

**THE VISUAL LANGUAGE OF AUTHENTICITY: MEDIATION AND MUSICAL
PERFORMANCE IN THE FILMS OF THE BEATLES**

by

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Abstract

In the context of scholarship surrounding the areas of mediation, performance, and authenticity, evidence of the media object is frequently blamed for distancing audiences from their musical idols. This thesis, which uses the films of the Beatles and as its main subjects, considers the contradiction born from the fact that while the Beatles were constantly exposed to forces of mediation - when they were not being photographed by journalists, they were in front of a television or film camera – this has not affected audiences’ willingness to interpret the band’s plethora of on-screen performances as authentic. If technology impedes authenticity, I ask why the highly stylized performance sequences in *A Hard Day’s Night*, for example, are still able to contribute to the Beatles’ authentic image. I contend that the representational strategies employed in the films of the Beatles creates a visual language that is an essential part of the process of authentication, and that this process transcends the boundaries usually created by the politics and aesthetic strategies associated with particular filmic modes.

I have chosen five of the Beatles’ feature-length films as subject matter for this thesis, which span a variety of filmic modes ranging from the documentary to the fictional, studio-financed narrative film. After a review of pertinent criticism in Chapter One, Chapter Two explores the Beatles’ film of 1964, including *The Beatles! The First U.S. Visit* (Albert and David Maysles, 1964), *The Making of The Beatles! The First U.S. Visit* (Smeaton, 2003), and *A Hard Day’s Night* (Lester, 1964). Chapter Three investigates the films of the following year, using *Help!* (Lester, 1965) and *The Beatles at Shea Stadium* (Bob Precht for ABC, 1965). Using the work of Philip Auslander, Michael Brendan Baker, Thomas Cohen, Simon Frith, Theodore Gracyk, and Jonathan Romney, I explore the ways in which the films of the Beatles deliver

contemporary audiences positive insight into technology's capacity to provide viewers with a sense of immediacy, unpredictability, and "liveness".

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Paula Schneider.

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Dedication

This thesis is for everyone who has experienced that very real moment of realization that the Beatles are not going to play live for us again – and to the sense of hope that we, as fans and as members of culture at large, can recover from this trauma.

Introduction

"If you get the camera down on this mic it'd be a right
laugh...Go on, defy convention!"

-Paul McCartney to Albert and David Maysles
(*The Making of The Beatles!*: The First U.S. Visit)

In reference to his first experience at the Experience Music Project conference in Seattle in 2004, Tim Quirk relays that “the word ‘authenticity’ cropped up during so many panels that it actually started getting booed by the end of the weekend” (“Going Through the Motions” 401). This is perhaps because, in much scholarship contemporaneous to Quirk’s encounter with the term, authenticity had been treated as an objective quality inherent in a musical work or performing artist. As a result of these connotations, the word comes to carry unnecessarily pedantic baggage and has a reductive effect on the music it attempts to build up. Yet the desire of fans, journalists, and academics to unpack all of that baggage has never wavered. Indeed, without attempting to draw any presumptuous causal patterns between them, it remains interesting that shortly after Quirk’s observation was made, scholar Allan Moore sought to reinsert authenticity, newly defined as a term that connotes subjective experience - an *ascribed* quality rather than an *inscribed* one - back into the vocabulary of popular music studies (*Authenticity of Authentication* 210). It is from this position that I launch this thesis.

In an attempt to undo the hierarchy of musical performance experience that so haunts academic discourse surrounding popular music, I want to challenge the idea that it is a band’s live performance, and the audience’s experience of that performance, that gives those present fans’ appreciation of their idols a certain weight. In the introduction to her book *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*, Pam Cook states: “The fact that the eye witness was actually present at the time invests their recollections...with authority and emotional power” (3).

Much to my own disappointment, and the disappointment of thousands of others, the band featured in this thesis – the Beatles – are wholly unavailable to contemporary audiences, and to some extent were unavailable to contemporaneous ones (who perhaps simply never got to attend a Beatles concert) in any live concert setting. I contend, however, that just because the Beatles can never fill a stadium again, and that so many fans will never be in their immediate performance space, the authenticity of their experiences as Beatles fans is no less powerful. It is simply drawn from different sources by necessity, and those sources are dependent on technology in its many forms. This thesis will provide a series of in-depth textual analyses of the Beatles as they appear in select film and television productions in order to illustrate the notion that authenticity can be interpreted from sources that are separate from (although not completely *independent* from) the musical performer in general and, here, from the Fab Four in particular.

Being the ruthlessly photographed, filmed, (and written about), band that they are, the Beatles provide a particularly interesting platform from which questions of performance, authenticity, and mediation may be scrutinized. Select “pairs” of films from the Beatles’ filmography, separated by their respective date of creation (as opposed to their release date) and the different cinematic modes that they embody will provide the core texts for this project. The first chapter will consider the made-for-television documentary *The Beatles! The First US Visit* (Albert and David Maysles, 1964), its complementary documentary entitled *The Making of The First US Visit* (Bob Smeaton, 2003), and *A Hard Day’s Night* (Richard Lester, 1964).¹ A second chapter will focus on a second made-for-television special, *The Beatles at Shea Stadium* (Bob Precht for ABC, 1965), and *Help!* (Lester, 1965).²

¹ Please note that *A Hard Day’s Night* will be here on in referred to as *AHDN* for ease of reference.

² Similarly, *The Beatles at Shea Stadium* will be referred to simply as ...*Shea Stadium*.

