

The Rutles and the Use of Specific Models in Musical Satire

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On March 22, 1978, NBC aired a 90-minute "docudrama" entitled, "The Rutles: All You Need is Cash."¹ The focus of this satirical film is the fictitious 1960's musical group, "The Rutles." As the title of the film already suggests, the Rutles are modeled on the Beatles, and the densely packed references to the "Fab Four" which occur throughout "All You Need is Cash" will be immediately detected by any viewer familiar with the Beatles' careers.

The idea of making the film arose after Monty Python comedian and writer Eric Idle presented a film clip of the Rutles performing "I Must Be In Love" on NBC's "Saturday Night Live"

¹This date is given by Kim "Howard" Johnson in *The First 200 Years of Monty Python* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 235. According to George Perry, BBC-2 first aired the program on March 27, 1978. Perry, *Life of Python* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1983), 188.

The film is available on home video as "I Love The Rutles," Pacific Arts Video Records PAVR-540. All the Rutles musical examples can be found on the recent CD release, *The Rutles*, Rhino R2 75760. The Beatles songs cited in the text can be found on the following albums: "She Loves You," *The Beatles' Second Album*, Capitol ST2080; "Please Please Me" and "P.S. I Love You," *The Early Beatles*, Capitol ST2309; "All My Loving," "I Want To Hold Your Hand," and "It Won't Be Long," *Meet The Beatles*, Capitol ST2047; and "Help!," *Help!* (motion picture soundtrack album), Capitol 2386. The Beatles citations are all to the American-release LP's; these songs appear on different albums on the original British-release LP's (the latter arrangement is used for the new CD issues).

on October 2, 1976.² The clip had been shown previously on Idle's BBC-2 series, "Rutland Weekend Television," a program supposedly produced by Britain's "smallest, cheapest independent television station."³ This brief appearance of the bogus "Pre-Fab Four" on American TV caused a minor sensation, and NBC suggested a full-length special be made, for which the network provided both facilities and funding. "Saturday Night Live" producer Lorne Michaels produced the film.⁴

The film is written entirely by Idle, but the music is the work of Neil Innes. Innes had previously provided music for Idle's Rutland series, an association which produced both the album, "The Rutland Weekend Songbook" and the book, "The Rutland Dirty Weekend Book."⁵ George Perry reports that on the strength of his brilliant work on the Rutles project, Innes was given his own BBC series, "The Innes Book of Records."⁶

The movie chronicles the rise and fall of the Rutles: Ron Nasty (John Lennon, played by Innes), Dirk McQuickly (Paul McCartney, played by Idle), Stig O'Hara (George Harrison, played by Rikki Fataar), and Barry Wom (Ringo Starr, played by John Halsey).

²Perry, 118; and Johnson, 234.

³Johnson, 234. Johnson describes the "Rutland Weekend Television" program as consisting of two sets of six shows, broadcast in 1975 and 1976.

⁴Perry, 118.

⁵Eric Idle, *The Rutland Dirty Weekend Book* (Methuen/Two Continents, 1976); and "The Rutland Weekend Songbook," BBC Records REB 233 (1976), and ABC/Passport Records PPSD-98018. Johnson, 234, 254, 262. Johnson related that after the film had been done, Innes appeared as musical guest on "Saturday Night Live" (hosted that night, April 23, 1977, by Idle) and performed the song, "Cheese and Onions," a satire of John Lennon. This tune was included in "All You Need Is Cash," where it is played over their jab at the Beatles' "Yellow Submarine," a film entitled "Yellow Submarine Sandwich." This corrects Perry's description of these events. Compare Johnson, 234; and Perry, 118.

While Neal Innes is credited as sole composer on the LP and recently released CD, EMI currently lists John Lennon and Paul McCartney as composers of both songs. This would seem to indicate that the names of Lennon and McCartney were used by the publisher to resolve any possible charges of plagiarism.

⁶Perry, 119. Innes would already have been known, in addition, for his work with the "Bonzo Dog Doodah Band," a British musical comedy group.

With the exception of Idle, the cast members actually play the music for all the tunes.⁷ The story opens with the forming of the band and their subsequent stint in Hamburg (where they play at the Rat Keller). They are then seen appearing in the Liverpool Cavern Club (“Goose-Step Mama”: “music which will last a lunchtime”) and, subsequently, in a recording session for what will be their first hit (the tune they play, “Number One,” can only be a take-off on “Twist and Shout”).

The film continues to play the parody out in amazing detail. We are led through the films “A Hard Day’s Rut,” and “Ouch!,” and through such albums as “Rutle Soul,” “Sargeant Rutter’s Only Darts Club Band” (“a veritable millstone in popular music”), “Tragical History Tour,” and “Let It Rot.”

