1991]). The untiring work ethic that the band evinced directly reflected the fact that, contrary to Mercury's persistent denials, the flamboyant singer was knowingly carrying the deadly HIV virus. Queen, who by 1987 had earned the reputation as one of the leading live acts in the world, abruptly decided to abandon live performance and touring entirely, a decision that, when coupled with Mercury's steadily declining health and frail appearance, fueled what became Britain's largest media frenzy around the anticipated death of a rock celebrity.²

During the final ten months of Mercury's life, although AIDS significantly debilitated his physical capacity, he valiantly continued to record and compose in the seclusion of Montreux, Switzerland, a place that provided him with serenity from the unrelenting pursuits of the paparazzi. On Monday 6 November 1995, nearly four years following the singer's tragic death, the surviving members of Queen released their

¹ Freddie Mercury, *Freddie Mercury: A Life, in His Own Words*, ed. Greg Brooks and Simon Lupton (London: Mercury Songs Ltd., 2006), 168.

² Queen's last performance occurred on Saturday 9 August 1986 at Knebworth Park in Hertfordshire, England, before 120,000 fans, concluding the *Magic Tour*.

fifteenth album, *Made in Heaven*, an unparalleled posthumous work intended to eulogize Mercury's inspirational life. Upon *Made in Heaven's* release, it quickly climbed to the number one position (on 18 November 1995), and remained on the UK Charts for twenty-eight consecutive weeks.³ To date, the album has been certified platinum on six occasions and stands as one of Queen's most successful works. Although the album embodies a plethora of complexly related issues pertaining to AIDS, homophobia, rock ideology, recording practice and technologies of genre, I shall begin with a comprehensive historical exploration of the most significant people and events in Mercury's personal and professional life in order to contextualize his professional activities with Queen, spanning holistically the social situation in which he found himself from the time of his diagnosis until his death. I divide this chapter into three main segments ordered chronologically. The first offers background information on the people (ranging from lovers to ex-lovers, medical doctors to recording engineers, drivers to friends), who deeply affected, directly and indirectly, Mercury's ability to make music. Due to the privacy and sensitivity that surrounded *Made in Heaven's* formation, very little of this historical material exists in popular music scholarship. Therefore, through a series of interviews with some of Mercury's closest affiliates, collaborators and confidants, including Peter Freestone (personal assistant), Terry Giddings (bodyguard and chauffeur), Mike Moran (musical colleague), David Richards (producer and recordist of *Made in Heaven*) and a top medical specialist who wishes to remain anonymous, I present previously undocumented data that in turn premise the arguments that I develop in the latter portion of this study. In doing so, I shall argue that Mercury, who recorded

³ For a comprehensive listing of Queen's UK Chart positions see: <http://www.ultimatequeen.co.uk/homepage.htm>

vigorously until his death, sought to bequeath a musical legacy to the world, as his terminal illness not only prematurely ended his career but equally jeopardized the professional lives of his fellow bandmates, John Deacon, Brian May and Roger Taylor.

The second section of this chapter specifically targets the way not only Mercury recorded the tracks that comprised *Made in Heaven*, but more concretely, the innovative technological methods that Queen and their support staff used to assemble the album. Moving from the level of production to reception, I critically analyze two songs, "Mother Love" and "Too Much Love Will Kill You," to probe the interplay between the composers' motivations to create the songs in comparison with the way in which they were perceived in the aftermath of Mercury's death. Finally, the concluding section addresses the ideological implications that AIDS bestowed upon Mercury's existence, a gay rockstar living with a deadly illness during a time when the status quo regarded homosexuals as social deviants. Building upon this notion, I conduct an in-depth socio-critical examination of AIDS and rock ideology, with particular reference to Mercury, his legacy and his musical works, namely *Made in Heaven*.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As the AIDS epidemic swiftly swept through America, and later Britain, during the 1980s, Freddie Mercury witnessed the catastrophic effects that the fatal virus, a condition identified then as a gay cancer or GRIND (Gay Related Immune Deficiency), visited upon the homosexual community. Mercury, who in the early part of the decade resided at 425 East 58th Street in Manhattan, found himself geographically positioned in the disease's epicentre. Although many Britons perceived the rather neoteric medical crisis as an American plague, Saturday 4 July 1982 marked the death of Terry Higgins, a

thirty-seven year old homosexual who was the first publicized victim in the United Kingdom. Only following Higgins' death did the British magazine, *Capital Gay*, publish an article stating: "US Disease Hits London."⁴ Contrary to popular belief, as exemplified by the retrospective assertion of Jeffrey Ressler, who states, "Once the AIDS epidemic began taking its toll [in America], Mercury panicked about his promiscuity and refused to tour the United States for fear he might contract the disease," the social view that AIDS predominantly infected America did not deter Mercury from spending extended periods in the country.⁵ I would argue that Queen avoided performing in America principally because of their inability to recapture their fame following *Hot Space's* (1982) commercial failure.⁶ If paranoia consumed Mercury's consciousness to the degree that Ressler suggests, I doubt that Queen would have recorded their 1984 release, *The Works*, at the Record Plant in Los Angeles, where the band resided for nearly a year.

Though journalists may have suspected Mercury's homosexuality at various points throughout his colourful career, the first publicity that his lifestyle generated came on Monday 4 May 1987, when *The Sun* ran a feature entitled "All the Queen's Men." Former Queen manager, Paul Prenter, sold photographs to the London-based newspaper for £32,000 along with information linking Mercury's suspected homosexual lifestyle with AIDS.⁷ The cover story identified two of Mercury's alleged former lovers, Tony Bastin of Brighton and John Murphy of New York, both of whom had died of AIDS-

⁴ Stephen M. Engel, *The Unfinished Revolution: Social Movement Theory and the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 88.

⁵ Jeffrey Ressler, "Freddie Mercury (1946-1991): Queen Singer is Rock's First Major AIDS Casualty," *Rolling Stone* 621 (9 January 1991):13.

⁶ Queen's final American performance (with Mercury) occurred on 15 September 1982 at the Forum in Inglewood, California.

⁷ Peter Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 10 November 2008.

related illnesses in 1986.⁸ Around Easter in the spring of 1987, between the time Mercury met Montserrat Caballé at the Ritz Hotel in Barcelona and the point when Mike Moran and Caballé formally began their intensive work on *Barcelona*, the singer secretly underwent an AIDS test.⁹ For Mercury, the inkling that he had contracted the disease came from a lump on his shoulder resulting from Kaposi's sarcoma, an AIDS-defining illness.¹⁰ Dr. Frank Gordon Atkinson, Mercury's general practitioner and close friend, administered the test.¹¹ One source, who due to his position in the medical field wishes to remain anonymous, states: "To my understanding, Gordon extraordinarily sent [to the lab] the first test from the practice under Freddie's registered name. As a result, before having been told the results by his G.P., somebody from the press rang him and asked: 'what are your comments of having tested HIV-positive?'"¹² Following the startling news, Mercury buried himself in his work and for some time avoided communicating with Atkinson. The doctor took it upon himself to contact Mercury's best friend, Mary Austin, in his attempts to reach the infected musician. Austin states: "I received a telephone call from Freddie's G.P. to say that he had received no response and would I remind him to call, which I did. I subsequently received calls back saying, 'I still haven't had a call.' So I

⁸ Prenter, who would later die of AIDS himself, identified John Murphy as one of Mercury's former lovers. In contrast to this supposition, Peter Freestone states Murphy, who was an airline steward in New York, was a close friend, although he did not have sexual relations with Mercury. Peter Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 10 November 2008.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Jim Hutton quoted by Tim Teeman, "I Couldn't Bear to See Freddie Wasting Away," *The Times* (7 September 2006), online source: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/article630033.ece

¹¹ Dr. Frank Gordon Atkinson's medical practice was located at 22 Wood's Mews in London, UK, W1K 7DS. Currently Atkinson is retired and resides in France. Anonymous, interview by author, telephone conversation, 22 July 2008.

¹² Ibid.

pursued, and in the end I was told why the G.P. needed to speak to Freddie. I felt my heart fall out of my boots."¹³

Ultimately, to Mercury's inconceivable regret, Atkinson explained that the disease had progressed beyond HIV and had manifested to AIDS. Mercury immediately obtained the expertise of three additional doctors to assist with his care. Dr. Brian Gazzard, one of Britain's most prominent physicians who tended to persons with AIDS, led Mercury's medical team.¹⁴ Gazzard, who first met Mercury at his home, did not know the identity of the star, and upon his arrival famously whispered to him: "I don't know what you do, but you are obviously quite successful at it."¹⁵ Dr. Richard C. D. Staughton, a dermatologist at the Lister Hospital on Chelsea Bridge Road, joined the team to treat the Kaposi's sarcoma. The condition engendered scattered skin lesions on Mercury's face and body, which were injected with local chemotherapy, sprayed with radiation or removed through incision and extraction. As a result, these procedures changed the contour of Mercury's face, which are visually apparent in the final videos, "I'm Going Slightly Mad" and "These Are the Days of Our Lives."¹⁶ The final doctor that constituted Mercury's medical alliance was Graeme Moyle, a twenty-seven year old junior at St. Stevens' Hospital in London, located in Earls Court and Chelsea. In 1990, Mercury enlisted himself under a false name in an experimental program headed by Moyle. Up until 1989, the only licensed drug used in the management of HIV/AIDS was AZT or azidothymidine, and

¹³ Mary Austin interview, *Lover of Life, Singer of Songs: Freddie Mercury*, DVD Disc 1, directed by Rudi Dolezal and Hannes Rossacher, produced by Jim Beach and Rudi Dolezal (Burbank, CA: Hollywood Records, 2006), video recording.

¹⁴ Dr. Brian G. Gazzard became a consultant at St. Stephen's and Westminster Hospital in 1978. By 1991, Gazzard founded St. Stephen's AIDS Trust and the British HIV Association. In 1997, Gazzard became Professor of HIV Medicine in the Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at the Imperial College in London, England.

¹⁵ Anonymous, interview by author, telephone conversation, 22 July 2008.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Moyle was beginning to conduct the first studies on what became the second licensed antiviral drug, DDI or didanosine.¹⁷ Due to the veil of secrecy that encircled the case, Mercury received medical attention outside regular hours. Terry Giddings, Mercury's chauffeur and bodyguard, provided security during these discreet hospital visits. He states:

I used to take Fred there at six o'clock in the morning or very late at night. Obviously, Fred did not want to be seen having treatment, so I went there in advance to figure out the route and point of entry. Upon our arrival, I would park the car at the back, Fred would be wearing a big hat and coat, and we would go in through the maintenance door.¹⁸

Mercury would receive infusions to slow the rate at which his body deteriorated, in an effort to sustain his singing ability. Although Mercury was cognizant that the medications would not save his life, statistical data demonstrated that they had the potential to delay his death. One AIDS research specialist states:

If we look at the clinical trial data with those drugs, they certainly provided evidence of benefit but the evidence and benefit was transient. The main measure that would be examined for treatment response at that time was to look at changes in CD4 count, a measure of the immune system's function. This is on a scale from zero, which is the lowest it can be (effectively a complete breakdown of the immune system), through to greater than 450, which is in the normal range. When someone would start one of these new medications, you would often see a rise of fifty to sixty cells, which might last for a year to eighteen months.¹⁹

Mercury could not solitarily contend with the social, physical and emotional pressures that AIDS imposed upon his life, and therefore turned to his closest friends for support. These people provided him with medical assistance, compassion to ease the psychological baggage of being terminally ill, inspiration to create and record music, and refuge and reprieve from the menacing paparazzi.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Terry Giddings, interview by author, telephone conversation, 7 July 2008.

¹⁹ Anonymous, interview by author, telephone conversation, 22 July 2008.

The person with whom Mercury shared the strongest bond was Mary Austin, described by many as Mercury's soulmate (see Example 6-1).²⁰ Austin recalls, "Freddie was like no one I had ever met before. He was very confident and I have never been confident. We grew together. I liked him, and it went on from there."²¹ Following his breakup with Austin, Mercury stressed his inability to find a partner whose interests extended beyond his level of celebrity and seemingly endless flow of money, a complaint that arguably sets the thematic backdrop to the gospel-influenced hit, "Somebody to Love" (1976). Mercury and Austin lived together for nearly seven years, first on Victoria Road and later on Holland Road in London.²² Although the couple's official relationship ended around the time of "Bohemian Rhapsody's" release in 1975, Mercury shared a platonic yet profound union with her that lasted until his death.

Example 6-1 – Mary Austin and Freddie Mercury



²⁰ In the late-1960s, Austin found employment at the Biba Store, an iconic and popular fashion boutique located on Kensington High Street, where she encountered Mercury and drummer Roger Taylor, both of whom ran a stall in the nearby Kensington Market.

²¹ Mary Austin quoted by David Wigg, "The Ex-Lover of Freddie Mercury, Mary Austin, Shares Her Memories of the Late Queen Singer from Inside His Home," *OK! Magazine* 204 (17 March 2000):143.

²² *Ibid.*

Following many years of homosexual love affairs, Mercury entered into a serious relationship with Jim Hutton in 1985, whom he encountered in 1983 at the Copacabana, a gay bar located on Kensington High Street (see Example 6-2).²³ Mercury brought Hutton to Munich on a few occasions until the pair formally moved in together at the former's palatial home in London, where he hired Hutton to do odd jobs and maintain the grounds at Garden Lodge for £600 per month.²⁴ By this point, Hutton had entered into Mercury's entourage and thus was given a pseudonym, Lauren Hutton, named after the American actor and supermodel.²⁵ Another person with whom Mercury had a rather atypical social arrangement during his final years was Joe Fanelli, a former lover whom he met in Springfield, Massachusetts (see Example 6-3).

Example 6-2 – Jim Hutton and Freddie Mercury



²³ Jim Hutton was the seventh of ten children, raised in County Carlow, Ireland. He initially studied to join an order of brothers but became an apprentice hairdresser following a relationship with his teacher. By the time he had met Mercury at Heaven, he was working at the prestigious and opulent Savoy Hotel, located in Westminster. Teeman, "I Couldn't Bear to See Freddie Wasting Away," online source: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/article630033.ece

²⁴ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 10 November 2008.

²⁵ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 11 August 2008.

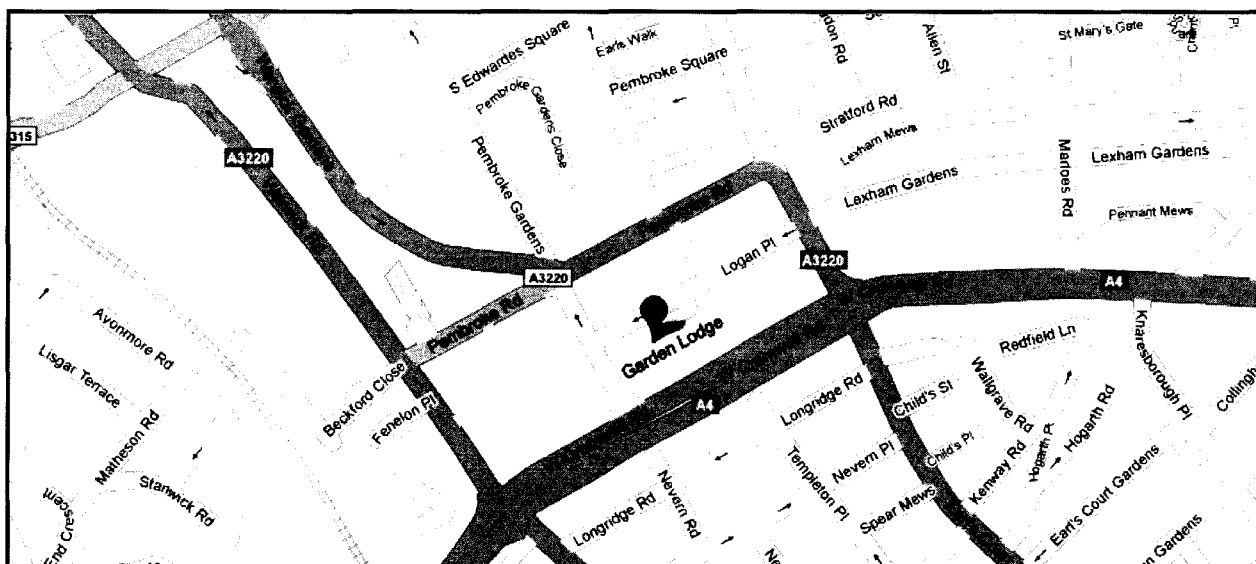
Example 6-3 – Joe Fanelli

Peter Freestone explains: "Freddie had swept Joe off his feet, took him to London, gave him a wonderful lifestyle, and then got bored with him; however, Freddie would never just throw someone away. So he paid the lawyers to ensure that Joe could stay in London as long as he liked."²⁶ Although Mercury's relationship terminated with Fanelli in 1978, he employed him years later, principally for two reasons. First, in 1985, following the completion of extensive renovations to Garden Lodge, Mercury's insurance company requested that someone live in the house at all times, and consequently Peter Freestone, who toured with Mercury as his personal assistant, elected to watch over the home while Fanelli took his place on tour. Second, Fanelli was an exquisite chef, and accordingly later took up a full-time position as the cook of the household. As authentication to Fanelli's admittance into the Garden Lodge family, Mercury referred to Joe Fanelli as Liza Fanelli, a pseudonym derived from the American actor and singer, Liza Minnelli. The final member of the immediate Garden Lodge family was Peter Freestone, a person with whom Mercury spent countless years on and off the road. Mercury hired Freestone

²⁶ Ibid., 2 July 2008.

as his personal assistant, a position that inevitably resulted in Freestone residing at Garden Lodge.²⁷ As a sign of Freestone's social belonging, Mercury awarded him the pseudonym Phoebe. According to Freestone, his relationship with Mercury differed from those of Austin, Fanelli and Hutton, as Freestone was the only person among these closest intimates of Mercury's who had never slept with him.²⁸ A secondary figure who played a considerable role during the last ten years of Mercury's life was Terry Giddings, Mercury's personal bodyguard and chauffeur. His job description involved a variety of duties, spanning from providing advanced security for Mercury at Queen shows, to shopping with him for antiques and clothes.²⁹ Similar to the other members of Mercury's entourage, Giddings too was given a pseudonym, Gilda Giddings.³⁰

Example 6-4 – Garden Lodge, 1 Logan Place, Kensington, London W8 UK



²⁷ Freestone was the first to take up residency in the luxurious home in 1985 and was one of the last to leave in 1992. In an interview on 11 August 2008, Freestone explained that his stay at Garden Lodge exceeded that of Mercury's by eight months; five months prior to Mercury's arrival (as he was still residing in Munich), and three months following his death.

²⁸ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 2 July 2008.

²⁹ Giddings, interview by author, telephone conversation, 7 July 2008.

³⁰ Giddings, email to author, 20 August 2008.

Example 6-5 – Aerial view of Garden Lodge



Although Mary Austin, Jim "Lauren" Hutton, Joe "Liza" Fanelli, Peter "Phoebe" Freestone and Terry "Gilda" Giddings played leading roles in the story that constituted Mercury's life, of particular significance was the location at which many events occurred. Mercury's palatial home not only stood as a symbol of his success and wealth, but also became a fortress where he remained safely guarded behind its towering brick walls, located at 1 Logan Place in Kensington, London (see Examples 6-4 & 6-5).³¹ It was here, at Garden Lodge, in the latter portion of 1987 where Mercury began the daunting task of

³¹ Mercury, who purchased Garden Lodge in 1980, did not take residency until 1985, as he felt the home required extensive renovations, first to accommodate his ambition to restore the home to its original state, which had been divided into two separate living quarters; and second, to tailor the design of the home to suit the needs of his living arrangement. Freestone explains: "The culmination of a great deal of dedication was Garden Lodge. It was not only a home. It was a canvas upon which he painted his life and surrounded himself with his image of beauty. He put in a huge amount of work to the design aspects of the house to bring it back to its former glory." Peter Freestone with David Evans, *Freddie Mercury: An Intimate Memoir by the Man Who Knew Him Best* (London: Omnibus Press, 2001), 140.

disclosing his condition to his close friends, family members and bandmates. Peter Freestone recalls, "About three or four months after Freddie had confirmation of his AIDS-positive status, he told me. I am sure he only did so because I was there working for him; you know, if he cut himself and I washed his hands I had to be aware."³²

Mercury insisted that the people with whom he surrounded himself refrain from speaking openly about the disease. Mary Austin states: "Everything had to be treated very normally. He had to be too. If he found that you were flagging, you were becoming too emotional, then he would naturally push you back in line."³³ Mike Moran, a person with whom Mercury closely collaborated during the time of his diagnosis, recalls: "Fred was of the opinion that if everybody knew, they would treat him differently, and he did not want to be excused because he was not well. We never spoke of it and for the longest time I did not even know."³⁴

The fact that Mercury was incurable had implications not only on his own career, but also on those of his bandmates. Although his colleagues never outwardly confronted Mercury about the rumours that began to circulate in the tabloids, visual and behavioural indicators suggested their valued frontman had contracted the terminal disease. Brian May states:

We kind of knew for a long time, very very gradually, because the signs began to appear. There came a day when Freddie said, "Look, you've probably figured out what I am dealing with. I have this thing, and as far as I know, there is no cure. I only have a certain amount of time left and I would like everything to carry on as is; I would like us to make records. I do not want anyone to know, I do not want anyone to talk about it from this point forward, and that is it."³⁵

³² Ibid., 2 July 2008.

³³ Mary Austin interview, *Lover of Life*, DVD Disc 1, video recording.

³⁴ Mike Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 15 January 2008.

³⁵ Brian May interview, *Legends: Queen*, produced by Angela Quilala and narrated by Henry Rollins (New York: Viacom, VH1-Music First, 1998), video recording.

Mercury's spirited ambition to continue making music determinedly reflected, in part, his dismay for contracting a malady that would inescapably terminate the band. Peter

Freestone states:

For so many people that I know, as soon as they are told they have AIDS, they give up because there is no reason for living anymore. But for Freddie, it was the total opposite. It concentrated him, it made him accept that there was so much more that he still had to do, particularly where the music was concerned. It wasn't just him who was going to suffer from this, it was the band. With him being so inconsiderate and dying, what would happen to the band? That preyed a great deal on his mind. He wanted to give them as much as he could.³⁶

Mike Moran continues: "He could have easily given up and disappeared somewhere, and lived the rest of his life in isolation, but he did not do that. It is another example of how brave the man was. He was out working until he could actually work no more."³⁷

Drummer Roger Taylor describes the effect that Mercury's condition had upon the hierarchical structure on the group. He states: "At one point, he decided to invite us all over to the house for a meeting, and he just told us the absolute facts, the facts that we were really starting to realize anyway. We closed ranks and just worked as hard as we could. He wanted to make as much music as he could, and we wanted to help him. I think he felt propped up by the strength of the band."³⁸ The unanimity that Taylor describes was evident in the methodological shift that the band embraced. The group made a surprising decision to accredit all their newly released material to "Queen" rather than to the individual composer.³⁹ Traditionally, band members debated during the selection process of an album's repertory, as they sought to contribute as many songs as possible

³⁶ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 2 July 2008.

³⁷ Mike Moran interview, *Lover of Life*, DVD Disc 1, video recording.

³⁸ Roger Taylor interview, *Lover of Life*, DVD Disc 1, video recording.

³⁹ One of the few other rock bands to accredit all their songs to the band rather than to the specific composer was the Doors (1965-1973), a group that, like Queen, dissolved following the death of their lead singer, Jim Morrison.

with the hope of accruing substantial revenues from royalties. Whereas this system acted as a filter that ensured quality control, while simultaneously fueling competition that forcibly caused members to compose to the best of their ability, it oftentimes prompted many heated conflicts. To this end, upon the group's reformation in 1988, they realized that no time could be dispensed on indecision and disagreement.⁴⁰ To symbolize their reconciliation, the band depicted their unity on the cover of *The Miracle* (released on 22 May 1989), which displayed the fusion of each band member's face; a striking image that boldly represented the congruity and solidarity of a dedicated assemblage of musicians who would create music until they could no more (see Example 6-6).

Example 6-6 – The Miracle Cover Art



⁴⁰ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 16 June 2008.

