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Sounds Like the Mall of America: Programmed Music and the Architectonics of Commercial Space

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S hopping malls have become icons of consumer society. The prophets of advanced capitalism—whether they be post-Marxist academics or developers—have given us the shopping mall as emblem and microcosm of this cultural epoch (see Morse 1990; Shields 1992; Karasov and Martin 1993). Visions of the shopping mall become social visions. Yet the visual bias in cultural critique tends toward the assumption that all that matters presents itself to be seen. What if we were to *listen* to a shopping mall instead? What could be heard?[1]

At the Mall of America (Bloomington, Minnesota), beneath the crash of a roller coaster, the chatter of shoppers and the shuffle of feet, one hears music everywhere. Every space in the Mall is hardwired for sound. The apparatus to disseminate music is built into the Mall's infrastructure, and is managed as one of several major environmental factors. Music flows through channels parallel to those providing air, electricity and information to all areas of the Mall. "Facilities Management," the department responsible for maintaining the Mall's power supplies, temperature, and even grounds-keeping, also keeps the Mall's varied soundtracks running. Throughout the many stores and hallways, one can see the blonde circular speakers which are the programmed music industry standard. The Mall of America has three main sound systems: a set of speakers in the hallways plays background music quietly; a set of speakers hidden beneath the foliage of Camp Snoopy (the amusement park built into the Mall's atrium) broadcasts the steady singing of digital crickets; and each store is wired for sound so that it may play tapes or receive a satellite transmission. The Mall of America both presumes in its very structure and

requires as part of its maintenance a continuous, nuanced, and highly or-
chestrated flow of music to all its parts. It is as if a sonorial circulation
system keeps the Mall alive.

In places like the Mall of America, music becomes a form of architec-
ture. Rather than simply filling up an empty space, the music becomes part
of the consistency of that space. The sound becomes a presence, and as
that presence it becomes an essential part of the building's infrastructure.
Music is a central—an architectural—part of malls and other semi-public
commercial spaces throughout the country, yet for all the literature on
spaces of "consumer culture," little or no mention is made of the system-
atic dissemination of pre-recorded music that now pervades these places
(a notable exception is Frow and Morris 1993). This article can be thought
of as an answer to that absence, but it is really part of a larger experiment:
what happens when we begin to think about space in industrialized soci-
eties *acoustically*? How is sound organized by social and cultural practice?
How does it inflect that practice? These are old questions for ethnomusi-
cologists, yet the field has really just begun exploring music and sound in
industrialized and recorded forms. Since Charles Keil's call for studying mass
mediated music (1984:91), there has been a growing field of interest in the
circulation and culture of recordings (see, for example, Wallis and Malm
1984, Meintjes 1990, Guilbault 1993, Manuel 1993). Much of this work is
concerned with the relationships of performers and audiences, with the
manner in which music influences or connects constructions of identity,
or with music industries themselves. This article takes these problems as a
point of departure, but explores them at two different layers: (1) where
music and listeners' responses to it are themselves commodities to be
bought, sold and circulated; and (2) where this commoditized music be-
comes a form of architecture—a way of organizing space in commercial
settings.[2]

The centrality of music as an environmental factor in commercial spaces
should come as no surprise. To the contrary, the idea of music pervading
quasi-public commercial spaces is the height of banality. Programmed
music, better known by one of its brand names, "Muzak," is one of the most
widely disseminated forms of music in the world. Alex Greene notes that
"we take Muzak for granted, the word having transcended its status as a
product trademark and entered into the realms of everyday language, as a
label for all 'easy' listening music" (1986:286). Americans take for granted
that almost every commercial establishment they enter will offer them an
endless serenade during their stay. This banality itself is a cause for
reflection: in 1982 it was estimated that one out of every three Americans
heard programmed music at some point every day; that number has steadily
increased since then. Americans on average hear more hours per capita of

programmed music than any other kind of music (Jones and Schumacher 1992:156). As I will shortly discuss, programmed music now encompasses both "easy listening" music *and* original recordings heard elsewhere. In other words, one cannot tell simply by listening to music whether it is "Muzak" or not—*all* recorded music is at least potentially Muzak. (For consistency, I will refer to the service itself—"programmed music"—rather than adopting this common usage of a specific brand name. Currently, the three largest programmed music services are the *MUZAK* Limited Partnership, 3M, and Audio Environments, Inc. Programmed music has been in practical use since the 1930's, and *MUZAK* remains the predominant service in the industry; it is the model on which other services are based.)[3]

The economics and social organization of programmed music presumes and exists on top of a whole culture and economy of recorded music. In other words, programmed music presumes that music has already become a *thing*—a commodity. This reification is represented in the economics of the service, and in the presumptions on which this economy is based. For instance, programmed music requires the absolute separation of performer and audience fostered by many recording industries, thereby circumscribing the experience of music for the majority of the population to that of listening: "Today's Baby Boom generation grew up with music as an integral part of their lives. From the clock radio to the Hi-Fi to the stereo to the CD player, music has always been present. They expect it everywhere they go. In fact, respondents of all ages in survey after survey unanimously agree they prefer to shop, dine and work where music is present. Music moves people" (*MUZAK* 1992b). Here, musical experience is understood entirely as listening and cultural value is attributed to the very *presence* of music as a kind of sound. These are two key cultural assumptions underlying the production and deployment of programmed music.

I want to be absolutely clear here: while the capitalist and consumerist market structure of mass mediated music contributes to a larger divide between performer and audience, with fewer performers and a larger audience, this is not necessarily a quality inherent in recording and transmission (mediation) of sound itself. In other words, we should be wary of critiques of mediation *qua* alienation. Also, we should be careful to recognize that the treatment of music as purely a kind of sound (as opposed to a whole ensemble of practices such as dancing, playing and so on) is a specific cultural construct, and not universally valid. However, this construct of music as sound is very much alive, and exerts real effects, as the case of programmed music demonstrates.

If—under certain conditions—music exerts effects primarily or solely as sound, then we have to begin asking questions about the very act of listening under those conditions. In a media-saturated environment, listening

designates a whole range of heterogeneous activities involving the percep-
tion of sound. Everything from aesthetic contemplation in a concert hall
to the mere act of turning on a radio or a sound recording in one's every-
day environment can be understood as "listening." Here, I will use the term
"listener" to denote a person perceiving sound in either the active or the
passive sense, or both. This ambiguity is important in thinking about pro-
grammed music, since such music certainly isn't meant for contemplative
listening; it also isn't always "heard" in an entirely passive fashion—rather,
it tends to pass in and out of the foregound of a listener's consciousness.
Thus the necessity for understanding "listener" as an ambiguous term that
shuttles between activity and passivity. In part, this ambiguous status of
listening—especially as it pertains to programmed music—is an effect of
the social organization of music in a capitalist mass media environment.
Peter Manuel (1993) and others have suggested that recorded music be
considered from a "holistic" vantage point that examines its production,
circulation, and consumption. The context of programmed music adds a
whole second layer of circulation to this economy: *re*production, *re*distri-
bution, and secondary consumption. The "producers" of programmed
music are the programmed music services themselves, who assemble al-
ready existing songs into soundtracks. The consumers of programmed
music are stores and other businesses that purchase the services.[4] Clients
generally subscribe to a programmed music service and pay a small monthly
fee. The service will provide the subscriber with a tuner and a choice of
approximately twelve satellite channels to choose from, or a special tape
player and a catalogue of hundreds of different four-hour programs. Clients
with tape subscriptions generally receive new tapes every month, or ev-
ery few months, depending on the type of music. Thus, as Manuel points
out, in a thoroughgoing analysis of mass mediated music the analytical tools
of ethnomusicology need to be supplemented with those of communications
(1993:7; see also Wallis and Malm 1984). A detour through the political
economy of programmed music will clarify my own analytical orientation.