I contend that the representational practices applied to the Beatles in 1964 are significantly different from those that appear in 1965, hence the nature of the chapter division that has been introduced above. The former pairing of films was selected because the two works emphasize the presence of media objects within the films' *mise en scene*, while also making formal commentary on what it means to mediate a performance through the lens of a documentary camera versus that of a camera on a studio set. Alternately, the latter two films offer evidence that the spaces that the Beatles are filmed within act as sources of authentication in themselves, as we witness the studio and stage spaces Lester had set up around the Beatles in *AHDN* be deconstructed in his second Beatles-centric film *Help!*. Meanwhile, the camera crew responsible for filming ...*Shea Stadium* (a team comprised of thirteen camera operators) encourages the audience's familiarity with the construction and geography of the venue more so than they do the visual clarity of the Beatles' performance. I argue that all of these films necessarily spend as much effort in authenticating the *means* through which the Beatles are represented as performers as they do in encouraging authentic interpretations of the band and their music. I will prove that readings of authenticity do not depend on the impression that the tools of mediation, or the physical appearance of media objects within the *mise en scene*, be absent from performance spaces. The often self-reflexive stylistic choices and representational strategies employed in the creation of, and inside of the *mise en scene* of each film should be understood as essential elements that provide the means necessary for audiences to be able to understand a performance as authentic.

While the scope of my research was quite wide, as my decision to include a Bibliography rather than a "Works Cited" will reflect, the influence of certain sources dissipated over the course of this project while others became increasingly significant. Essential to my argument will

be a reconsideration of Philip Auslander's idea of the "parasitic" media form, a notion that he borrowed from Raymond Williams. This concept suggests that any new media form, such as television was in relation to cinema in the 1950s, does not seek to work *with* the form that came before it - perhaps television could help to convey cinematic events to a homebound audience, for example - but instead seeks to supplant it (Auslander, *Liveness* 22). In rejecting the representational strategies associated with any given preceding medium, Auslander suggests that new technology works on a principle of erasure. In his later book *Performing Glam Rock*; Auslander continues to explore how the 1970s invited a theatricalization of rock and roll culture that manifested in glam rock. Here too, Auslander stresses that a large component of these glittered rock stars being interpreted as authentic by audiences was reliant on the traditional definition of, and act of making, an event theatrical: that there is a both a physical and a theoretical split made between audience and performer, where the performer self-reflexively exaggerates his role and his position on the stage, thus denouncing his personal associations with the falsities that are responsible for creating his "look" (15). Providing the audience with evidence of the technological mediation, or insight into the means through which a performer relies on falsities, are for Auslander the key means through which authenticity is sacrificed.

Theodore Gracyk similarly discusses the effects of mediation in regards to the production of music records in his book *Rhythm and Noise* (1996), and Steve Wurtzler suggests that the authentic live event is something entirely divorced from the technologically reproduced one that so often haunts modern concert stadiums, which are typically equipped with big screens, or diamond screens ("She Sang Live..." 87-9). With audience's increasingly close relationship with the technologies that mediate a live event - whether the reader chooses to see the outcomes of that relationship as positive or negative - comes Auslander's conclusion that the screened act of

performance bears no ontological differences when compared to the live version of that same event. With this idea Auslander suggests that authenticity as it was once defined no longer exists, but is being re-ascribed to a new source: to the mediated visions of the musician in question, as opposed to that musician's performing body (*Liveness* 7).

The idea that evidence of mediation or of the processes of making a performer stage-ready should render a performance inauthentic is too simplistic. A particularly problematic feature of pop music scholarship is that the majority of texts that do argue that mediation and authenticity are not mutually exclusive are applied to music video, films, and television shows that hail from the post-MTV era. I insert my own project into this gap in scholarship, suggesting that the techniques used to mediate popular music from the *pre*-MTV era, whether this refers to televised performances or those seen in the eruption of youth-oriented rock 'n' roll films that arose from the late 1950s and continued into the 1960s, should be seen to carry the same potential for gaining an understanding of what authenticity means for their contemporaneous audiences as the Milli Vanilli scandal, or the proponents of Glam Rock, have provided for Auslander. His claim that the contemporary audience's evolution of viewing habits, wherein the differences between a live event and mediated one have now been rendered indecipherable (*Liveness* 7), can be built upon further. A very particular *kind* of evidence for mediation must be articulated, one fitted to both temporally specific notions of what authenticity "looks" like, as well as to representational practices associated with a given filmic mode. This evidence for mediation is synonymous for evidence of a given filmmaker's presence. As a result, the focus films in this thesis highlight the performance of the director and his camera as another source that demands authentication in addition to the performances of the musician and his music. The directors responsible for capturing the Beatles on film converge to form an especially interesting

site for such an analysis, because each filmmaker, from the Maysles, to Lester, to the multiplicity of cameramen responsible for capturing the Beatles in their performance at Shea Stadium, manages to contribute to a consistent image of the band while maintaining their own signature style.