"SO QUIET AND PEACEFUL": THE MONTREUX VOYAGES

By January 1991, after recording *The Miracle* in 1988 (released on Monday 22 May 1989) and *Innuendo* in 1990 (released on Tuesday 5 February 1991), Mercury bravely continued to record, although his health had deteriorated to a point that an album project was simply out of the question. Brian May discusses the circumstances that surrounded these sessions:

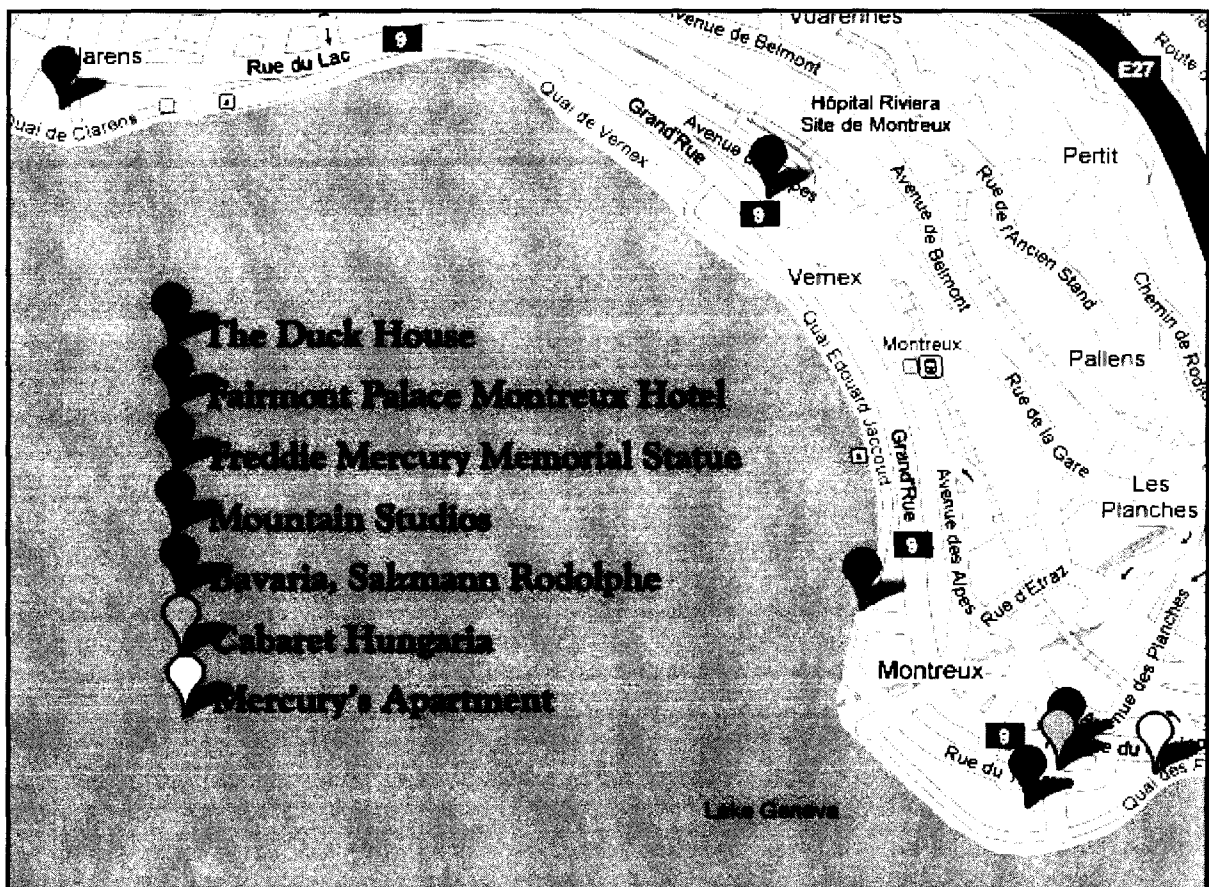
By the time we were recording these other tracks [the songs comprising *Made in Heaven*] after *Innuendo*, we had had the discussions and we knew that we were totally on borrowed time, because Freddie had been told that he wouldn't make it to that point. So our plan was to just make use of him as much as possible. We lived in the studio for a while and when he would call and say, "I can come in for a few hours," our plan was to make as much use of him as we could. Freddie said, "Get me to sing anything, write me anything and I will sing it, and I will leave you as much material as I possibly can."⁴¹

Due to a heightened invasion of his privacy, Mercury elected to record the tracks that would later comprise *Made in Heaven* at Mountain Studios, Queen's privately owned recording facility, located at 8 Rue du Théâtre in Montreux, Switzerland (see Example 6-7). Queen first used the facility in 1978 to record their *Jazz* album, during which time they met assistant resident recording engineer David Richards, a person who occupied a central role as their producer in subsequent albums. During the recording of *Jazz*, Queen became aware that the studio was for sale, and soon thereafter became its new owners. Although Queen had unlimited access to Mountain Studios, they tended to favour Musicland Studios in Munich, a place where they recorded many of their hits during the 1980s. David Richards states: "After they became the new owners, Freddie and the group continued to do their main recording in Munich as Freddie liked it there very much, and

⁴¹ *Champions of the World*, directed by Rudi Dolezal and Hannes Rossacher; produced by Jim Beach and Queen (Burbank, CA: Hollywood Video and PMI/Parlophone, 1995), video recording.

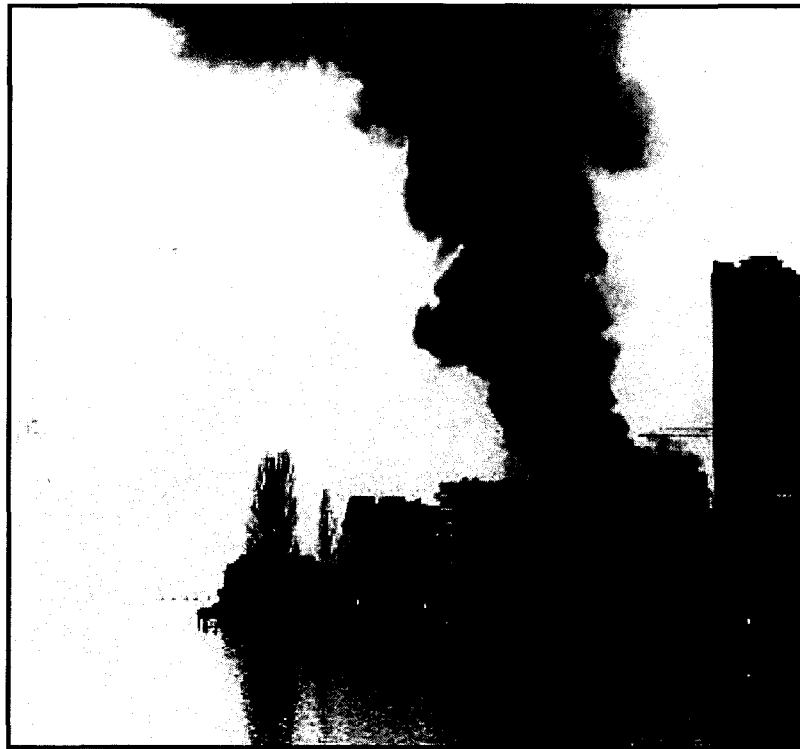
they continued to work with their regular producer, [Reinhold] Mack."⁴² Mountain Studios became immortalized through Deep Purple's 1972 hit, "Smoke on the Water," alluding to a fire that occurred during Frank Zappa's performance at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1971, held at the Montreux Casino (the complex that housed Mountain Studios) (see Example 6-8). The opening lyrics to "Smoke on the Water" recount the legendary tale (see Example 6-9).

Example 6-7 – Landmarks in Montreux, Switzerland



⁴² David Richards, interview by author, telephone conversation, 12 June 2008.

Example 6-8 – Mountain Studios fire



Example 6-9 – Verse 1 of "Smoke on the Water"

We all came out to Montreux on the Lake Geneva shoreline
 To make records with a mobile we didn't have much time
 Frank Zappa and the Mothers were at the best place around
 But some stupid with a flare gun burned the place to the ground
 Smoke on the water fire in the sky

Until the end of the 1980s, Queen avoided using Mountain Studios for two primary reasons. As discussed in Chapter 4, the first resulted from the studio's physical layout, which Queen found confining and awkwardly configured. Mike Moran states:

It was not a very good studio to be frank. Its design came from Tom Hiddley of Westlake Audio. I used to think it sounded like shit, actually, I have to say. It was not a rock 'n' roll studio at all; it was a kind of very fancy L.A. type studio. You could not get anything loud for one thing, and as a result everything was muted. It went through a few changes, and then went into disrepair.⁴³

⁴³ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 16 June 2008. Moran first worked at Mountain Studios in 1972 with Deep Purple.

For Mercury, the second irritation arose from the general social atmosphere of Montreux itself, an environment that he found tediously calm and painfully boring. The natural beauty that Montreux offered paled in comparison to the excitement that Mercury enjoyed in New York, London and Munich. Moran continues:

Montreux is a very tranquil but very expensive place, free largely of media and fans. Frankly, I always found it boring. When you have seen the view for a week, the mountains tend to hem you in a little bit. Fred too found it boring until the last few years of his life. He would say, "I'm not going to fucking Montreux again." The road crew hated it because it was far too expensive for them to go out, so everybody would sit around all night and play cards or scrabble.⁴⁴

Montreux, a place of seclusion and tedium that once irritated Mercury, became an oasis that provided him with something he desperately sought to retain: his privacy. Similar to Lieutenant Fredric Henry and Catherine Berkley, characters in Ernest Hemmingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), Mercury's Montreux became a safe haven from the turmoil in his life. Despite the 596 miles that geographically separated Garden Lodge in London from Mountain Studios in Montreux, the ailing and frail Mercury elected to make the voyages to evade the British press. During the recording sessions of *Innuendo*, Mercury rented a summer home on the edge of a private port from a local artist. Queen producer David Richards explains, "Freddie stayed there a few times. We called it 'Duckingham Palace' because of all the ducks. It was on the lakeshore, very guarded and picturesque, and he used to love it there."⁴⁵ This summer home, also known as "The Duck House," was located between Quai de Clarens and Rue du Lac in the northwesterly district of Montreux (see Examples 6-7, 6-10 & 6-13). Contrary to popular belief, Mercury did not ever live in the boathouse depicted on the cover of *Made in Heaven*.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Richards, interview by author, telephone conversation, 12 June 2008.

Example 6-10 – The Duck House or Duckingham Palace



He did, however, reside on the property during the *Innuendo* sessions, at which time he lodged in the 1960s concrete bunker-style home located directly behind the hut displayed on the album cover.⁴⁶ Conversely, during the *Made in Heaven* sessions, Mercury resided at a waterfront apartment that he purchased near the completion of *Innuendo*, located next to the Hotel Excelsior on Quai des Fleurs (see Example 6-7). Mercury did so first for its proximity to Mountain Studios (0.2 miles); second, to avoid the burden of being seen in public at hotels; and third, to have the flexibility to come and go as he pleased without contending with property owners and leases.

Beginning in 1991, Mercury traveled to Montreux where the duration of his visits would span anywhere from two to six weeks, determined mainly according to his level of productivity and physical condition. Mercury would return to London for approximately six to seven weeks, particularly to receive medical treatment, before returning to Montreux. Scheduling for these sessions was left entirely to Mercury's discretion, and as

⁴⁶ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 2 July 2008.

such the band would clear their schedules accordingly to join him whenever his health permitted. Although all the members of Queen resided within a relatively close geographic area in London, they usually traveled to Montreux separately. May, Taylor and Deacon would travel inconspicuously in first class on a commercial airliner to Switzerland, where they would stay at the Fairmont Palace Montreux Hotel, located at 100 Grand Rue, 0.8 miles northwest of Mountain Studios (see Example 6-7).⁴⁷ Alternatively, Mercury traveled much more discreetly. Upon receiving the dates on which Queen intended to convene in Montreux, Terry Giddings, who accompanied Mercury on every voyage, orchestrated the travel itinerary. Typically, the journey began at Garden Lodge where a limousine collected Giddings, Mercury, Hutton and either Freestone or Fanelli. They would then travel westward for eleven miles towards Terminal 4 of London's Heathrow International Airport, to a chartered private jet. On their arrival, Giddings and Freestone or Fanelli would obtain boarding passes and security clearance for Mercury, while the latter patiently awaited the flight's departure in an isolated area of the terminal. Within a twenty-minute span, the luggage, a cold pack containing Mercury's medications and the flight crew were in place and ready for takeoff. Mercury along with his entourage boarded the ten-seat Lear jet and began the two-hour flight destined for the northeast shoreline of Lake Geneva.⁴⁸

While in Montreux, everyone who accompanied Mercury played an integral role; Giddings tended to travel arrangements and supplied Mercury with twenty-four hour surveillance; Hutton extended moral support; and either Joe Fanelli or Peter Freestone provided personal care, ranging from food preparation to administering medication.

⁴⁷ Giddings, interview by author, telephone conversation, 7 July 2008.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Fanelli and Freestone were on an alternating system whereby if one traveled to Montreux with Mercury, the other would keep watch on Garden Lodge, which increasingly became under siege by the media.⁴⁹ In Montreux, Mercury rarely experienced aggravations from crazed fans or obtrusive journalists. In fact, when his health permitted, he occasionally frequented restaurants with the band. In particular, Freestone recalls that Queen would dine at the Bavaria, located at 27 Avenue du Casino, only steps away from Mountain Studios (see Example 6-7).⁵⁰ Giddings recounts that in the early Montreux sessions, Queen would often frequent a strip club named Cabaret Hungary, located at 19 Avenue Nestlé, as it was the only place in town open after hours where they could unwind after a lengthy studio session (see Example 6-7).⁵¹

For Mercury, the summer of 1991 marked a rise in negative media attention, stemming principally from the singer's frail appearance in the video of "These Are the Days of Our Lives," filmed by Rudi Dolezal and Hannes Rossacher of DoRo Productions on Thursday 30 May 1991, and released shortly thereafter in June. During this time, *The Sun* intensified their pursuits of Mercury in London, as they unpitifully anticipated his death. The newspaper ran a series of headlining articles that attempted to correlate Mercury's suspected homosexuality with the deadly AIDS disease. Terry Giddings states:

Fred used to love gardens and flowers. On one instance, at his request, I discreetly brought him to a garden centre for him to get out. At this point, Fred looked quite ill. The next day, on the cover of *The Sun* was a photo of Freddie and me, with the headline: "Freddie Mercury and His New Boyfriend."⁵²

Subsequently, *The Sun* outed Mercury's medical team with a photograph taken outside Le Gavroche, a quaint Michelin two-star French restaurant located at 43 Upper Brook Street

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 2 July 2008.

⁵¹ Giddings, interview by author, telephone conversation, 7 July 2008.

⁵² Ibid.

in Mayfair, London. Seen in the photograph were Dr. Gordon Atkinson, Dr. Brian Gazzard and Dr. Graeme Moyle, along with Mercury, over which the headline read: "Top AIDS Docs visit Freddie Mercury."⁵³

By September of 1991, following the unremitting manhunt of the paparazzi, Mercury disappeared entirely from public life in Britain. While in London, he became a prisoner in his own home as reporters loomed ubiquitously awaiting their chance to capture a picture of the ailing superstar. Unlike many of Mercury's previously celebrated birthday parties, which over the years earned a reputation for their overindulgence and extravagance, on Thursday 5 September, Mercury, in the company of his closest friends, quietly *fêted* what would be his last birthday.⁵⁴ The attendants included Jim Hutton, Mary Austin, Peter Freestone, Joe Fanelli, Dave Clark, Jim and Claudia Beach, Mike and Lynda Moran, and Terry and Sharon Giddings.⁵⁵ For Mike Moran, Mercury's forty-fifth birthday marked the end of what he regarded as a very meaningful friendship. He states, "We were very privileged, the few of us there at the very last party on 5 September, which was the last time I ever saw Freddie alive. He did not really see anyone much after that."⁵⁶ In the last year of his life, Mercury did not want people to watch him deteriorate and thus pushed away many of his friends, including Barbara Valentin (German actor), Peter Straker (actor and singer), and Gordon Dalziel and Graham Hamilton (a couple who owned a chauffeur service). Some, however, remained close with him, such as Mike Moran, Dave Clark, Elton John and Diana Moseley (wardrobe designer and friend), not

⁵³ Anonymous, interview by author, telephone conversation, 22 July 2008.

⁵⁴ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 16 June 2008.

⁵⁵ Moran, email to author, 4 July 2008. By 1991, Mercury developed a professional relationship with Jim Beach whom he hired as Queen's manager and lawyer in 1978. Mercury's profound relationship with Dave Clark began in 1986, during which time Mercury composed "In My Defense" for Clark's musical, *Time*.

⁵⁶ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 16 June 2008.

to mention the band members, his Garden Lodge affiliates and his mother, father and sister.⁵⁷ Twelve days following his birthday party, Mercury could sense his own finality and on Tuesday 17 September 1991, in the presence of John Libson (Mercury's accountant) and Henry James Beach (Mercury's lawyer), he certified his last will and testament (see Appendix 6-1, Figures 2 & 5). Although Mercury's condition worsened, he decided to return to Montreux to continue recording. At this point, Mercury suffered from cytomegalovirus or CMV, a serious viral infection that required regular infusions of an antiviral medication, administered three times daily intravenously through a central line fitted near his collarbone. One of the effects of the cytomegalovirus was a deficiency in vision, which greatly affected the way Mercury functioned.⁵⁸ It was during these final sessions on the Montreux voyages that Mercury arguably recorded some of the most riveting vocal tracks of his career.

If one had to pinpoint the day on which the music figuratively died for Freddie Mercury, I would argue Saturday 9 November 1991. Mercury finished recording Verse 2 of "Mother Love" when he received a troublesome phone call from Peter Freestone who explained the paparazzi had begun camping outside Garden Lodge day and night, and they were growing in size and persistence. Mercury, who had recently sung the poignant line in Verse 2 of "Mother Love," stating: "My heart is heavy and my hope is gone," came to the realization that he must leave Montreux forever. Prior to Mercury's departure, David Richards observantly remarked that the vocals to Verse 3 of "Mother Love" had not yet been completed. Mercury replied, "Oh, let Bri sing it!"⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 2 July 2008.

⁵⁸ Anonymous, interview by author, telephone conversation, 22 July 2008.

⁵⁹ Richards, interview by author, telephone conversation, 12 June 2008.

"GUIDE ME HOME": MERCURY'S FAREWELL

Upon Freddie Mercury's return to Garden Lodge, he decided to discontinue his medication, the medication that was keeping him alive.⁶⁰ Mary Austin states: "He'd given himself a limit, and I think that when he couldn't record anymore it would be the end, because his life had been his work."⁶¹ Freestone states:

Freddie never wanted the disease to get the better of him. He would never let the disease control his day, what he was doing or anything. That is why, in the end, he is the one who decided he was going to stop taking the drugs. He made the decision because he knew he would never walk outside the house again, because the media were outside twenty-four hours a day and they just wanted to see him die; that is all they were waiting for.⁶²

Through retrospective analysis, fans and publicists often romanticize Mercury's decision to discontinue taking his medications, through their portrayal of a hero who fearlessly acknowledged his fate and bravely accepted his mortality. Unquestionably by 10 November 1991, Mercury had grown tired of living in perpetual pain and dodging the media, although I contend that his choice to cease the medication stemmed from the fact that he had reached a point of futility with the drugs, resulting in a dangerously high level of toxicity in his body. A leading AIDS expert states:

When the virus had become resistant to the medication, treatment response would be lost. That did commonly result in people taking breaks from medication. The dosing was much higher than what is used today; therefore the side effects tended to be higher. There were a lot of people who went on and off medication for periods of time, and whilst now we have an obsession with near 100 percent adherence, at that time we were relatively more casual because the drugs were so limited in their efficacy and so problematic in their toxicity. One often talks about quality of life, but there was also a cognizance about quality of death.⁶³

⁶⁰ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 2 July 2008.

⁶¹ Mary Austin interview, *Lover of Life*, DVD Disc 1, video recording.

⁶² Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 2 July 2008.

⁶³ Anonymous, interview by author, telephone conversation, 22 July 2008.

Although he stopped taking the majority of his medication, Mercury required observation and some degree of treatment from his medical staff, mainly to ease his level of discomfort and pain. Because Garden Lodge was swarming with paparazzi, Mercury could not leave without being observed, and so doctors were forced to see him at home. Not only were reporters eagerly awaiting an appearance by Mercury himself, but in their attempts to gather information, they pursued anyone who entered or exited the home.

Terry Giddings states:

The press was like a pack of animals. I'd walk around to the front of Garden Lodge where I would find twenty to thirty news reporters pushing cameras in my face. At the time, my wife was pregnant with our second son, and she very unexpectedly would have people knocking at the door asking questions. I never even told her how ill Fred was; she did not even know that Fred had AIDS.⁶⁴

Giddings was not the only person whom the press probed for answers. Although Mercury's housekeepers were never permitted near his suite in Garden Lodge, they too were trailed and questioned by the indomitable media. Therefore, in response to this problem, visiting doctors and friends used an alternative entrance, located on the far side of Garden Lodge. Two green wooden gates offered points of entry along the front facade of the property, one of which was the main entrance, and the other, located on the westerly side of the long fence, labeled "Tradesmen." On the easterly side of the property was a small street, lined with mews homes, offering special access to Mercury's home. This passage conveniently enabled guests to bypass the conglomerate of people who waited alertly at the front of the home. Although reporters perceptively and continuously observed the goings-on at Garden Lodge, they did not uncover the secondary entrance due to the high level of caution and discretion used by Mercury's guests. Doctors would arrive inconspicuously at the mews in the late hours of the evening, often by bicycle,

⁶⁴ Giddings, interview by author, telephone conversation, 7 July 2008.

where Fanelli or Freestone met them, during which time Terry Giddings deployed a decoy. On many instances, Giddings slowly drove a large black Mercedes away from the gates of Garden Lodge, carrying with him a passenger located in the backseat wearing a large top coat. The paparazzi would chase the car, never to discover that Giddings' passenger was in fact a nicely dressed mannequin.⁶⁵

In the interest of the band's reputation, and for his own personal dignity, Mercury, in consultation with Queen manager/lawyer Jim Beach decided to issue a press statement confirming what many people had already suspected: Mercury was dying of AIDS. His ongoing distrust for the media resulted from their tendency to superimpose alternative meanings to his intended claims by alluding to his homosexuality. For this reason, Mercury conferred with Beach to obtain a legal perspective on the way in which he should proceed. Beach concluded that in order for the official statement to have any impact or positive recourse on Mercury's memory, not to mention on his surviving friends, family members and fellow bandmates, it must precede Mercury's death. In other words, the statement would only be received and interpreted as authentic if it came while Mercury was alive.⁶⁶

On Saturday 22 November 1991, at 8:00 p.m., Roxy Meade of Lipsey Meade (Queen's public relations company) delivered the much-anticipated statement on Mercury's behalf. Outside the gates of Garden Lodge she read:

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 2 July 2008.

Following the enormous conjecture in the press over the last two weeks, I wish to confirm that I have been tested HIV positive and have AIDS. I felt it correct to keep this information private to date to protect the privacy of those around me. However, the time has come now for my friends and fans around the world to know the truth, and I hope that everyone will join with my doctors and all those worldwide in the fight against this terrible disease. My privacy has always been very special to me, and I am famous for my lack of interviews. Please understand this policy will continue.⁶⁷

As the finality of Mercury's life loomed over Garden Lodge, Terry Giddings took precautionary security measures, and accordingly spoke with the Kensington Police Department to ensure intruders did not compromise Mercury's safety or privacy.⁶⁸

On the day that followed the official press release, hordes of fans and media personnel encircled Garden Lodge, all of whom clamoured restlessly as they awaited Mercury's death. Meanwhile, deep within the silence of the terraced-master suite that overlooked the crowd laid Mercury, who by now was slipping in and out of consciousness regularly. His caregivers notified Dr. Gordon Atkinson, who came to the home but said that he could do nothing to alter Mercury's grave condition. Following the brief examination, Joe Fanelli escorted Atkinson to the mews where the doctor departed, during which time Jim Hutton and Peter Freestone noticed that Mercury had quietly passed away in his sleep. Freestone expands upon the circumstances that surrounded the event:

My first reaction was to try to get Doctor Atkinson back who had only just left. From the house, I called over to Joe in the mews on the phone as Gordon Atkinson was already driving away in his car. Although Joe's running out into Logan Mews alerted the press to something going on, Joe managed to stop Gordon and brought him back inside. Gordon immediately came up to Freddie's bedroom where he pronounced Freddie dead and certified the time as being twelve minutes to seven.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Peter Gregory, *Queen* (Broomall: Mason Crest Publishers Inc., 2008), 40.

⁶⁸ Giddings, interview by author, telephone conversation, 7 July 2008.

⁶⁹ Freestone, *Freddie Mercury*, 244.

On the unforgettable evening of Sunday 24 November 1991, only forty-eight hours following the press statement, Dr. Frank Gordon Atkinson and Dr. Graeme Moyle pronounced Mercury dead, attributing his death to bronchial pneumonia resulting from advanced AIDS.⁷⁰ Shortly afterwards, Peter Freestone contacted Mary Austin, Terry Giddings, Mercury's parents (Bomi and Jer Bulsara) and Leslie Freestone (Freestone's father), the latter of whom was, coincidentally, a funeral director. At the same time as Freestone orchestrated the way Mercury's body would be collected from the home, Giddings, as he always did, tended to matters of security. Consequently, he contacted the Kensington Police Department to organize a police escort for Mercury's body, and to request that they install a roadblock in Logan Mews, to deter anyone who might attempt to follow or gain knowledge of Mercury's place of rest.⁷¹

During the course of Giddings' efforts, Freestone's father, Leslie, and his four coffin-bearers arrived at Garden Lodge. Freestone recalls, "We couldn't take our eyes off Freddie. We watched with tears brimming as the men manoeuvred Freddie's body into the black protective bag, the use of which being mandatory in the case of every death which has occurred from a communicable disease."⁷² Although Mercury passed away in the early part of the evening, he made his final exit from Garden Lodge at midnight on 24 November, concurrent with the official press release delivered once again by Roxy Meade, who confirmed the singer's death. The funeral arrangements were handled primarily by Mercury's personal assistant, Peter Freestone, who on the day after Mercury's death signed the official death certificate at the Chelsea Registry Office (see

⁷⁰ Anonymous, interview by author, telephone conversation, 22 July 2008.

⁷¹ Giddings, interview by author, telephone conversation, 7 July 2008.

⁷² Freestone, *Freddie Mercury*, 246.

Appendix 6-1, Figure 1).⁷³ Mercury's funeral took place on Wednesday 27 November 1991 at 10:00 a.m. at the West London Crematorium in Kensal Rise. Similar to the collision of styles and genres that characterized Mercury's artistic works, his private funeral service saw the intersection of two incongruous worlds: the ancient traditions of the Zoroastrian religion and the modern world of rock 'n' roll. The musical programme at the service consisted of two pieces, neither of which belonged to the Queen repertory. The songs, chosen by Peter Freestone and Joe Fanelli, featured the voices of those singers whom Mercury most deeply admired. The solemn event commenced with a recorded version of "You've Got a Friend," sung by Aretha Franklin; a fitting piece considering only forty or so of Mercury's closest friends and family members attended his sendoff, an affair that headlined practically every newspaper in the developed world. The service ended with a recording that featured the voice of a person with whom Mercury shared a profound friendship, Montserrat Caballé. In an interview, Mercury once stated, "A Montserrat Caballé performance is sensational. She has that same kind of emotion as Aretha Franklin. The way she delivers a song is so very natural, and it's a very different gift."⁷⁴ Although she could not attend the funeral, the mournful occasion concluded with a recording of Caballé singing "*D'amor sull'ali rosee*," from Act IV of *Il Trovatore* by Giuseppe Verdi.