   Essentially, the use of programmed music in a shopping mall is about
the production and consumption of consumption. Programmed music in
a mall produces consumption because the music works as an architectural
element of a built space devoted to consumerism. A store deploys pro-
grammed music as part of a fabricated environment aimed at getting visi-
tors to stay longer and buy more. Other commercial establishments may
use programmed music to other ends, but in all cases its use is primarily
concerned with the construction of built and lived commercial environ-
ments. Having deployed the music, subscribers such as a store or a mall
consume consumption insofar as they are interested in listener response
to the music itself. They are purchasing the music so as to consume listen-

ers' responses to it—for instance, if listener responses to music lead to increased average shopping time, increased sales, and increased number of customers (see *MUZAK* 1990, 1992b). In other words, while the people who go to a mall to shop may hear programmed music, the consumers of that music (and listener responses to it) are actually the stores and the mall itself. A thoroughgoing analysis of these relations requires an adjustment in critical orientation. Rather than focusing purely on listener response—that of people we normally think of as "consumers" in a mall setting—I am primarily concerned here with the production, distribution, and consumption of that listener response (or what I called above the second "layer" of circulation). I have focused on the frames of possible experience and the ways in which those frames are constituted, rather than cataloging all possible listener experiences in the Mall of America. I am less interested in an exhaustive survey of possible meanings listeners (or "hearers") may attribute to programmed music than in the uses to which those attributions may be put.

Two other obvious problems obstruct a proper ethnography of listening. As I discuss below, actual hearing and listening practices are not necessarily at the forefront of participants' consciousness—sounds can be quite ephemeral, and therefore my calling attention to the music would not necessarily elicit responses from people that reflected what would happen in my absence. Furthermore, because the music in the Mall comes from a larger field of circulation, it would be an error to isolate music heard in the Mall from other contexts in which the same music is heard. In other words, if I were to do a proper ethnography of listening, given that my subjects would be visitors and not *dwellers* in the Mall, the Mall ceases to be useful as an exclusive site of inquiry. Finally, ascertaining exactly what music means to listeners in the Mall still begs the question of how that experience is put to use by the Mall itself.

A Suburban Ethnomusicology?

Given these concerns, in this article I examine the deployment of programmed music in the Mall of America. While this mall may be more spectacular than other malls, its spectacle is a self-conscious one: a tourist visit to this mall above all others is about the spectacle of consumption itself. The Mall's utter extremity on one hand and everydayness on the other offer a unique perspective on a place where consumerism is conflated with nationalism, and where a private commercial space can be hailed by developers as an "alternative urbanity." The Mall has been promoted by airlines and travel agencies as a tourist destination to rival downtowns; some local architects have echoed this assessment, suggesting that the Mall is a

downtown for an outer suburb and that *this* downtown offers what Deborah Karasov and Judith A. Martin call a "facsimile of urban delights with almost no urban responsibilities." (1993:27) But Karasov and Martin are quick to qualify this assessment: "What this commercial imperative suggests is how poorly we understand our cities, present and future, if we view them as little more than accumulated land uses. There is little expectation that shopping malls will contribute to urban design and social goals, no matter how big these malls become or how many people they attract. In the end, the Mall of America is no more a city than Sea World is an ocean" (ibid.).

In this facsimile of urbanity, speakers in the ceilings and walls cascade travelers with an endless flow of music. Perhaps, then, as a footnote to Bruno Nettl's call for an "urban ethnomusicology" (1978:13), essay could be understood as a suburban ethnomusicology. Although they are a distinguishing aspect of the space, a mall's acoustical features cannot be understood apart from its other general thematic and structural features. Acoustical space is an integrated and substantial element of cultural practice, not an autonomous sphere.

The Mall of America is the largest mall in the United States; it is second only to Canada's West Edmonton Mall. (For a discussion of the West Edmonton Mall, currently the largest in the world, see Crawford 1992.) Also known as the "megamall," it has become a major tourist and leisure site in the area: it has attracted over 10,000 bus tours (each averaging fifty people) since its opening in August 1992, and the average visit to the Mall for all customers is three hours, close to triple the industry average. In addition, adult shoppers spend approximately $84 per visit, which is almost double the industry average (based on Nordberg 1993:1). You can find billboards advertising the megamall—"the place for fun in your life"—at least as far away as the middle of South Dakota.

Aside from its size, the Mall's most unique feature is its national theme (Petchler 1993). It was built with a self-consciousness about its cultural purpose: while striving valiantly to be "all things to all people," the Mall cultivates itself to simulate a whole range of generic "American" experiences that will appear nonthreatening to its desired middle class clientele (Karasov and Martin 1993:19, 25). While most malls serve as regional centers, the megamall attempts to present itself as a center of national culture. Its tenant stores are well-known national chains, and the four department stores—Sears, Macy's, Bloomingdale's, and Nordstrom's—combined, represent the paradigm of national department stores (it is worth noting in this respect that neither Bloomingdale's nor Nordstrom's had any locations in Minnesota prior to the construction of the Mall). Even the Mall's home state is demoted to one region among many, as evidenced by stores with "Minnesota" themes. Considering that the West Edmonton Mall claims to be "the

world" in a shopping mall, that the second largest mall in the world should devote itself to an entirely "American" theme illustrates the self-importance of American nationalist ideology.

The Mall's national identity requires a very narrow conception of the nation, centered on the mainstream of retail marketing. There is a great deal of product duplication, and with a few exceptions (like souvenirs), one could find almost all the products available in the megamall at many smaller malls. Similarly, although there are a great number of specialty stores, all specialties are geared toward an assumed mainstream population. Ideologically, the Mall of America adds an explicit national theme to the usual consumerist and white middle class worldviews represented in mall design.

While the Mall of America derives special significance from its size and theme, it also represents the cumulative wisdom of almost forty years of mall design and management. Architecturally, the Mall embellishes on industry standards, but not much. Any difference in scope between the Mall of America and other malls is a result of scale. In contrast to the traditional suburban shopping mall surrounded by smaller strip malls, movie theaters, bars and fast food joints, the Mall of America has simply enclosed all the surrounding activities under one giant roof. As Karasov and Martin put it, the spaces separating the shopping mall from its surroundings have been transformed from "highway to hallway" in the Mall of America (ibid.:23). The Mall thus foregrounds the connections between consumption and leisure so prevalent in American culture, while keeping each activity in its place: to wit, the Mall has an unusually large entertainment complex—the amusement park is joined by a "Lego Imagination Center" and an indoor mini-golf course. As Rob Shields has remarked, there is a critical interdependence among private subjectivity, media and commodity consumption, and privately owned semi-public spaces like shopping malls (1992:1). In the Mall of America, they can feed off one another.

Great care was taken to produce an "urban shopping district" sensibility for the interior. Each major corridor of the Mall is called an "avenue" and is painted, carpeted, lit, and named differently from the others. The "entertainment districts" are isolated from the shopping areas—Camp Snoopy is located in the Mall's gigantic atrium, while the movie theaters, bars, and an arcade are located on a separate floor, away from retailing. The Mall compartmentalizes specialized functions like eating and entertainment, and retains a general cohesion of design throughout its interior.

In theory and execution, the Mall's soundscape is entirely consonant with other design goals, in part because programmed music is a phenomenon divided according to the same logic as the other commercial enterprises in the Mall: according to a reduction of identity to consumer taste and a universe of taste that rotates on the axis of a consumer class. The

music also works because programmed music has become a design feature integral to *any* mall, and therefore doesn't seem the least bit out of place. The acoustical design of the Mall is a result of similar philosophies to those underlying other design features, but it is structured to somewhat different ends.