The most remarkable aspect of this masterful parody is the closeness which the satire bears to the original. Those familiar with the Beatles’ music and history will be amused, but those who are intimately familiar with the Beatles story are frequently delighted by the film; the more one knows about the Beatles, the more fun one has with the Rutles.

The present study will explore only the musical dimension of the Rutles humor, and, of that, it will focus on only two works. This paper, then, does not constitute a thorough study of even the musical dimension of “All You Need Is Cash.” Instead, I would like to take some carefully chosen examples from the film to make a number of points about stylistic competencies and how they contribute to an amused response in music. In other words, I would like to examine why it is that a greater familiarity with the music of the Beatles contributes to a greater, and perhaps fuller, amused response to the Rutles. I would also like to explore the various ways in which this greater familiarity is used to trigger an amused response.

In a study of musical humor in the film, “This is Spinal Tap,” I outlined a number of philosophical approaches to explaining

⁷Bass on the recordings is played by Andy Brown; additional guitars and keyboards are played by Ollie Halsall.

humor and laughter.⁸ Arthur Schopenhauer explains the amused response as a recognition of incongruity between a representation and a concept: we encounter a situation where a particular representation is “thought through” a concept which is in every other respect incongruous with it. The sudden apprehension of the unexpected incongruity produces an amused response.⁹ Roger Scruton refines Schopenhauer’s “incongruity theory” by pointing out the dialectical relationship played out by congruity and incongruity: an amused response is provoked when the object of perception is somehow exaggerated. The exaggeration is at once a congruity—for it exaggerates a feature already present—and also an incongruity—by virtue of the exaggeration.¹⁰ Scruton provides the example of a caricature of Margaret Thatcher; the caricature amuses not because it does not fit her, but rather because it does fit her, all too well.¹¹ Of course, the incongruity signals that the caricature should not be understood as a portrait.

When these philosophical observations are applied to music, one must first determine how the congruity-incongruity dialectic can arise. I have suggested that it is stylistic competencies which provide the mechanism for certain types of amused response in music. A stylistic competency is the ability of a listener to discern, in any single piece, those features which are normative within a particular

⁸See John R. Covach, “Stylistic Competencies, Musical Humor, and ‘This is Spinal Tap,’” unpublished paper presented to the Society for Music Theory (Oakland, 1990), Music Theory Midwest (May, 1990), and the International Society for the Study of Popular Music (April, 1990.)

⁹See Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), 91. A good example of this would be the P.D.Q. Bach “New Horizons in Music Appreciation” (“The Wurst of P.D.Q. Bach, Vanguard VSD-719/20): A concert performance of the first movement of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony is thought through the concept of a sports event. The amused response arises when we perceive the incongruity of the representation (the symphony) and the concept (a sports event).

¹⁰Roger Scruton, “Laughter,” reprinted in John Morreall, ed., *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), 156-171.

¹¹Scruton, 161.

style (group of pieces), and to discern those features which are non-normative or innovative.¹² Thus, viewed through the dimension of style, normative features are congruent, non-normative ones are incongruent.

Stylistic competencies can operate in a number of ways. In the Spinal Tap song "Heavy Duty," part of a Boccherini minuet is introduced in the context of a heavy metal rock number. In this case, the stylistic incongruity is readily apparent and this "inter-stylistic incongruity" acts as the primary trigger to elicit an amused response. In another Spinal Tap number, "Cups and Cakes," the incongruity is more subtle, residing within the "British-invasion competency" itself; that is, the style establishes the norm against which subtle deviations constitute incongruities. This latter, "intra-stylistic competency," requires a greater familiarity with the style under consideration; while one need not know much heavy metal or classic-period music to perceive the incongruity in "Heavy Duty," the incongruities in "Cups and Cakes" could pass unnoticed by a listener without a highly developed competency for British-invasion style.

But the musical numbers in "All You Need Is Cash" present yet different situations with regard to issues of humor and style. With the Rutles, it is not so much the British-invasion stylistic competency which is at work, but rather an even more specific one: A Beatles competency. Without a knowledge of the Beatles' music specifically, much of the musical humor in "All You Need Is Cash" goes undetected.

In order to unpack the mechanisms which create humor in the Rutles songs, I will proceed as follows: first, I will examine two representative numbers from the film and attempt to identify the references made to specific Beatles songs; and second, I will then

¹²These remarks rely on the work of Leonard Meyer, Leonard Ratner, and Robert Hatten. See Meyer, *Style and Music* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980); and Robert Hatten, "Toward a Semiotic Model of Style in Music: Epistemological and Methodological Bases" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1982).

employ Leonard Meyer's style theory to account for the "inter-textual" dimensions of each example.