The final matter of business that bound Mercury's friends and family together was his last will and testament, handled by Mercury's appointed executors, Jim Beach and John Lisbon. Mary Austin, Mercury's best friend, confidant and soulmate, received the bulk of his estate. Austin, who was raised in poverty by two deaf parents, became an

⁷³ Ibid., 247.

⁷⁴ Mercury, *Freddie Mercury*, 97.

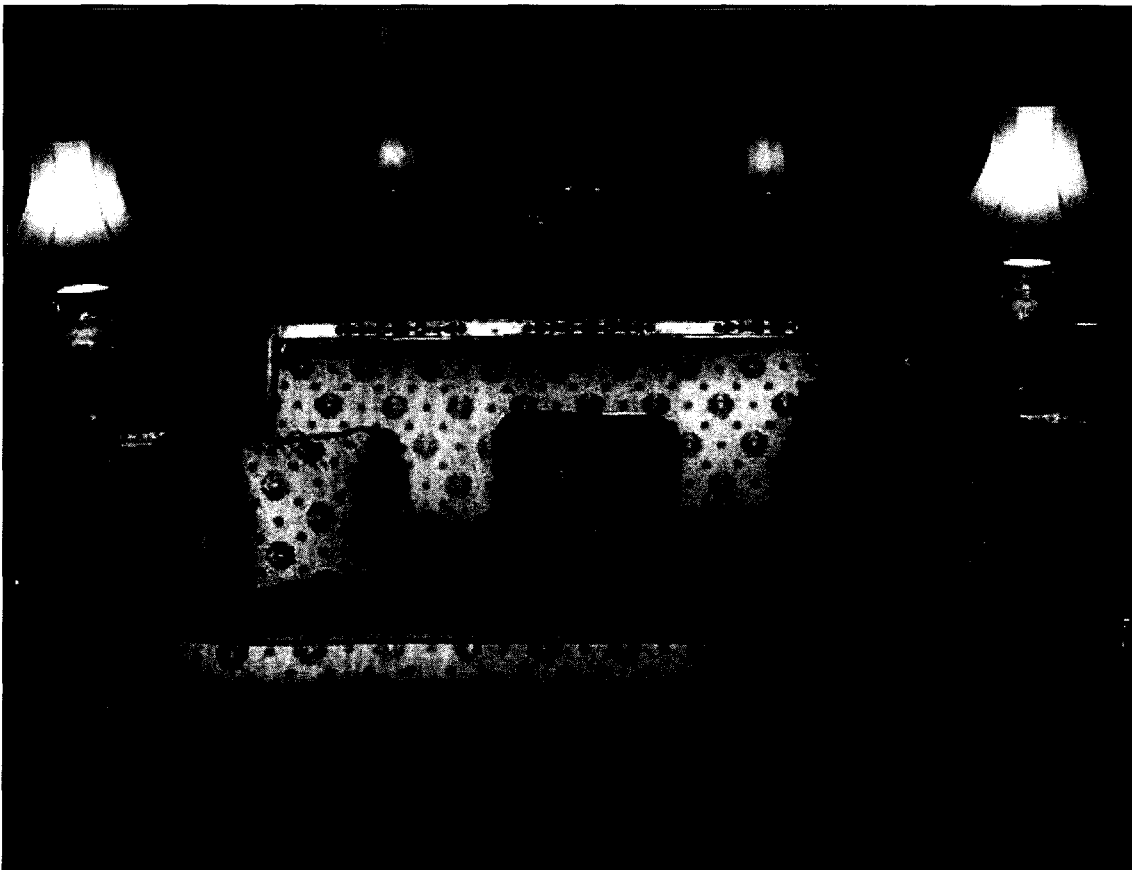
instant millionaire upon inheriting fifty percent of Mercury's assets in addition to his prized dream home, Garden Lodge, with all its contents (see Appendix 6-1, Figure 3: 5 & Figure 4: 8.1). Surprisingly, Jim Hutton, Mercury's lover for many years, received £500,000, an amount that paled in comparison to the millions of pounds that Austin received. Hutton alleged that Mercury had verbally stated his wish to bequeath Garden Lodge to him, but to Hutton's dismay he had no evidence to support his claim. Consequently, following the reading of the will, Hutton, Fanelli and Freestone were benevolently given three months to vacate the premises. According to Hutton, the outcome left him devastated "and he went absolutely crazy, using the £500,000 that Mercury had left him to go on holiday, buy a house in Shepherds Bush and build a home in Ireland, where he now lives."⁷⁵ It is probable that Austin, who as Giddings and Freestone suggest openly articulated her dislike for Hutton, was not sympathetic towards his apparent displeasure. Peter Freestone and Joe Fanelli received £500,000 each, the same amount that Mercury left to Hutton. Finally, as a token of Mercury's appreciation to his trustworthy chauffeur, bodyguard and friend, Terry Giddings received £100,000 (see Appendix 6-1, Figure 3: 6).

Even as Mercury's pain and suffering had finally ended, despair loomed on the horizon for many of his closest friends, particularly those who comprised the Garden Lodge family. Although they benefited financially from Mercury's death, tragedy would soon envelop their lives. In February 1992, Mary Austin relocated to her new home, Garden Lodge, only to find that Mercury's memory haunted her psyche (see Example 6-11). As a result, she slipped into a deep depression that led to the termination of her long-term relationship with Piers Cameron, with whom she shared two children (Richard and

⁷⁵ Teeman, "I Couldn't Bear to See Freddie Wasting Away," online source.

Jamie).⁷⁶ Jim Hutton, who witnessed the devastating effects that AIDS bestowed upon his lover, lived in perpetual fear, for he had been diagnosed HIV-positive in 1990. Joe Fanelli decided to leave Britain and return to his native land, the United States. While visiting Fire Island near Brookhaven, New York, Fanelli complained of a severe headache and sought medical attention at a nearby hospital where he was pronounced dead hours later. Like his former lover and employer, Fanelli had lost his life to an AIDS-related illness.⁷⁷

Example 6-11 – Mary Austin at Garden Lodge (2000)



⁷⁶ Wigg, "The Ex-Lover of Freddie Mercury," 140 and Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 10 November 2008.

⁷⁷ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 2 July 2008.

SYSTEMS OF MEMORY, PROCESSES OF RECORDING

Up until this point, through an examination of prominent figures, significant locations and consequential events, I have argued that Freddie Mercury's decision to record prolifically directly reflected his ambition to leave behind a musical legacy. For Mercury, sound recording provided a channel through which his voice could diachronically span beyond the temporal and spatial limitations of his life, beyond his mortality. Jonathan Sterne discusses this phenomenon in relation to the utilitarian and commemorative function of early sound recordings. He states:

The voices of the dead had their cultural converse in the ears of the not yet born. Beyond the idea of retaining the voices of the recently departed for a final graveside performance or for the ears of loved ones, writers quickly developed a sense of the metahistorical possibilities of sound recording. They hoped that recording would enable transgenerational speech, where any "present" could address itself to an almost infinite range of possible futures.⁷⁸

Although sound recording and the preservation of one's artistic voice invites different levels of participation for its perceivers, recordings, unlike the written word, intensifies one's auditory senses to a point that enables them to capture a sonic impression of the performer, regardless of the perceiver's placement in time. Marshall McLuhan classifies these forms of media as "hot media" for their ability to provide a high degree of involvement without necessitating considerable stimulus.⁷⁹ Therefore, rather than writing an autobiographical memoir in print, Mercury elected to use sound recording as his vehicle to transcend time, knowing full-well that his works would be consumed long after his passing. The current section of this chapter addresses the exteriority and nature of sound reproduction by examining *Made in Heaven's* sonic construction and assemblage.

⁷⁸ Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 308.

⁷⁹ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1964), 22.

Subsequently, through textual and musical analysis, I critically consider the implications of Mercury's metaphoric "heavenly voice," and the internal semantic connotations that *Made in Heaven* conveys, as a recording that stands allegorically, for many, as Mercury's last will and testament.

Contrary to popular belief, although Mercury recorded prolifically until the end of his life, Queen, as a quartet, never made a formal decision to release the material in album form; Deacon, May and Taylor only elected to do so following Mercury's death. Sheila Whiteley, however, suggests Mercury was fully mindful of the details that constituted the posthumously released work. She states, "Although there have been other posthumous album releases, this was the first instance in which the artist was fully aware of the project and its looming sense of finality."⁸⁰ In contrast to Whiteley's highly romanticized account, I argue that Mercury recorded with little expectation and certainly did not have a premeditated vision of the entire project. Unquestionably, the fact that Mercury composed and recorded in poor health points to his ambition to have the material released, although due to the uncertainty of his future, Mercury was not cognizant of the result. Peter Freestone suggests, "I think the only thought that Freddie had was to get as much material created before he died as possible. I don't think there was a set idea to do another album."⁸¹ Similarly, Terry Giddings states: "To be honest, we were all surprised that he recorded it. He never said that an album was in the works."⁸² Many commentators presume Queen composed and recorded the thirteen songs that appear on *Made in Heaven* in close succession, following *Innuendo* and prior to

⁸⁰ Whiteley, "Which Freddie?: Constructions of Masculinity in Freddie Mercury and Justin Hawkins," in *Oh Boy!: Masculinities and Popular Music*, ed. by Freya Jarman-Ivens (New York: Routledge, 2007), 26-27.

⁸¹ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 2 July 2008.

⁸² Giddings, interview by author, telephone conversation, 7 July 2008.

Mercury's death. In fact, Mercury only managed to record very few pieces during the Montreux sessions. Therefore, I argue in opposition to Sheila Whitley and John B. Smith, who state: "*Made in Heaven* was not a case of an artist simply working right up to his death, but a unique example of an acceptance of fate and determination to see a project through to completion – rare enough in ordinary life but here captured on vinyl and CD."⁸³ According to producer David Richards, the band members never expressed their desire to release an album, *per se*. As previously stated, from 1988 to his death, Mercury intended to leave his bandmates with as much usable material as possible (much of which was released during the course of Mercury's life through *The Miracle* and *Innuendo*), although by the winter of 1991, the possibility to record an album would have never crossed Mercury's mind, who compared the shortage of musical material with the declining condition of his health. Richards states: "Freddie was very sick by this time. He could not be in the studio for more than a couple hours, and could only do so sitting down; he did not have the strength to stand up. It was getting very traumatic for all of us."⁸⁴ In view of the friendship that the pair developed since 1978, Mercury did not let emotions prevail over his work, and so he never told Richards of his condition. The indication that pointed towards Mercury's terminal illness came from his insistence to alter the way in which he normally recorded his voice. Typically, Mercury would only sing a "final vocal" after the backing instrumental and vocal parts were nearly, or already, completed and positioned in the mix. Richards explains that, similar to most rock bands who utilized multitrack recording, Mercury never wished to commit the lead vocals until he had an exact sonic impression as to what the accompaniment would include. This

⁸³ Whiteley, "Which Freddie?: Constructions of Masculinity in Freddie Mercury and Justin Hawkins," 27.

⁸⁴ Richards, interview by author, telephone conversation, 12 June 2008.

process enabled him to auralize and contextualize his vocal line relatively with the already recorded tracks. Much like his work on "Barcelona" and "Bohemian Rhapsody," Mercury preferred to build complex arrangements by using an incremental system, afforded by multitrack recording, culminating with the addition of the lead vocal tracks. This, of course, permitted Mercury to embellish the melody with motifs embedded in the accompaniment, which he performed in a call and response fashion. In opposition to this process, during the later Montreux sessions, Mercury insisted on recording a final vocal over what were, in essence, very rough unfinished tracks.⁸⁵ The artistic consequences of this methodological change impacted not only Mercury's ability to compose, as his capacity to engage musically with other parts was encumbered tremendously, but also in post-production, the lack of recorded material greatly impacted David Richards' ability to assemble a faultless track.

Predictably, Mercury kept the number of people who attended these recording sessions to a minimum. During his final visit to Montreux, he performed only in the presence of Richards and Terry Giddings. Though a considerable veil of secrecy encompassed the creation of what became segments of *Made in Heaven*, commentators recount glorified tales that depict Mercury as a tragic hero, who through immense struggle consumed copious amounts of alcohol to ease his pain. Georg Purvis propagates this ongoing myth, stating, "The vocalist was also drinking some serious amounts of vodka to help him deal with the pain he was suffering."⁸⁶ In every account that I obtained, this scenario never transpired. Mike Moran states: "No, Fred was not doing shots of vodka, let alone drinking. It is just silly press speculation. He quit smoking and

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Georg Purvis, *Queen: The Complete Works* (London: Reynolds and Hearn Ltd, 2007), 74.

did everything he could do to stave off what was actually the inevitable."⁸⁷ Similarly, Peter Freestone explains, "Freddie had been told in 1989 that he would die if he didn't stop drinking, smoking and doing drugs, and he did what he was told to survive. In the old days, that was another story."⁸⁸ Mercury treated the sessions with the utmost degree of delicacy and professionalism, as he consciously lived on borrowed time; doctors advised Mercury that, in all likelihood, he would not see Christmas of 1989.⁸⁹ David Richards recalls, "Fred once told me: 'God has given me this great thing that I can still sing. My body is falling apart, but thankfully I can still sing.'"⁹⁰

Following an eighteen-month break after Mercury's death, the surviving members of Queen convened with David Richards to appraise the quality of the recordings that Mercury had left behind. Inspired by Mercury's dedication to record tirelessly, the band decided to release the material in the form of a full-length album. Indubitably, their decision begs an imperative question: if Mercury was only able to record very few songs before his death, where would they obtain the amount of musical material necessary to fulfill the standard length requirement of an album, which by the early 1990s changed from the standard thirty- to forty-minute length of the LPs they produced at the beginning of their career to the forty-five to sixty-minute length of the CD era? The answer hinged upon the potency of technology. The band not only intended to use the newly-recorded material from the Montreux sessions, but sought to construct entire songs from segments of preexisting tracks, most of which were B-sides or unreleased recordings.

⁸⁷ Moran, interview by author, telephone conversation, 16 June 2008.

⁸⁸ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 2 July 2008.

⁸⁹ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 11 August 2008.

⁹⁰ Richards, interview by author, telephone conversation, 12 June 2008.

The repertory for *Made in Heaven*, as the title suggests, stemmed from the band's desire to release a conceptual album, one that thematically conveyed issues pertaining to life and death, paying homage to their fallen bandmate. While possibly influenced by Deep Purple's 1972 release *Made in Japan*, Queen elected to name their forthcoming release *Made in Heaven*, a title that Mercury himself contemplated using for his 1985 solo album, which he ultimately abandoned for *Mr. Bad Guy*.⁹¹ It is noteworthy to mention that, contrary to Georg Purvis' account, Queen never sought inspiration from their fans to name the album. Purvis states:

As the reports of Queen's final studio album started to build, fans were asked by the fan club to submit their own titles. Many were inspired (*Phoenix* and *Encore* being the most-suggested, through *Cantus In Aeternum*, *Subject To Approval* and *From A Smile To Innuendo* were also clever), while others were predictable (*The Show Must Go On*, *Anyway the Wind Blows*) and some just strange (*Bulsarian Rhapsody?!?*). However, in keeping with the tradition of their previous albums, the band chose to name the album after the strongest track present: *Made in Heaven*, a fitting title if there ever was one.⁹²

In contrast, Jacky Smith, who today continues to operate the Official Queen Fan Club, adamantly explains that the band members extended no such invitation, nor was she the recipient of the submissions listed by Purvis.⁹³

Although Queen had a clear thematic vision that they wished to portray from the onset of the project in 1992, their endeavour would take years to execute logistically and musically. The process began with Brian May working closely in his private studio

⁹¹ In 1985, during an interview on Dutch Television in Holland, Mercury stated that his forthcoming solo album was entitled *Made in Heaven*.

⁹² Purvis, *Queen*, 74.

⁹³ In an email to the author on 22 July 2008, in response to Georg Purvis' claim, Jacky Smith states: "I think this is all utter nonsense actually! Yes, I was running the club then, but I do not recall ever asking fans to submit ideas (and the band would not have requested it either!). I certainly don't remember getting ANY of these titles sent to me." In an email to the author on 22 July 2008, Georg Purvis revealed the source from where he obtained the information: <http://home.wanadoo.nl/madeinheaven/indx2.html>. The website, created by Rienk Tholen, provides interpretations presented from the perspective of a fan and should not be taken as sound historical data acquired from extensive research.

(Allerton Hill Studios) with Justin Shirley-Smith, while Roger Taylor worked in his personal studio (Cosford Mill) with Joshua J. Macrae. These early experiments were reminiscent of Queen's labour-intensive epics that demanded months of studio manipulation. David Richards, who had mentored both Macrae and Shirley-Smith at Mountain Studios, regained control of the project once the preliminary work had been completed. For nearly three years, Richards and Queen attempted to unite sonically musical fragments that in the end would holistically stand as an autonomous entity. To do so, they strove to obtain a degree of sound fidelity suggesting Queen recorded the songs collectively within a proximal period. The group obtained this level of continuity first by re-arranging and re-recording all the instrumental tracks with contemporary equipment; and second, by using digital technology to unite the degrees of sonic variance that resulted from diverse recording equipment, studios, periods and methods. The divergence in sound quality that typifies this editorial process reflects Albin Zak's discussion on the constructedness of rock recordings. He states, "The narrative aspect of the mix is what reconnects the project with its origin. It cements both the conceptual and the practical connections between recording and mixing. Performances have been gathered – often in ways that seem to contradict the very notion of musical performance – and become artifacts subject to deliberate compositional decision making."⁹⁴

In the case of *Made in Heaven*, Richards and Queen utilized digital technologies to create and simulate Mercury's presence. To do so, they shifted pitches and transposed passages, inserted or removed segments by cutting and pasting, sequenced layers of keyboard sounds with synthesizers and MIDI, looped drum tracks, altered spatial

⁹⁴ Albin J. Zak, *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 161.

parameters of depth through effects (such as digital reverb, delay and chorus), normalized opposing decibel levels and added incidental sounds with samplers. Following years of fastidious experimentation and recording, Queen released *Made in Heaven*, a technological feat that in all probability would have most surprised Mercury himself.

As disclosed in Example 6-12, some of the tracks used on the album date to 1980, while others Mercury recorded as late as 1991. *Made in Heaven* begins with the optimistically ambient "It's a Beautiful Day," featuring Mercury's vocal and piano tracks that resulted from an improvisatory session captured by Reinhold Mack at Musicland Studios in April 1980, the source from which producer David Richards and the remaining members of Queen constructed the piece in 1995.⁹⁵ The album continues with the title-track, "Made in Heaven," a piece formally recorded in Munich in 1984 for *Mr. Bad Guy*, Mercury's first solo album, on which the song appears as Track 2 on Side A. In musical contrast to the preceding rock ballad, Track 3 presents the uplifting and gospel-influenced "Let Me Live," originally named "Another Little Piece of My Heart," composed by Rod Stewart and Queen in 1976, which developed over a jam session. In September 1983, while recording *The Works* (released on 27 February 1984) at the Record Plant Studio in Los Angeles, Queen briefly considered including the piece on their forthcoming album and consequently recorded a demo version, but in the end rejected it.⁹⁶ When the band, in 1995, revisited the song for *Made in Heaven*, they modified the title and various lyrical segments to avoid copyright infringement on Jerry Ragovoy and Bert Berns' "Piece of My Heart," originally recorded by Aretha Franklin's eldest sister, Erma Franklin (1967), released as a single with "Baby, What You Want Me to Do" as the B-side.

⁹⁵ Richards, interview by author, telephone conversation, 12 June 2008.

⁹⁶ Purvis, *Queen*, 195.

Example 6-12 – Made in Heaven – album details

	SONG TITLE	COMPOSER(S)	CREDIT	SOURCE	YEAR
1	It's a Beautiful Day	Mercury	Queen	demo from Musicland	1980
2	Made in Heaven	Mercury	Mercury	<i>Mr. Bad Guy</i>	1985
3	Let Me Live	Queen	Queen	unreleased	1983
4	Mother Love	May/Mercury	Queen	<i>Made in Heaven</i>	1995
5	My Life has been Saved	John Deacon	Queen	B-side for "Scandal"	1989
6	I was Born to Love You	Mercury	Mercury	<i>Mr. Bad Guy</i>	1985
7	Heaven for Everyone	Taylor	Taylor	<i>Shove It</i>	1988
8	Too Much Love Will Kill You	May/Musker/Lamers	May/Musker/Lamers	unreleased	1989
9	You Don't Fool Me	Richards + Queen	Queen	<i>Made in Heaven</i>	1991
10	A Winter's Tale	Mercury	Queen	<i>Made in Heaven</i>	1995
11	It's a Beautiful Day (Reprise)	Mercury	Queen	demo from Musicland	1980
12	Yeah	Mercury	Queen	"Don't Try Suicide"	1980
13	<i>Untitled</i>	Richards + Queen	Queen	<i>Made in Heaven</i>	1995

In 1968, led by Janis Joplin, Big Brother and the Holding Company released a cover version on *Cheap Thrills*, obtaining a much larger degree of fame in the mainstream pop market.⁹⁷ In Queen's "Let Me Live," due to small imperfections in Mercury's original vocal tracks, Richards was only able to assemble one verse, and so Roger Taylor and Brian May sang Verses 2 and 3 respectively, to compensate for the lack of musical material. Similarly, the lavish choirs that were idiosyncratic of Queen's sound were equally unobtainable due to Mercury's absence, and thus the remaining band members employed additional singers to supply backing vocals, including Rebecca Leigh-White, Gary Martin, Catherine Porter and Miriam Stockley.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ "Piece of My Heart" was released by Erma Franklin as a single in 1967 by Shout Records. An alternate version of the song appeared as Track 4 on Big Brother and the Holding Company's *Cheap Thrills*, released in August 1968 by Columbia Records.

⁹⁸ Richards, interview by author, telephone conversation, 12 June 2008.

Made in Heaven continues with Track 4, featuring what many consider the highlight of the album: the somber and provocative "Mother Love," which, as I shall discuss below, was the last song Mercury sang before his death.⁹⁹ Mercury recorded the vocals at Mountain Studios in the fall of 1991. In thematic contrast to Mercury's final composition and performance, Track 5, entitled "My Life has been Saved," dramatically alters the momentum of the album by infusing an air of optimism to the solemn mood and dark musical colours conveyed through "Mother Love." Bassist John Deacon composed the work in 1989, and although the piece never appeared on *The Miracle*, the band released it as a B-side to the single "Scandal."¹⁰⁰ *Made in Heaven* carries forward featuring another song from Mercury's 1985 release, as Track 6 prominently showcases "I Was Born to Love You," appearing on Side A, Track 3, of *Mr. Bad Guy*. Subsequently, Track 7 presents *Made in Heaven's* first single, "Heaven for Everyone" released on 21 October 1995, the only song on the album penned by drummer Roger Taylor. Composed in 1988, Taylor released the piece on *Shove It*, the first of three albums by his band, the Cross.¹⁰¹ "Heaven for Everyone" appears as Track 4 on the album's UK edition, featuring a cameo appearance by Mercury who provided lead vocals on the track, the source from which Richards used to create the alternate version re-recorded by Queen in 1995. Regarding the attribution of songwriting credits, it is important to note that, although the band members decided to accredit material composed from 1988 onwards to "Queen," the repertory featured on *Made in Heaven* composed prior to this time remained the property of the song's creator.

⁹⁹ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 2 July 2008.

¹⁰⁰ "Scandal," featured on Side B, Track 3, of *The Miracle*, was released as a single on 9 October 1989.

¹⁰¹ The Cross' albums include *Shove It* (1988), *Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know* (1990) and *Blue Rock* (1991).

The subsequent song, on Track 8 of *Made in Heaven*, entitled "Too Much Love Will Kill You," was written by Brian May with Elizabeth Lamers and Frank Musker, a musical number May originally intended to include on his 1988 solo project.

Alternatively, May presented his composition to Queen who recorded it and then considered it for inclusion on *The Miracle*. Due to minor disputes over publishing rights with Musker and Lamers, Queen set the work aside and abandoned it until 1995.¹⁰²

Unlike the poignant and distressing "Too Much Love Will Kill You," Track 9 features "You Don't Fool Me," a dance/disco song reminiscent of Queen's *Hot Space*. Richards described the work as "quite the technological achievement," which is an understatement. Through ingenious technological manipulation, Richards created the framework of the song before presenting it to the band, after which time May added the signature seven-note guitar ostinato. Richards obtained Mercury's vocal track from fragments of recorded material, which in the end he merges seamlessly.¹⁰³ By shifting tempi and pitches, Richards created an impressive work that demonstrated his mastery of digital recording technologies and his keen sense of musicality as an esteemed record producer.

Unlike the rhythmically driven "You Don't Fool Me," Track 10 presents the tuneful and enchanting "A Winter's Tale," the final song Mercury solely composed in his life, which he managed to record before his death in 1991. Queen released the ballad on 18 December 1995 as *Made in Heaven's* second single, and consequently the piece has been dubbed Queen's unofficial Christmas song.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Purvis, *Queen*, 263.

¹⁰³ Richards, interview by author, telephone conversation, 12 June 2008.

¹⁰⁴ Many consider Queen's official Christmas to be "Thank God It's Christmas," composed by Roger Taylor and recorded in 1984. This piece appeared as the B-side to "A Winter's Tale" in 1995.

The album continues with "It's a Beautiful Day (Reprise)," which, as its title suggests, returns to the original theme set forth in the opening track of the album. The song, as it appears on Track 11, begins in the same manner as it did in Track 1, although it develops and culminates with interspersed sampled drums over May's modal guitar performance and Mercury's heavily processed voice. The piece ends with a piano excerpt taken from "Seven Seas of Rhye," released in 1974 on *Queen II. Made in Heaven* concludes with two "hidden tracks" (Tracks 12 and 13), the first comprising a two-second vocal sample of Mercury saying "Yeah," originating from "Don't Try Suicide" (0:07-0:09) featured on *The Game* (released on 30 June 1980), on which it appeared as Track 2 on Side B; and second, Track 13 uncharacteristically presents a twenty-two minute dreamlike instrumental piece created by David Richards, who produced the work with an Ensoniq ASR13 sampler in consultation with Queen.¹⁰⁵

NARRATIVE, PERSPECTIVE AND THE POLYSEMIC NATURE OF MEANING

Through sonic editing, telling photography and graphic superimposition, the remaining members of Queen created a carefully constructed concept album, projecting the illusion of Mercury's enigmatic voice singing contemplatively on themes of life and death, love and shame and heaven and serenity, from an ethereal world. Artistic director Richard Gray heightened the album's posthumous effect by depicting a stamp of origin and authenticity, which read, "Made in Heaven," as its seemingly faded seal suggests the product traveled from a great distance (see Example 6-13).