Given the status of the Beatles as pop royalty, it is remarkable that their films have been relatively underappreciated in film scholarship over the decades since the group gained fame. Bob Neaverson points out that a number of factors contribute to this trend. First, the band's film canon is discouragingly discordant in many ways: a number of different directors contributed to the catalog and this results in tonal and stylistic disparities between their works. In turn, this makes it difficult for these films to be studied using a conventional methodology – one cannot easily pursue an overreaching *auteurist* reading of the Beatles' films, for example (although I will consider the relevant filmmakers' own *auteurist* tendencies, resulting in a string of individual auteurs being studied). Secondly, certain Beatles films are not readily available, at least by legal means, most notably ...*Shea Stadium* and *Let It Be* (Michael Lindsay-Hogg, 1970). That some works remain in the Apple vaults is not aided by the nonchalant or unfavourable attitude that critics, fans, and even the Beatles themselves had towards the production process and finished versions of certain films. One only need read a few contemporaneous reviews of the Beatles' self-directed (along with Bernard Knowles) film *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967), which was initially broadcast via BBC television in black and white, to discern this attitude (Neaverson 72).³

³ See the 1967 reviews from the *Daily Mirror* or *Daily Express*, all of which describe the audience's stress in not grasping how to absorb the episodic nature of the film's narrative. The latter newspaper even remarked that the songs populating the film were "quite unmemorable" (Qtd. in Neaverson 73). It is interesting to note, however, that contemporary audience reviews of

Contributing to the exclusion of these films from much of scholarship is the disinterested attitude from some scholars (an attitude which, in recent decades, is beginning to change) towards the “pop musical” genre at large, aimed at the larger trend of youth-oriented films that erupted from the late 1950s, continued through the 1960s, and which were heavily populated by musicians-turned-actors. In his book *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (1990), Jeff Smith notes that the American entertainment industries of the 1950s provided the perfect context for such music- and performer-oriented films to arise because of the presence of increasingly refined “machinery” behind the marketing schemes of both film and popular music. With the collapse of vertical integration, film studios sought to expand their marketing methods, and by the mid-1950s many owned private record labels. This drastic structural change, coupled with marketing strategies dependent on the concept of synergy (the potential for the pop soundtrack to sell the film and vice versa), resulted in a body of films such as *Jailhouse Rock* (Richard Thorpe, 1957), *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* (Blake Edwards, 1961), and, of course, the Beatles’ films, all of which can be viewed as especially potent marketing bombs that demand scrutiny more rigorous than most due to the nature of their complex inception (Smith 2-4). Thus it is only in light of relatively recent scholarship that the pop musical began to be viewed as a subgenre of films worthy of being viewed at all (Neaverson, *The Beatles Movies* 2-3).

Close textual analysis of the aforementioned films will be my main methodological approach, with considerable emphasis on the nature of the visuals found in these films as is encouraged by my own scholarly background in Film Studies; there will also be some treading into the subject of sound design in these films, although regrettably there is not more of such

the film find many points of merit within *Magical Mystery Tour* (IMDB, *Magical Mystery Tour User Reviews*).

analysis (perhaps that is the seed of a whole new venture).⁴ While much scholarly attention has been dedicated to the study of the visualization of musical performance (see aforementioned works by Auslander, and Michael Brendan Baker's dissertation *Rockumentary: Style, Performance and Sound in a Documentary Genre*, 2011), oftentimes a multitude of bands are used as sites for textual analysis, which in turn encourages broad-reaching investigations of popular music's visual conventions across cultures, time periods, and genres (both musical and filmic). To better suit the tight focus of this thesis, I will adopt an approach inspired by Thomas Cohen in his book *Playing to the Camera* (2012), where he emphasizes close analysis of the representational strategies applied to violinists in a host of documentaries from around the Western world. I limit myself to the considerations of the visual representations of the Beatles alone, so that I may better notice the changes in these practices which are applied to the band as both their career and the visual tendencies in performance documentation evolve throughout the mid-1960s.

Given this emphasis on attention to visual style, I have purposefully chosen to juxtapose various filmic modes against each other within the confines of a single chapter. *The Beatles! The First U.S. Visit*,⁵ being an observational documentary, offers audiences different insights into what constitutes a filmmaker's authentic performance, and what an authentic visual language is, than a fictional, studio-financed film such as *AHDN* will. In order to successfully navigate which elements of these films are particularly auteurist, which are the products of tradition, and what the nature of the relationship between the two is, I will need to engage with the history of each

⁴ See Baker's chapter 6, "This Film Should Be Played Loud! Understanding Sound in the Rockumentary" for his ideas on the rockumentary genre's commitment to, and negotiations with legibility, especially in regards to soundtrack.

⁵ Please note that *The Beatles! The First U.S. Visit* will be referred to as *The Beatles!* for ease of reference.

relevant mode before beginning my own analysis. The work of Bill Nichols, who has provided several seminal texts on the topic of documentary cinema, will act as one of my main scholars of focus where that task is concerned. Neil Sinyard and Jonathan Vogels, who each devote a book to Richard Lester and Albert and David Maysles (see *Richard Lester* [2010] and *The Direct Cinema of Albert and David Maysles* [2005], respectively), will be employed throughout my textual analysis in order to discern which visual strategies belong to tradition, which are indicative of the men behind the camera.⁶ Thomas Waugh's essay "Acting to Play Oneself: Performance in Documentary" explores that latter point through its discussion of the relationship between fictional film and the documentary mode, and it is with a similar attitude and in the interest of fostering connections between otherwise disparate modes that I ground this methodological decision.