Let us first consider the Rutles number "Hold My Hand." Perhaps the most obvious references to Beatles numbers are to be found in the lyrics: each verse ends with the words "please, please hold my hand," and each chorus begins with the words "hold my hand, yeah, yeah." The phrase "hold my hand" refers to the Beatles' "I Want to Hold Your Hand"; adding "yeah, yeah" to the end of "hold my hand" creates a reference to the Beatles' "She Loves You" (yeah, yeah, yeah); and placing "please, please" before "hold my hand" creates a reference to the Beatles' "Please Please Me." Thus the lyrics, by making specific references to Beatles tunes and combining them, become a conflation of the three models.

Example 1. a) "Hold My Hand," three-note figure; b) "She Loves You," three-note figure transposed; c) "All My Loving."

A

Hold my hand yeah yeah

B

She loves you yeah yeah yeah

C

All my lo-vin'

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This same procedure can be seen in a number of more specifically musical dimensions of the song. Example 1 shows the three-note melodic figure which carries the text “hold my hand, yeah, yeah”; note that the E—D-sharp—C-sharp descending third may be found in both “She Loves You” (on “yeah, yeah, yeah” transposed up a minor third), and in “All My Loving” (on “all my loving” terminated with a fourth leap).

The reference to “All My Loving” is further reinforced by the quadruple-compound meter shared by the two tunes. In addition, the rhythmic configurations in the Rutles rhythm section are lifted directly off the Beatles model: the Rutles constant eighth-note strums in the rhythm guitar and walking quarter notes in the bass create a direct reference.

“All My Loving” also seems to be the principal model for the harmonic movement of the verse. Example 2 shows the initial measures of the verse sections of both “Hold My Hand” and “All My Loving,” and Figure 1 compares the harmonic movement. Note that the progression ii - V - I is held in common between the two tunes, as is the use of bVII. Both of these harmonic features are typical enough for 1960’s pop, and their use here, taken in isolation, does not create a reference: they are stylistically normative. The harmonic reference to “All My Loving” is signalled, however, when these harmonic features are understood in the context of the textual, melodic, and rhythmic references. Further, whenever the ii - V - I progression is played on the rhythm guitar in either tune, the guitar barre-chord voicings are mostly the same ones (but again, the voicings themselves are typical enough in the style).

Example 2. a) Excerpt from “Hold My Hand” (verse); b) excerpt from “All My Loving” (verse). Guitar voicings are given below the melody.

A

I'm not the kind of guy who likes to play

E: ii V I

big bro- ther

E: ii

B

Close your eyes and I'll kiss you to mor - row I'll

E: ii V I

miss you

vi

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Figure 1.

“Hold My Hand”

E: ii | V | I | I | ii | V | I | I |
 vi | iii | IV iii | ii V | I | bVII | I | I ||

“All My Loving”

E: ii | V | I | vi | IV | ii | bVII | V |
 ii | V | I | vi | IV | V | I | I ||

The reference to “She Loves You” is further reinforced in the chorus of “Hold My Hand.” Example 3 gives the chorus of “Hold My Hand” and the intro to “She Loves You”; Figure 2 compares the chorus of “Hold My Hand” with the chorus and intro of “She Loves You.”

Figure 2.

“Hold My Hand”

E: vi | vi | II | II | IV | bVI | I | I ||

“She Loves You”

intro: G: vi | vi | II | II | IV | IV | I | I ||
 chorus: G: vi | vi | II | II | iv | V | I | I ||

Example 3. a) "Hold My Hand," chorus; b) "She Loves You," intro.

A

Hold my hand yeah_ yeah_ Hold my hand yeah_ yeah

E: vi II

Hold my hand and I'll_ see_ you home_

IV \flat VI I

B

She loves you yeah yeah_ She loves you yeah yeah_ She

G: vi II

loves you yeah yeah yeah

IV I

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In this instance the harmonic modeling is unmistakable; even where the progressions differ in measures 5-6, this difference is slight. The only conflict between the chorus of “Hold My Hand” and the intro to “She Loves You” is the use of bVI in the former. But the Beatles model presents two versions of the progression; while the intro uses IV, the chorus (on “with a love like that, you know you should be glad”) employs a iv - V progression. In the same place in the eight bar unit, “Hold My Hand” uses the diatonic IV and the borrowed bVI. The bVI, in terms of pop harmony, is nearly synonymous with the iv. In this instance, the bVI is slightly more startling when it arrives than the iv would be, an effect produced by the chromatic-third root movement IV - bVI. Thus the Rutles progression can be seen as a conflation of the two Beatles versions: it employs both IV and the harmonic synonym for iv, bVI, and the harmonic rhythm of one chord per measure which occurs at iv - V, is referenced by the IV - bVI movement. In any case, the use of bVI is common to many Beatles tunes: “P.S. I Love You,” is characterized by the root movement bVI - bVII - I (end of verse); and “It Won’t Be Long” moves I - bVI - I (verse). Therefore, even if one tends not to view iv and bVI as synonyms, the use of bVI fits easily within the Beatles’ style.