¹⁰⁵ Richards, interview by author, telephone conversation, 12 June 2008.

Example 6-13 – Made in Heaven cover art



The uncropped version of the cover photograph (as displayed in the cassette release) typically supports this theme, demonstrating Mercury in his legendary pose, as he prepares to embark upon a metaphoric voyage, leaving behind the mortal world. Though the artwork presents itself as one picture, it was in fact the result of three separate photographs, each of which was digitally enhanced. The first, captured by Gray at the Duck House, the location where Mercury briefly resided during the recording of *Innuendo*, was simply a landscape shot, containing no people as such. The second, was the result of a band photograph taken by Gray, which he superimposed in the foreground of the cover, featuring the surviving members of Queen (from left to right: May, Deacon and Taylor), who stand united, bidding farewell to their beloved friend and musical colleague. Third, and finally, in the middle ground is Mercury's silhouette, which many commentators believe to be an image of either Mercury himself or of Mercury's statue,

the latter standing today at the Place du Marché in Montreux (see Example 6-14).¹⁰⁶ In fact, Gray captured Mercury's silhouette by photographing a small figurine in a cornfield, which, through graphic editing, he altered and superimposed.¹⁰⁷ Not only does the cover art reinforce the overarching *topoi* of the album, but it also provides listeners with a window through which they can gaze to appreciate visually the splendour of Montreux, a place that distinctly sets the thematic backdrop to "A Winter's Tale." In the piece, Mercury uses adjectives such as quiet, peaceful, tranquil and blissful to describe the "truly magnificent view" and "breathtaking scene," culminating with his declaration, "what an extraordinary place!"

Whereas "A Winter's Tale" unquestionably chronicles Mercury's sentiments during his final days, many speculate retrospectively that all the songs on *Made in Heaven* serve this semantic function. To this end, it is imperative to reiterate the way in which Queen and Richards assembled the album. Its creators went to painstaking lengths to ensure that the final product projected a high level of sonic uniformity, implying rather convincingly that Mercury sang the tracks within a close time frame, shortly prior to his death. If the sound fidelity is not enough to veer listeners toward this supposition, perhaps the crux of the work lies in the thematic conceptualization that blatantly correlates *Made in Heaven's* repertoire with the trials and tribulations of Mercury's life.

¹⁰⁶ The Freddie Mercury commemorative statue, sculpted by Irena Sedlecka, stands three metres high on the eastern shore of Lake Geneva, only steps from the former site of Mountain Studios. The statue was unveiled on Monday 25 November 1996, at which time Brian May thanked the people of Montreux for giving Mercury a sanctuary during the last few years of his life. After the ceremony, May said that following many failed attempts to have the statue erected in London, the next logical choice was Montreux. To watch May's speech, consult: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v6epCdzyi4>

¹⁰⁷ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 10 November 2008.

Example 6-14 – Freddie Mercury memorial statue



Who could argue the fact that songs entitled "My Life Has Been Saved," "Let Me Live," "Heaven for Everyone" and "Made in Heaven" strongly allude to Mercury's riveting life, whose impending death became a global spectacle, sensationalized to unprecedented heights by the media. Moreover, titles such as "Too Much Love Will Kill You" and "You Don't Fool Me," insinuate Mercury's physical struggle with AIDS. By the time *Made in Heaven* was released in 1995, memories of Mercury's battle remained at the forefront of social awareness, and therefore commentators had the tendency to interpret the songs connotatively rather than denotatively. Many rock journalists and Queen fans wrongly hypothesized that Mercury found inspiration to compose the repertoire as a mode of self-reflection, from the perspective of a dying man afflicted with AIDS, a conclusion that

seemed only natural, particularly given the suggestive imagery of the album artwork and the time in which the album was released.

In truth, Mercury and Queen composed *most* of the songs when the former was unaware of his AIDS status. In addition, Mercury is not the sole composer of the album, and so *Made in Heaven* does not simply encapsulate the singular view of one person. As for the repertory that Mercury independently composed, interpretation cannot rest exclusively on hypotheses that premise songs of love and intimacy as paeans of homosexual praise; we should recall that Mercury's closest relationship was with a woman, Mary Austin. Sheila Whiteley, in a recently published scholarly forum, exemplifies the anachronistic interpretive quandary to which I allude. She states, "Freddie died in Joe's arms on November 24, 1991, and it is not too improbable that the sixth track on the album, 'I Was Born to Love You' is a tribute to his steadfastness and love. Mercury had been in the show business for 23 years and, as his funeral demonstrated, his lovers were with him to the end."¹⁰⁸ Whiteley's postulate is encumbered with inaccuracies, resulting from a misreading of the piece and the context in which it was created. First, she does not cite the source of the historical data that premise her argument, forcibly causing one to question the validity of her claim. Second, Whiteley on two instances wrongfully speculates that Joe Fanelli was Mercury's lover when he composed "I Was Born to Love You." In the first, Whiteley seems to confuse Fanelli for Jim Hutton (the latter according to my sources was Mercury's monogamous lover at the time of his death). More disturbing is Whiteley's suggestion that Mercury died in Fanelli's arms (Fanelli escorted Dr. Atkinson to the mews when Hutton and Freestone discovered Mercury dead). In her

¹⁰⁸ Whiteley, "Which Freddie?: Constructions of Masculinity in Freddie Mercury and Justin Hawkins," 27.

second instance of confusion, Whiteley suggests that Mercury composed "I Was Born to Love You" as "a tribute to his [Fanelli's] steadfastness and love." In all likelihood, Whiteley conceives this belief by assuming Mercury composed the song near the end of his life. In fact, Mercury wrote "I Was Born to Love You" on 25 May 1984 while in New York.¹⁰⁹ The song later appeared as Track 3 on *Mr. Bad Guy*, Mercury's first solo album, released on Monday 29 April 1985, years after the termination of Mercury and Fanelli's physical relationship in 1978.¹¹⁰ The type of interpretive decoding that Whiteley puts forth reflects a paradigmatic shift in the general perception of Queen's music following Mercury's death. Although *The Miracle* for many did not allude to Mercury's illness, *Innuendo* when analyzed retrospectively, demonstrates Mercury's tendency to weave the tragedy of his life into the fabric of the plot. Brian May states: "We made a whole album, *Innuendo*, knowing this was happening. If you listen to it now, it is made with the knowledge that we don't have much longer, and Freddie doesn't have much longer on the planet."¹¹¹

For the remainder of this section, I shall critically analyze two songs that appear on *Made in Heaven*, as they reflect the autobiographical nature of Queen's later music that May discusses. In doing so, I will not only explore the ways in which the musical backdrop reinforces apparent themes found within the text, but I equally probe issues pertaining to perspective and narrative, as they implicate the effectiveness and meaning

¹⁰⁹ See liner notes of *Mr. Bad Guy*.

¹¹⁰ Upon reading Sheila Whiteley's account of "I Was Born to Love You," Peter Freestone, a person with whom Mercury spent the majority of his time after 1979, stated that he was deeply disturbed and annoyed by people who "make their living off fabricating stories." Freestone concludes that, to his knowledge, the only song appearing on *Mr. Bad Guy* composed with someone in mind was "Love Me Like There's No Tomorrow" (Track 6, Side 2), inspired by long-time friend Barbara Valentin (1940-2002), who appeared in the film *Kiss Me Like There's No Tomorrow*. Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 10 November 2008.

¹¹¹ Brian May interview, *Legends: Queen*, video recording.

of the text through retrospective analysis. By exploring "Mother Love" and "Too Much Love Will Kill You," I problematize the ways commentators regard both songs as autobiographical lamentations of Mercury's life.

"I LONG FOR PEACE BEFORE I DIE": "MOTHER LOVE"

Unlike many of the other tracks that comprise *Made in Heaven*, "Mother Love" is one of the few pieces that corresponds directly to Mercury's life and his battle with AIDS, for Mercury composed the work (with Brian May) in his final days. Incontestably, the song stands as the zenith of Mercury's spirited desire to leave his musical imprint upon history before conceding to the disease that would claim his life. The haunting piece sonically projects the pain and struggle that Mercury suffered during his final visit to Montreux, invoked through a passionate vocal display, and paralleled by the semantic depths of the text. Although Mercury himself was unable to complete the song, Brian May predictably sang Verse 3, fulfilling Mercury's request that he made prior to his return to London on 9 November 1991. The song begins with a fixed drumbeat produced by the Linn LM-1 Drum Computer set to 92 beats per minute (measured at the quarter note), as it provides the unwavering rhythmic foundation on which the remainder of the piece rests. Following the short four-bar introductory section, keyboard tracks performed on the Korg M1 provide a drone in the lower register, complimented with upper auxiliary chords in G minor, all of which reinforce the deeply somber sonorial quality of the piece. Brian May mirrors the evocative ambience of the introduction created by synthesized string patches, providing a sparse chordal guitar arrangement (0:11-0:47). In Verse 1, through digital processing, Mercury's voice captures the ephemeral musical effect that the instruments produce, created with long decay reverb and digital delay set to 300

milliseconds with short feedback. As such, the sparseness of the instrumentation allows Mercury's voice to remain at the forefront of the mix (0:48-1:22). The only interjections to Mercury's vocal phrases that go beyond the centralized ostinati emerge from John Deacon on the bass (1:08-1:14). The dismal and sparse nature of the instrumental accompaniment word paints the sorrow and bewilderment that Mercury describes in Verse 1 (see Example 6-15), particularly through a fury of arpeggios that enter with a crescendo, replicating the turmoil with which the protagonist is surrounded. Panning and digital tempo acceleration heightens the dramatic intent of the gesture, engulfing the listener from multiple spatial nodes within the mix (1:21-1:29).

Example 6-15 – Verse 1 of "Mother Love" (0:11-1:29)

I don't want to sleep with you
 I don't need the passion too
 I don't want a stormy affair
 To make me feel my life is heading somewhere
 All I want is the comfort and care
 Just to know that my woman gives me sweet mother love

Unlike the thematic intent of many conventional rock ballads in the early 1990s, most of which extend an invitation for heterosexual physical romance, Mercury, on the other hand, states his disinterest in sexual relations and passionate affairs; in his fragile condition, he seeks to procure "comfort and care." Mercury, whom the media demonized as a homosexual inflicted with AIDS, fascinatingly seeks consolation from a woman, presumably Mary Austin.

Example 6-16 – Chorus of "Mother Love" (1:29-2:04)

I've walked too long in this lonely lane
 I've had enough of this same old game
 I'm a man of the world and they say that I'm strong
 But my heart is heavy, and my hope is gone
 Out in the city, in the cold world outside
 I don't want pity, just a safe place to hide
 Mama please, let me back inside

In the following section, or Chorus (see Example 6-16), Mercury continues in the first person singular by reflecting upon the condition of his life and the closeness of his death. In a contemplative manner, Mercury alludes to his perceived strength (1:40-1:44), but concludes that his hope has vanished (1:45-1:49). He then refers to London as he states "Out in the city, in the cold world outside" (1:50-1:54), suggesting the inhumanity that has come to plague his life. Mercury blatantly states his desire to find somewhere safe to hide, and interestingly concludes the section by asking "Mama" to let him back inside (1:55-2:04). One can interpret this in many ways, although I contend, as I have done in my analysis of "Bohemian Rhapsody," that Mercury uses "Mama" as an epithet to betoken Austin rather than his biological mother, Jer Bulsara. Following a stop-time, emphasizing Mercury's longing for refuge, the accompaniment reenters with a sample emulating a massive blast (2:05-2:07). The musical effect not only word paints the importance of the narrator's plea, but also metaphorically captures the imploding sentiments that symbolize the finality of his life.

Example 6-17 – Verse 2 of "Mother Love" (2:16-2:57)

I don't want to make no waves
 But you can give me all the love that I crave
 I can't take it if you see me cry
 I long for peace before I die
 All I want is to know that you're there
 You're going to give me all your sweet mother love (mother love)

In Verse 2, Mercury expands upon the importance for him to obtain compassionate love during his time of need (see Example 6-17). Mercury states that he does not wish to "make waves" or cause trouble, and accordingly confesses that he cannot bear to impose his misfortune upon the life of his addressee: "I can't take it if you see me cry" (2:16-2:30). The narrator's inability to display his emotions physically reflects Mercury's ordinance, mandating that his condition remain unspoken by his friends within his immediate social network. Mercury then delivers a *précis* of his ambition during the last few years of his life: "I long for peace before I die" (2:32-2:36).

As requested by Mercury, Brian May sings Verse 3 remaining in the first person, and therefore delivering the text from Mercury's point of view (see Example 6-18). Due to the timbral distinction of May's voice, he inescapably adds a secondary and complementary narrative to the song, as, although he thematically develops the sentiments described in the preceding two verses and chorus sung by Mercury, the sonic characteristics of May's voice render his presence unambiguously different from those of the primary speaker.

Example 6-18 – Verse 3 of "Mother Love" (3:40-4:03)

My body's aching, but I can't sleep
 My dreams are all the company I keep
 Got such a feeling as the sun goes down
 I'm coming home to my sweet mother love

Immediately following May's last sung note, Mercury practically interrupts with an omnipresent whisper stating "mother love" (4:04-4:09). The musical effect projects a haunting and ubiquitous impression of Mercury, over which a cheering crowd begins to emerge (4:06). The sonic montage that ensues comprises many musical snippets, portraying highlights from Mercury's career in reverse chronological order, beginning with three separate segments from shows recorded at Wembley Stadium (on 11 and 12 July 1986) during the band's *Magic Tour*; the first from "One Vision" (4:08-4:18), the second from Mercury's vocal call and response with the audience (4:13-4:25) and the third from the guitar introduction to "Tie Your Mother Down" (4:20-4:21). The sonic tableau continues with an excerpt from "Goin' Back," composed by Carole King and Gerry Goffin in 1966, and later released by the Byrds on *The Notorious Byrds Brothers* in 1968. Mercury, under the pseudonym Larry Lurex, released the song as a B-side to "I Can Hear Music," the latter composed in 1966 by the Ronettes and later covered by the Beach Boys in 1973. The musical function of "Goin' Back" echoes the nostalgic and self-reflexive function of "Mother Love" as Mercury recalls in the former, "I think I'm going back, to the things I learnt so well in my youth" (4:29-4:40). To reinforce the retrospective narrative that "Goin' Back" signifies, layered samples depicting incidental rewinding sounds personify the condensed rendering of Mercury's life. As such, the montage serves to eulogize Mercury's prodigious career. Following a whirlwind of densely layered sounds, the song concludes with the sound of a baby crying, symbolizing Mercury's birth (4:41-4:46).

"YOU'RE THE VICTIM OF YOUR CRIME": "TOO MUCH LOVE WILL KILL YOU"

As I have suggested in my brief explanation of "I Was Born to Love You," due to the ontological nature of *Made in Heaven*, many perceive and wrongfully interpret its repertory collectively, correlating the thematic aspects of each piece with the calamity of Mercury's illness. Analysts have the tendency to construe a song's meaning without closely considering the factors that provoked its inception for the composer. This form of interpretational misunderstanding arguably occurs most frequently in the reception of "Too Much Love Will Kill You," composed in 1988 by Brian May (with Elizabeth Lamers and Frank Musker). Following his divorce with Chrissy May (nee Mullen) in conjunction with his affair with English actor Anita Dobson, guitarist Brian May found inspiration to compose a song that revealed the pain that love inflicted upon him, and not the pain that AIDS inflicted upon Mercury.¹¹² Although May composed the piece to lament his failed marriage, it begins optimistically in G major at an adagio tempo (72 beats per minute to the quarter note). Even as the major key infers an air of hopefulness to the vexatious thematic narrative, the addition of a tremolo filter to the primary keyboard program (electric piano) sonically foreshadows the instability of the protagonist. Following the brief four-bar introduction (0:00-0:11), the central character makes his entrance (0:12), explicating his fragmented and solitary state of being (see Example 6-19).

¹¹² Jackson, *Queen and I*, 142 & 154.

Example 6-19 – Verse 1 of "Too Much Love Will Kill You" (0:12-1:05)

I'm just the pieces of the man I used to be
 Too many bitter tears are raining down on me
 I'm far away from home
 And I've been facing this alone
 For much too long
 I feel like no-one ever told the truth to me
 About growing up and what a struggle it would be
 In my tangled state of mind
 I've been looking back to find
 Where I went wrong

The duality that encompasses the piece (May's divorce and Mercury's illness), points vividly to the polysemic nature of textual analysis and interpretation. The opening lyrics fortuitously speak to Mercury's life, as AIDS rendered him physically and mentally "in pieces." Mercury's time in Montreux and his decision to refrain from openly discussing his condition resonates in the text, as the narrator states he is "far away from home" and has "been facing this alone for much too long" (0:26-0:34).

The first chorus demonstrates the double entendre of meaning, whereby the protagonist describes his irresolution towards present and past lovers, interestingly through the gaze of the second person singular: "Torn between the lover and the love you leave behind" (see Example 6-20). In the composer's case, it undeniably reflects May's love triangle between his lover, Anita Dobson, and "the love he left behind," his wife Chrissy May. Conversely, for many, the same line in the context of *Made in Heaven* signifies Mercury's lover, Jim Hutton, and his former lover whom he left behind in 1975, Mary Austin.

Example 6-20 – Chorus 1 of "Too Much Love Will Kill You"

Too much love will kill you
 If you can't make up your mind
 Torn between the lover
 And the love you leave behind
 You're headed for disaster
 'cause you never read the signs
 Too much love will kill you every time

In the penultimate chorus below, and like Chorus 1 above, while, on one hand, the narrator may be using the second person colloquially to mean himself, on the other, the composer may be using a secondary voice to address the protagonist, in this case, describing the devastating effects that love invoked upon his life (see Example 6-21).

Example 6-21 – Chorus 2 of "Too Much Love Will Kill You"

Too much love will kill you
 Just as sure as none at all
 It'll drain the power that's in you
 Make you plead and scream and crawl
 And the pain will make you crazy
 You're the victim of your crime
 Too much love will kill you every time

The colourful narrative that May provides bears a remarkable degree of similarity with Mercury's physical battle with AIDS: "It'll drain the power that's in you, make you plead and scream and crawl," the crux of the chorus stating, "And the pain will make you crazy, you're the victim of your crime." As demonstrated in Example 6-22, May employs inverted and secondary chords to intensify the potency of the passage achieved through stepwise motion in the bass (2:48-2:58).

Example 6-22 – Harmonic progression ending Chorus 2 of "Too Much Love Will Kill You"

$I^6 - IV - I_4^6 - vii/V - I_4^6 - V_2^4 - I$

In all likelihood, the crime to which May alludes represents that of adultery, reflecting his relationship with Anita Dobson outside his marriage with Chrissy May. Conversely, in the context of *Made in Heaven*, many interpret the striking line as the stigmatization of AIDS, a disease believed to punish drug addicts and homosexuals. To this end, similar to Sheila Whiteley's analysis, which problematically regards "I Was Born to Love You" as a paean towards Joe Fanelli, David Sinclair argues that Brian May's "Too Much Love Will Kill You" deliberately condemns and vilifies homosexuals:

Only on two tracks [of *Made in Heaven*] do we find Mercury staring finally and unequivocally over the edge of the abyss. The first is a remake of the hideous Brian May hit "Too Much Love Will Kill You." Doubtless, it is not intended as a song of censure, but even sung by Mercury himself, the line which goes "The pain will make you crazy / You're the victim of your crime" still sounds like somebody's sick idea of a recrimination. Some resonances are simply too strong to ignore, no matter how many times the "real" meaning of a song is explained.¹¹³

Similar to Sinclair's account, Richard Smith regards "Too Much Love Will Kill You" as a scornful tirade, through which May censures homosexuals. Smith states: "[In October 1992], Brian May puts out his first solo album, trailed by the single 'Too Much Love Will Kill You.' I can't believe it. I can't believe the Mercury-esque vocal intro. I can't believe the title. I can't believe the sentiment. Too much love will kill you? With friends making tributes like this who needs the tabloids?"¹¹⁴ The fact that Brian May released and performed the piece following Mercury's death does not confirm Smith's macabre interpretation. May premiered the work during the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert for AIDS Awareness on 20 April 1992, at Wembley Stadium, where he tearfully performed the song to pay homage to his fallen bandmate, and not to make a public mockery or criticism of Mercury's life and sexual orientation.

¹¹³ David Sinclair, "Queen from Beyond the Grave," *Q-Magazine* (December 1995):S. 144f.

¹¹⁴ Richard Smith, *Seduced and Abandoned: Essays on Gay Men and Popular Music* (London: Cassell, 1995), 239.

ROCK IDEOLOGY, THE AIDS CRISIS AND HOMOPHOBIA

The degree of strife asserted by Sinclair and Smith echoes the general ideologies of the 1980s, many of which sadly continue to circulate. Many uninformed commentators identify homosexual relations with AIDS, a self-inflicted disease representing their reckless abandon. During the 1980s, the vilification of AIDS stemmed from a constructed ideological view, characterizing homosexuals as social deviants, who through uncontrolled sexual promiscuity and drug use, provoked their own demise. Warren Johansson and William Percy expand upon this notion by demonstrating the binary ideological view that typified AIDS. On the one hand are the inflictors (homosexuals and drug users), and on the other are the afflicted (heterosexuals, hemophiliacs and infants). They state:

Unfortunately this distinction is implanted in the popular mind and reinforced by religious traditions. Early in the epidemic medical personnel had dubbed the condition WOG (Wrath of God) by allusion to Romans 1:18. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men." In this view homosexuals and IV-drug users are being punished for immoral behavior, while heterosexuals, hemophiliacs and others who acquire the disease through blood transfusions or in the womb are the 'innocent victims' of others' wrongdoing.¹¹⁵

The media's portrayal of AIDS reflected the ill-founded attitude that the disease punished those who defied social behaviours and opposed the status quo. Terry Sanderson states: "Right from the beginning, the newspapers had grabbed the opportunity to express the unbridled homophobia that AIDS provided. They harped constantly upon the idea that AIDS was 'self-inflicted' and that it was 'punishment' for gay men's immorality."¹¹⁶ The media's persistent pursuit of Mercury reflected their ambition to project his experience

¹¹⁵ Warren Johansson and William A. Percy, *Outing: Shattering the Conspiracy of Silence* (New York: Haworth Press, 1994), 218.

¹¹⁶ Terry Sanderson, *Mediawatch: The Treatment of Male and Female Homosexuality in the British Media* (London: Cassell, 1995), 205.

and life as the prototypical and exemplary scandalous homosexual, personifying the criminality that AIDS imposed upon society. Four days following Mercury's death, Joe Haines of *The Daily Mirror* wrote: "He was sheer poison, a man bent – an apt word in the circumstances – on abnormal sexual pleasures, corrupt, corrupting and a drug taker . . . Mercury died from a disease whose main victims in the Western world are homosexuals. From his kind, AIDS is a form of suicide. . . his private life is a revolting tale of depravity, lust and downright wickedness."¹¹⁷ Correspondingly, an article in *The Sport* declared: "Don't cry for killer Freddie. He was a menace to society, a raging poofter who spread his killer virus with characteristic gay abandon. If he were a dog he'd have been put down years ago."¹¹⁸

The media attention that Mercury's denials of illness and ensuing death received stemmed from his social placement as an esteemed musical performer in a genre that epitomized heterosexuality, a point to which I shall return below. Interestingly, at a press conference only weeks prior to Mercury's death (on Thursday 7 November 1991), basketball icon Earvin 'Magic' Johnson (of the Los Angeles Lakers) announced his HIV-positive status, at which he carefully insisted he contracted the virus from a woman.¹¹⁹ Johnson, who like Mercury plied his trade in a domain that austere-ly opposed homosexuality, emphasized his heterosexual orientation. As a result, while Mercury typified the demonization of AIDS, Johnson ostensibly personified the blameless heterosexual sufferer. As the paparazzi badgered Mercury to his grave, they alternatively

¹¹⁷ Joe Haines in *The Daily Mirror* on 28 November 1991, quoted by Terry Sanderson, *Mediawatch: The Treatment of Male and Female Homosexuality in the British Media* (London: Cassell, 1995), 211.

¹¹⁸ "Don't Cry for Killer Freddie," in *The Sport*, quoted by Richard Smith, *Seduced and Abandoned*, 235.

¹¹⁹ Johansson and Percy, *Outing*, 217.

projected Johnson as a hero who could combat the menacing disease on society's behalf. United States President George H. W. Bush stated, "For me, Magic is a hero, a hero for anyone who loves sports."¹²⁰ In the following summer at the 1992 Summer Olympic Games held in Barcelona, no mention was made of Mercury's tragic death (who incidentally was the composer of the official theme song, "Barcelona"); instead, Johnson, who played on the American basketball team dubbed "the Dream Team," received countless standing ovations from supporters for his bravery and inspiration.¹²¹

Arguably, Mercury's decision to conceal his condition resulted from the media's propensity to disgrace homosexuals publicly. Despite the fact that Mercury was unquestionably the first major rock star afflicted with the disease, he certainly was cognizant of the debasing and unsympathetic condemnations put forth by the media. The tragedy Mercury witnessed in America surrounding Rock Hudson and Liberace became astonishingly similar to the events that transpired during his own battle with AIDS. Rock Hudson (born Roy Harold Scherer, Jr.) was the first major outed celebrity to experience the ferocity of the press. Hudson, who purposefully adopted the nickname "Rock," projected an idealized image of strength, manliness and heterosexuality in Hollywood, first as a film star and later as a television actor. For Hudson, the inciting incident that placed him at the focal point of disconcerting public attention came in July 1985, when he appeared on a television show entitled, "Doris Day's Best Friends," on which his

¹²⁰ Shari Lee Dworkin and Faye Linda Wachs, "The Morality/Manhood Paradox: Masculinity, Sport, and the Media," in *Masculinities, Gender Relations, and Sport: Masculinities, Gender Relations*, ed. by Jim McKay, Michael A. Messner and Don Sabo (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2000), 54.