Sounding Out the Mall

A social space is as much defined by its constant influx and expenditure of energies, by the movements which maintain it, as it is by any stable or structural construct (Lefebvre 1991:93). Music can therefore be considered as one of those energy flows (such as electricity or air) which continually produce the Mall of America as a social space. In this way, programmed music is both an environmental and an architectural element of the Mall. The acoustical space of the Mall is structured around a central musical tension: the quiet, nondescript music in the hallways contrasting with louder, more easily recognizable and more boisterous music in the stores.

Background Music

The 3M Corporation provides quiet background music for the Mall's common spaces. According to their programming director Tom Pelisero, 3M "did nothing unusual for the Mall of America" (1993). Pelisero himself suggested that the megamall was a hostile environment for background music, because the common hallways are all filled with the din of Camp Snoopy. So what would the Mall want with a standardized form of background music that is barely audible?

The music for the hallways is known within the industry as "environmental" or "background music." This is the kind of music usually brought to mind by references to "Muzak": symphonic arrangements of well-known tunes, both contemporary and traditional, that make prolific use of stringed instruments but stay away from brass, voice, and percussion. In the last ten years, programmed music providers have begun updating their collections. Instead of hearing "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" performed by the Czechoslovakian State Orchestra, one is now likely to hear it adapted for a four- or five-piece jazz group (McDermott 1990:72). These relatively generic ensembles are chosen in service of background music's ultimate design goal: anonymity. The quest for anonymous or "unobtrusive yet familiar" music animates the entire production process.

All environmental music has certain essential characteristics. All vocals and those instruments considered by programmers to be abrasive are elimi-

nated; both would call attention to themselves and thereby disturb the backgroundness of the music. As several authors have noted, mass-mediated music tends to focus more on the performer than on the song (see Chopyak 1987:441). In the case of programmed music, this tendency must be countered by stripping the music of any distinctive elements. Background music strives toward anonymity, and can thus be understood as the inverse of most industrially recorded and disseminated music. Arrangements of popular and traditional songs are thus performed in "a style devoid of surprise" (Radano 1989:450) in an effort to render the music familiar and unthreatening—and nondescript.

Background music programming operates according to a technique called "stimulus progression," where each musical selection is rated on a scale from one to six and arranged with other songs in an ascending or descending order to evoke certain emotional responses in listeners. Although *MUZAK* does not share their criteria for stimulus ratings, it is clear that the differences between low and high stimulus ratings are based primarily on rhythm, tempo, and melody. The more upbeat a song, the higher its stimulus rating. (Of course, all background music already operates within a limited range in these respects given the constraints on musical content and style mentioned above.) Stimulus progression was invented to combat worker fatigue in weapons plants during World War II, functioning on a principle of maintaining a stable stimulus state in listeners at all times. Programming is designed to slow people down after exciting parts of the day and speed them up during sluggish parts of the day. It is an aesthetics of the moderate: not too exciting, not too sedate. While environmental music is no longer used exclusively in factories and production centers, it is still programmed along this line of thinking. In a shopping center setting, stimulus progression could be justified—to pick up visitor movement during the middle of the morning and afternoon, and to slow people down after lunch and at the end of the day.

Thus, background music in the hallways has many possible uses, despite its precarious audibility. To paraphrase a corporate slogan, the music in question is not meant to be listened to, but to be heard. A great deal of market research shows that the presence of quiet, leisurely music increases the duration of shoppers' visits (see Bruner 1990). But even if the din of Camp Snoopy counteracts the kind of psychological effects Gordon Bruner seeks, the simple presence of the music itself—when it can be heard—does carry some significance. For instance, it constructs a continuity among the hallways, bathrooms, and entrances. These spaces are somewhat distinguished by architectural motif, but the background music reinforces their common characteristics through its own non-distinctive and generalized character (Greene 1986:288). Background music is not devoid of meaning, but its meaning is

entirely located in its presence, rather than in the songs in the soundtrack. Even controversial songs that contain a catchy tune may still wind up in an environmental program: for example one may hear quiet jazz arrangements like Madonna's "Like a Virgin" or Nirvana's "All Apologies" with a piano or saxophone playing the vocal melody. This practice is quite common, although it invites a kind of recognition on the part of listeners that may actually be disruptive—the song, if recognized, could still call attention to itself, even in an anesthetized version, thus contradicting the "backgroundness" of the environmental program.

This soundtracking further serves to structure the hallway as a transitional space, a space of movement. Besides the nondescript (or vaguely familiar) environmental music and the echoing amusement park, the hallway has no markers of its own identity other than a vague architectural theme. The mall management does not intend the hallways as destination for Mall visitors. (Despite the management's intentions, these transitional spaces often serve as a place for youth to congregate and socialize—to hang out. As this has become a point of contention, I will consider the issue in further detail below.) Through the contrast of clearly identified architectural, visual, and musical markers, stores construct themselves as the identifiable localities within the Mall.

The tensions within the acoustical space both affect and reflect the contradictory flows of movement throughout the Mall—into and out of stores, through hallways, among levels, and into and out of the parking lots. Musical programs constantly produce the space; their continuous presence is an insistence or reminder to listeners. Programmed music can be said to territorialize the Mall: it builds and encloses the acoustical space, and manages the transitions from one location to another; it not only divides space, but also coordinates the relations among subdivisions. As they divide and demarcate, sonorities create "a wall of sound, or at least a wall with some sonic bricks in it" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:311). To get anywhere in the Mall of America, one must pass through music and through changes in musical sound. As it territorializes, music gives the subdivided acoustical space a contour, offering an opportunity for its listeners to experience space in a particular way: "music . . . calls forth our investments and hence, our affective anchors into reality" (Grossberg 1991:364).[5] It also constructs the limits of that experience.

Foregound Music

In contrast to the halls' quiet, sometimes inaudible soundtrack, stores may have varying volumes of foreground music. Foreground music is the industry name for music programming that consists of songs in their origi-

nal form, as recorded by the original artist. The music itself it still meant to serve as a background wherever it plays, but it is "foreground" in that it can draw attention to itself in ways that background music cannot. So while on the environmental channel we might hear a jazz group quietly working out "Faithfully" by the band Journey, on a foreground channel we'd hear Journey playing the song themselves, complete with wailing vocals and soaring guitar solos. This louder and more audacious foreground music emanating from stores works in tension with the background music in the hallways. If the store is open to the mall (rather than being closed off by a front wall with a door), music distinguishes the store's interior from the exterior hallway. If the volume of the store's music is moderate, the placement of the speakers within the store will determine a sonic threshold: on one side the ambiance of the hallway is primary in a listener's auditory field, and on the other side the sounds of the store will be primary in a listener's ear. This sonic threshold, often a discernible physical point, behaves as a store's front wall. Through clear acoustical delineation, the music produces a sense of inside and outside.

If, on the other hand, the volume of the store's music is high enough, the music will spill out into the hallway. In this way programmed music produces a transitional space from outside in the hallway to inside the store, much as stairs up from the street or a canopy and carpet on the sidewalk would do. Its louder relative volume also directly hails people in the hallway in an attempt to get their attention—it more or less invites them inside the store. Thus, from the hallways, stores can become identifiable by how they sound; this sonic quality is the central preoccupation of foreground music programming.

Foreground music sounds like radio: it "broadcasts" already existing recordings, but is itself carefully programmed according to a logic called "quantum modulation." If background music strives toward anonymity and gradual changes in mood, foreground music strives for an absolutely consistent identity and unchanging mood. Quantum modulation produces continuity and maintains flow in the overall soundtrack through assigning each song a composite numerical value based upon a variety of criteria: rhythm, tempo, title, artist, era, genre, instrumentation, and popularity. A flow of music is established through song compatibility and cross-fading so that all transitions from song to song are seamless. This stress on maintaining a flow that does not vary in "intensity" is again based upon the posited listener of the music: it is assumed that the person will hear the music for a shorter duration of time (for instance, while browsing in a store). Therefore, rather than try to gradually alter the listener's mood over time, the music remains at a consistent value (*MUZAK* 1992b; Ritter 1993).