One more detail reinforces the reference to “All My Loving”: the tag to “Hold My Hand” refers directly to the tag of “All My Loving” (See Example 4 and Figure 3).

Figure 3.

“Hold My Hand”

E: vi | vi | I | I | vi | bVI | I | I ||

“All My Loving” (ooh, ooh)

E: vi | vi | I | I | vi | vi | I | I ||

Example 4. a) Excerpt from “All My Loving” (tag); b) excerpt from “Hold My Hand” (tag).

A

All my lo-vin' all my lo-vin' ooh ooh all my

E: vi I

lo - vin'

vi

B

Hold my hand yeah yeah Hold my hand yeah ooh ooh Hold my

E: vi I

hand and I'll

vi

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Not only are the progressions nearly identical, but the falsetto “ooh, ooh”’s sung over the tonic harmony in both tunes are unmistakably identical.

Many other factors reinforce the modeling suggested above. For example, similar instrumentation is used in all the examples cited. The lead and back-up vocal styles are consistently “Beatlesque.” There is even a clear effort to reproduce the recording techniques from the old records, with lead vocals double-tracked and instruments panned to extreme sides in the mix. These references, however, are to a more general Beatles competency: they do not refer to specific numbers, but rather to the early Beatles style (1963-65) generally.

Figure 4 displays and summarizes the references in “Hold My Hand.”

Figure 4.

Text:	I Want to Hold Your Hand She Loves You (chorus) Please Please Me (verse)
Melody:	She Loves You All My Loving
Meter and Rhythm:	All My Loving
Harmony:	All My Loving (verse) She Loves You (chorus)

“Hold My Hand” can be viewed as a composite of the Beatles’ songs mentioned. The humor arises from the listener’s recognition of these models, and from the clever alterations and juxtaposition of the material. These specific references, though, operate according to a kind of collective principle; any single reference, taken alone, could be too subtle and escape detection. But taken collectively and

in different musical dimensions, the references become mutually reinforcing. Both “All My Loving” and “She Loves You” are referenced in more than one dimension. “I Want to Hold Your Hand,” however, seems to be referenced directly only in the textual dimension.¹³

In the case of “Hold My Hand,” the listener’s “Beatles competency” is challenged to first identify the models, and then to delight in their clever and unexpected juxtaposition. Without a highly developed Beatles competency, almost all of this type of listening response is absent. The ways in which a congruity-incongruity dialectic triggers this amused response will be discussed in more detail below; for now, it is enough to have noted that specific references do occur, and to have examined how they occur.

While “Hold My Hand” brings multiple sources of reference into play, there are other Rutles numbers which reference a single Beatles song. While it would be possible to discuss such Rutles numbers as “Doubleback Alley” (“Penny Lane”) or “Piggy in the Middle” (“I am the Walrus”), I will instead stick with the early Beatles/Rutles numbers and consider the Rutles’ fictitious 1965 release “Ouch!”

¹³One could perhaps build a case for harmonic modeling. The progression of “I Want To Hold Your Hand” is:

I | V | vi | iii | I | V | vi | iii | IV V | I vi | IV V | I ||

Note that “Hold My Hand” moves from vi to iii, then from IV through iii and ii to V. IV and ii are syntactically interchangeable, and iii is merely connective; thus, the IV to ii movement is the syntactic equivalent of IV alone, and the harmonic movement in the two tunes could be viewed as equivalent.

While I have chosen not to make use of Schenkerian theory or reductive techniques throughout my paper, it is certainly possible to use those techniques to effectively analyze popular harmony. See, for example, Walter Everett, “Text-Painting in the Foreground and Middleground of Paul McCartney’s Beatle Song, ‘She’s Leaving Home’: A Musical Study of Psychological Conflict,” *In Theory Only*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1987): 5-21, or Steve Larson, “Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz,” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Michigan, 1987).

There is one more obvious reference in “Hold My Hand”: the guitar introduction is modeled on the one to the Beatles’ “Eight Days a Week” (*Beatles VI*, Capitol ST2358). The harmonic progression is different but the type of guitar voicings used in the Rutles intro are so closely associated with the Beatles intro that no guitarist who knows both tunes could possibly miss the reference.

The title already indicates the source of the number, which is the Beatles' "Help!" Almost everything about the details of this piece are taken directly from the Beatles song: the lead and back-up vocals; the instrumentation, including the use of an acoustic 6-string guitar; the George Harrisonesque guitar fill which precedes each verse; the use of tambourine; the stop-time third verse; and the ending (complete with "add 6" vocals on "ooh"). In fact, according to this description, it might at first seem as if "Ouch!," with its point of reference being so obvious, is bound to be less interesting than the multi-referencing "Hold My Hand." But there is a feature of the harmonic movement of "Ouch!" which, though modeled on "Help!," actually creates a kind of dialogue between the model and the copy—a dialogue which depends in a crucial way on the proper identification of the model.