¹²¹ In 1992, another sports figure received praise by the media for his courageousness to combat AIDS. Arthur Ashe, an African-American tennis star, symbolized the prototypical victim of AIDS, as he contracted HIV from a blood transfusion he received during heart surgery. Even though Ashe was aware of his AIDS status by 1988, he elected to withhold the information from the press until Wednesday 8 April 1992. Ashe died from AIDS-related pneumonia on Saturday 6 February 1993. Richard Steins, *Arthur Ashe: A Biography* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), 76 & 82.

feeble and frail appearance triggered a media frenzy that lasted until his death. Similarly, Mercury's gaunt appearance on Sunday 18 February 1990 at the British Phonographic Industry Awards prompted an equivalent scale of propaganda, culminating at Garden Lodge, a place dubbed by the media as "Gay Lodge" and "AIDS Lodge." Due to the incredible media circus that surrounded Hudson's life, he like Mercury lived in seclusion until his death, which for Hudson came on Wednesday 2 October 1985.

Although many commentators and fans were astonished to discover Hudson's guarded homosexual orientation, the fact that Wladziu Valentino Liberace (better known simply as Liberace) contracted AIDS was not as startling. The hypermasculinized image that Hudson portrayed starkly opposed the flamboyance that typified Liberace. Nevertheless, the media treated Liberace's anticipated death with the same level of antipathy as they did with Hudson's, and as they would with Mercury. Prior to his death, hoards of media personnel swarmed Liberace's home in Palm Springs, California, where they remained until he died on Wednesday 4 February 1987, only months before Mercury discovered he was AIDS-positive. Unlike Mercury's official statement, in which he conceded and professed his AIDS status, Liberace's public relations personnel continually denied his condition, attributing his death to heart disease and emphysema resulting from his lifelong cigarette-smoking habit.¹²²

The publicized tragic end to Hudson's, Liberace's and Mercury's lives reflects not only the deluded and stigmatized views of AIDS at the time, but also demonstrates the duality that encompasses stardom. Chris Rojek rightfully argues celebrity status always implies a division between a private self and public self. To reinforce his postulate, he turns to the social psychologist George Herbert Mead, who demonstrates the split

¹²² Ray Mungo, *Liberace* (New York: Chelsea House, 1995), 104.

between *I* (the 'veridical' self) and the *Me* (the self as seen by others).¹²³ The veridical self often faintly resembles the guise of the constructed self perceived publicly, and therefore a celebrity's level of success hinges upon her or his ability to articulate convincingly and consistently vectors that define the public persona. Arguably, in instances where the press uncovers and disseminates secret information pertaining to one's veridical self, the existence of the constructed persona becomes greatly compromised. In such instances, the outing of the disreputable veridical self reconfigures the way in which the public perceives the constructed self, as new signifiers typify and define their enterprise within the star system. One notable example includes the media's portrayal of Michael Jackson as a pedophile, beginning in 1993 by an unfounded accusation by Jordan Chandler, a thirteen-year-old boy. Referred to as the "King of Pop," Jackson during the 1980s dominated the charts with *Thriller* (1982) and *Bad* (1987), perceived by many as the most influential African-American artist of all time. In the 1990s, the media pounced upon the opportunity to demonize Jackson, who through two failed marriages, numerous botched surgical procedures and the chronic skin condition vitiligo, became exploited as the emblematic pedophile.¹²⁴

As a primary tactical maneuver to protect his veridical self, Mercury made numerous press statements that opposed the fact he tested AIDS-positive. In 1987, Mercury states: "AIDS changed my life. I was extremely promiscuous, but I stopped that. Anyone who is promiscuous should have a test. I'm fine, I'm clear."¹²⁵ In the statement,

¹²³ Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 11.

¹²⁴ Diane Dimond, *Be Careful Who You Love: Inside the Michael Jackson Case* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 73.

¹²⁵ Freddie Mercury quoted in *Legends: Queen*, video recording.

Mercury clearly acknowledges the social stigmas upheld by the status quo on AIDS, as he conjoins promiscuity with the disease. Mercury continues:

I used to live for sex but now I've changed. I've stopped going out, stopped the nights of wild partying. I've almost become a nun. It's amazing, I thought sex was a very important thing to me but now I realize I've just gone completely the other way. Once, I was extremely promiscuous, it was excess in every direction, but now I'm totally different. I have stopped all that and I don't miss that kind of life. Everything is fine.¹²⁶

As a secondary measure of prevention to his veridical self, Mercury altered his physical appearance, first to closet his affiliation with the subcultural gay community, and second, to conceal bodily traces of the disease. As I demonstrate in Example 6-23, Mercury transformed his appearance in 1987, around the same time he tested AIDS-positive. Mercury, who since the early 1980s, projected an image known subculturally as the gay/macho clone, originating in New York's Greenwich Village. Although Queen performed internationally to a primarily heterosexual audience, Mercury encoded gay signifiers within his physical appearance, many of which went undetected by the general public. For example, at Live Aid in 1985, millions of spectators watched Mercury's captivating performance, not correlating his thick mustache, slicked-back hair, muscular appearance, studded belt and the cock ring worn tightly around his right bicep as performative modes of homosexual significations. Alternatively, by 1987 Mercury emerged in videos in formal wear, prognosticating a mature and pensive appearance that he thematically pursued in his music, abandoning entirely any form of sexual blurring that once characterized his androgynous persona.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Mercury, *Freddie Mercury*, 165.

¹²⁷ Mercury's visual transformation is comparable to that of David Bowie who through his 1976 character, Thin White Duke, presented himself flawlessly in formal wear. For further details on Bowie and the Thin White Duke, see James E. Perone, *The Words and Music of David Bowie* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 51-52.

Example 6-23 – Mercury's transformation in appearance



As the disease progressed, Mercury and Queen sought to present videos in a manner that concealed Mercury's deteriorating condition. In the video to "I'm Going Slightly Mad," shot in March 1991 in black and white, Mercury wears a wig, thick clothes and heavy makeup, personifying the jester portrayed on *Innuendo's* cover (see Example 6-24) and the demented narrator of the piece itself (see Example 6-25). Drummer Roger Taylor states: "The character was a good piece camouflage, at the same time as being this sort of slightly leerish, slightly Noël Coward type of humour in it. And the sort of wild-haired character with the heavy makeup and the black and white all did help to hide the fact that Freddie was in fact pretty ill at that point."¹²⁸ Similarly, for the video to "These Are the Days of Our Lives," Queen's final video, shot in June 1991, the band elected to use black and white to hide the Kaposi's sarcoma. Mercury chose not to wear a disguise for the reason that he knew the video would be his last. He did not want to conceal himself for it may have detracted from his sincerity in what was unquestionably Mercury's farewell to the world. Brian May states: "With 'Days of our Lives' there are lots of things in there which to us looking at it now are completely about Freddie saying goodbye."¹²⁹ Mercury ends the piece stating, "I still love you," a poignant line that he delivers with an ironic smile. Following a quick sleight-of-hand gesture, Mercury vanishes not only from the frame, but also from public life forever (see Example 6-26).

Mercury's decision to deny his condition not only resulted from media pressure, but also stemmed from the ideological views enshrined by the rock community itself.

¹²⁸ Roger Taylor interview, *Champions of the World*, video recording. Interestingly, Taylor draws parallels between Mercury's character and Noël Coward, the latter famously known for his flamboyant lifestyle.

¹²⁹ Brian May interview, *Champions of the World*, video recording.

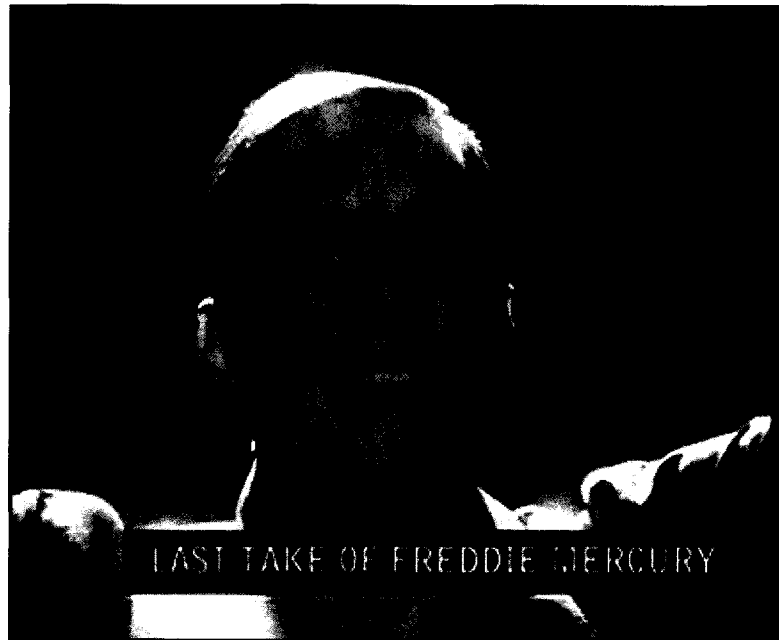
Example 6-24 – Innuendo cover art



Example 6-25 – "I'm Going Slightly Mad": video shoot



Example 6-26 – "These Are the Days of Our Lives": video shoot



The codified behaviours that typified rock stars included hedonistic rituals, marked by excess and sexual promiscuity, but did so only to the extent that reinforced heterosexuality. That is to say, while male-dominated heterosexual promiscuity legitimated and confirmed a rock star's sexual prowess, homosexual activities of the sort were chastized by the homophobic rock community. As rock celebrities including Mick Jagger, Roger Daltrey, Gene Simmons, Robert Plant and Tommy Lee are championed by fans who perceive their sexual adventures as the quintessence of rock 'n' roll's mandate, nowhere in the genre's historical pages do we find publicized and glorified tales of Little Richard, Freddie Mercury, George Michael, Elton John, Boy George or Rob Halford's sexual escapades. Promiscuity in the form of homosexual relations opposes the essence of misogyny and male hegemony on which rock culture is based. Although male heterosexuality affirms the first criterion set by rock's mandate (sex, drugs and rock 'n'

roll), homosexuality appends to otherness, and as such conjoins to AIDS and social deviance. Michael Clatts and Kevin Mutchler state:

Promiscuity, invariably represented as dangerous and deviant, is the core symbol around which much of the discourse of AIDS centers. This is ostensibly because, of course, promiscuity has been singled out as the primary behavioral vector of the spread of AIDS in virtually all American discourses on the subject, including those within the gay community. The identification of risk with social deviance and vice (whoring, drug addiction and homosexual promiscuity), has had the effect of drawing a shroud of ignorance around, and abdication of responsibility over, this congeries of untouchable outcasts.¹³⁰

The marginal placement of homosexuals in rock music bears a degree of similitude to the alienation of women within the genre. Norma Coates persuasively demonstrates the iteration and ratification of maleness in rock music. She states:

Rock is indeed a technology of gender in that 'masculinity' is reinforced and multiplied in its many discursive spaces. However, what is reiterated in and by rock is a particular type of masculinity, one which was 'fixed' in the early days of rock and roll. Rock masculinity, at least the stereotype which, I assert, is still very much in play discursively and psychically, is one in which any trace of the 'feminine' is expunged, incorporated or appropriated.¹³¹

The misogynistic treatment of women in rock cultures mirrors the general oppressive views towards overt homosexuality. Perhaps the artist who best articulates this sentiment is Axl Rose, lead singer of the Los Angeles group Guns N' Roses. Released in 1988, *G N' R Lies* contained the piece "One in a Million," in which Rose states his views on African-Americans, immigrants and homosexuals. Through racial defamation, Rose prejudicially utters his condemnation of select visual minorities in the United States (see Example 6-27).

¹³⁰ Michael C. Clatts and Kevin M. Mutchler, "AIDS and the Dangerous Other: Metaphors of Sex and Deviance in the Representation of a Disease," in *The AIDS Pandemic: A Global Emergency*, ed. by Ralph Bolton (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1989), 17.

¹³¹ Norma Coates, "(R)evolution Now? Rock and the Political Potential of Gender," in *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, ed. by Sheila Whiteley (New York: Routledge, 1997), 52.

Example 6-27 – Excerpt from "One in a Million" by Guns N' Roses

Immigrants and faggots
 They make no sense to me
 They come to our country
 And think they'll do as they please
 Like start some mini Iran
 Or spread some fucking disease

It was not only Guns N' Roses who asserted and disseminated their homophobic feelings within the rock community. In concert, Skid Row's Sebastian Bach proudly wore a T-shirt that bore the slogan: AIDS – KILLS FAGS DEAD.¹³² In response to these bigoted attacks, homosexuals began to joke about their precarious position as a form of self-empowerment, similar to the way gays and lesbians reclaimed the term "queer" in the latter part of the twentieth century. Richard Goldstein recounts one joke that served this function: "'Hi mom, I've got bad news and good,' went one joke of the early 1980s. 'The bad news is, I'm gay. The good news is, I'm dying.'"¹³³ Similar to this form of self-farcicality, Mercury in 1987 at Garden Lodge performed a humorous rendition of "Que Sera Sera," accompanied by Mike Moran on the piano and Peter Straker, who provided the vocal harmony in the upper register.¹³⁴ Mercury began by singing ponderously: "will I be pretty, will he be rich? Here's what she said to me." Interspersed by profound laughter, Mercury sings: "Fuck off and die you slag" in the place of the original lyrics "Que sera, sera."¹³⁵ Even though in his veridical existence, as Farrokh Bulsara, Mercury

¹³² Mary Herczog and Steve Hochman, "AIDS and Rock: Sound of Silence," *Rolling Stone* 629 (30 April 1992):16.

¹³³ Richard Goldstein, "The Implicated and the Immune: Cultural Responses to AIDS," *The Milbank Quarterly* 68 (1990):303.

¹³⁴ Freestone, interview by author, telephone conversation, 11 August 2008.

¹³⁵ The musical example that I cite can be heard at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMIOh8mZb-w>. Arguably, one of the most memorable performances of "Que Sera Sera" (composed by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans) is by Doris Day, Rock Hudson's frequent co-star, in the 1956 Alfred Hitchcock film *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Day went on to use the piece between 1968 and 1973 for *The Doris Day Show*.

may have poked fun at stereotypes linked with promiscuity that in turn correlated with homosexuality, through his constructed self, as Freddie Mercury lead singer of Queen, he never overtly confirmed his homosexuality. Similar to Liberace, through tongue-in-cheek humour and artifice, Mercury occasionally alluded to his homosexual lifestyle, but never overtly confirmed it, rendering journalists in a perpetual state of frustration. Rock journalist David Wigg states, "The industry did not like it [Mercury's homosexuality], and of course, they were making a lot of money and so the record company would not want Freddie to come out and say 'well I am actually gay.' He rarely gave an interview to the music press or the national press because he did not trust them."¹³⁶ Mercury's sister, Kashmiri Cooke, concludes: "Freddie was totally committed to Queen. If you take that as your starting off point, you will realize why Freddie did not leap up and down and wave pink flags, not that he was that sort of person anyway."¹³⁷ Mercury's distrust towards the media and his deep loyalty to Queen reflects, in part, his decision to conceal the fact that he was dying of AIDS, particularly in his final days, during which time he painstakingly continued to record the tracks that constituted his last creative project, *Made in Heaven*.

CONCLUSION

Tragedy, excess and hedonism are interchangeable descriptors that epitomize rock music, enacted by iconic performers who, in accordance with discursive codified utterances, embody perilous adventure and reckless abandon. Through romanticized and commodified processes of cultural memory, the recourse of legitimized promiscuity (i.e. heterosexual encounters with groupies, for example) and drug and alcohol abuse function to commemorate rather than condone those immortalized martyrs who sacrificed their

¹³⁶ David Wigg, *Freddie Mercury: A Kind of Magic*, video recording.

¹³⁷ Kashmiri Cooke interview, *Freddie Mercury: A Kind of Magic*, video recording.

lives in the name of rock 'n' roll (notable examples include Elvis Presley, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Keith Moon, John Bonham, Sid Vicious and Kurt Cobain). Contrarily, in 1991, Freddie Mercury's death, conjoined to homosexuality and queerness, stigmatized practices that were quintessentially antithetical to the underlying belief systems espoused by rock music.¹³⁸ Richard Smith states: "If he'd been knocked down by a truck perhaps things might have been different but the fact that he'd died from an AIDS-related illness made the fact of his homosexuality – a subject he himself had always been vague about – unavoidable."¹³⁹ Some commentators argue that Mercury, who until the eve of his death continuously denied his condition, could have used his celebrity status to promote AIDS awareness effectively. Journalist Alkarim Jivani of *Time Out* states: "The positive aspects had he come out as gay certainly in the '70s and early '80s for gay men like me, who could see no role models for ourselves, would have been immensely helpful. I feel very disappointed that he could not bring himself to do it."¹⁴⁰ Similarly, only days following Mercury's death, at a London AIDS conference entitled *Living for Tomorrow*, did Dr. Roger Ingham state: "Maybe if Freddie Mercury had revealed his illness much earlier, it would have brought discussion out into the open."¹⁴¹

The idealized and prescriptive outlook put forth by Jivani and Ingham reflects their inability to comprehend the paradox of Mercury's existence as a rock star who secretly lived as a dying homosexual. Mercury did not aspire to become the next

¹³⁸ Over the course of my research for this project, I developed a comprehensive list of music industry personnel who, like Mercury, courageously battled AIDS (see Appendix 6-2).

¹³⁹ Richard Smith, *Seduced and Abandoned*, 234.

¹⁴⁰ Alkarim Jivani interview, *Freddie Mercury: A Kind of Magic*, video recording.

¹⁴¹ Dr. Roger Ingham quoted by Jeffrey Ressler, "Freddie Mercury (1946-1991): Queen Singer is Rock's First Major AIDS Casualty," *Rolling Stone* 621 (9 January 1991):17.

spokesperson for a disease perceived socially as the condemnation of degenerate homosexuals, nor did he wish to impose voluntarily that view upon Queen. Instead, like Ernest Hemmingway, Igor Stravinsky and Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Freddie Mercury found solace in the Swiss lakeside town of Montreux, where inspired by the scenery and reclusion, he composed some of his greatest works. The result, *Made in Heaven*, personifies not only the zenith of Queen's prodigious career, but equally encapsulates Mercury's tireless and unremitting strength of mind, as he sought to impart a musical legacy upon the world. As Mercury endured lapses of blindness, agonizing bouts of pain and endless manhunts by the paparazzi, he arguably recorded some of the most riveting vocal performances of his career. In November 1995, the surviving members of Queen released Mercury's most moving accolade, *Made in Heaven*, an album that fittingly carried the inscription: "Dedicated to the immortal spirit of Freddie Mercury."

APPENDIX 6-1

Figure 1 - Freddie Mercury death certificate

Application Number: 11111111

Q0X 196635

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY

DEATH		25
Register containing and Chelsea Royal Hospital containing and Chelsea Hospital and Chelsea		
1. Date and place of death Twenty fourth November 1991 Garden Lodge, 1, Logan Place, U.S.		
2. Name and surname Frederick Mercury alias Frederick BUSARA	3. Sex Male	4. Maiden surname _____
5. Date and place of birth 5th September 1946 Zanzibar		
6. Occupations and usual address Musician Garden Lodge, 1, Logan Place, U.S.		
7. Name of doctor Peter Richard Leake FRCSTONE	8. Cause of death Causing the body to be examined	
9. Usual address Garden Lodge, 1, Logan Place, U.S.		
10. Nature of death 1a. Bronchopneumonia ↳ AIDS Certified by F. Q. Atkinson MBChB		
11. Name and position of Registrar F. Scuba Registrar		
12. Date and place of registration Twenty fourth November 1991 Chelsea Register		

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Deaths in the District above mentioned. Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE under the Seal of the said Office on 25th February 1992

The Registrar is not a member of the Public and Health Register and does not hold a licence for the purposes of the provisions of the Public Health Act 1936 and the Public Health Act 1947 and is not a member of the Public Health Register and does not hold a licence for the purposes of the provisions of the Public Health Act 1936 and the Public Health Act 1947 and is not a member of the Public Health Register and does not hold a licence for the purposes of the provisions of the Public Health Act 1936 and the Public Health Act 1947




Figure 2 – Page 1/13 of Mercury's last will and testament

I FREDDIE MERCURY of 1 Logan Place London W8 HEREBY REVOKE all Wills Codicils and Testamentary Dispositions heretofore made by me AND DELCARE this to be my last Will:

1. I WISH to be cremated

2.1 I APPOINT JOHN LIDSON of Regina House 124 Finchley Road London NW3 and HENRY JAMES BEACH of Mountain Studios 8 Rue de Theatre PO Box 170 1820 Montreux 2 Switzerland to be the EXECUTORS AND TRUSTEES of this my Will (and they and the trustee or trustees for the time being hereof are hereinafter called "my Trustees")

2.2 If ancillary or separate administration of any property I may own situated in the State of New York, United States of America, becomes necessary or desirable, I appoint such individual or bank or trust company resident in the State of New York as may be designated by the then senior partner in age of the law firm of Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam & Roberts, New York, New York, to be ancillary executor of my Will in New York or to occupy such other fiduciary position as may be appropriate to accomplish this purpose under the law of New York. This power of designation shall include the authority to appoint a member of the firm of Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam & Roberts. Where the context so admits the expression "my Trustees" shall include the individual or bank or trust company appointed as ancillary executor pursuant to this clause 2.2.

To the extent authorized by applicable law, I appoint the Trustees of my Will in the United Kingdom to be ancillary co-executors of my Will in New York to serve with the resident individual or bank or trust company designated above, provided, however, that none of my said executors shall be entitled to dual commissions as domiciliary executor and as such fiduciary with respect to the same assets. The ancillary executors acting pursuant to this Clause 2.2 shall have, with respect to the property subject to such ancillary or separate administration, all of

Figure 3 – Page 3/13 of Mercury's last will and testament

5. I BEQUEATH to MARY AUSTIN my house known as 5/6 Logan Mews London W8 together with all of its contents at the date of my death free of all inheritance tax and other duties and taxes payable on or by reference to my death and free of all mortgages and other charges
6. I BEQUEATH free of all inheritance tax and other duties and taxes payable on or by reference to my death:-
- 6.1 The sum of five hundred thousand pounds (£500,000) to JOE FANNELLI of Garden Lodge 1 Logan Place London W8 6QA
- 6.2 The sum of five hundred thousand pounds (£500,000) to JIM HUTTON of Garden Lodge 1 Logan Place aforesaid
- 6.3 The sum of five hundred thousand pounds (£500,000) to PETER FREESTONE of Garden Lodge 1 Logan Place aforesaid
- 6.4 The sum of one hundred thousand pounds (£100,000) to TERRY GIDDINGS of 9 College Gardens London E4 7LQ
- 7.1 I BEQUEATH free of all inheritance tax and other duties and taxes payable on or by reference to my death any shares which I own in any private limited companies excluding however the apartment at 425 East 58th Street Apartment 43E New York United States of America which is represented by shares of stock in a privately owned United States Corporation ("the US Shares") to my Trustees upon trust to sell call in and convert same into money with power at their absolute discretion to postpone such sale calling in or conversion without being liable for loss
- 7.2 My Trustees shall hold the said shares (which together with all additions and accretions thereto and property from time to time representing the said property shall be called the Trust Fund) upon trust:-
- 7.2.1 to pay the income thereof until the Vesting Day to the following beneficiaries in the following shares:-
- 7.2.1.1 a 50 per cent (50%) share to MARY AUSTIN




Figure 4 – Page 5/13 of Mercury's last will and testament

- share (if any) of the income of the Trust Fund to which he or she was entitled immediately before the Vesting Day
8. AFTER PAYMENT of my funeral and testamentary expenses and debts and any legacies bequeathed by this my Will or any Codicil hereto and all inheritance tax and other duties and taxes thereon payable on or by reference to my death my Residuary Estate (which for the avoidance of doubt shall include the US Shares) is to be divided into the following shares:-
- 8.1 a 50 per cent (50%) share to MARY AUSTIN
- 8.2 as to 25 per cent (25%) share to my sister CASH COOKE PROVIDED ALWAYS that in the event of CASH COOKE predeceasing me leaving a child or children I BEQUEATH to my Trustees the share to which my sister CASH COOKE would have been entitled had she not predeceased me UPON TRUST for the surviving child or children of CASH COOKE who shall attain the age of eighteen (18) years if more than one in equal shares absolutely And this provision shall apply to any accruals to the share of my sister CASH COOKE pursuant to clause 9 below
- 8.3 a 25 per cent (25%) share to my parents JER BULSARA and BOMI BULSARA or the survivor of them
9. IF ANY of the gifts of shares of residue under clause 8 shall fail then any such share shall accrue to the share or shares (rateably if more than one) referred to in sub-clauses 8.2 and 8.3 but in the event of all the beneficiaries referred to in sub-clauses 8.2 and 8.3 predeceasing me I give my entire Residuary Estate to MARY AUSTIN if she shall be living at my death
10. IF ALL the gifts under clause 8 and clause 9 fail then I give my Residuary Estate to be divided equally between The National Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and The Imperial Cancer Research Fund

Figure 5 – Page 13/13 of Mercury's last will and testament

with the administration of the trusts hereof including acts which an executor or trustee could have done personally

- 17. POWER TO enter into any transaction of any nature with any of the Trustees in their personal capacity or some other fiduciary capacity PROVIDED THAT there be a majority of disinterested Trustees who shall approve of the Transaction or in the case of a sale of shares in a private company PROVIDED THAT the shares are sold at public auction or at a price which is not less than that which shall be certified in writing to be a fair price by the company's auditor
- 18. THE POWERS conferred upon my Trustees by my Will or by Law shall be exercisable by a majority of them
- 19. THE POWER of appointing a new trustee or trustees of this my Will shall be vested in the Trustees The statutory powers of appointing new trustees hereof shall apply hereto and it is hereby expressly declared that such powers shall be deemed to authorise the appointment of a trustee or trustees resident or domiciled in any part of the World

I N W I T N E S S whereof I have hereunto set my hand this 17th day of September one thousand nine hundred and ninety one

SIGNED by the above named)
FREDDIE MERCURY as his last)
 Will in the presence of us)
 both present at the same time)
 who at his request in his)
 presence and in the presence)
 of each other have hereunto)
 subscribed our names as)
 witnesses:-)

800

[Handwritten Signature]

Q E Spear.
 56 Loftus Rd.
 WID. YEN
 DOMESTIC.