I place increased attention upon the role that the filmmaker has in inducing readings of authenticity, which logically infers an inclusion of an auteurist approach. However, I wish to direct auteurist considerations in a precise direction rather than engage heavily in describing the individuated visual tendencies of Richard Lester or the Maysles, for example. I will attach the work of performance studies scholars generally, and considerations of performance in rock music more specifically, to my auteurist analyses. The work of Simon Frith, from his book *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (1996) will be crucial here, as will Auslander's essay "The Performativity of Performance Documentation" (2006). Combining auteur theory with performance studies will allow me to engage in a sort of "reverse auteurism," wherein I consider the influence that the Beatles have upon the types of performances, and the resulting visual strategies, employed by the filmmakers responsible for representing them.

⁶ In the context of this thesis, every camera operator is indeed male.

Performance theory is never divorced from considerations of authenticity, especially in regards to musical performances.

Thus the first chapter of this thesis will be dedicated to a review of pertinent literature, the most significant of which have been briefly introduced above, and all of which demand much more detailed expansion. Following this, I dedicate my second chapter to the first two works of the Beatles' film catalog, *The Beatles!...* and *AHDN*. Here I suggest that the Maysles negate normative conceptions of physical space and temporality between locations and events in their film through their employment of close ups and their tendency to focus on various media forms within the *mise en scene*. I want to offer interpretations about what the stylistic tendencies particular to the Maysles imply in regards to Auslander's previously outlined concept of the parasitic media form. Alternatively, Lester combines representational strategies inherent to various media forms *simultaneously* when filming on-stage performances, emphasizing that the stage (as a performance space) encourages multiple readings of what stage performance (as a mediated act) implies. This portion of the chapter will involve close textual readings of the Beatles in on- and off-stage performance environments. In mediating other types of media objects, and in providing images of the Beatles on screens-within-screens, Lester's employed stylistic choices create space in theoretical discussions pertaining to the role that the fiction filmmaker plays in relationship to the observational documentary mode, and also to television's representational strategies.

In refusing to portray performance as being inherent to or reliant on a particular type of space, the Maysles film all spaces as performance spaces, alerting audiences to their involvement in a filmmaking process and aesthetic that is dictated as much by the two brothers as it is by their filmmaking equipment. Lester's emphasis on the particular kind of performance inherent to the

stage highlights conventions of off-stage performance by proxy and liberates a viewer's conceptions of the type of performance(s) a stage can hold. This chapter, then, will work to challenge the idea that similarities in film form is what marries these two works together, and instead suggest that the visual treatment of media technologies that the Beatles are exposed to or interact with is essentially different in each. What draws the two films together is their conception of the Beatles, and the filmmakers responsible for filming them, as performers in *all* kinds of spaces.

My third chapter will involve textual analyses of Lester's second and final Beatles film, *Help!*, and the made-for-television documentary ...*Shea Stadium*. This latter film involves (as the titles suggests) the documentation of the first ever stadium concert event in North America of the Beatles performing live at Shea Stadium in New York. The audio footage of this concert has been notoriously overdubbed in post-production because the sonic atmosphere of the original event easily overwhelmed the cameras responsible for filming it. Thus while my former chapter focuses on the high degree of self-reflexivity present in the performance spaces in *The Beatles!...* and *AHDN*, chapter three will concentrate on the newfound aesthetic trend of removing the Beatles from typical performance environments altogether, and the rejection of traditional representational strategies involved in depicting the Beatles playing their music.

Help! offers a final point of departure from all of the films that come before it in this thesis in that it is the first of the Beatles' feature films to abandon all attempts to depict the band members playing live. The Beatles are sometimes shown in the midst of recording a song in the studio, or have been placed in a performance setting that is so unconventional (not to mention impractical) that any readings of *Help!* require audience members to relocate their interpretations of authenticity quite drastically. This film is one that highlights the increasing importance of the

recording devices that make the Beatles' increasing interest in the potential of in-studio innovation known, and thus lays the foundation for the Beatles' status as *recording* artists – as opposed to a band that thrives off of live performance. Lester's already highly stylized representational strategies, some of which surfaced in *AHDN* (especially in regards to the song sequences for "Can't Buy Me Love," for example) are brought to a colourful and surreal peak here. The ever-changing geographies featured in this film do not suggest that the Beatles as performing figures are inauthentic, but rather emphasize that the band members are capable of asserting their seemingly innate musicality no matter how removed their performances may be, visually and aurally, from the types of stage spaces they occupied so frequently in their films of 1964.

Finally, with my analysis of ...*Shea Stadium*, I intend to perform another series of close analyses but to different ends once more. This television documentary has been studied in relation to questions of sound fidelity (see Baker, 135-6, 229-48).⁷ This is understandable, since the Beatles' concert at Shea was the first and largest of its kind in pop/rock history, which made the event and the method of its documentation an experiment on many levels. Whereas Baker suggests that ...*Shea Stadium* stands as an example of a rockumentary that abandoned sound fidelity in favour of legibility "...in light of the source material's unintelligibility" (248), I contend that this film also had little interest in remaining visually faithful to the "authentic" (where authentic means verisimilitudinous) live event from the outset. ...*Shea Stadium*, with its emphasis on the overwhelming and chaotic spaces that envelop the stage performance given by

⁷ It is important to note that this documentary, like the Maysles' aforementioned work *The Beatles!...*, is more often *not* studied at all. It is for the same reasons that the two are underappreciated relative to the films of the Beatles that enjoyed a theatrical release: it is now difficult to obtain a copy of *Shea Stadium...*, and the fact that it was made for television seems to create a division between itself and the band's fictional works.

the Beatles, is perhaps the best embodiment of Auslander's claim that the mediated version of an event not only becomes a new kind of document in and of itself ("Performing Texts" *Youtube*; "The Performativity of Performance Documentation" 2, 6), but also that the documented event might be more fun, and more ontologically interesting, than the live one.