Unlike in environmental music, where services will provide only one program choice (usually just called "the environmental channel" or some

such), there are a multitude of foreground programs. Foreground music operates at the levels of taste and distinction, differentiation and association. The standard satellite programs are based on the categories of *Billboard* charts, adjusted for certain demographics like age and gender. Rather than organizing music according to style categories, foreground music organizes it according to marketing categories like "top 40" or "adult contemporary"—which is similar, but not identical, to the way commercial radio stations organize their play lists. Foreground music programs available on tape are more specialized according to genres such as "classic jazz" or even "Hawaiian," or they are programmed for other specialized uses, such as "holiday music" (*MUZAK* 1992a). Two illustrations will clarify the continuities and discontinuities of foreground music programming.

In programmed music, the recording medium is inseparable from its message: music acquires its value as much from the manner in which it is recorded as the supposed "content" of the recording. Figure 1 is part of a "Mixed Tempo Classic Pop" tape in a *MUZAK* catalog. The tape appears under the catalog's "Nostalgia" section, with this description under the heading "Classic Pop": "This series features Pop's all-time greats from the top of the charts of the 1960s, '70s and '80s. This series differs from "Classic Rock" by including only the smoother side of Pop music. These programs provide a timeless feel for an audience looking for the best popular music" (*MUZAK* 1992a:29).

This sequence of songs is notable because of the diversity of artists represented. The songs do, however, have several characteristics that bind them together. They all come from a six-year span: 1972–78. Although the songs were produced in differing styles, they all operate within a narrow range of production values and techniques endemic to 1970s pop, and a limited range of timbres. The ordering of the songs represents gradual changes in tempo from song to song, but no radical shifts in speed from one song to the next. To the devoted fans of any particular artist or group

Figure 1: *Tape 4016: Mixed Tempo/Classic Pop (track 4 of 4) (MUZAK 1992a):*

Creedence Clearwater Revival, "Have You Ever Seen the Rain?" (1972).
Jim Croce, "I Got A Name" (1973).
O'Jays, "Back Stabbers" (1972).
Hall & Oates, "She's Gone" (1973).
The Steve Miller Band, "Fly Like an Eagle" (1978).
Queen, "Bohemian Rhapsody" (1975).
Dave Loggins, "Please Come To Boston" (1974).
Olivia Newton-John, "Please, Mr. Please" (1977).
George Harrison, "My Sweet Lord" (1976).
Bob Segar, "Night Moves" (1976).
Leo Sayer, "You Make Me Feel Like Dancing" (1976).

on the tape, the program may appear to juxtapose different music inappro-
priately; to a more casual listener, the differences will likely be overshad-
owed by the consistency among songs in overall production values (dy-
namic range, mix, timbre, use of reverb, and so on). Figure 2, from a tape
of "Mixed Light Symphony Favorites," is again organized by sound, tempo,
and timbre. The selection appears in the "Classical" section of the catalog;
"Light Symphony" is described as follows: "This series contains popular
movements from the great symphonies. Favorite melodies recorded by
some of the world's best orchestras provide a full sound without being
imposing. Suitable for a sophisticated environment" (*MUZAK* 1992a:59).
The program limits itself to orchestral recordings since 1980, so that the
timbres, mixes, dynamic ranges and overall production values are consis-
tent on the tape, as in the first example. One could chart similar tenden-
cies throughout the various music programs. Although programming may
be totally inconsistent along lines of genre, it is carefully regulated in terms
of other musical characteristics that might be lumped together under the
headings of "affect" or "mood." However, musical periods and histories can
re-enter this framework: in the "Classic Pop" example, the selection's pe-
riod determines the parameter of a production aesthetic; and as I discuss
below, periods such as "the 1950s" can themselves become tropes in the
rhetoric of programmed music. Programmed music is organized according
to an aesthetics of production, where the recording itself is analyzed and
programmed as much as the content or style of the musical selection the
recording ostensibly represents. While many theories of recording treat the
medium as an instrument to reproduce existing music, programmed mu-
sic is more concerned with the substance and texture of the medium itself.

**Figure 2: *Tape 6023: Mixed/Light Symphony Favorites (track 1 of 4)
(MUZAK 1992a):***

Johann Strauss, "Tales from the Vienna Woods, Op. 325" performed by The
    Vienna Johann Strauss Orchestra (1982).
Giuseppi Verdi, "La Donna E Mobile" performed by Andre Kostelanetz and His
    Orchestra (1989).
Boccerini, "Minuet from String Quartet, Op. 13, No. 5" performed by Academy
    of St. Martin-In-The-Fields (1980).
Edvard Grieg, "Morning from Peer Gynt Suite" performed by the Orchestre
    Philharmonique De Monte Carlo (1989).
Vivaldi, "Spring-Allegro 1" performed by the Vienna Philharmonic (1984).
Beethoven, "Symphony No. 7-3, Presto" performed by Staatskapelle Dresden
    (1987).
Mozart, "Overture from The Marriage of Figaro" performed by the City of Lon-
    don Sinfonia (1986).

Foreground music utilizes these programming techniques to create consistent musical programs with which stores can then associate themselves. Retailers are encouraged to choose music styles to cultivate a business image considered most appealing to whatever demographic group of customers they hope to attract (*MUZAK* 1990). Although *MUZAK* and its main competitors produce mostly generalized programming, the choices of programs, the placement of speakers, the volume and the texture of the music are all determined at each individual site.

That this music resembles radio—but isn't radio—is further advantageous to stores. Playing radio stations in commercial establishments without paying royalties to musicians' unions is illegal. Thus many stores find it cheaper to subscribe to a programmed music service than to play the radio, because all such services pay their royalties in a lump sum. But a resemblance to radio is advantageous to businesses because radio stations are often instrumental in constructing local communities (Berland 1990). Not only is FM radio a part of regional community construction, but it also hails its listeners according to age, race, and class. In short, this resemblance mimics the use of FM radio in other spaces and thereby produces at least the possibility that a store will be able to associate itself with the other spaces in which the music resounds. This enables retailers to construct a "business image" through the music and possibly connect with other places listeners have heard the same music. Although the musical program does not necessarily conform to any rules of genre, it can appeal very strongly to consumer identity. Pierre Bourdieu has demonstrated the continuities between taste and social position (1984).[6] By knowing the tastes of a desired clientele, a store can position itself as within—or as a "logical" extension of—an already existing taste culture.

Generally speaking, stores within a particular chain all use the same or similar music programs to achieve a uniformity of corporate image, just as they use similar design and lighting techniques. However, this corporate image is itself an amalgamation of what the company wants potential consumers to think about it, and what the company wants potential consumers to think about themselves and the products they are browsing. In other words, programmed music can become a key that frames the experience of shopping in a store. Not only can it suggest a particular affective stance for listeners toward the store and their experience of it, foreground music can frame the context to suggest a whole range of possible responses to the commodities and experiences within, and a whole disposition toward those possible responses. This is no different than the use of music to frame other kinds of activities (see Goffman 1974 on framing; see Booth 1990 and Turino 1993:218-232 on musical framing). Or as Regula Burkhardt Qureshi

puts it, "extra-musical meanings in musical sound give music the power to affect its context in turn" (1987:58). I will illustrate the variations on this process with four examples from the Mall of America.