[Handwritten Signature]
 8 HAMPDEN AVENUE
 CHESHAM BUCKS
 ACCOUNTANT WPS 2HL.

APPENDIX 6-2

Notable music industry figures stricken with AIDS

NAME	CELEBRITY PROFILE	BORN	DIED
Peter Allen	Australian; songwriter and entertainer	1944	1992
Andy Bell	British; lead singer of Erasure	1964	
Michael Callen	American; singer-songwriter and author	1955	1993
Cazuza	Brazilian; composer, singer and poet	1958	1990
Patrick Cowley	American; disco artist and electronic music pioneer	1950	1982
Bobby DeBarge	American; lead singer of Switch	1960	2002
Patrick Esposito Di Napoli	Canadian; harmonica player of les Colocs	1964	1994
Kiki Djan	Ghanaian; keyboardist of Osibisa	1957	2004
Eazy-E	American; record executive, rapper and producer	1963	1991
Kenny Everett	British; radio DJ and television host	1944	1995
Tom Fogerty	American; guitarist of Creedence Clearwater Revival	1941	1990
Ray Gillen	American; singer of Black Sabbath, Badlands and Phenomena	1961	1993
Dan Hartman	American; singer-songwriter and record producer	1950	1994
Sylvester James	American; disco/soul musician, and drag performer	1948	1998
Holly Johnson	British; singer of Frankie Goes to Hollywood	1960	
Craig Lee	American; guitarist of the Alice Bag Band	1953	1991
Liberace	American; entertainer and pianist	1919	1987
David Mankaba	Zimbabwean; guitarist of the Bhundu Boys	1959	1991
Freddie Mercury	Zanzibarian/British; singer of Queen	1946	1991
Jacques Morali	French; musician and music producer of the Village People	1947	1991
Klaus Nomi	German; singer	1944	1983
Lonnie Pitchford	American; blues musician and instrument maker	1955	1988
Steve Rubell	American; co-owner of New York City's Studio 54	1943	1989
Arthur Russell	American; cellist, composer, singer and disco artist	1951	1992
Nicholas Schaffner	American; singer-songwriter, author and journalist	1953	1991
Jermaine Stewart	American; singer	1957	1997

CHAPTER 7

God Save the Queen: Freddie Mercury, Cultural Memory and Posthumous Fame

*Thank you, God bless and sweet dreams.*¹

- Freddie Mercury

Following Freddie Mercury's heartrending death in 1991 and *Made in Heaven's* poignant release in 1995, bassist John Deacon, guitarist Brian May and drummer Roger Taylor found themselves at a delicate professional crossroad as they, on the one side, looked nostalgically upon an unparalleled musical past while, on the other, gazed forward into Queen's finality. Using this paradoxical relationship as a point of departure, the current chapter seeks to investigate some of the central factors with which the band members and their fans contended in the wake of Mercury's death. To accomplish this objective, I shall revisit overarching themes presented throughout this dissertation, including the group's historiography, the musical outcomes of their inventive usage of technology, the generic plurality that encompassed their repertory and, finally, the ways in which commentators perceive Mercury's works retrospectively, as they put forth suppositions premised upon the flamboyant frontman's sexual orientation. More precisely, I begin by considering the legacy that Mercury worked assiduously to bestow, and so I critically evaluate issues surrounding his iconic stature in contemporary society. Second, through an exploration of the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert for AIDS Awareness, I contend that Mercury's prodigious life, in tandem with his premature death, greatly affected public cognizance, thus transforming the general social view of AIDS in the early to mid-1990s. Finally, I appraise the implications of Queen's reincarnation in 2004, as Brian May and Roger Taylor joined forces with the rock/blues singer Paul

¹ Freddie Mercury, *Freddie Mercury: A Life, in His Own Words*, ed. by Greg Brooks and Simon Lupton (London: Mercury Songs Ltd., 2006), 169.

Rodgers to tour internationally and release *The Cosmos Rocks*, Queen's sixteenth studio album, released seventeen years following Mercury's death. In doing so, I probe the musical ramifications and aesthetic implications of Paul Rodgers' placement within the band.

"NO-ONE BUT YOU": COMMEMORATION AND POSTHUMOUS FAME

On numerous hermeneutical levels, Freddie Mercury's passing symbolically represented his transformation from rock star to rock legend, consequently raising questions for critics, cynics, musicians and fans alike, who pondered if Queen's charismatic frontman could ever be replaced and, perhaps more importantly, if ever he should be replaced. For John Deacon, the response was effortless to conceive: without Queen's metaphoric king, the band could no longer carry forward. As such, prior to parting their separate ways, Mercury's colleagues recorded one final song together, to eulogize the musical legacy that their singer worked so diligently to impart during his lifetime. Following the work's completion, John Deacon retired from Queen and the recording industry to the extent that he evanescently vanished from public life.² On 5 January 1998, Queen released their solemn work, which composer Brian May fittingly titled, "No-One but You (Only the Good Die Young)."³ The single remained on the UK Charts for four consecutive weeks, peaking at the number thirteen position.⁴ Unlike *Made in Heaven's* repertory, the song did not feature a performance by Mercury; instead May and Taylor divided the vocal parts equally. The band, as they did in their 1995 release,

² Since the time of his departure from the band in 1997, John Deacon has remained in deep seclusion to the point that he was absent from Queen's induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on 19 March 2001.

³ The song's commemorative essence suited the general social atmosphere in Britain at the time. Four months prior, on 31 August 1997, Princess Diana lost her life in a car crash in Paris. She, like Mercury, was hounded persistently by the paparazzi.

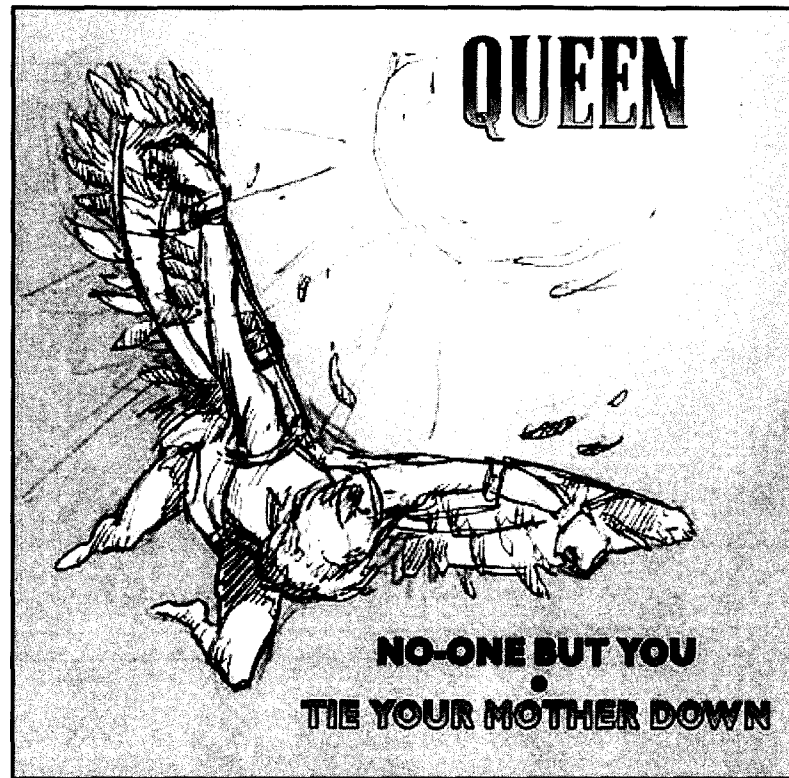
⁴ For a comprehensive listing of Queen's UK Chart positions see: <http://www.ultimatequeen.co.uk/homepage.htm>

heightened and reinforced the commemorative spirit of the music through graphic depictions, and so the single's cover figuratively juxtaposes Mercury's plight with that of the Greek mythological character Icarus, who burned the wax that held the feathers to his arms by adventurously flying near the sun (see Example 7-1). This theme recurs throughout the piece, particularly in the chorus whereby May sings: "One by one, only the good die young. They're only flying too close to the sun" (0:55-1:11, 2:11-2:27 and 3:26-3:43).

Through his death, Mercury's life has become mythologized by commentators who, on the one hand, regard him as a homosexual whose demise was self-inflicted through reckless gay abandon while, on the other, fans romanticize aspects of the singer's existence to venerate his prominence, two points that I have elucidated with examples throughout this dissertation. According to Steve Jones, "a truism in the music business is that death is a 'good career move.' Sales figures bear this out. Rarely does any performer with the slightest bit of popularity fail to increase sales immediately after death, and often those who only have the slightest bit of popularity are the ones whose sales benefit most."⁵ In Mercury's case, the elevated commercial success that his *oeuvres* obtained reflect not only the profound degree of innovation that underpinned them, but also the media frenzy that targeted his AIDS status in the final stages of his life at Garden Lodge.

⁵ Steve Jones, "Better off Dead: Or, Making It the Hard Way," in *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, ed. by Steve Jones and Joli Jensen (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 3.

Example 7-1 – "No-One But You (Only the Good Die Young)" artwork (1998)



In other words, Mercury's death, an event that as I demonstrated in Chapter 6 obtained international notoriety, exposed previously unknown elements of his veridic and authentic self to the public, consequently situating cloaked aspects of his private life at the crux of his posthumous fame. Therefore, commentators of divergent cultural formations interpret, shape and filter the constructedness of Mercury's legacy through disparate aesthetic associations, which, undeniably, remain in perpetual cultural negotiation through ongoing social discourses.

THE AIDS CRISIS REVISITED: MERCURY'S OFFICIAL SENDOFF

On Mercury's death, similar to the press release made by Mercury's spokesperson, Roxy Meade, acknowledging his AIDS-positive status, Deacon, May and Taylor also made a statement:

We have lost the greatest and most beloved member of our family. We feel overwhelming grief that he has gone, sadness that he should be cut down at the height of his creativity, but above all great pride in the courageous way he lived and died. It has been a privilege for us to have shared such magical times. As soon as we are able, we would like to celebrate his life in the style to which he was accustomed.⁶

Following their singer's tragic death, Queen began to target AIDS funding and research initiatives, and so they re-released "Bohemian Rhapsody" with "These Are the Days of Our Lives" as a single. The record sleeve read:

AIDS concerns us all. The proceeds of this record will go to the Terrence Higgins Trust. Freddie Mercury was concerned that financial support be available to those less fortunate than himself, and therefore the money raised by this record will go to the home care of people living with AIDS and to health education campaigns to help prevent the further spread of the virus.⁷

This charitable act was the first of many that Queen undertook to raise money for AIDS research. As Mercury's surviving bandmates suggested in their address, they envisioned a concert of epic proportion intended not only to celebrate Mercury's achievements, but also to heighten public knowledge of a disease that claimed the life of their dear friend. And so in London, on Monday 20 April 1992, Queen, along with a host of seminal rock icons, performed at the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert for AIDS Awareness, an event televised internationally to over one billion viewers, with all proceeds going to the Mercury Phoenix Trust (see Example 7-2).⁸ The spectacle began with a visibly emotional Brian May, who addressed the 72,000-person crowd, stating: "Good evening Wembley and the world. We are here tonight to celebrate the life and work and dreams of one

⁶ Peter Gregory, *Queen* (Broomall: Mason Crest Publishers Inc., 2008), 42.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸ Shortly after Mercury's death, Queen and their manager, Jim Beach, planned the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert for AIDS Awareness as a means to launch the Mercury Phoenix Trust. Since its creation in 1991 until 2008, the trust has donated more than £8 million to charities worldwide in the fight against AIDS. The organization's current trustees are Mary Austin, Jim Beach, Brian May and Roger Taylor.

Freddie Mercury. We are going to give him the biggest sendoff in history."⁹ Following May's brief salutation, Roger Taylor stated the band's goal: "Today is for Freddie, it's for you and it is to tell everybody around the world that AIDS affects us all."¹⁰ The event, as Mary Herczog and Steve Hochman of *Rolling Stone* suggest, was witness to the largest gathering of upper-echelon talent since Live Aid (see Appendix 7-1 for the concert programme).¹¹

I contend that the event was culturally important within the rock sphere, as spectators cognitively began to consider the fallacies associated with AIDS and homosexuals by way of Mercury's courageous battle. To this point, although the show did not overtly present the physical and psychological pain that Mercury faced on a daily basis, it did, however, represent rock culture's unification, whose members sought to combat collectively a disease that seized Mercury's life. Arguably, the person who best personified this reconciliation was Axl Rose, a musician who paradoxically admired Mercury for his genius but also previously denounced homosexuals in his works. Jeffrey Ressler of *Rolling Stone* states:

In Los Angeles, Guns N' Roses singer Axl Rose also grieved over the loss of the artist he cited as his most important early influence. Rose, appearing on the *Rockline* radio call-in show a few days after Mercury's death, played Queen's "Who Wants to Live Forever" and recalled how much the singer's work meant to him. "If I didn't have Freddie Mercury's lyrics to hold on to as a kid, I don't know where I would be," he said. "It taught me about all forms of music. . . . It would open my mind. I never really had a bigger teacher in my whole life."¹²

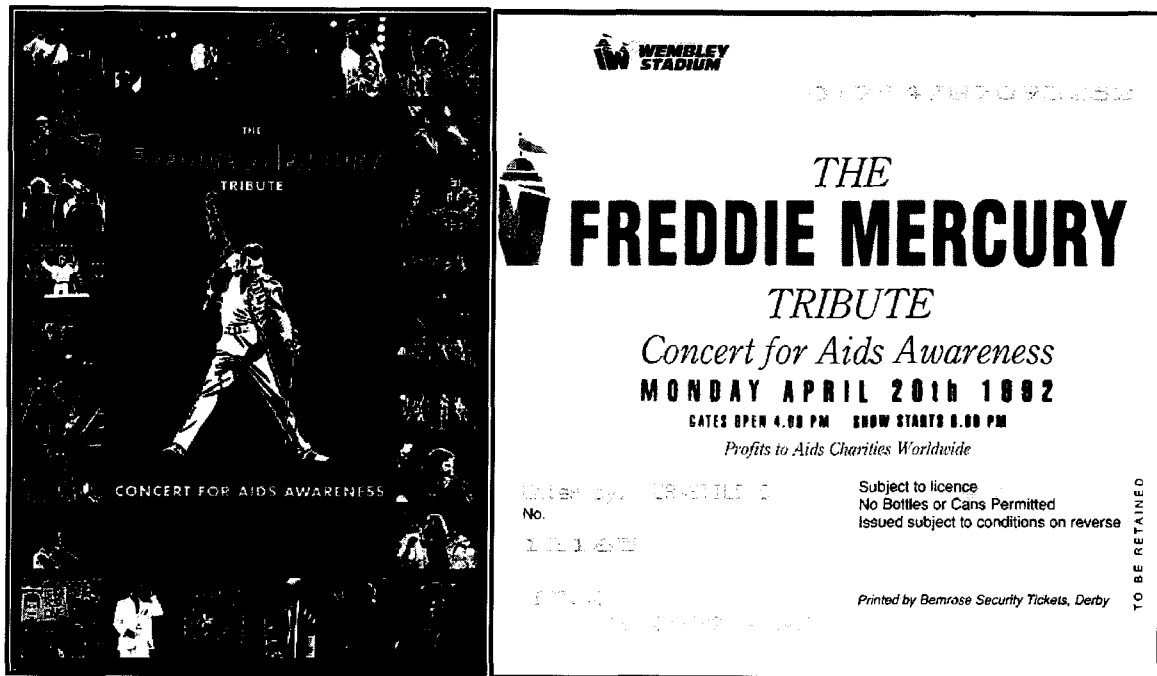
⁹ *The Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert: Special 10th Anniversary Edition*, DVD Disc 1, directed by David Mallet (Hollywood: Buena Vista Music Group, 2002), video recording.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Kim Neely, "Freddie's Royal Send-Off," *Rolling Stone* 633 (25 June 1992):17.

¹² Jeffrey Ressler, "Freddie Mercury (1946-1991): Queen Singer is Rock's First Major AIDS Casualty," *Rolling Stone* 621 (9 January 1991):13.

Example 7-2 – Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert for AIDS Awareness



The image is a composite of two parts. On the left is a black and white photograph of a concert stage. A central figure is illuminated, surrounded by other performers and bright spotlights. Text at the bottom of the photo reads "CONCERT FOR AIDS AWARENESS". On the right is a ticket stub for the event. At the top left of the ticket is the "WEMBLEY STADIUM" logo. The main title is "THE FREDDIE MERCURY TRIBUTE" in large, bold letters. Below that, it says "Concert for Aids Awareness" and "MONDAY APRIL 20th 1992". Further down, it lists "GATES OPEN 4.00 PM" and "SHOW STARTS 8.00 PM", followed by "Profits to Aids Charities Worldwide". There is a section for "ORDER BY" and "No." with some faint, illegible text. To the right of this section, it says "Subject to licence No Bottles or Cans Permitted Issued subject to conditions on reverse". At the bottom right of the ticket, it says "Printed by Bemrose Security Tickets, Derby". On the far right edge of the ticket, there is vertical text that reads "TO BE RETAINED".



Guns N' Roses' damaging comments caused controversy long before Mercury's death. In 1989, the band, who were to headline an AIDS benefit entitled *Rock and a Hard Place*, caused dismay for gay activists who expressed their anger over the line "immigrants and faggots... spread some fuckin' disease," in "One in a Million." Due to this negative media attention, organizers cancelled the event, a reaction that many AIDS activists now mourn as a lost opportunity to open the door to AIDS awareness in the rock world.¹³

Unsurprisingly, shortly prior to Mercury's tribute show, when Axl Rose was named as a feature performer, AIDS activists once again regarded Rose's inclusion as a conflict of interest.¹⁴ As Kim Neely of *Rolling Stone* explains, "After the lineup was announced, the AIDS activist group ACT UP London began screeching about Guns N' Roses' participation, first demanding that Guns be dropped from the bill, then urging other artists to shun them and the Wembley crowd to boo them off the stage – a concept the members of Queen found ludicrous."¹⁵ With this result, Queen was intricately wedged between defending Rose, a musical colleague who wanted to help the cause, and supporting AIDS activists who clearly opposed Rose's homophobic statement. With reconciliatory fortitude, Roger Taylor denounced the activists' overt attempt to burden the show, and in a forceful tone the drummer stated: "ACT UP will have no influence on the audience whatsoever. And I have a two-word message for them, which I'm prepared to give them at any moment if they want it."¹⁶ In a similar vein, Brian May supported Taylor's assertion, as he himself stated:

¹³ Mary Herczog and Steve Hochman, "AIDS and Rock: Sound of Silence," *Rolling Stone* 629 (30 April 1992):15.

¹⁴ By 1992, Guns N' Roses were at the zenith of their career, as in 1991 they released two albums concurrently: *Use Your Illusion I* (including "November Rain" and "Don't Cry") and *Use Your Illusion II* (featuring "You Could Be Mine" and "Civil War"), both of which soared to the top of the Billboard Charts.

¹⁵ Neely, "Freddie's Royal Send-Off," 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

People seem so blind. Don't they realize that the mere fact that Guns N' Roses are here is the biggest statement that you could get? We think it's time that everybody realizes that whether you're gay or straight, you're entitled to your feelings. You cannot come down on anybody because of the way they feel. That's got to be an outdated concept, and I hope that the concert will help to bring that about.¹⁷

Despite the turmoil that preceded the event, Rose was embraced by the Wembley audience, particularly through his expressive rendition of "Bohemian Rhapsody" with Elton John, who is openly gay (see Example 7-3).

Example 7-3 – Elton John and Axl Rose performing "Bohemian Rhapsody"



Therefore, Mercury's death, and his memorial concert that ensued, were an important turning point in the way the rock world perceived AIDS. Through iconic celebrities ranging from Elizabeth Taylor, who offered a lengthy speech on the facts of AIDS, to David Bowie, who on bended knee said the Lord's Prayer, the event attempted to shatter traditional stereotypes. For some, the event shook the bedrock of rock music's hegemony while for others, it only perpetuated the ill-founded views of homophobes. With reference

¹⁷ Ibid.

to the latter, in his review of the Concert, Garry Bushell of *The Sun* exemplifies this notion, stating:

A stench of hypocrisy, propaganda and lies hung over the Freddie Mercury Tribute. You couldn't have had a better guide to How To Catch AIDS than Freddie's wildly promiscuous "gay" lifestyle. So why this attempt to turn him into a saint? It's fine to celebrate his enormous talent. But that doesn't mean we have to swallow the idea that there was anything noble about Freddie's unsavoury private life, any more than if he'd died of syphilis. It's *wrong* to whitewash his life, *wrong* to spread the myth of heterosexual AIDS and *criminal* to divert funds from less trendy but more pressing concerns like cancer research.¹⁸

Conversely, in the same publication, Piers Morgan described the aesthetic magnetism that captured the minds and hearts of many spectators who, through Mercury's memory, became mindful of the unforgiving disease:

It's too easy to pour scorn on the way Freddie died, too complacent to dismiss AIDS as just another cause for the save-the-whale brigade to bang on about. It was not a celebration of the way Freddie died, or of what he did in his private life. It was celebration of his music. And on that score he was, quite simply, a genius. It was billed as the biggest gig since Live Aid – and if anything it was better. The atmosphere at Wembley was incredible, emotion-charged and tear-jerking, but often wonderfully joyful as well.¹⁹

Through a spectacle that celebrated his innovative contributions to the recording industry, Freddie Mercury spiritually educated the world on the effects of AIDS. At the concert, Elton John concluded: "Freddie Mercury was a dear friend of mine and it was a privilege to know him. He was very funny, extremely outrageous, very kind, a great musician and one of the greatest frontmen. Quite simply, he was one of the most important figures in rock 'n' roll."²⁰

¹⁸ Garry Bushell and Piers Morgan, "Rubbish or Rhapsody?" *The Sun* (22 April 1992), 17.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *The Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert*, DVD Disc 2, video recording.

QUEEN + PAUL RODGERS: THE COSMOS ROCKS

From Queen's formation in 1972 until Freddie Mercury's death on 24 November 1991, the singer, along with his bandmates, put forward an inimitable approach to music making, one that enabled them to exceed the fixity of generic and stylistic configurations. As I have demonstrated in this dissertation, works such as "Bohemian Rhapsody," *Hot Space*, "Barcelona" and *Made in Heaven* vividly exemplify the group's compositional dexterity, sonic experimentations, personal struggles and public risks, all of which enabled them to forge new paths within the rock world. Although Mercury may have oftentimes led the band's musical vision, I argue that the highly inventive and idiosyncratic character of Queen's enterprise results from the contributions of all performers, and so Queen's existence is, in many ways, greater than the sum of its parts. To this point, as demonstrated through many of rock's tragedies, when an integral component of a band becomes removed from the creative sequence, groups often find themselves at an artistic loss, rendering them incapable of recapturing and reclaiming their prominence. Although numerous examples exist, perhaps the most recent case occurred with the Australian rock band, INXS. In 2005, nearly eight years following frontman Michael Hutchence's death (22 January 1960-22 November 1997), the remaining members brought forth an international search through the CBS reality television program "Rock Star: INXS."²¹ Greg Blanco of *The Boston Music Examiner* explains: "The whole thing was atrocious and shameful. Some no talent ass clown named J.D. Fortune won, played lead singer on INXS' 2005 release *Switch* and fronted them

²¹ Although the medical examiner ruled Hutchence's death as a suicide, some believe that it was the result of erotic asphyxiation, an act whereby the flow of oxygen to the brain is intentionally stopped for sexual arousal. For more information see Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 84.

briefly on a world tour before the band came to its senses and kicked him out."²² Even though the band combed the world to find a suitable replacement for Michael Hutchence, while the Canadian J.D. Fortune's singing style matched that of the late frontman's, he lacked artistic cohesion, the "kind of magic" that oftentimes cannot be replaced.

More recently, and perhaps more related to Queen, is the death of Boston's singer Bradley Delp, a rock figure who, like Mercury, was known for his soaring vocal range and innovative studio techniques.²³ Following Delp's sudden death, Tommy DeCarlo, a credit manager at a Home Depot in Charlotte, North Carolina, who performed and composed a song on a MySpace page, was asked by founding member Tom Scholz to be one of the singers for the band's 2008 tour. Unsurprisingly, Sholtz's abrupt and unexpected move to replace Delp caused an uproar for disgruntled fans who felt the deceased's legacy was being trodden by voracity and self-indulgence.

Similarly for Queen fans, in 2001, signs began to emerge that Brian May and Roger Taylor were considering to reclaim their throne within the rock domain, despite Freddie Mercury's death and John Deacon's disappearance from public life. By joining forces with the English singer-songwriter Robbie Williams, May and Taylor recorded a rendition of "We Are the Champions," for inclusion in the motion picture, *A Knight's*

²² Greg Blanco, "Sublime's Return: New Front Man, Old Band Name," *Boston Music Examiner* (5 March 2009), online source: <http://www.examiner.com/x-1274-Boston-Music-Examiner~y2009m3d5>

²³ On 9 March 2007, Brad Delp was found dead by his fiancée, Pamela Sullivan, at his home in Atkinson, New Hampshire, after committing suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning. Delp's suicide note read, "*Je suis une âme solitaire.*" For more information, see Jon Pareles, "Brad Delp, 55, Lead Singer for Boston, Dies," *The New York Times* (10 March 2007), online source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/10/arts/music/10cnd-delp.html> and Ray McDonald, "Rock Musician Delp Described Self as 'Lonely Soul' in Suicide Note," *Voice of America News* (16 March 2007), online source: <http://www.voanews.com /archive/2007-03/2007-03-16-voa38.cfm>

Tale.²⁴ Echoing the distress expressed by many Queen fans, John Deacon made a surprising declaration, stating in *The Sun*: "I didn't want to be involved with it and I'm glad. I've heard what they did and it's rubbish. It is one of the greatest songs ever written but I think they've ruined it. I don't want to be nasty but let's just say Robbie Williams is no Freddie Mercury. Freddie can never be replaced and certainly not by him."²⁵

Arguably, Deacon's protectionism points to the commemorative elements associated with Mercury's legacy, as the bassist's absence, in and of itself, pays respect to Queen's dynasty. Therefore, through comparative analysis, many observers juxtaposed Mercury and Williams, deeming the latter's performance as contrived.