Example 5 provides an excerpt from the verse section to each number, while Figure 5 compares the harmonic progressions for those sections.

Figure 5.

"Ouch!"

C: I | iii | ii | V | I | bVII | IV | V :||

"Help!"

A: I | I | iii | iii | vi | vi | IV bVII | I :||

"Ouch!" uses the I - iii progression from "Help!," though the harmonic rhythm of the former is half that of the latter. The IV - bVII - I movement characterizes the second half of the "Help!" verse; "Ouch!" uses its inverse, I - bVII - IV. These alterations, while creating a new harmonic progression, retain much of the harmonic character of the model. All that is missing in "Ouch!" is the use of the submediant harmony, and it is being withheld for a reason.

Example 5. a) Excerpt from "Help!" (verse); b) excerpt from "Ouch!" (verse).

A

When I was young-er so much young-er than to day

A: I iii

A

I ne-ver need-ed a-ny bo-dy's help in a-ny way

vi IV bVII I

B

When we first met I must ad-mit I fell for you right from the start (I must ad -

C: I iii ii V I

mit I fell for you right from the start)

bVII IV V

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Example 6. a) "Help!," intro; b) "Ouch!," chorus/intro.

A

Help! I need some bo___ dy Help! not just

A: ii b VII

a - ny bo___ dy Help! you know I need some one___

v7

Help! ___

I

B

ouch! You're break - in' my heart___ Ouch! I'm

C: vi IV

Example 6. (cont'd.)

The image shows a musical score for piano. The top staff is the treble clef, and the bottom staff is the bass clef. The lyrics are: "fallin' a - part" followed by four "Ouch!" exclamations. The bass line has chord symbols: II⁷, bVI, bVII, and I. The melody in the treble clef has a dotted rhythm and a final cadence.

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Figure 6.

"Ouch!"

C: vi | vi | IV | IV | II⁷ | bVI bVII | I | I ||

"Help!"

G: ii | ii | ii | ii | bVII | bVII | bVII | bVII |
V7 | V7 | V7 | V7 | I | I | I | I ||

"Help!" (intro)

G: ii | ii | bVII | bVII | V7 | V7 | I | I ||

Example 6 represents the chorus of "Ouch!" (which also functions as the intro) and the intro of "Help!"; Figure 6 compares the chorus section of "Ouch!" with the chorus and intro of "Help!" The "Help!" chorus begins on ii, moves through bVII to V7, and arrives at I. The "Ouch!" chorus, on the other hand, moves from

vi to IV, then on to II7, and ends with the startling bVI - bVII - I movement (see "P.S. I Love You," cited above). The "Help!" chorus, like the verse, moves at a harmonic rhythm twice as slow as that of "Ouch!" The "Help!" intro and the "Ouch!" chorus/intro, however, move at the same harmonic rhythm.

Because of the close modeling, the "Ouch!" verse can be seen to first articulate part of the progression literally (but with the harmonic rhythm in diminution) and, second, to reorder another part of it, retaining the characteristic chromatic alteration (bVII). This can only be detected if the listener is able to maintain some version of the "Help!" verse in the ear (and a synchronic one, at that), while taking in the "Ouch!" verse.

Further, the "Ouch!" chorus constitutes a large musical pun on the "Help!" chorus and intro. As was mentioned above, the vi chord is missing in the verse of "Ouch!" It arrives only in the chorus. But when it arrives the progression moves vi - IV - II7. The "Help!" chorus moves ii - bVII - V7. The pun arises because both progressions move from a minor triad to a major triad with a root a major third lower, then on to a major-minor seventh chord with a root a minor third below that. But the "Help!" progression begins on ii, while the "Ouch!" one begins on vi. It is clear that the vi chord is excluded from the verse of "Ouch!" so that it can be used in the chorus pun. When the II7 chord arrives in "Ouch!," we are still one harmonic move away from where we need to be to conform to the movement of the model, which is at V7 at that point in the progression. The "Ouch!" progression then moves hurriedly via bVI and bVII to I, as if caught off guard, creating the awkward II7 - bVI movement. The mere continuation of the harmonic movement from II7 on to V would have achieved the desired harmonic goal; the awkward II7 - bVI - bVII - I movement, however, amounts to a "harmonic pratfall," which serves to further highlight the comedic intent of the pun worked out in the harmonic progression immediately preceding it. "Ouch!," therefore, references a single Beatles song, and the closeness of the modeling permits the perception of the harmonic pun and pratfall.