(1) Victoria's Secret, a store specializing in lingerie, not only plays classical music in their stores, but sells tapes of their music programs. "Romantic" selections like Mozart's Piano Concerto in E Flat, the allegro from Schubert's Symphony No. 5 in B Flat, or Beethoven's Romance No. 1 in G cascade over supple decor. While the store's merchandise and visual displays differentiate it in terms of gender, the music program, along with the decor, offers listeners an index of class and a coherent frame within which to experience the store and themselves.[7] The music plays to an American bourgeois identity by suggesting a refined, European, aristocratic taste. As a form of music that is generally associated with refined taste and prestige, it functions to legitimate the store as a respectable place to shop.[8] More generally, it helps to produce the atmosphere within the store. The store itself is decorated in plush style, and the lighting is particularly soft. While the music plays, sale displays encourage the visitor to take advantage of "a special opportunity to indulge yourself" in a lingerie purchase. The music suggests a continuity among the wide array of commodities available in the store (clothing, accessories, and perfume, as well as more general merchandise), some of which are only related to one another in that they are being sold in the same store.

The store is full of references to England and Europe (where displayed, the "Victoria's Secret" name is always pictured with a London street address). The programmed music, European classical music, supplements the rhetoric of the store's appearance. For many Americans, "Europeanness" can itself be an index of high-class status and refinement. To the other design features, however, classical music offers the possible pleasures of recognition: recognizing the music can be as important as enjoying the music, both for the cues it gives toward experiencing the store itself and for suggesting that proper customers of Victoria's Secret are people refined enough to recognize the music. In other words, knowledge of the music is a form of cultural capital: it suggests membership in a certain social stratum.

But Victoria's Secret goes one step further by selling the music it plays. Victoria's Secret can sell tapes of the music in their stores because their music is programmed by an independent contractor, and was arranged especially for them, as opposed to having simply purchased a "light classical" program from one of the major programmed music services. This has been a hugely successful venture for the store: according to a June 1995 *Forbes* article, they had sold over 10 million tapes and CDs since 1989 (Machan 1995:133). The tapes offer their purchasers a chance of enjoying

the music at home, but also of learning the music and thereby being able to recognize it upon return visits to the store (see Bourdieu 1984:13–14, 272–273). In other words, should one find oneself outside the refined taste culture upon entering Victoria's Secret for the first time, one can undertake an education to culture the taste and refine the senses. This has a metonymic effect: insofar as the music works with other aspects of the decor, it suggests that one needs a cultivated, refined sensibility to enjoy all that Victoria's Secret has to offer. The liner notes to their tapes combine these purposes, offering rudimentary knowledge about composers' lives and trivia concerning the music, while extolling the sensibilities of composer and listener, patron and performer:

> This spectacular recording includes some of the world's best loved and most romantic music composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. You will thrill to the lyrical magic of this romantic collection recorded exclusively for Victoria's Secret by the London Symphony Orchestra. Victoria's Secret is proud to be among the distinguished individuals and corporations, who through their endowments, have been designated Diamond Patrons of The London Symphony. In his short life, Mozart lived amidst kings and courts, brilliance and despair, dying almost penniless at the age of 34. In this collection, you will celebrate Mozart at his most majestic and compelling. Inclusion of several intricate and intimate compositions, lesser known than most, gives this volume its singular quality (Victoria's Secret 1993).

The irony, of course, is that the music in question is the most common and most easily recognized variety of European classical music. Thus the liner notes take time out to assure readers that *this* tape of Mozart is special. Victoria's Secret offers an experience of itself and the tools to sophisticate and heighten that experience. It offers potential consumers an image of themselves, as if that image could be actualized through the consumption of the experiences in the store and the commodities it offers.

(2) Compagníe Internationale Express, a more conventional fashion store, plays only French pop music, and it plays this music at a relatively high volume. Near the cash register, the store proclaims itself to be "a world of French style." But the design within the store is quite common to fashion retailers in the Mall. The entire store is brightly lit, and track lighting allows individual displays to be highlighted. Most of the color comes from either the clothing or the displays in the store. Aisles are wide, but not too wide, so that one moves through the selection slowly. Most of the clothing for sale comes from places other than France. The window display features (at this writing) "grunge" fashions (faded flannel shirts and faded jeans) that are decidedly American. So "Frenchness" refers more to an affect the store would like to convey than to any trait that the store or its patrons actually possess. "Here again, the sign [in this case French pop programmed

as foreground music] is ambiguous: it remains on the surface, yet does not for all that give up the attempt to pass itself off as depth" (Barthes 1972:28). Or to make our French theorist speak to the matter at hand directly: the sound is like another layer of packaging laid over commodities. This packaging contains the real instructions for use—how to *feel* when using the products in the store. The French rock music envelops the commodities in an effort to stand in as their essence. As at Victoria's Secret, programmed music works with other environmental factors to confer certain meanings onto the merchandise and the people in the store—these meanings having no intrinsic connection to the people or products. However, there are crucial differences here: the volume of Express' music makes it more insistent—making conversation more difficult, and making the music much more present. But then, it has to be: while the programmed music in Victoria's Secret works in concert with other environmental factors to simulate an aura of sophistication and indulgence, the music here works all by itself. The music is authentically French, or at least *in* French; little else in the store is. The music suggests a particular experience of shopping or a way to experience a wide range of products. In suggesting these experiences, the music also offers a mode of experiencing the self. The actual nature of that experience depends on what one takes "Frenchness" to mean. Clearly, Express intends its "Frenchness" to connote sophistication of taste, affluence, luxury, and a touch of exoticism—after all, Paris is the capital of international fashion. But this is a particularly American representation of what it means to be French. Compagníe Internationale Express exemplifies this: they are headquartered in Columbus, Ohio.

(3) In addition to framing space and offering affective cues, foreground music can be used to help construct time and movement by its presence rather than its content. A Levi's store uses programmed music and video to these ends. The back of the store contains a giant nine-screen "video wall" and the store actually plays music videos. The store acquires these on laser disc from a parent company, and true to form, the discs only appear coherent in terms of programming concerns (for instance, offering a program that is a combination of popular rap, alternative, and "top 40" musics). The store is itself otherwise unremarkable. The floors are a wood grain, and the store uses the usual bright lighting and track-lit displays. They sell a complete line of Levi's clothing. An eclectic range of musical genres would disallow any simple identification of music with a particular mood as in the above examples. Neither does the store sell itself as an experience; it relies primarily on its products. By essentially saying nothing, the store says everything it has to: as if the choice of basic decor was the result of the products speaking for themselves, and not a deliberate marketing strategy. Relieved of its ostensible content function, the programmed music and

video wall can provide a generalized hip atmosphere—one that echoes or displays current fashion trends—while helping to structure the movement of people inside and outside the store through a process of distraction. Since the video wall is visible from the hallway, it is to the store's advantage that passers-by stop and watch the video. In so doing, they will also look at the available merchandise and sale displays. Moreover, for a visitor to stop shopping momentarily and watch the video is not a liability to the store: it is conventional wisdom among retailers that the longer people spend in a store, the more likely they are to make a purchase. In this way, Levi's is able to use the video screen's power to distract to its own advantage: the distraction may or may not gel with the rest of the shopping experience, but it affects that experience by prolonging it. Unlike music programmed according to stimulus progression, this music and video usage does not attempt to speed up or slow down customer movement by tempo, melody, or rhythm; but rather, it functions as an interruption that becomes integrated into the shopping experience. By hailing people into the store, and by distracting them in the store (thereby increasing the duration of their stay) the programmed music and video juxtapose consumption and entertainment without having to fuse them in any meaningful way. Or to play on writers who treat the mall as a postmodern phenomenon: the music video serves to decenter shoppers (its "subjects"), but this decentering is not necessarily endowed with a resistant or subversive political potential. Rather, the discontinuity works in service of the one unifying "signifier of value" for the store: the point of sale. Any other effects of this decentering (as there may be) are incidental.