In offering an analysis of the spaces and technologies that surround the Beatles and asserting that it is from the representational strategies applied to these sources that authenticity may be interpreted, I hope to inspire readers to draw wider connections between the Beatles' films, and to make their body of work valuable to performance theory at large, rather than only to die-hard Beatles fans.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Across his books *Representing Reality* (1991) and *Blurred Boundaries* (1994), Nichols undertakes the task of listing and describing five types of documentary modes that he has seen crop up and morph over the decades since the documentary film's inception. These five modes are 1) the expository mode, 2) the observational mode, 3) the interactive mode, 4) the reflexive mode, and finally, 5) the performative mode. It is in the context of Nichols' own apparent struggle with defining the performative mode that room for a reinterpretation of films of the observational documentary mode arises. Before this, however, a thorough unpacking of the term "mode," as well as an outline of the various documentary modes that Nichols discusses over the course of several of his writings is an essential starting point. I contend that a visual language of authenticity can, and does, reappear and is reinvented across modes. The very fluid nature of Nichols' listed modes places emphasis not only on the formal and thematic patterns that exist between a group of films, but also considers the *process* involved in arriving at those formal choices. Mode is thus more than a label, and is also descriptive of a set of processes that emphasizes the filmmaker's role in creating and performing his own film.

Although I will discuss the ways in which a range of certain visual elements are made recognizable over a particular body of films, this project is not a study focused on noting generic distinctions between films (although arguments for the "rockumentary" coming to stand as a genre in and of itself has been argued for by Baker). While discussions of genre are an essential method for entering discussions about observational documentaries, the qualities that mark a film as belonging to a certain genre need to be attributable to a completed work, while the word mode connotes the entire creative *process* of making a film (whether that film is a documentary or not). Thus discussions of the two terms should be approached differently. Rick Altman notes that the

definition of genre describes a set of conventions that float about, slightly above the heads of the artists who contribute to a generic canon, for these conventions seem to have been developed by an unseen creative oligarchy. Scholars such as Altman have taken it upon themselves to bring this definition of genre closer to the ground, rooting their own studies in particular texts, as well as their industrial and cultural impact (*Film/Genre*, 11-2). Mode, however, does not so easily encourage such abstract considerations, because the features that define a mode as such are those that are attributable not only to the visual products of filmmakers, but also to the process(es) an individual undergoes in order to create his or her film: these procedures include deciding which shots to take, or how to interact (or not interact) with one's subjects or subject matter, as well as the historical compatibility that one particular set of representational strategies represents. A mode, then, is all encompassing in its breadth and flexible in its application – so flexible that it may encompass a variety of filmic genres and generic cycles under one umbrella (Baker 10).

For Nichols, the definition of the word mode emphasizes this idea of flexibility of application, and the wide range of formal characteristics it describes. Unlike genre, which Nichols notes describes entire imaginary worlds that can coexist alongside each other but which can also develop and evolve exclusively from one another, modes come into being as a *direct result* of the dissatisfaction that the previous mode began to impart upon its viewers (*Representing Reality* 23). Though modes have a comparably more aggressive point of conception than genres do, when one mode overtakes a previous one it will never thoroughly exterminate it. One mode's representational strategies may mingle with those of another, and over time, it is even possible for audiences to absorb a film previously labeled as one mode as another altogether. After I briefly introduce each of Nichols' four modes, I intend to re-read and reapply Nichols' fifth addition of the performative mode, which was added to his list with the

publication of his book *Blurred Boundaries* (1994). The first, third, and fourth above-listed modes will only be briefly described here, for the sake of emphasizing their chronological points of inception and to allow for a clearer understanding of what each mode involves, historically, ideologically and visually.

Nichols gives a similarly constructed debriefing in *Representing Reality* in his chapter entitled “Documentary Modes of Representation,” where he assigns each mode to a particular group of directors and their films as reference points. The works of John Grierson, then, represent the expository documentary mode, as does that of Robert Flaherty; this mode arose because audiences of the 1930s through to the mid 1950s were disenchanted with the idealistic outlooks present in Hollywood fiction films. A voice-of- god-style commentary commonly addresses viewers directly in an expository documentary (consider Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* [1922]) and accompanies images staged for the awkward, heavy, and often-static documentary camera (34). Since the voice over became such a prevalent component of these films due to the fact that synchronized sound technology was not available when filming in remote locations, the director’s own opinion of how his images are to be interpreted gives these films a didactic quality. In many ways, then, the elements that make such films effective – their argumentative logic, their tendency to present generalized facts, and their images which reject poetic tendencies in favour of straightforward (and therefore objective or more realistic) views of the world we all interact with – are precisely the elements that the subsequent observational mode rejects (Nichols 35-8; Baker 32).