We have now examined two songs in which specific references can be detected; but these references trigger an amused response in different ways. How can these different mechanisms be accounted for? And how does the congruity-incongruity dialectic—which is central to eliciting an amused response in the Spinal Tap numbers—operate to elicit an amused response in the Rutles examples? These questions can be addressed by combining Meyer’s theory of style with the semiotic concept of “intertextuality.”

I would like first to review those aspects of Meyer’s style theory useful to the discussion which will follow. In his discussion of compositional choice, Meyer makes the distinction between dialect, idiom, and intraopus style:

Dialectics are substyles that are differentiated because a number of composers—usually, but not necessarily, contemporaries and geographical neighbors—employ (choose) the same or similar rules and strategies.¹⁴

For our purposes, all the examples cited in the discussion of “Hold My Hand” and “Ouch!” are considered to be within the “British-invasion dialect” (which might also be considered a sub-dialect of the larger popular music dialect).

Meyer goes on to define idiom as follows:

Within any dialect, individual composers tend to employ some constraints rather than others; indeed, they may themselves have devised new constraints. Those that a composer repeatedly selects from the larger repertory of the dialect define his or her individual idiom.¹⁵

¹⁴Meyer, 23.

¹⁵Meyer, 24.

All the examples discussed above could further be classified as in the “early Beatles idiom.”¹⁶

Finally, Meyer introduces the notion of intraopus style, which he carefully distinguishes from intraopus structure:

While dialect has to do with what is common to works by different composers, and idiom has to do with what is common to different works by the same composer, intraopus style is concerned with what is replicated within a single work. . . .

The intraopus style of a work must be distinguished from what I will term its *intraopus structure*. When a pattern is viewed as an aspect of the intraopus style of a work it is understood as a replicated, classlike event. But every pattern within a work also enters into nonrecurrent relationships with each and every other event or pattern in that work. Thus understood as nonrecurrent and unique, the pattern is an aspect of the work’s intraopus structure.¹⁷

Meyer’s distinction between intraopus style and structure seems to rest on a synchronic-diachronic distinction: aspects of style are viewed synchronically and are associative, while aspects of structure are viewed diachronically and achieve significance as much from “where” they are as from “what” they are.

It is precisely at this level of intraopus style and structure that the difference in the operation of the humor mechanism in our two Rutles examples may be found. There is no incongruity in either tune at the level of dialect or idiom; either number could pass for

¹⁶While Meyer, considering the repertory of Western art music, refers to a single composer, I take the liberty here of referring to the early Beatles as an idiom in spite of the fact that there are two composers, Lennon and McCartney and five arrangers (add Harrison, Starr, and producer George Martin).

¹⁷Meyer, 24-5.

an authentic but lost Beatles tune, and consequently as an authentic artifact of the British invasion.¹⁸

At the level of intraopus style, “Ouch!” takes over most of the intraopus constraints of “Help!”; but “Ouch!” unfolds a different intraopus structure from that of “Help!” Due to the shared intraopus stylistic constraints (which account for the suggestion of modeling in the first place), “Ouch!” could be thought of as a recomposition of “Help!,” or perhaps, as an alternative structural manifestation of common intraopus constraints and features.¹⁹

The humor in “Ouch!,” however, is partially the result of intertextuality. This concept, as it is used in the field of literary criticism generally, “derives from the view of a literary work as a text whose richness of meaning results from its location in a potentially infinite network of other texts.”²⁰ For our study of the

¹⁸In fact, according to Beatles expert Walter Everett, the Rutles tune “Cheese and Onions” (mentioned above) actually appeared on some Beatles bootleg albums, apparently passing for authentic with Beatles fans. Walter Everett shared this with me during one of the many conversations we have had concerning the Rutles.

¹⁹Meyer discusses the application of his style theory to the study of sketches and drafts. While Meyer values the discovery of what “might have been,” believing that this knowledge enhances an encounter with the final version, a different situation arises when we have an alternative version (Bruckner), or versions which are substantially recomposed (Beethoven’s “Eroica Variations,” his overture to *The Creatures of Prometheus*, and the final movement to his Symphony No. 3); in these two latter situations one cannot invoke the same reasoning to establish the priority of one piece over the other. One would need to determine to what extent the versions either shared a common intraopus style, or have more or less similar ones.

²⁰Robert S. Hatten, “The Place of Intertextuality in Music Studies,” *American Journal of Semiotics*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1985): 69-82. Hatten also suggests the use of style theory to explain intertextual references in music, providing a number of examples. In the same issue, see Thais E. Morgan, “Is There an Intertext in This Text?: Literary and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Intertextuality”: 1-40, an extremely helpful survey.