Although fears that Williams might replace Mercury occupied the minds of many Queen fans, a larger controversy loomed on the band's horizon. The inciting incident occurred in 2004 when May performed at the Fender Stratocaster Anniversary Concert, held ironically at Wembley Arena. In the absence of the late Paul Kossoff (4 September 1950-19 March 1976), May performed with vocalist Paul Rodgers (born 17 December 1949) in a version of Free's "All Right Now." Unknown at the time to observers, and perhaps to the featured artists themselves, this concert unassumingly foreshadowed the regeneration of Queen. Brian May explains the circumstances that surrounded the concert and the artistic interaction that he shared with Rodgers: "We came off stage knowing that the chemistry had flowed. It just seemed so natural to do that. It was Paul's girlfriend, who is now his wife, Cynthia, who looked at us both and said 'something happened out

²⁴ Distributed in 2001 by Columbia Pictures, *A Knight's Tale* is an action/romantic comedy by Brian Helgeland that stars Heath Ledger (4 April 1979-22 January 2008). The film's marketing slogan read: "He Will Rock You."

²⁵ John Deacon quoted in *The Sun* by Darren Davis and Bruce Simon, "Queen Bassist Slags 'We Are the Champions' Collaboration with Robbie Williams," *Yahoo! Music* (24 April 2001), online source: <http://music.yahoo.com/read/news/12057561>

there, didn't it?' She said 'All you guys need is a drummer,' and I said 'actually, I know a drummer!'"²⁶ Soon after this epiphanic performance, and following May's contacting Taylor, a group was officially formed. Aptly yet insipidly titled Queen + Paul Rodgers, the band featured half of Queen's original roster, Brian May (lead guitar) and Roger Taylor (drums), and Paul Rodgers (vocals) of Free, Bad Company, the Law and the Firm, along with supporting musicians including Spike Edney (keyboards), Danny Miranda (bass) and Jamie Moses (rhythm guitar) (see Example 7-4).²⁷

Example 7-4 – Queen + Paul Rodgers



²⁶ Harry Doherty, "Queen Exclusive!: Brian May, Paul Rodgers and Roger Taylor on the Controversial new Album," *Classic Rock* (November 2008):56.

²⁷ Since 1984, British musician Spike Edney (born 11 December 1951), also known as "the Wizard" within Queen, has performed with the band members in various capacities (on tour with Queen, Taylor's the Cross, May's solo efforts and the musical *We Will Rock You*). Other groups with whom Edney has worked include the Tymes, Duran Duran, the Boomtown Rats, Haircut 100 and the Rolling Stones. American bassist Danny Miranda (born 21 March 1964), obtained fame with Blue Öyster Cult. Concurrent with his duties in Queen + Paul Rodgers, Miranda frequently performs with the metal group Faith and Fire, and Blue Öyster Cult. Finally, British guitarist Jamie Moses (born 30 August 1955), who spent his formative years in the United States and Japan, performed as a freelance musician for many artists, some of whom include Broken English, Robbie McIntosh, Mike & the Mechanics and Bob Geldof. Moses' association with Queen + Paul Rodgers stems from his earlier work with Brian May (1994 and 1998).

Though the group's formation troubled commentators who were taken aback by May's and Taylor's seeming readiness to replace Mercury, they contended that the group offered audiences a chance to hear Rodgers' and Queen's respective repertoires collectively and commemoratively. Therefore, in no way was the band intended to suppress Mercury's legacy. In his assessment of the supergroup's configuration, Greg Blanco states: "Rodgers has an established career, so there is no saying that he would play solely under the Queen moniker anyway, but either way as awkward as it may sound, the name Queen + Paul Rodgers keeps everyone happy and remains respectful to the memory of Freddy [*sic*] Mercury."²⁸ Beyond the aesthetic issues that many observers found symbolically disturbing, on a musical level, Paul Rodgers singing Freddie Mercury's repertoire inescapably engenders auditory repercussions on the band's reception. Harry Doherty explains:

To fans and critics alike, Queen carry a huge weight of heritage with them, and while most Queen fans first endured before enjoying the collaboration with Paul Rodgers, there were few who even in their wildest dreams felt that a Queen without Freddie Mercury could never and, *would* never, happen. Nobody wanted to see them become their own tribute band, and there was a bit of concern that that actually might happen.²⁹

Numerous reasons exist that could potentially position the newly-formed Queen as their own cover band.

Aesthetically, the works that Mercury recorded in his later years, which he himself never performed in concert (such as "I Want It All" and "The Show Must Go On"), distort the underlying narrative of the works, as many fans acknowledge the fact that the ailing singer recorded the material during times of tremendous anguish, a delicate truth that remains unassailable. Musically, Freddie Mercury and Paul Rodgers differ

²⁸ Blanco, "Sublime's Return," online source.

²⁹ Doherty, "Queen Exclusive," 58.

considerably in singing style. Mercury, a lyric rock tenor, who used a smooth legato (typical of the *bel canto* tradition), quick vibrato and pure falsetto, over a three-octave range, to deliver striking vocal displays compared stylistically with the art music tradition. Alternatively, Paul Rodgers is a baritone, and so by trying to sing high pitches that Mercury effortlessly delivered with clarity, the timbral result is darker, huskier and pushed. Rodgers, who rarely integrates falsetto in his performance style, sings with much more nasal resonance and his frequent use of diphthongs adds a country twang to his renditions of Queen's repertory. Moreover, Rodgers uses many more embellishments than Mercury, reflective of his affinity towards the improvisatory nature of the blues. Stephen Thomas Erlewine comparatively states:

When thinking of suitable replacements for Freddie Mercury in Queen, Paul Rodgers is not a name that immediately leaps to mind. As the former lead singer for Free and Bad Company, Rodgers roughly belongs to the same '70s British hard rock pack as Queen, but Rodgers is pretty much the polar opposite of Mercury: a gruff, bluesy, barrel-chested macho blues-rock belter opposed to Freddie's grandly flamboyant, eccentric glam rock showman.³⁰

Despite the sonic and visual differences that separate Mercury and Rodgers as musicians, May distinguishingly states that Rodgers is featured with Queen, and in no way is his inclusion intended to replace the late Freddie Mercury.³¹

Although many skeptics oppose the reincarnation of the group, Queen + Paul Rodgers sold out stadia on their world tour, performing predominantly Queen songs with a few selections from Paul Rodgers' repertory (for a standard setlist of the band's 2005

³⁰ Stephen Thomas Erlewine, "Return of the Champions: Queen/Paul Rodgers," *All Music* (September 2005), online source: <http://www.allmusic.com/cg/>

³¹ Paul Elliot, "Queen + Paul Rodgers: The Cosmos Rocks" *Mojo* (October 2008):100.

tour, as performed on *Return of the Champions*, see Appendix 7-2).³² According to

Stephen Thomas Erlewine:

Return of the Champions never feels like Queen, it feels like a bar-band given a chance to play a big theater. Listening to the album, you get the sense that it probably was a fun night out, but there's no reason to listen to it at home. (In case you're wondering, the operatic middle section of "Bohemian Rhapsody" is taken from the original record, which makes Rodgers' blustering entrance with "so you think you can stone me and spit in my eye" all the more disarming.).³³

Queen + Paul Rodgers adopted a novel approach to the performance of "Bohemian Rhapsody" to offer an explicit commemoration of its composer. In addition to the performative quandaries produced by the song's non-veridic character, the newly-assembled group faced further problems; how could they deliver "Bohemian Rhapsody" in a way that did not deface Mercury's legacy, as the song's contemporary consumption has become synonymous with his genius. Queen + Paul Rodgers accomplished this goal by using video technology inventively, whereby they visually projected Mercury from various camera angles, creating the illusion that Mercury was performing live with the band. Prior to the song's commencement, Paul Rodgers welcomingly gesticulates his arm toward the screen above to unveil Mercury, who hauntingly appears at the piano to begin his magnum opus (see Example 7-5). To add a greater degree of realism to Mercury's performance (taken from Queen's performance at Wembley Stadium on 11 July 1986), superimposed over the singer's close-up and frontal angle is his side profile, modeled to scale, which convincingly insinuates that he is performing the work live within the venue. Strategically positioned spotlights in the stadium's rafters that point to the lower left corner of the large screen, further heightens the simulacrum's effect (see Example 7-6).

³² Released on 19 September (CD) and 17 October 2005 (DVD [directed by David Mallet]), *Return of the Champions* (Parlophone/Hollywood Records) is a live recording of Queen + Paul Rodgers on their world tour, captured on 9 May 2005 at the Hallam FM Arena in Sheffield, UK.

³³ Erlewine, "Return of the Champions," online source.

During the song's operatic segment, in customary fashion, the band exited the stage, although in this case, in the place of extravagant lighting displays, the group projected a video montage (along with the audio recording), featuring Mercury, with a few images of Deacon, culminating with the group's explosive return on stage for the famously-coined "headbanging" section, sung by Paul Rodgers. During this concluding part, the narrative flow that Queen eloquently construct collapses, as Rodgers' entrance establishes a binary whereby audiences, who arguably want Mercury to finish his performance, juxtapose Mercury's authorial prominence as a seminal force in Queen with Rodgers' evasive and unsolicited presence, thus rendering the latter's presentation unconvincing for many aficionados. Prior to Rodger's entrance, the way in which the band members present "Bohemian Rhapsody" not only persuasively acknowledges Mercury's central role in the song's creation, but also offers a pseudo-live performance that exhibits May and Taylor reunited on stage with their former friend in an unheard rendition of the song (May and Taylor accompany Mercury's pre-recorded tracks live). In her account of Queen + Paul Rodgers' final performance on their 2005 tour, Kerry Gold of *The Vancouver Sun* vividly describes her impression of "Bohemian Rhapsody," among other highlights of the performance:

Example 7-5 – Return of the Champions – "Bohemian Rhapsody"



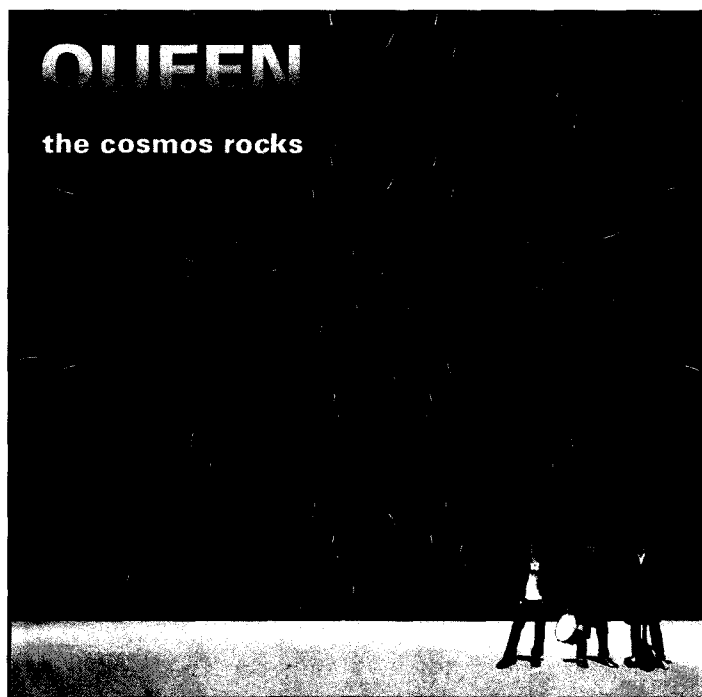
Example 7-6 – Return of the Champions – "Bohemian Rhapsody"



One of the stopping moments came near the end of the show, when the band surprised everyone with "Under Pressure," on which Taylor and Rodgers traded vocal parts and May spectacularly handled the falsetto. It was worth the price of admission alone, right there. But this turned out to be only the beginning of a spectacular finale. Rodgers continued with "The Show Must Go On," the song Mercury never got the chance to perform live. Rodgers was riding this one to the fullest. He owns that song now, his voice is showcased to perfection on this rock tragedy, which also utilizes the signature Queen backing harmonies. Of course, the most exquisitely touching moment had to be when Mercury made an extended appearance on the video screen for "Bohemian Rhapsody" – even taking a bow at the song's end. The sight of a smiling May walking out onto the catwalk with his guitar as he joined his old friend's voice was, well, to used a tired but accurate cliché, spine-chilling.³⁴

Following the success of their world tour, Queen + Paul Rodgers entered the studio to record *The Cosmos Rocks*, a rock/blues album that showcased the talents of Rodgers, May and Taylor (see Example 7-7).³⁵

Example 7-7 – The Cosmos Rocks (2008)



³⁴ Kerry Gold, "Classic Arena Rock Makes a Comeback," *The Vancouver Sun* (14 April 2006), F2.

³⁵ Recorded between 2006 and 2008 at Roger Taylor's private recording facility, the Priory Studios, *The Cosmos Rocks*, an album that thematically encapsulates May's scholarly penchant towards astrophysics, features fourteen songs composed by Rodgers, May and Taylor. In John Deacon's absence, May and Rodgers divide the bass duties equally.

Released on 12 September in Europe and 28 October 2008 in North America, commentators and critics collectively approached the work with apprehension. For many, due to the album's musical insipidness and minimalism, traits that tremendously opposed Queen's soundscape, in conjunction with Mercury's absence, the work failed commercially. Unlike *Hot Space*, which as I argued received negative reactions due to its stylistic eclecticism and sexual overtones, alternatively, *The Cosmos Rocks* failed due to its generic stagnancy. Mickey Noonan of *The Metro* contextualizes the album in relation to the band's most recent tour:

Queen owed their fame to frontman Freddie Mercury. Now that bassist John Deacon has retired, just half of the original line-up remains and, since 2005, their singer has been former Bad Company frontman Paul Rodgers, resulting in the newish, naffish name of Queen + Paul Rodgers. This current tour features tunes from the trio's recent album, *The Cosmos Rocks*. It's decent arena rock, but 17 years on from Mercury's death, is it really Queen? Nope. However you look at the math, unless Elizabeth Windsor decides to grow a magnificent 'stache and put in a star turn, calling it Queen is pushing it slightly.³⁶

In the album's *Rolling Stone* review, Christian Hoard writes:

Queen's first studio album in 13 years sounds a little like the band's old albums, with stomping rockers, over-the-top power ballads and pyrotechnic solos difficult to replicate on *Rock Band*. But one thing's missing: late frontman Freddie Mercury, whose charisma Bad Company's Paul Rodgers can't match. Under Rodgers' command, *The Cosmos Rocks* evokes an unmemorable stretch of drive-time radio, with slow songs like "Say It's Not True" recalling Air Supply. The classic-rock clichés aren't all Rodgers' fault: original band members helped write tracks like "Still Burnin'," a generic bar-band jam laced with chestnuts like "music makes the world go 'round." Queen are competent enough to rock arenas, but don't expect a repeat of the glory days.³⁷

The dismay that Hoard expresses regarding Mercury's absence is equally felt by Alexis Petridis of *The Guardian*, who states:

³⁶ Mickey Noonan, "I've Been Meaning to Ask How is There Queen without Freddie Mercury?" *The Metro* (16 October 2008), online source: <http://www.metro.co.uk/metrolife/>

³⁷ Christian Hoard, "Queen: The Cosmos Rocks," *Rolling Stone* 1064 (30 October 2008):72.

All involved have underlined that Rodgers should in no sense be thought of as Freddie Mercury's replacement, but it's hard to stop yourself wondering what Mercury might have made of all this. The songs might have sounded less awful if they were delivered with a certain knowing camp, a grandiloquence that suggested a sense of the ridiculous. But Paul Rodgers' stock in trade is a kind of pained sincerity: not for nothing was he the favourite vocalist of our erstwhile PM. When he sings "Once I loved a butterfly, don't wonder how, don't ask me why," he sounds as if he quite literally did love a butterfly, like one of those blokes you see on late-night Channel 4 documentaries trying to explain away his intimate relationship with a horse.³⁸

Petridis addresses an important point as he reveals the artistic dichotomy that separates Mercury and Rodgers' *raisons-d'être* as musicians, for their personae provoke differing interpretive responses resulting from the ideological connotations appended to each performer's career. Therefore, I contend that Rodgers, May and Taylor's partnership, at least in live performance, positions them more closely to a cover group than that of an authentic entity whose members obtained fame collectively. To this point, the band's fundamental essence rests upon their mandate to replicate works created in an earlier period, comprising, in part, different players, as fans purchase tickets on the assumption that they will hear songs that attained a significant degree of mainstream success. Conversely, in the studio, despite the trio's ambition to cultivate new material through *The Cosmos Rocks*, I argue that, due to the fortitude of Queen's musical past, along with Rodgers' success with Free and Bad Company, irrespective of what the supergroup releases, their works would remain appraised comparatively with those that defined them previously. Although Stephen Thomas Erlewine finds *The Cosmos Rocks* slightly more palatable than *Return of the Champions*, he, like many commentators, is troubled by May and Taylor's ambition to release an album under the auspices of Queen, as their musical and methodological shift conflicts with the band's sonic signature.

³⁸ Alexis Petridis, "Queen and Paul Rodgers, The Cosmos Rocks," *The Guardian* (12 September 2008), F9.

Example 7-8 – Queen recording sessions (above with Mercury, below with Rodgers)



Moreover, as Erlewine elucidates, the group evades the lavish and experimental undertakings that once defined their soundscape, thus furthermore distancing the musical consequences of their newly-composed works with their typical studio practices.

Give Queen — or Brian May and Roger Taylor, as that's who's left at this point — and new singer Paul Rodgers this much credit: this awkward marriage of convenience winds up being more convincing on the 2008 studio effort *The Cosmos Rocks* than it did on the live album. Of course, this is almost entirely due to the fact that the songs here were written by and for Rodgers, a frontman who is a cosmos away from Freddie Mercury and never quite seemed comfortable taming Freddie's flamboyancy. Here, Rodgers effectively rules the roost, helping steer *The Cosmos Rocks* far, far away from the meticulous, grandiose sonic sculptures of Queen at the height of their reign and toward a humble boogie.³⁹

Similar to groups like the Eagles, a band whose sonic imprint rests upon the idiosyncratic contributions of each member, the artistic chemistry that enabled Queen (with Deacon and Mercury) now lies beyond the grasp of May, Taylor and Rodgers, as the sonic attributes that provoked their fame are blatantly lacking. To appease Rodgers' penchant towards a minimalist recording method, the band employed a live-off-the floor system instead of the expansive production techniques emblematic of their autographic sonic stamp. Although interspersed among the blues/rock numbers are some backing vocals reminiscent of Queen's traditional artificial choirs, as depicted graphically in Example 7-8, Paul Rodgers' standing in the place of Freddie Mercury ensconced the band spiral galaxies away from the artistic mastery and technical sophistication that the original members of Queen evinced in their glory days.

FINALE: WE ARE THE ETERNAL CHAMPIONS

In closing, Freddie Mercury and Queen forged new paths in the recording industry by creating music that utilized technology in inventive ways, consequently

³⁹ Erlewine, "The Cosmos Rocks," *All Music* (30 October 2008), online source: www.allmusic.com/cg/

enabling them to compose complexly by appropriating stylistic attributes from disparate genres. The poetics of their vocation as musical innovators inspired countless musicians with their precision and originality. Axl Rose exemplifies this notion, as he states: "When I was a kid I was told that rock 'n' roll wasn't music, it wasn't art. Queen was my proof and my evidence that these people were wrong, and they meant everything to me."⁴⁰

Correspondingly, as elucidated by Kurt Cobain in his suicide note, the degree of pleasure that Freddie Mercury exuded as master showman made him an inspirational rock icon.⁴¹

To this end, Freddie Mercury and his bandmates determinedly challenged themselves by continually exceeding customary industry standards. Mercury states:

We always liked to confuse people and prove we're not really like anyone else. If anything we have more in common with Liza Minnelli than Led Zeppelin. We're more in the showbiz tradition than the rock 'n' roll tradition. We had an identity of our own because we combined all those things that define Queen. That's what people didn't seem to realise.⁴²

Over their impressive twenty-year existence, despite their affinity to take risks, the members of Queen remain among the richest people in the United Kingdom, as their music is played *ad infinitum* around the world at spectacles ranging from sporting events to musicals, through which Freddie Mercury's memory survives.⁴³ Similar to the Queen + Paul Rodgers extravaganza, *We Will Rock You*, a musical collaboratively penned by English comedian Ben Elton and May and Taylor, repackages the band's music in a tongue-in-cheek manner for audiences who, in Mercury's absence, consume Queen's

⁴⁰ *The Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert*, DVD Disc 2, video recording.

⁴¹ Cobain note viewed in David Giles, *Illusions of Immortality: A Psychology of Fame and Celebrity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 84.

⁴² Mercury, *Freddie Mercury*, 40.

⁴³ All of living members of Queen appeared in *The Times's* 2008 Rich List: Brian May (£75 million) Roger Taylor (£70 million) and John Deacon (£65 million). For a complete listing see: http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/specials/rich_list/rich_list_search/

catalogue.⁴⁴ Due to the group's musical eclecticism and colourful dramatics in live performance, in many ways the production echoes the theatricality that was at the crux of Queen's enterprise.⁴⁵

By adventurously experimenting and amalgamating elements associated with celtic, country, disco, flamenco, folk, funk, gospel, opera, ragtime and vaudeville, Mercury and his colleagues caused strict genre paradigms and gender codes to fragment. Following his AIDS-positive diagnosis, Mercury, rather than immediately surrendering his talents to a merciless disease, courageously continued to battle for his life, as he sought to impart his musical legacy upon the world. Despite the constant manhunt by the paparazzi during the Montreux voyages, Mercury bravely continued to compose and record music, as he chronicled through "The Show Must Go On:" "Inside my heart is breaking, my make-up may be flaking but my smile still stays on." And so in the same manner that Mercury himself ended his live performances, I shall conclude this dissertation with a quotation from "We Are the Champions," a song that compellingly incarnates the life, works, times and memory of the late Freddie Mercury:

I've paid my dues time after time
 I've done my sentence but committed no crime
 And bad mistakes, I've made a few
 I've had my share of sand kicked in my face, but I've come through

⁴⁴ *We Will Rock You* opened on 14 May 2002 at the Dominion Theatre in London. Since its premiere, numerous other productions have followed in Australia, Bangkok, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Moscow, New Zealand, South Africa, South Korea, Spain and the United States.

⁴⁵ Other jukebox musicals include *Smokey Joe's Cafe* (Leiber and Stoller [1995]), *Play On!* (Duke Ellington [1997]), *Mamma Mia!* (ABBA [1999]), *Movin' Out* (Billy Joel [2002]), *Tonight's the Night* (Rod Stewart [2003]), *Lennon* (John Lennon [2005]), *Good Vibrations* (the Beach Boys [2005]), *All Shook Up* (Elvis Presley [2005]), *Jersey Boys* (Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons [2005]), *Ring of Fire* (Johnny Cash [2006]), *Hot Feet* (Earth, Wind & Fire [2006]), *The Clockwork Waltz* (the Dresden Dolls [2006]) and *Desperately Seeking Susan* (Blondie [2007]).

APPENDIX 7-1

Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert: performers and repertory

ARTIST	REPERTOIRE
Metallica	Enter Sandman
	Sad But True
	Nothing Else Matters
Extreme	Queen Medley
	Love of My Life
	More Than Words
Def Leppard	Now I'm Here (with Brian May)
	Let's Get Rocked
	Animal
Bob Geldof	Too Late God
Spinal Tap	The Majesty Of Rock
U2	Until the End of the World
Guns N' Roses	Paradise City
	Only Women Bleed (intro)
	Knockin' on Heaven's Door
Elizabeth Taylor	AIDS Prevention and Awareness Speech
Queen + Joe Elliot and Slash	Tie Your Mother Down
Queen + Roger Daltrey with Tony Iommi	Heaven and Hell (intro)
	Pinball Wizard (intro)
	I Want It All
Queen + Zucchero	Las palabras de amor
Queen + Gary Cherone with Tony Iommi	Hammer to Fall
Queen + James Hetfield with Tony Iommi	Stone Cold Crazy
Queen + Robert Plant	Innuendo
	Kashmir (excerpt)
	Thank You (intro)
	Crazy Little Thing Called Love
Brian May with Spike Edney	Too Much Love Will Kill You
Queen + Paul Young	Radio Ga Ga
Queen + Seal	Who Wants to Live Forever?

Queen + Lisa Stansfield	I Want to Break Free
Queen + David Bowie and Annie Lennox (vocal duo)	Under Pressure
Queen + Ian Hunter, David Bowie, Mick Ronson, Joe Elliot and Phil Collen	All the Young Dudes
Queen + David Bowie and Mick Ronson	Heroes
Queen + George Michael	'39
Queen + George Michael and Lisa Stansfield	These Are the Days of Our Lives
Queen + George Michael	Somebody to Love
Queen + Elton John and W. Axl Rose	Bohemian Rhapsody
Queen + Elton John with Tony Iommi	The Show Must Go On
Queen + W. Axl Rose	We Will Rock You
Queen + Liza Minnelli	We Are the Champions
<i>Recording</i>	God Save the Queen

ADDITIONAL PERFORMERS

Spike Edney, Joshua J. Macrae, Mike Moran, Maggie Ryder, Miriam Stockley, Chris Thompson and the London Community Gospel Choir.