The birth of the observational documentary brought with it the invention of a new set of technologies, which allowed for radical stylistic and political departures from the expository mode that preceded it. Observational documentaries are, in their simplest definition, films that

boast an unobtrusive filmmaker (Nichols 38-9). It is for this reason that films of the observational mode gained a reputation for being objective works; and although this idealistic label has disintegrated in the eyes of critics and audience members, over time, the aesthetics of objectivity established in these documentaries upholds pure objectivity as an underlying goal and driving myth of the mode. Albert Maysles, for example, who composes one half of the filmmaking duo completed by his late brother David, and who is responsible for such renowned observational films as *Salesman* (1968) and *Gimme Shelter* (1970) relates in many of his interviews the fact that he is consistently struck by how “close” and “personal” he is allowed to become with his social actors. Albert defines this closeness on several levels: he is emotionally sympathetic with his subjects, and he also uses his relatively small camera to push up against his subjects, achieving a literal closeness through physical proximity (see interviews in *The Making of...*, or Peter Wintonick’s *Cinema Verite: Defining the Moment*, 2002). The observational documentary filmmaker’s ability to get closer to his subject, with what is (ironically) a *hyper-present* camera is also precisely what allows him to create the impression that that same camera is *absent*. It is perhaps because Albert and David Maysles had such personal involvement in the development of the relatively small and lightweight camera, equipped with a more conveniently placed viewfinder (allowing the filmmaker to see what he was filming easily) and synchronized sound technology (capable of capturing on-location sound in real time) that Albert Maysles so eagerly upholds the belief that these technologies could deliver an authentic closeness with the subject and not only the impression of it (Vogels 6; *The Making Of...*).

It is through its particular stylistic characteristics that the observational mode achieves its reputation of objectivity. The interview format, including the “talking head” approach is rejected in observational documentaries, as are voice-over commentaries and evidence of a filmmaker’s

personal opinion in regards to the subjects of his films (Beattie, *Documentary Screens* 22-4). Nichols notes that the observational mode instead emphasizes more abstract qualities that work towards creating an impression of everyday life, such as the feeling of lived time, often emphasized in such films through the prevalence of long takes that are sustained for much longer than those of realist fiction films (*Representing Reality* 39). The Maysles are special connoisseurs of the long take combined with the close up; through this stylistic technique the Maysles encourage tension and therefore dramatic moments in their non-fiction worlds because they make the burden of time lie so heavy upon the subject and viewer. In *Gimme Shelter*, the members of the Rolling Stones are filmed while listening to a recording of their own song “Wild Horses”. The Maysles divide screen time between Mick Jagger, Keith Richards and Charlie Watts, each of whom is lost in his own moment of reflection as he listens to the song in its entirety. For an extended moment Charlie stares back into the camera lens, and because of the duration and close scale of the shot, the weight of the violent events that took place at Altamont resurface in his gaze. The band members’ physical inactivity in this sequence becomes metaphoric for their inability to prevent the murder of Meredith Hunter. There are no innocent close ups here, or in the catalogue of Maysles films.

The reality effect is also perpetuated through certain obsessively repeated characteristics, such as the return to specific kinds of spaces. In the rockumentary genre in particular, there is an emphasis of the juxtaposition between on-stage and off-stage space, the social significance of which is explored in Jonathan Romney’s essay “Access All Areas: The Real Spaces of Rock Documentary” (1995). In the 1965 film *Dont Look Back*, Bob Dylan appearing in a string of hotel rooms, or sitting in a never-ending series of cars and trains not only contributes to the mundane reality of life on the road that D.A Pennebaker sought to

communicate, but they also help to place Dylan in the historical reality of 1965 London. Dylan's hotel rooms, then, may be compared with those seen in the earlier film *Lonely Boy* (1962) by Roman Kroitor and Wolf Koenig and which features a young Paul Anka, or the lack of such spaces in *Woodstock* (1970) by Michael Wadleigh. Generic readings of the signs and signifiers within films of the observational mode, especially those that focus upon the musical performer as their main subject, are therefore readily available. What is also indicated by the potent nature of signs available in these documentaries and the transferability of those signs (as becomes the subject of Baker's dissertation) is their propensity towards fictionalization.

Waugh, in his essay "Acting to Play Oneself: Performance in Documentary" illustrates the many ways in which classical documentary form (that is, the works that would fall under Nichols' expository mode) relate to the practices and aesthetic tendencies of fiction film. Waugh's essay is based upon his own experience in making documentary films as well as accounts of the experiences of others; his analysis, then, might also read as a manifesto for "how to film your documentary subject". Waugh's most emphasized piece of advice in this regard is to come to know how your subject moves, how they speak, etc., so that their performance can be effectively naturalized visually. Waugh points out that "this clearly artificial code of 'acting natural' is so rooted in our [Western] cinematic culture, then as now, that [Joris] Ivens posits it unquestioningly as a basic axiom of 'quality' cinema" (75-6). He goes on to argue that, no matter how much the practitioner of the *verite* school might deny it, the concept of making the social actor in any documentary film forget the camera's presence is an essential component in establishing a relationship between audience and subject. It is in relation to this "conscious forgetting" that Waugh presents two new terms to be used to describe otherwise conventional practices in relation to the social actor's relationship to the camera. These are his

representational performance style, which describes the social actor hiding his or her awareness of the camera and which stands in contrast to the *presentational* performance style that involves “performing an awareness of the camera” (76). Waugh’s introduction to these two approaches to documentary performance is important in that they strip the *verite* school (and by proxy, the observational mode in general) of its idealized objective labels. I want to use his description of the presentational mode in particular and redirect its application from the social actors in front of the camera in order to consider the reciprocal relationship between these actors, the men behind the camera, and finally the camera itself, in order to uncover a visually manifest language of performance and authenticity. In this context, a discussion of Nichols’ fifth documentary mode now becomes relevant. Nichols’ performative mode, which was introduced three years after his initial list in his book *Blurred Boundaries* (1994) changes the way in which the other four modes may be considered.