(4) Johnny Rockets, "The Original Hamburger," is located on the edge of The Mall of America's south food court. There it is sandwiched between an Asian fast-food restaurant and a larger sit-down bistro. It is far less enclosed and far less set off from neighboring businesses than are the clothing stores discussed above. Through its volume, programmed music frames the experience of Johnny Rockets by physically differentiating the space from those around it and enveloping other noise within its frame. It spills out of the restaurant and touches every listener in the food court. The restaurant is a representation of a 1950s-style art-deco diner, and includes a long counter and a row of seats in front of it. It is the only restaurant in the food court to provide its own seating, in addition to the tables and chairs in a large common area. The employees are all wearing 1950s-style soda jerk outfits (white shirts and hats) as the programmed music, 1950s pop (mostly love songs), comes blaring out of the restaurant. It is by far the loudest music in the food court. The menu is conventional—hamburgers, fries, sodas, and so on; one can get this food from a variety of sources at the Mall. Thus, rather than differentiating itself by its product, Johnny Rock-

ets is about consuming an experience. On the west wall, a poster pictures a teenage man seated on a couch with two women seated very close to him and clearly enraptured with him. They are dressed in fifties clothes, and the slogan on the poster reads: "Johnny Rockets—Hospitality." The restaurant invites its customers to experience a nostalgic 1990s representation of a 1950s diner, complete with regressive gender roles and sexual mores. Here programmed music performs a double function: it is at once part of the experience to be consumed (as atmosphere) and simultaneously calls attention to the possibility of consuming that experience. Here the experience becomes crucial, because the product for sale is unremarkable in any other way. Yet it doesn't seem to offer the same cues for self-understanding as the clothing stores. It seems less about constructing an identity (being "1950s-ish") than suggesting that *anyone* can now enjoy the experience of a 1950s diner. Certainly, anyone in the food court can hear the music from the diner. The volume of the music here may be a more blunt and demanding message: it demands a reduction of all context to the nostalgia booming through the diner. Perhaps the music's blistering volume exists in quiet deference to the knowledge that the party never happened this way the first time.

In each of the above examples, programmed music plays a role particular to its context, but it also serves a more generalized function which could best be termed "articulation." Stuart Hall defines articulation as "the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time" (1986:53). Articulation is the process through which otherwise independent meanings, ideologies, or people are unified in some sense. In all four of my above descriptions, a musical program articulates specific meanings to the purchase of a commodity or service. Thus, underwear at Victoria's Secret becomes refined; "Frenchness" is conferred on flannel at Express; music and video distract visitors at the Levi's store, making them better and more valuable shoppers; and eating a hamburger becomes part of a "1950s experience" at Johnny Rockets. None of these connections are natural—rather, they have to be produced or performed.

Although the above are all examples of planned and deliberate uses of musical programs, intention on the part of the store is not necessary for this process to take place. Upon informally questioning the employees of an art gallery and a shoe store in the Mall, I found that in both cases, the music playing had been brought in from home by the stores' employees. Rather than specifying a particular kind of music to be played, the management of each outfit had simply defined a range of possible music, and allowed employees to select the music they wanted to hear. On that particular

day, Bob Segar resounded in the shoe store, and the Beach Boys could be heard in the art gallery.[9] Both of these musics could easily perform the same kind of articulatory functions I outlined in my previous examples, but any coherence with other environmental factors (such as decor) would be more coincidental. However, this arrangement may prove to have other benefits, since it is the employees, not the customers, who must spend hours in a store; and the employees I spoke with tended to find preselected music programs repetitive. This could benefit the store as well: in giving up control over the sound space to the employees, it allows workers to take control of one aspect of their environment. In so doing, it offers underpaid service workers the comforting illusion of some ownership in the retail process. Even if the workers entertain no such illusions, it still offers a degree of comfort. Who wouldn't want to make a bad job a little bit better? Regardless of intention, the music can still function at the level of articulation, and it still builds acoustical space.

Building a Better Consumerism

Clearly, music's various functions within stores are always socially determined and constantly changing. My intent here has been to provide an illustration of how these processes work, rather than an exhaustive survey of programmed music's uses (or listeners' responses)—possible or realized—in the Mall. The Mall's handling of spatial difference is intimately tied to its handling of social difference. In considering the Mall of America's construction of space, elements are excluded and are juxtaposed together and enclosed. The structure and movement of the Mall's acoustical space— and more generally its social space—congeals around a clear set of priorities: "interior space protects the germinal forces of a task to fulfill or a deed to do" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:311). Consumer culture is given priority in the Mall by decree, not by consensus. Yet the Mall is far from a closed or seamless system. An awareness of cultural struggle and cultural difference plays a part in its very constitution. In particular, three issues concerning difference warrant some further exploration:

(1) If the Mall's play on a national and consumerist identity requires a narrow mainstream to be represented, the programmed music refines that mainstream ideology in both its spatial and its interpretive functions. The bell curve and "the charts" determine the presence of any song or kind of music on a musical program. The ubiquitous *Billboard* charts depend on a laser scanning system that records sales in 11,000 music stores nationwide. *Billboard,* by their own admission, has to rely on larger retail chains, because smaller independent stores cannot afford the necessary survey technology (Ellis 1993). So the charts are determined by chain sales, but sales

figures say little about taste. They don't reflect, for instance, the practice
of sharing or "passing along" a recording common in many communities
(see Rose 1994:7-8). Moreover, buying power is not equal among all sec-
tors of the population. Thus, a chain of effects occurs: social stratification
is reproduced in the statistical—that is, commercial—distribution of taste;
the statistical distribution of taste is foundational in the construction of
programmed music; programmed music then becomes part of the Mall's
architectonics; and the Mall thereby mobilizes social difference and makes
it useful, all the while denying that it's anything but good clean American
fun.

(2) The forms taken by Mall design and programmed music are con-
nected with larger political concerns. 3M is very careful to assure poten-
tial clients that nothing "controversial or offensive" will ever appear on the
soundtrack which might upset a customer (Pelisero 1993). In other words,
they wish to keep social tensions and the differences which embody them
out of listeners' minds. In reducing all traces of real social difference to taste
preference, the programmers and the Mall must necessarily draw their lines
of exclusion precisely along traditional axes of social difference, lest draw-
ing different lines call attention to the process itself. Although music pro-
grammers and the Mall do differentiate by gender, age, and taste (which
often stands in for race or class) all of these differentiations exist within a
very limited field. In this particular case, difference is circumscribed by a
mainstreamed construct of "Americanness," and to a large extent, middle
class whiteness.

The "nation" as it is used by Mall planners and music programmers is
a narrow construct, corresponding exactly to empirical data, but not to any
living human being. (Of course, the data themselves are influenced by col-
lection procedures that are biased toward a consumer public; again, see
Meehan 1990.) By deploying a range of social scientistic norms in the ser-
vice of building a better consumerism, the Mall of America and the program-
ming of music function in the reproduction of a stratified society.[10] Deci-
sions about what will be in the Mall or the soundtrack contain, implicit
within them, three kinds of normative prescriptions: those pertaining to
normative behaviors (signs in the hallways indicating appropriate behav-
ior, and the repeated encouragement to identify oneself through consump-
tion—sensing, looking, listening, and ultimately buying); those pertaining
to normative tastes (the stocking of the stores, the songs that are used for
programmed music); and those pertaining to normative differences (what
kind of variation is allowed within and among stores and what kind of dif-
ferences are and aren't allowed to be represented in the Mall—evangelical
Christians can set up a kiosk to sell tapes and books, but Greenpeace can-
not because mall management considers the latter to be political. Further,
Devin Nordberg has noted that although the Mall does have an environmen-

tal booth, it is run by Browning Ferris Industries, a notorious corporate polluter [1993:18].) The result is a perpetuation of taste through programming. One might ask whom the Mall is hailing through their programmed music or more precisely, what kinds of identifications the Mall wants to encourage, and who is most likely to make those identifications.