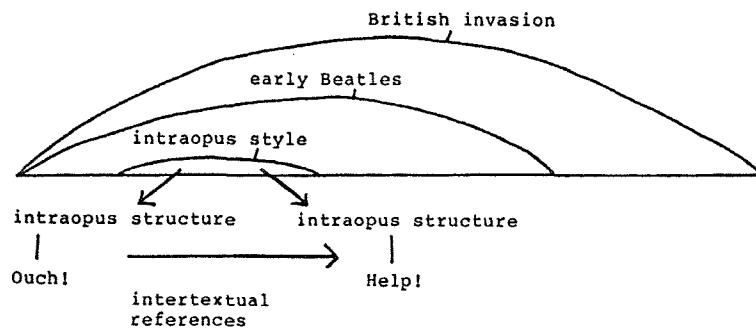
As Robert Scholes has pointed out, the terms “intertext” and “intertextuality” have different meanings for semioticians like Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Gerard Genette, and Michael Riffaterre. Scholes defines the concept as follows:

The common principle is that, just as signs refer to other signs rather than directly to things, texts refer to other texts. The artist writes and paints, not from nature but from his or her predecessors’ ways of textualizing nature. Thus an intertext is a text lurking inside another, shaping meaning, whether the author is conscious of this or not. (p. 145)

humor in “Ouch!,” it is enough to know that this text invokes another very strongly (through close modeling). The amused response depends upon the listener’s recognition of this specific intertextual reference. In fact, the listener is asked to hold the intertext (“Help!”) in mind while “reading” the first text, and this dual imaging will result in a simultaneous reading of both texts. The amused response arises through a process of constant comparison, with the musical mind quickly darting back and forth between the heard text and the invoked intertext. The listener therefore perceives the two texts as congruent at the dialect and idiom level (“that sounds like the Beatles!”); depending on one’s level of Beatles competency, the listener may notice the congruence at the level of intraopus style (“that sounds like “Help!””). The last step crucial to eliciting an amused response is when the listener realizes the incongruity in the two intraopus structures (“Hey, this is kind of different; it sounds like “Help!” but it’s not!”). It is the intertextuality which sets the stage for the congruity-incongruity dialectic: by the direct referencing of “Help!,” “Ouch!” initiates the dialectic which triggers the amused response.

Figure 7 diagrams the relationships which I have just described.

Figure 7.



See Robert Scholes, *Semiotics and Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982).

For the purposes of the following discussion, I would adapt the definition to read “the artist writes, paints, and composes,” and “. . . lurking inside another, shaping meaning (sometimes humorous), whether . . .”

The Help-Ouch intraopus style is contained within the early Beatles idiom, which is contained within the British-invasion dialect. The two intraopus structures are generated out of the single intraopus style, and the intertextual references are shown by the arrow (note that these references are one-way).

“Hold My Hand,” however, presents a slightly different situation with regard to intertextuality; the modeling is not based on a single intertext, but rather on the conflation of multiple intertexts. Figure 8 diagrams the network of relations in “Hold My Hand.”

Figure 8.

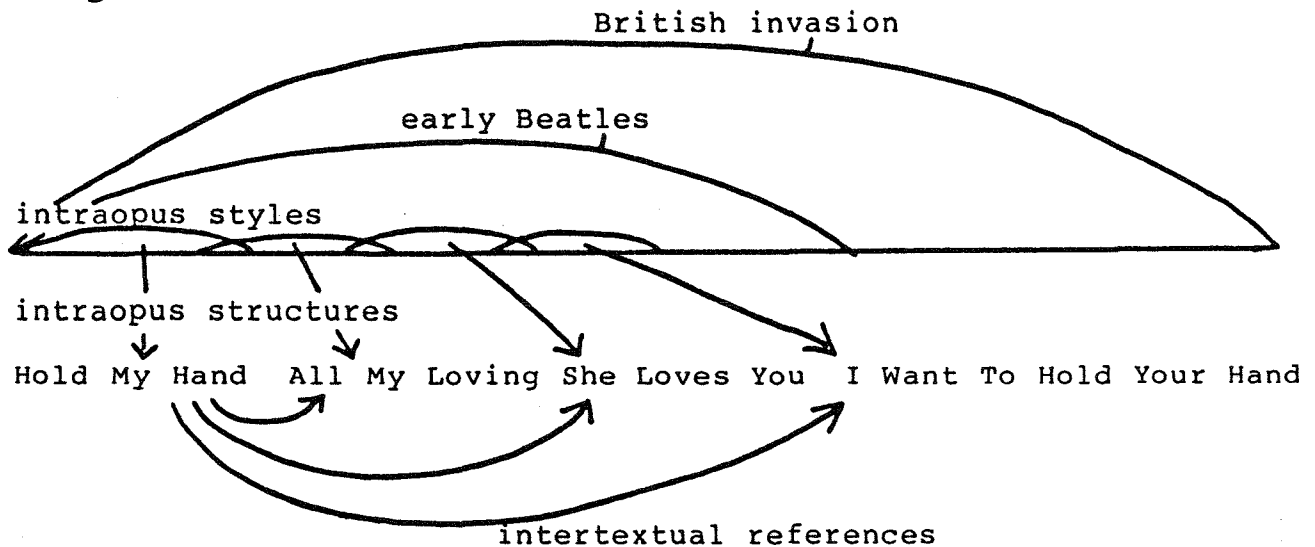


Figure 8 illustrates how the four songs shown each have an intraopus style which is contained within the early Beatles idiom, and how each has an intraopus structure generated out of its respective intraopus style. The figure therefore attempts to portray the more varied network of references which occurs in “Hold My Hand.”²¹