The performative mode has proven to be the most confusing of Nichols’ modes, as every scholar who interacts with the term ends up answering the question, “what ‘performative mode’ means to me” instead of granting a hardened definition.⁸ The language that Nichols himself uses when discussing this mode is as murky (but poetic) as the nature of the films that fit this documentary category, which he describes as “...highly suggestive, clearly fabricated, referential but not necessarily reflexive...” (*Blurred Boundaries* 93). This ambiguity, perhaps, is the point in that the mode’s subjective qualities are highlighted this way. Performative documentaries

⁸ For example, John Little, in his thesis *The Power and Potential of Performative Documentary Film* (2007) emphasizes subjective reception as a result of its redirected concern with representing indexical reality as the defining features of a performative documentary (22). Randolph Jordan emphasizes the role of literal performance in these documentaries, particularly staged musical performance (“‘Oh, What a Beautiful City’”, 35-40). Baker highlights the ways in which such films take subjective recounting, in regards to the film’s diegetic social actors as opposed to the subjectivities of the film’s audience (36).

emphasize the *experiential* and thus highly subjective qualities of cinema, but not in the way that an abstract or avant-garde film might venture into phenomenological areas of hapticity or the sublime. Rather, they make bare the experience of the filmmaker creating his work; they “[make] the viewer rather than the historical world a primary referent” (94), and finally, they emphasize the “acting” implications present in the term “social actor”. While Nichols suggests that the performative documentary reached its zenith in the 1980s and ‘90s, thus suggesting that it was born out of the failure of the previous mode (in this case, the reflexive mode), the performative documentary should also be understood as a methodology, applicable to a number of films from across modes and genres. Applying some of the principle characteristics of the performative mode (this is, to clarify, the emphasized presence of the filmmaker in the process of creating his work), encourages audiences to see the observational mode in particular in a fresh way precisely because of the observational mode’s special relationship to performance.

Stella Bruzzi’s thoughts in her book *New Documentary* (2006) provide a good example of the diverse interpretations of what the performative mode will mean to an individual viewer, and Bruzzi emphasizes the role of the camera in her definition. To take the already-muddled definition applied to these films and stir up its waters some more, Bruzzi cautions that her thoughts on performative documentaries should not be associated with the fifth documentary mode discussed by Nichols; rather, her definition of the term is more closely associated with the ideas of J.L. Austin and Judith Butler, who discuss verbal utterances – that is, words that describe an action, and complete that action upon being uttered. Bruzzi’s concept that ‘a documentary only comes into being as it is performed’ (186) may thus be slightly tweaked, with emphasis placed on the performing role of the filmmaker and his filmmaking tools, to suggest that a documentary does not come into being until it is *filmed*. The postmodernist contradiction

of the image, wherein something cannot attain its full potential for meaning until its image, and even the process of it becoming an image, is considered. As well, as much as Bruzzi might contend that her discussion is separate from that of Nichols', the two scholars overlap in regards to the fact that for each, the *techniques* associated with the observational documentary mode in particular change, both in purpose and effect, when they are considered in light of the principles of performative documentary.⁹

Bruzzi argues that performative documentaries have taken two main forms, one of which is more closely attached to the observational documentary mode (and which Bruzzi calls the “earlier” set of performative documentaries), and the second of which is the modern performative documentary which she suggests best manifests itself in the films of directors such as Errol Morris, Molly Dineen, and Nicholas Barker (186). In particular, Bruzzi spends time differentiating between the influence of the camera and the filmmaker behind that camera when discussing observational documentaries that feature performing artists as their main subjects, and the modern performative documentary, especially since the former is so often cited as being a major influence upon contemporary performative documentaries. The observational mode, Bruzzi states, is always obsessed with masking its means of production, and in doing so attempts to inch its way closer to reality. Thus even when featuring performing artists such as musicians, it is the performance of those on-screen artists that were intended to distract audiences from noticing the potentially obtrusive representational strategies being used in these films. In other words, on-screen performance helped viewers experience a comfortable, or acceptable kind of

⁹ Baker also notes Bruzzi’s tendency to overlap with the ideas presented in Nichols’ book in light of her claim to separate herself from them. For example, Bruzzi’s critique of Nichols’ definition of performative is undermined by her own methodology in that she relies on many of the same films Nichols uses for her own explanatory process (Footnote 4, page 36).

self-reflexivity, but having viewers *catch on* to the performance of the filmmaker launched audience members into a suddenly *uncomfortable* zone.

Bruzzi's definition of the modern performative documentary accounts for a different artistic intent. She notes that such films not only accept that the filmmaker's intrusion upon their end product is inevitable, but they also highlight this fact, especially through their form. Morris' *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), for example, values stylistic excess over the "truthfulness" of its content, to such an extent that the performative qualities of this documentary are actually upheld by the presence of Philip Glass' hypnotic score and by Morris' highly staged, sometimes heavy-handed chiaroscuro lighting rather than harmed by them, for it is these stylistic choices that "...[confirm] the existence of a life beyond the image" (196). Thus these two kinds of performative documentaries are not only separable by the time period they are associated with, but by their intentions and the belief systems that each documentary mode brings into relief.