Music programs correspond to the demography of the Mall's *desired,* rather than *actual,* visitors. While the Mall desires an affluent (and usually white) adult middle-class population, there is strong evidence to suggest that the real enthusiasts of the Mall are teenagers from a diversity of racial backgrounds (Karasov and Martin 1993:27). But these teens must make use of an environment that is not immediately welcoming to them; or rather, which welcomes them as consumers first, and people second. African American teens, for instance, have reported being trailed by uniformed guards (ibid.).[11] Indeed, the Mall has displayed a great deal of ambivalence toward the population that seems to have taken to it most strongly: there are now signs outside of Camp Snoopy detailing expected appropriate behavior, and more security staff has been added. Such signs become a clear marker of difference: they prohibit "loud, boisterous behavior" precisely at the entrance to a sometimes deafening amusement park. Considering the loud, drunken revelry on Friday nights in the "bar district" and the joyful screams emanating from the roller coaster, it becomes clear that these prescriptions can be pretexts for enforcement of social boundaries rather than clearly delineated rules. Thus, the management of sound becomes one political strategy in the management (and collapsing) of difference.

(3) Listeners have to negotiate programmed music. This negotiation is rarely a conscious or intentional thing—how many people reflect on a store's wallpaper?—yet the contradictions embedded in mall and musical design leave open the possibility for alternative readings (I use this phrase with some caution). As statistical categories and behavioral ideals, the scientistic norms animating music programming are neither internally consistent nor do they correspond to living individuals.[12] Such a system is necessarily clumsy, because no person or group of people is fully inside it at any given time. Since potential listeners' affective investments vary widely and are themselves overdetermined, there is always a range of possible engagements with programmed music, whatever the statistical and scientific rhetoric of marketing research might suggest. Thus, mall design can manifest itself in several ways for visitors: the intended result is a process of identification, where the (ideal) consumer identifies with the environment, the music, the spectacle, the mall, or simply (and most importantly) the commodities being offered. But any differentiating process—and here I return to programmed music specifically—can also alienate people. Because the acoustical landscape reflects the mall's desired rather than its actual visitors, the environment could cause some cognitive dissonance. If

this alienation does not chase people away, it can, at the very least, foster some kind of ironic distance. (But again, ironic distance alone is not necessarily a resistant or subversive stance, unless it is coupled with some kind of collective and active opposition. Any store will readily accept money from any customer, whatever level of irony the latter may read into the transaction.) By trying to paper over differences that may be entirely visible and audible in the hallways of the Mall (such as race), the environment itself may reveal its own biases more clearly. Ronald Radano views programmed music as an attempt to "domesticate" public spaces by placing familiar music in an unfamiliar space (1989:452), but this familiarity does not guarantee a positive identification with the music.[13]

Several authors (such as Schaefer 1977; Lanza 1991; Jones and Schumacher 1992) have expanded these possible contradictions and tensions into a political program—they have felt the need to consider the ways a person might "resist" programmed music. Each winds up suggesting that a resistant response to programmed music would simply be to listen to it more closely. Joseph Lanza claims that "we can subvert the corporate canon by actually LISTENING with a fresh, ironic ear" (1991:48). In a call for devoting more energy to discerning programmed music these authors reproduce it as some kind of autonomous practice, removed from its surroundings. This is the very dichotomy that the *MUZAK* Limited Partnership sets up in their advertising: in the slogan "Music is art, Muzak is science," art and science are both constructed as socially autonomous truths. A call to ironic listening ignores any sense of context. Nobody is escorted from the Mall of America for listening to the music too closely. Jacques Attali claims that programmed music works to silence the listener, or more precisely, to hide the listeners' own silence from themselves (1985:111). A finely tuned, ironic ear only reinforces this relationship. Or rather, those listeners who choose this political route will always wind up "resisting" all by themselves.

What disrupts the Mall environment is noise, the voicing of differences. The signs prohibiting "loud, boisterous behavior" located at the entrances and exits to the roaring amusement park are reminders that the Mall is attempting to construct a very specific kind of consumerism, and interference with that goal is grounds for ejection. This is a concern not only for visitors to the Mall who might not fit so neatly into its imagination of "America," but for the residents of the Mall itself—the stores.

Mall space is now an eminently familiar environment to many Americans, even to those who find it alienating. In addition to policing their images, stores have to worry about conflicts from outside communities arising in the Mall. In fact, there is a great deal of anxiety among stores in this respect. This is one reason that programmed music services all assure their potential customers that nothing "offensive" will appear in the

soundtrack. But the soundtrack itself may be offensive. To illustrate: a popular urban legend has two adjacent stores in a shopping mall quarreling.[14] One plays light classical music, and sells upscale clothing. The other sells the latest fashions, and plays Top 40 music, which includes some rap. The former store fears that the latter's music will chase away its customers and petitions the mall management to have the latter keep their music at a lower level. The latter, of course, pleads that turning down their music would make their store design less effective in luring in potential customers. The moral of this story is simple: programmed musics in malls do not form a seamless and totally coherent system, nor do they always work together or as they're supposed to. Yet this divergence from designer intention should not be taken as cause for celebration. This is not *subversion* but *contradiction*—part of the everyday functioning of capitalist societies. Chance and coincidence play their part in composing the rhythms of acoustical space.

Conclusion: Ethnomusicology and the Problem of Reification

If all music is ethnic music (McAllester 1979:183), then the ethnicity of programmed music is capitalism. Programmed music presupposes and builds upon an already-constituted commodity status for music and the experience of that music. In order for there to be programmed music, music must already have become a thing—it must be lived through its commodity status. The logic of programmed music follows Georg Lukács' description of reification all too perfectly: "The essence of the commodity-structure has often been pointed out. Its basis is that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity,' an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people" (Lukács 1971:83). In the case of programmed music, a relation of listening (itself highly structured by commodity circulation) is reified into a thing that can be bought and sold. That is why I have focused here more on rationalities underlying programming and design than on listener response. The latter is presupposed by the former.

If we follow Steven Feld (1988) and others in understanding sound in fundamentally social terms, then the problem of reification in mass mediated music should become a fundamental question for ethnomusicological inquiry. Ethnomusicologists tend to take mass-mediation as a problem or a point of departure—media are thought of as external to communities, impacting them or existing alongside them. In these accounts, the media begins as Other to the community. How the advent of a music industry affects local musicians, how it impacts on musical pedagogy, how music industries function on a global scale—these are the questions currently

preoccupying ethnomusicological thought (see Chopyak 1987; Wallis and Malm 1984; Erlmann 1993; Guilbault 1993; Manuel 1993; Meintjes 1990). While there is certainly much research remaining to be done in these areas, in order to fully understand mass mediation in music, ethnomusicologists will have to move beyond a paradigm primarily concerned with distinguishing between tradition and change. This paradigm tends to understand mass mediated music in terms of its difference from other music; its main concern with the mass media is in distinguishing between music that is mass mediated and music that is not (as is evident in the theoretical models proposed by Seeger 1987, Malm 1993, and Manuel 1993, for example). This approach tends to bracket mass mediation as a problem at the point of its advent, thereby overlooking the kinds of social conditions that emerge as a result of its proliferation. Ethnomusicology will have to consider formations like programmed music, that arise as a result of *the results of* mass mediation. To paraphrase an argument advanced by Ulrich Beck: in places like the Mall of America, mass mediation becomes reflexive; questions of the development and employment of media technologies are eclipsed by questions of the social, cultural, political, and economic "management" of the results of actually and potentially utilized media technologies (1992:19). If ethnomusicology wishes to recover and critique modes of experience in a society fully saturated with the mass media, it will have to consider the phantom objectivity—the reification—of experience itself as a pervasive social phenomenon. In mass mediated societies, this process is part of an endless chain in which the outside social world of recorded songs, mass mediated images, and programmed spaces and schedules is folded into that which is most inside and private: the substance of affect and experience.