While “Ouch!” requires the listener to hold the single intertext in mind, “Hold My Hand” requires the listener to identify various

²¹Since some part of the intraopus style/structures of the three Beatles songs is incorporated into the Rutles tune, adding a third dimension to my diagram would allow me to arrange the three Beatles numbers around the Rutles one such that they all intersect with it but not with each other.

intertexts; the listener first recognizes the congruence at the level of idiom (“that sounds like the Beatles!”) but then notices the incongruity at the level of intraopus style and structure (“that sounds like “All My Loving”—no, it’s “She Loves You”—no, now it’s “I Want To Hold Your Hand,” etc.). The differences between the mechanisms can therefore be located in Meyer’s model: “Ouch!” exploits incongruity between the respective intraopus structures, while “Hold My Hand” exploits incongruities at the level of intraopus style (which by extension includes the structures generated out of each intraopus style).

Further, “Hold My Hand” participates in an even more complicated intertextual relationship. Michael Riffaterre, in his *Semiotics of Poetry*, describes something he terms an “implied intertext.”²² An implied intertext is a second intertext which explains or clarifies the reference to the first intertext.

Something very like Riffaterre’s implied intertext is invoked in the Rutles song “Love Life,” which is modeled unmistakably on the Beatles’ “All You Need Is Love.” In the closing moments of “All You Need Is Love” the Beatles quote “She Loves You” by singing “she loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah” over the fading phrase “love is all you need.” The Rutles quote “Hold My Hand” by singing “hold my hand, yeah, yeah” over the closing phrase “love is the meaning of life, life is the meaning of love.”

Now if the listener knows both “All You Need Is Love” and “Love Life,” but not “Hold My Hand,” one can only suspect that the Rutles are referencing some tune from their past (a parallel to the Beatles quoting a number from their past). But with a knowl-

²²Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 134. Morgan, pp. 31-32, provides an interesting discussion and interpretation of Riffaterre’s notion.

It just so happens that Riffaterre’s discussion of the implied intertext occurs during his discussion of humor in poetry. Interesting to my discussion is that Riffaterre asserts, in the course of discussing the poem he uses as an example, that “intertextual incompatibilities . . . create the humor . . .”(130). He also comes to conclude in this section that “humor is nothing other than a special case of poetic language, and that poetic language is a special case of metalanguage” (138). This latter statement has some bearing on the suggestion that the mechanisms that elicit an amused response and those which elicit an aesthetic one may be closely related, as suggested below in the text.

edge of the intertextual relationships we examined in “Hold My Hand,” the reference to it in “Love Life” becomes a more complicated and richer one. Thus “Hold My Hand” becomes the implied intertext and the humor in “Love Life” is enriched for the listener possessing the competency to make this complex set of associations.

The examination of the mechanisms which elicit an amused response in the two Rutles numbers considered above suggests that the combination of Meyer’s theory of style and the semiotic notion of intertextuality could have a broader application. Meyer’s theory provides a powerful tool in explaining how intertextuality—of a musical kind, using strictly musical terms—can occur in music. I have suggested elsewhere that the mechanism that elicits an amused response in music may be very like the one that elicits an aesthetic response.²³ If the semiotic-musical style model offered above is helpful in unpacking the amused response, it might also prove helpful in examining music not intended to be humorous.

To conclude this study, I will suggest how Meyer’s model can help us pull together both the Rutles and the Spinal Tap examples. In fact, a comparison of the Rutles numbers with the Spinal Tap one suggests the following: the differences between the humor mechanisms of each example can be accounted for locating where in Meyer’s model the incongruity arises. For example, the interstylistic incongruity between “Heavy Duty” and the Boccherini minuet can be thought of as occurring between the dialect of classic music and the dialect of heavy metal. Similarly, the incongruity in “(Listen to the) Flower People” arises between popular music (sub-)dialects (British invasion and psychedelia). The incongruity in “Cups and Cakes” occurs between idioms (unlikely juxtapositions of idioms create a dialectical exaggeration). This leaves “Hold My Hand,” with the incongruity occurring between intraopus styles, and “Ouch!,” with the incongruity occurring between intraopus structures. As a general rule, the levels above the location of the incongruity are congruent.

²³Covach.