APPENDIX 7-2

Queen + Paul Rodgers: tour setlist

SONG	COMPOSER (S)
Reaching Out (excerpt)	Black, Hill
Tie Your Mother Down	May
I Want to Break Free	Deacon
Fat Bottomed Girls	May
Wishing Well	Rodgers, Kossoff, Bundrick, Yamauchi, Kirke
Another One Bites the Dust	Deacon
Crazy Little Thing Called Love	Mercury
Say It's Not True	Taylor
'39	May
Love of My Life	Mercury
Hammer to Fall	May
Feel Like Makin' Love	Rodgers, Ralphs
Let There Be Drums	Nelson, Podolor
I'm in Love with My Car	Taylor
Guitar Solo / Last Horizon	May
These Are the Days of Our Lives	Queen
Radio Ga Ga	Taylor
Can't Get Enough	Ralphs
A Kind of Magic	Taylor
I Want It All	Queen
Bohemian Rhapsody	Mercury
The Show Must Go On	Queen
All Right Now	Fraser, Rodgers
We Will Rock You	May
We Are the Champions	Mercury
God Save the Queen	Traditional, arr. May

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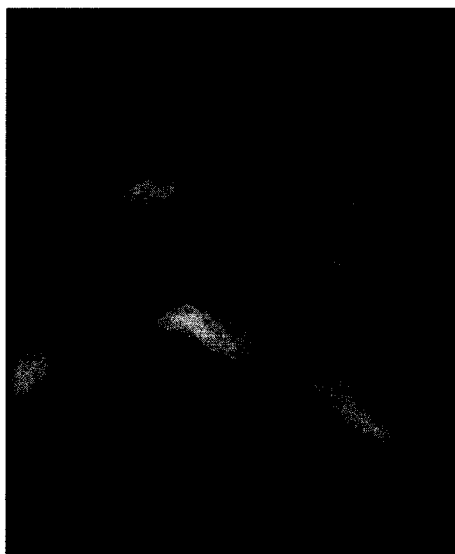
APPENDIX A: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

John "Teddy Bear" Brough



John Brough began his career as a recording engineer in the mid-1980s at the Townhouse Studios in London. He met Freddie Mercury through producer David Richards, who invited him to participate on mixing some of Queen's live recordings (Budapest and Wembley). Although Brough's dealings with Queen were initially set to last ten days, they surprisingly extended over fourteen months, involving solo projects with Freddie Mercury, Brian May and Roger Taylor. Brough describes this period as "the best time I ever had in a studio, because Queen were the best guys to work with." Since his artistic endeavours with the band members, Brough has developed a reputation as a world-class freelance engineer, working with many notable groups including Faith No More, Josh Groban, INXS, the Rolling Stones and U2.

Peter "Phoebe" Freestone



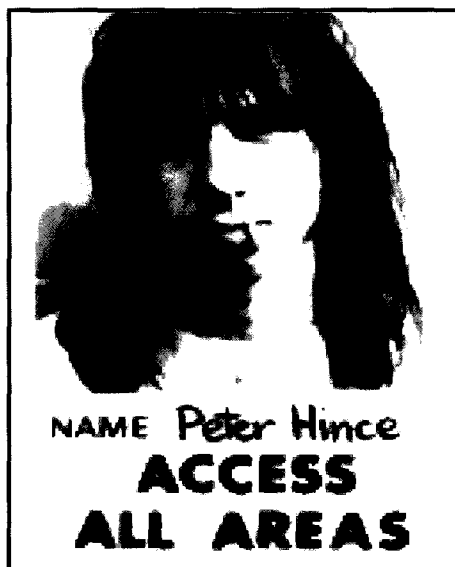
Peter Freestone, who worked in the Royal Ballet wardrobe department, officially met Freddie Mercury at the Royal Opera House in 1979 at a charity gala in aid of the City of Westminster Society for Mentally Handicapped Children, where Mercury performed choreographed renditions of "Crazy Little Thing Called Love" and "Bohemian Rhapsody." Two weeks following the performance, Queen manager, Paul Prenter, hired Freestone as Queen's costume coordinator for a portion of the *Crazy Tour*, lasting six-weeks. In the early 1980s, Mercury employed Freestone as his personal assistant, which, until Mercury's death, included a wealth of positions, including that of chef, wardrobe director, nurse, confidant, bodyguard, waiter, housemate, butler, secretary and, of course, close friend.

Terry "Gilda" Giddings



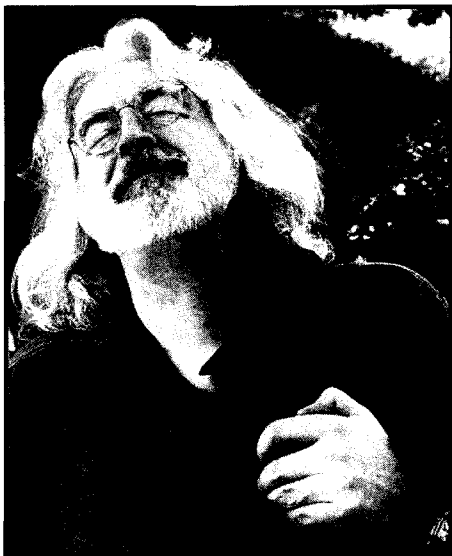
In 1983, after Terry Giddings completed an extensive tour with the Rolling Stones on their security crew, Jim Callaghan of Callaghan Security offered him the opportunity to work for Freddie Mercury on Queen's forthcoming *The Works Tour*. Subsequent to a brief meeting with Mercury at his apartment, located in Phillmore Gardens, Giddings, who had an impressive résumé as a bodyguard for Mick Jagger, Frank Sinatra and Paul McCartney, eagerly accepted the position. From Giddings' appointment as bodyguard and chauffeur until Mercury's death, the pair shared a profound friendship.

Peter "Ratty" Hince



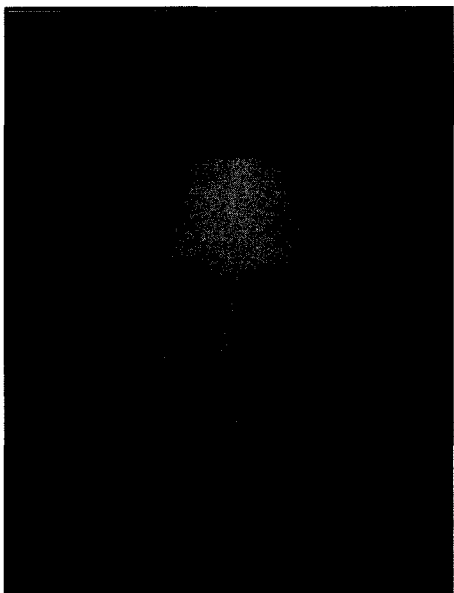
In 1973, Peter Hince, who was part of Mott the Hoople's road crew, met Queen, as they were the band's support act. According to Hince, "[Around this time] I seem to recall thinking and saying, 'they'll never make it.' I was wrong!" Eighteen months following the tour, Mott the Hoople disbanded and, coincidentally, Queen were looking for new crew members. As such, Hince became Freddie Mercury and John Deacon's roadie, a position he occupied from 1975 to 1986. As Queen's longest serving roadie, in addition to working on stage and in the studio with Mercury and Deacon, Hince occupied the position of head of crew and production. He concludes: "Despite being in the constant company of Queen, I was not immune to being impressed, and have met and known many famous rock stars and celebrities but I can't say that any held the presence that Fred radiated" (<http://www.peterhince.co.uk>).

Reinhold Mack



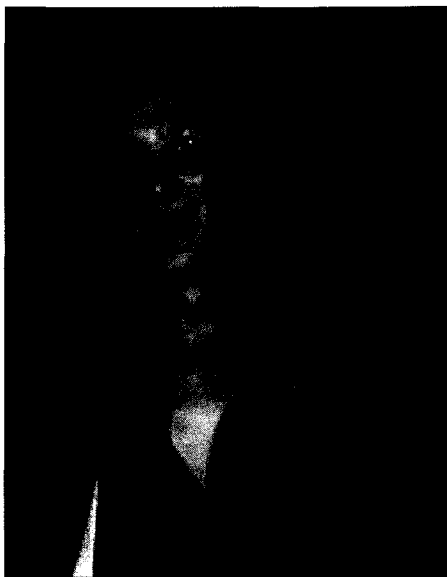
In 1979, while working with Gary Moore in Los Angeles, disco pioneer Giorgio Moroder arranged for Reinhold Mack to record Queen in Munich. The band, who had recently completed a tour of Japan, convened in Germany to record segments of *The Game*, resulting in "Crazy Little Thing Called Love." Although over the course of his prodigious career Mack worked primarily with Queen, he produced and recorded numerous other artists, some of whom include Electric Light Orchestra, Extreme, Black Sabbath, Liquidmeat, Meat Loaf and Billy Squier. Mack, who became Musicland's sole proprietor in 1984, sold the studio and its contents in 1992, after which time he and his family relocated to California, where he currently resides.

Mike Moran



In 1986, on the day following a motorcycle accident that left him with two broken ribs, Mike Moran provided the piano accompaniment to "In My Defence," a piece sung by Freddie Mercury and intended for inclusion in Dave Clarke's musical, *Time*. This brief collaboration provoked Moran and Mercury to work together in 1987 for "The Great Pretender." Soon thereafter, due to their artistic compatibility, the pair embarked upon their largest collaboration, *Barcelona*, terminating in 1988. Today, Mike Moran is one of the United Kingdom's best-known musicians. As a keyboard player, arranger, musical director and producer, he has worked with many superstars, including Kate Bush, José Carreras, Joe Cocker, Plácido Domingo, George Harrison, Julio Iglesias, Paul McCartney, George Michael, Ozzy Osbourne, Robert Plant, Cliff Richard, Paul Simon, Ringo Starr, Rod Stewart, Dionne Warwick and Stevie Wonder.

David Richards



In 1975, four years following the legendary Montreux Casino fire, sound engineer David Richards moved from England to Switzerland to manage Mountain Studios, a new recording facility built in the reconstructed casino. His first clients were the Rolling Stones, who recorded segments of *Black and Blue* (released on 23 April 1976). In 1978, during the recording of Queen's *Jazz*, Richards met the band and, shortly thereafter, Queen became the studios' new proprietors. Although during the early and mid-1980s Queen tended to record at Musicland Studios in Munich with Reinhold Mack, by the end of the decade, due primarily to Mercury's AIDS diagnosis, the group recorded their final three albums at Mountain Studios (*The Miracle*, *Innuendo* and *Made in Heaven*). Following Mercury's death in 1991, Richards purchased the studio from his employers. Sadly, in 2002, the Montreux Casino replaced Mountain Studios with the Mountain Club, a private *discothèque* that today features the music of the 1970s and 1980s, some of which, ironically, was recorded in the very space where it is being consumed. Consequently, Richards relocated his studio to Attalens, Switzerland, where he continues to record musicians of exceptional merit.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW RELEASE FORMS

John Brough

RELEASE FORM Don Wright Faculty of Music The University of Western Ontario FAX: [REDACTED] ATTENTION: Dr. James N. Grier	
Barry Promane [REDACTED]	
I, <u>John Brough</u> , of [REDACTED]	
City of [REDACTED], Country [REDACTED]	
hereby give, convey and assign to Barry Promane of The University of Western Ontario, my oral memoir, which was recorded to cassette through phone conversations, to have and to hold the same absolutely and forever. I understand that Barry Promane will use my oral memoir for such historical and scholarly purposes as he sees fit.	
I herein warrant that I have not assigned or in any manner encumbered or impaired any of the aforementioned rights in my oral memoir.	
I, <u>BARRY C. PROMANE</u> accept the oral memoir of John Brough for inclusion in my PhD dissertation, and for use in scholarly conferences and publications.	
[REDACTED] John Brough (Interviewee)	<u>19/1/2009</u> Date
[REDACTED] Barry Promane (Interviewer)	<u>17 January 2009</u> Date

Peter Freestone

Release Form

Don Wright Faculty of Music

The University of Western Ontario

FAX: [REDACTED]

ATTENTION: Dr. James N. Grier

Barry Promane



I, Peter Freestone, of [REDACTED],
City of [REDACTED], Country [REDACTED]

hereby give, convey and assign to Barry Promane of The University of Western Ontario, my oral memoir, which was recorded to cassette through phone conversations, to have and to hold the same absolutely and forever. I understand that Barry Promane will use my oral memoir for such historical and scholarly purposes as he sees fit.

I herein warrant that I have not assigned or in any manner encumbered or impaired any of the aforementioned rights in my oral memoir.

I, BARRY C. PROMANE accept the oral memoir of Peter Freestone for inclusion in my Ph.D. dissertation, and for use only in scholarly conferences and publications.



25/9/08

Peter Richard Leslie Freestone (Interviewee) Date



20 September 2008

Barry Christopher Promane (Interviewer) Date

Terry Giddings

RELEASE FORM
 Don Wright Faculty of Music
 The University of Western Ontario
 FAX: [REDACTED]
 ATTENTION: Dr. James N. Grier

Barry Promane
 [REDACTED]

I, TERRY GIDDINGS, of [REDACTED],
 City of [REDACTED], Country [REDACTED],

hereby give, convey and assign to Barry Promane of The University of Western Ontario, my oral memoir, which was recorded to cassette through phone conversations, to have and to hold the same absolutely and forever. I understand that Barry Promane will use my oral memoir for such historical and scholarly purposes as he sees fit.

I herein warrant that I have not assigned or in any manner encumbered or impaired any of the aforementioned rights in my oral memoir.

I, BARRY C. PROMANE accept the oral memoir of Terry Giddings for inclusion in my PhD dissertation, and for use in scholarly conferences and publications.

[REDACTED] _____
 Terry Giddings (Interviewee)

[REDACTED] _____
 Barry Christopher Promane (Interviewer)

18/8/08

 Date

1 September 2008

 Date

Peter Hince

Release Form
 Don Wright Faculty of Music
 The University of Western Ontario
 FAX: [REDACTED]
 ATTENTION: Dr. James N. Grier

Barry Promane
 [REDACTED]

I, Peter R Hince
 of [REDACTED]
 City of [REDACTED]
 Country [REDACTED]

hereby give, convey and assign to Barry Promane of The University of Western Ontario, my oral memoir, which was recorded to cassette through phone conversations, to use solely for his PhD dissertation. I understand that Barry Promane will use my oral memoir for such historical and scholarly purposes as he sees fit. However, there are to be no commercial or other publication uses now or at any time in the future.

I herein warrant that I have not assigned or in any manner encumbered or impaired any of the aforementioned rights in my oral memoir.

I, BARRY C. PROMANE, accept the oral memoir of Peter Hince for inclusion in my PhD dissertation, and for use in scholarly conferences and publications only.

[REDACTED]

Peter Hince (Interviewee) Date th November 20 2008

[REDACTED]

Barry Christopher Promane (Interviewer) Date 22 November 2008

Reinhold Mack

<p>RELEASE FORM Don Wright Faculty of Music The University of Western Ontario FAX: [REDACTED] ATTENTION: Dr. James N. Grier</p>	
<p>Barry Promane [REDACTED]</p>	
<p>I, <u>REINHOLD MACK</u>, of [REDACTED] City of [REDACTED], Country [REDACTED]</p>	
<p>hereby give, convey and assign to Barry Promane of The University of Western Ontario, my oral memoir, which was recorded to cassette through phone conversations, to have and to hold the same absolutely and forever. I understand that Barry Promane will use my oral memoir for such historical and scholarly purposes as he sees fit.</p>	
<p>I herein warrant that I have not assigned or in any manner encumbered or impaired any of the aforementioned rights in my oral memoir.</p>	
<p>I, <u>BARRY C. PROMANE</u> accept the oral memoir of Reinhold Mack for inclusion in my PhD dissertation, and for use in scholarly conferences and publications.</p>	
<p>[REDACTED] Reinhold Mack (Interviewee)</p>	<p><u>11.21.08</u> Date</p>
<p>[REDACTED] Barry Christopher Promane (Interviewer)</p>	<p><u>NOVEMBER 18 2008</u> Date</p>

Mike Moran

RELEASE FORM Don Wright Faculty of Music The University of Western Ontario FAX: [REDACTED] ATTENTION: Dr. James N. Grier	
Barry Promane [REDACTED]	
I, <u>MIKE MORAN</u> , of [REDACTED]	
City of [REDACTED]	Country [REDACTED]
hereby give, convey and assign to Barry Promane of The University of Western Ontario, my oral memoir, which was recorded to cassette through phone conversations on 15 and 17 January 2008, to have and to hold the same absolutely and forever. I understand that Barry Promane will use my oral memoir for such historical and scholarly purposes as he sees fit, and that by this conveyance I relinquish:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * All legal title and literary property rights which I have or may be deemed to have in said work. * All my rights, title, and interest in copyright which I have or may have deemed to have in said work and more particularly the exclusive rights of reproduction, distribution and display. 	
I herein warrant that I have not assigned or in any manner encumbered or impaired any of the aforementioned rights in my oral memoir.	
I, <u>BARRY PROMANE</u> accept the oral memoir of Mike Moran for inclusion in my PhD dissertation, and for use in scholarly conferences and publications.	
[REDACTED] Mike Moran (Interviewee)	<u>30 / 01 / 08</u> Date
[REDACTED] Barry Promane (Interviewer)	<u>30 January 2008</u> Date

David Richards

RELEASE FORM Don Wright Faculty of Music The University of Western Ontario FAX: [REDACTED] ATTENTION: Dr. James N. Grier	
Barry Promane [REDACTED]	
I, <u>DAVID RICHARDS</u> , of <u>[REDACTED]</u> , City of <u>[REDACTED]</u> , Country <u>[REDACTED]</u>	
hereby give, convey and assign to Barry Promane of The University of Western Ontario, my oral memoir, which was recorded to cassette through phone conversations, to have and to hold the same absolutely and forever. I understand that Barry Promane will use my oral memoir for such historical and scholarly purposes as he sees fit.	
I herein warrant that I have not assigned or in any manner encumbered or impaired any of the aforementioned rights in my oral memoir.	
I, <u>BARRY C. PROMANE</u> accept the oral memoir of David Richards for inclusion in my PhD dissertation, and for use in scholarly conferences and publications.	
[REDACTED] David Richards (Interviewee)	<u>10.11.08</u> Date
[REDACTED] Barry Christopher Promane (Interviewer)	<u>6 NOVEMBER 2008</u> Date

Disclosure and Privacy Statement

To protect the privacy of my informants, their personal information has been concealed in the release forms.

Anonymous Source

One additional research subject has provided information, through the form of interviews conducted by the author, for inclusion in this dissertation, along with written permission. Because of this person's professional standing in the medical community, the informant wishes to remain anonymous. I have a signed clearance form on record that confirms these conditions, which is available upon request by members of the adjudication committee.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Barry Christopher Promane

April 2009

Ontario.

Citizenship: Canadian.

EDUCATION

- Ph.D. (abd)** Don Wright Faculty of Music (musicology), The University of Western Ontario, 2009.
- B.Ed.** Faculty of Education (music and history at the intermediate/senior division), The University of Ottawa, 2005.
- M.A.** School for Canadian Studies (cultural studies and music), Carleton University, 2004. Thesis entitled: *Touring and Rock Music in Canada*, co-supervised by Dr. William Echard and Dr. Stan McMullen.
- B.Mus.** School for Studies in Art and Culture: Music (musicology), Carleton University, 2002.

Diploma in Sonic Design

School for Studies in Art and Culture: Music, Carleton University, 2002.

ACADEMIC AND TEACHING EMPLOYMENT

Sessional Adjunct Positions

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Summer 2007 | <p>The University of Windsor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The Musical Experience</i> (Music 32-106) |
| Intercession 2007 | <p>Carleton University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Issues in Popular Music</i> (MUSI 1002) ▪ <i>Popular Musics of Canada</i> (MUSI 3104) |
| Fall 2006 | <p>The University of Western Ontario</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Post World War II Popular Music</i> (Music 165/265a) |
| Summer 2006 | <p>Carleton University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Issues in Popular Music</i> (MUSI 1002) |

Graduate Teaching Assistantships

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Winter 2009 | <p><i>Post World War II Popular Music</i> (Music 2700b)
The University of Western Ontario; Dr. James Grier.</p> |
|-------------|---|

- Fall 2008 *Post World War II Popular Music* (Music 2700a)
The University of Western Ontario; Jason Chapman.
- Winter 2008 *Post World War II Popular Music* (Music 165/265b)
The University of Western Ontario; Dr. James Grier.
- Fall 2007 *Post World War II Popular Music* (Music 165/265a)
The University of Western Ontario; Dr. Jay Hodgson.
- Winter 2007 *Post World War II Popular Music* (Music 165/265b)
The University of Western Ontario; Dr. Jay Hodgson.
- Winter 2006 *Post World War II Popular Music* (Music 165/265b)
The University of Western Ontario; Dr. James Grier.
- Fall 2005 *Post World War II Popular Music* (Music 165/265a)
The University of Western Ontario; Dr. Andrew Scott.
- 2003-2004 *Issues in Popular Music* (MUSI 1002)
Carleton University; Dr. William Echard.

Supplemental Teaching Experience

- 2004-2005 High School Teacher; St. Pius X Catholic High School (Ottawa, Ontario) and Brookfield Public High School (Ottawa, Ontario). Instructed courses included Grade 9 Music, Grade 11 Law, Grade 12 Law and Grade 12 American History.
- 2001-2003 Private Music Teacher; Amulet Studios (Ottawa, Ontario). Primary areas of instruction included piano, bass guitar and theory/counterpoint.
- 1997-1999 Music School Manager/Summer Camp Director; Timmins Symphony Orchestra (Timmins, Ontario).

PROFESSIONAL HONOURS

- 2005-2009 The University of Western Ontario Graduate Research Scholarship (WGRS)
- 2008 Western Graduate Thesis Research Award
- 2008 The Textbook and Technology Grant (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities)
- 2006 Finalist in the 2006-2007 Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, sponsored by the Bank of Nova Scotia, the UWO Alumni Association and the University Students' Council.

PUBLICATIONS

"The Role of Technology in the Contemporary Music Classroom," *The Recorder: The Journal of the Ontario Music Educators' Association*, 48 no.1 (Autumn 2005): 21-24.

PAPERS PRESENTED TO LEARNED SOCIETIES

- 13 June 2009 " 'Let Me Live': The AIDS Crisis, Homophobia and Rock Ideology." The International Association for the Study of Popular Music: Canadian Branch – National Conference. Dalhousie University. Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- 14 Nov. 2008 " 'She's Not Just a Pretty Face': Shania Twain, Iconography and Male Hegemony." The Midwest Modern Language Association - Fiftieth Annual Conference. The Minneapolis Marriott City Center. Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- 1 Aug. 2008 "Any Way the Wind Blows: Meaning and Perception in Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody'." The North American British Music Studies Association – Third Biennial International Conference. York University. Toronto, Ontario.
- 21 June 2008 "When Two Musical and Ideological Worlds Collide: Artisanship, Authenticity and Divergent Modes of Composition in 'Barcelona'." McGill Suomi de Popolo – International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Improvisation. McGill University. Montreal, Québec.
- 26 April 2008 "Uncovering the Musical and Cultural Significance of Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody'." The International Association for the Study of Popular Music: United States Branch – National Conference. University of Iowa. Iowa City, Iowa.
- 14 Mar. 2008 "Pop Goes the University: Evaluating Popular Music's Place in the Canadian Academy." The College Music Society – Pacific Central and Pacific Southern Conference. Westmont College. Santa Barbara, California.
- 29 Feb. 2008 " 'Whispering a Prayer': Steve Vai, Intertextuality and Pedagogy." The College Music Society – South Central and Southern Conference. Louisiana State University. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
- 6 May 2006 "Artificial Reality: Performance, Performativity and Mediated Representations in the Rock DVD." The International Association for the Study of Popular Music: Canadian Branch – National Conference. The University of Regina. Regina, Saskatchewan.

SERVICES TO THE PROFESSION

- 4 May 2008 Session chair, Don Wright Faculty of Music Graduate Symposium. The University of Western Ontario. London, Ontario.
- 26 April 2008 Session chair, The International Association for the Study of Popular Music: United States Branch – National Conference. University of Iowa. Iowa City, Iowa.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- American Musicological Society
- College Music Society
- International Association for the Study of Popular Music: Canada and United States
- Modern Language Association of America
- North American British Music Studies Association
- Ontario College of Teachers

DISCOGRAPHY

- 2005 "I Love Thee," music composed and performed by Barry Promane; lyrics based on the poem "I Love Thee" by Eliza Acton (1799-1859); sung by mezzo-soprano Kathleen Young; recorded by Greg Vintar and James Mongeon and mastered by Peter Gilroy.
- 2003 *Stages*, lead vocals, bass and keyboards by Barry Promane; guitars and vocals by David Promane; backing guitars by Emit Brown; drums and percussion by Dylan Roberts; recorded and mastered by Andy Zeits at Pebble Studio.
- 2002 *Here I Stand* (Sonic Design Portfolio), produced, performed, composed and recorded by Barry Promane at the Carleton University Studio Facility.

PERFORMED COMPOSITIONS

- 2002 "I Have a Dream" – Electroacoustic and orchestral work composed by Barry Promane. This piece was the first Canadian-composed classical work performed in real-time via broadband Internet. The project was co-produced with the Institute of Information Technology (National Research Council of Canada) and Learn Canada through the Virtual Classroom of the Communications Research Centre (Industry Canada). For a comprehensive review of the performance see: Michael Bussière, "Performance Space Meets Cyberspace: Seeking the Creative Idiom and Technical Model for Live Music on Broadband," *The Leonardo Electronic Almanac*, 12 no.1 (Spring 2004): 33-37.

TOURING AND LIVE ENGAGEMENTS

- 2004 National tour (Canada) with rock group: *Promane*.
- 2003 National tour (Canada) with recording artists: *April Wine*.
- 2002 International tour (Canada and USA) with recording artists: *April Wine*.
- 2001 Provincial club tour (Ontario and Québec) with rock band: *Midnight*.
- 1997-1999 Regional performances with *The Reality Tour*, a substance awareness multimedia musical show, conceived and performed by Barry and David Promane, and sponsored by the Ontario Provincial Police.