Notes

1. This essay is part of a larger work in progress on the culture and history of programmed music in work and leisure. I am deeply indebted to the following people, all of whom provided essential contributions to this project: John Archer, Greg Dimitriandis, Ariel Ducey, Lawrence Grossberg, Richard Leppert, Alex Lubet, Lauren Marsh, Roger Miller, Radhika Mongia, Negar Mottahedeh, Carrie Rentschler, Carol Stabile, Gary Thomas, Tom Turino and Mike Willard. I'd also like to thank Leslie Ritter of *MUZAK,* Tom Pelisero of 3M, and Michael Ellis of *Billboard* for taking the time to answer my questions. Much of my analysis stems from personal observations during repeated visits to the Mall of America over the Fall of 1992, the Winter and Spring of 1993, and follow-up visits in late Fall of 1994 and late Spring 1995 for the purposes of this study.

2. Although the history of programmed music is important for understanding its significance, a thorough historical account is beyond the scope of this article. There are several varying accounts of Muzak's industrial and cultural history. Jerri Husch (1984) and Jane Hulting (1988) both provide detailed accounts of the corporation and product's evolution. Both of these accounts focus on the history of the *MUZAK* corporation in their account of its development as a cultural form. Joseph Lanza (1994) focuses on Muzak (programmed music) as

a kind of easy-listening music. For shorter discussions of Muzak history, see Jones and Schumacher 1992 or McDermott 1990.

3. "Muzak" (which refers to a programmed music product) is a registered trademark and "stimulus progression" and "quantum modulation" are registered service marks belonging to the *MUZAK* Limited Partnership. The degree to which "Muzak" stands as a synecdoche for the industry can be illustrated by my conversations with both 3M and Audio Environments, Inc.: each time I raised more detailed technical questions, I was referred back to the *MUZAK* Limited Partnership. Much of my information on programming logistics thus comes from the *MUZAK* corporation, although the corporation does not provide most of the programmed music considered in this particular case study.

4. There is an important analogy to radio here, where broadcasters sell audiences to advertisers through programming and ratings (see Meehan 1990). However, as I will demonstrate below, programmed music presupposes the circulation of music through radio. It is thus a secondary mode of distribution, whereas radio is a primary mode of distribution. For instance, another economic function of radio is to advertise the music itself for purchase, thereby serving the needs of the music industry directly. Programmed music, on the other hand, pays royalties to musicians' unions because it then sells the music (and its popularity) as a service to clients. While programmed music could occasionally result in increased sales of recordings, this would be a purely accidental result.

5. I am engaging two important theoretical issues here. The first is territorialization, a term I borrow from Gilles Deleuze to connote the literal "embodiment" of space. Territorialization is enclosure, but it is also the filling up of space, its endowment with a certain kind of meaning (or affect) and the exclusion of others. (For a more extended discussion of territorialization, see Deleuze and Guattari 1987:310-350). The second issue is music's spatiality— its spatial character and behavior, as well as the ontology of space in which music resounds. While it is one of the questions which got me interested in programmed music to begin with, there is very little written on it (in addition to the above chapter from Deleuze and Guattari, see Attali 1985 and Grossberg 1991).

6. Bourdieu's analysis focuses mainly on class distinctions within France, although his model appears demonstrable along the many lines of affiliation and difference in American culture, such as class, gender, race, sexual preferences, and age. In the American case, it seems less likely that one can correlate taste and class in any meaningful way, in part because Americans' experience of social class is itself so strongly mediated by other axes of difference (see, for example, Perlman 1993 for a summary of this position). Yet, given the importance of demographics in marketing (and the success of demographic models of marketing), dismissing connections between social difference and taste difference seems premature.

7. While a great deal of feminist scholarship has shown that when gender is not named, it is generally assumed to be male, programmed music is a messy case in this regard. Although *MUZAK* and 3M both offer a few programs pitched specifically to men or to women, the majority of their programs appear not to be intentionally geared toward a specific gender. *MUZAK*'s own research literature verifies that the majority of shoppers are women, which may be one reason for the relative inattention to gender at the level of programming. Another possible reason for *MUZAK*'s approach may have to do with the nature of its service: stores are often already gendered by their merchandise, so music performing that function would be redundant (although redundancy can also be an effective design and marketing tool). Finally, there is the question of what it means to call programmed music gendered. If music is gendered by virtue of its intended audience, then we are left with rather ambiguous clues from the music programs. If we understand the "gender" of a music to be defined by formal characteristics in the music (melody, harmony and chordal structure, as in McClary 1991; or timbre, rhythm and tempo as in Shepherd 1987), then we have to add to this list the formal characteristics of the medium itself (production values, dynamic range, and so on) given that the latter are especially important in programmed music. But here, we have to ask if listeners necessarily understand a characteristic of music as masculine or feminine just because it's described that way in the musicological or technical literature. Even if we turn it into a pure-

ly sociological question by instrumentalizing the content of the music ("the text") and consider the genders of performers and audiences, this also becomes a muddled problem as music programs cut across audiences and genres.

8. My argument here is similar to one advanced by Jane Juffer (1996). She argues that Victoria's Secret uses indicies of class—both in decor and soundtrack—as a part of an attempt by the store to distinguish itself from pornography and from other lingerie stores.

9. It is worth noting that this practice is strictly illegal, because it qualifies as a "public performance" of the music, and therefore would require the stores to pay royalties on each tape they played. The exception to this rule is the performance of tapes for sale (as in music stores) where the music being played is actually for sale.

10. I am loosely borrowing Michel Foucault's idea of *normalization* from his discussion of the deployment of norms. In some ways, it can be understood as the shadowy inverse of Weberian ideal-type analysis, where a norm is deployed in the service of comparison, differentiation, hierarchization, homogenization, and exclusion: "In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialties and to render the difference useful by fitting them one to another. It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences" (Foucault 1977:183-4).

11. If one were looking for a population that "resists" this environment, the teens would be as close to that as possible, but we have to keep in mind the context of that resistance. The fact that it is cheaper to ride a bus out to the Mall of America in a distant suburb than to your friend's neighborhood inside the city limits demonstrates the systemic tendencies these teens are up against. A little decentering and a critical attitude may help urban teens survive (and in this sense they are a good thing), but ultimately, these efforts alone will not lead to meaningful social change.

12. A passage by Jean Baudrillard is suggestive of a critique of *MUZAK*'s own appeals to "science" in the name of consumer engineering: "Besides, it will be noted retrospectively that the concepts 'class,' 'social relations,' 'power,' 'status,' 'institution'—and 'social' itself—all those too explicit concepts which are the glory of the legitimate sciences, have also only ever been muddled notions themselves, but notions upon which agreement has nevertheless been reached for mysterious ends: those of preserving a certain code of analysis" (1983:4-5). Demographic science, for Baudrillard, becomes a trope of legitimation.

13. Radano only discusses background music. Although foreground music uses the same rhetoric of familiarity, I have shown here that it does not work in the same way.

14. I use the term "urban legend" (or perhaps suburban in this case) deliberately. I've heard the same story with a few mutations from several people. It is quite likely this happened somewhere at some time, but as an allegory, it works equally well to illustrate my point. "Anecdotes need not be true stories, but they must be functional in a given exchange" (Morris 1990:15).

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