Bruzzi's dichotomy is too simplistic in relation to the observational documentary films of the 1960s, especially in regards to those that feature musicians and musical performance. The subjects of such films were indeed filmed in ways that emphasized, rather than shrouded, the presence and performance of the filmmakers behind the cameras. Working with the ideas already put forth by performance scholars such as Auslander, Frith, Waugh, and Ian Inglis. I will discuss the ways in which evidence for authentic performance can be sourced from outside of the performing bodies themselves. These aforementioned scholars investigate examples of performance that range from live musical performance, to performance art, and do not limit their discussions to film or to a specific filmic mode. It is because these concepts of performance are so wide-reaching that I am able to use them as methodological tools to explore the ways in which the performance of a filmmaker is made manifest visually.

Frith uses Western culture's performance etiquette as the basis for a series of fresh considerations of what performance entails and how everyday socializing makes blurry the definition of performance generally. In his chapter aptly entitled "Performance," Frith latches on to popular music performers in particular, and discusses their stage acts at live concert events. He suggests that audiences are involved in performance just as much as the people on stage are (203-4). For Frith, then, performance connotes a whole set of experiences of sociability, and he thus liberates the act of performance from the stage performer alone. In this context, performance is as fluid as Nichols' definition of mode – it describes a set of social processes manifest in a wide range of sources.

Frith's most significant concept in relation to this shifting performance boundary is the separation between the performer as a person, capable of decision-making and conscious thought, and their performing body. Using the ideas of Noel Carroll as counterpoint, whose insight into the nature of performance art suggests that the performer's body becomes a tool and an aesthetic piece of their artistic project, Frith remarks that such an approach leads to objectification. It does not help contribute to a realistic consideration of the processes the performer underwent in order to make their performance successful (204-5). Frith summarizes this process with the word *persona*, which in the context of his book describes a process of posing and not acting (and in this way, contrary to the ideas put forth by Waugh, acting – referring to the acting style common in fiction filmmaking - becomes intrinsically separated from putting on a persona). Since putting on a persona is not constrained to a specific kind of space (such as the stage), nor to a specific social role (the audiences performs just as the star does), it is the process of creating a persona that befits the type of performance a filmmaker puts on.

To be able to decentralize notions of performance, Frith blurs the line between everyday social performance and stage performance. In order to call an entire process of social events performance, such as an audience's reactions and interactions with the performer they've come to see – and these interactions might include singing along, waving one's lighter during slower songs (or, today, waving a cell phone), as well as knowing when to applaud and cheer – Frith notes that much of these processes of performance must be based upon everyday actions. To an extent, everyone understands what it is to pose and to gesture in front of people they don't know; it is required of us everyday and eventually it becomes unconscious (205-6). That being said, the nature of these everyday actions is culturally coded, as performance similarly is, and they change over time. Elements of performance are thus normalized, in that everyone has been through these performative processes before, at the same time that they are made spectacular. It is both the audience *and* the performer who are bathed in spectacle, however, as one offers the other gratitude for “playing along” with their performance role; a performance, and in this particular example, a concert, is an essentially reciprocal relationship. The filmmaker responsible for capturing the artist on stage is wrapped up in an entirely different type of performance than his musical subject is. Frith's definition of performance and his inclusion of the concept of persona (the creation of a performing character that one may consciously adopt, and drop as necessary) means that the spectacle of performance is not restricted to stage spaces, but can transgress that boundary (205). Indeed, the filmmaker's particular performance is defined by his relationship to the mundane, and not necessarily to the spectacle that a stage space creates.

A filmmaker's detected presence in his art, and by proxy his performative presence, depends upon the nature of the representational practices he uses. Discussing the felt presence of a filmmaker in his work is decidedly auteurist in that it depends upon making evident the

personality of the director regardless of studio and budgetary constraints, the conventions of representational practices associated with his mode of choice, and the flamboyancy of the subjects or subject matter. Frith suggests that an essential element of a performance is *excess*, that perpetual potential for embarrassment when one's *real* self leaks through their constructed persona. Embarrassment depends to a large extent upon the details of a performance that can't be pre-planned, "the drama which lies precisely in [an event's] liveness" (207). Frith details the ways that liveness might reveal to an audience these dramatic moments that are essential to making the social performances involved in a live event successful: "...we need to see things which we know must be live... What's valued here is not (as in high culture) seeing something unique, but seeing something difficult, something that *takes work*. Far from wanting the means of production to be concealed, the popular audience wants to see how much has gone into its entertainment" (original emphasis, 207). Self-reflexivity rules, then, in the places where popular musicians are concerned, and this reflexivity manifests itself differently depending upon which performing subject is of focus. The performer's body, placed under the gaze of (potentially) several thousand audience members as well as very hot stage lights, inevitably sweats; singing and/or dancing encourages facial contortions that are not flattering but also unavoidable. These examples are just a few of the ways in which the popular musician can be defined as a performer who reveals evidence of the mundane, and not only the expertly pre-planned, in order to encourage authentic interpretations via his or her communicated "liveness".

Frith's emphasis on making clear the manner of production behind a performance can be taken to mean the process involved in *filming* it as well as those self-reflexive processes put forth by the musician. A filmmaker's evidence of spontaneity and "liveness" is similarly important to the success of his performance, but he must express these characteristics in different ways than

the stage performer does. In *Liveness*, Auslander suggests that the mysterious way in which discussion of popular music performance appears to inevitably lead to considerations of authenticity is perhaps not so mysterious at all.

One of the most influential recent writers concerned with authenticity and performance studies is Moore, who decrees that authenticity should be understood as a quality that is ascribed upon a performing subject by audiences, rather than an inherent characteristic of the performer or his work (210). Auslander has employed this tactic, as all of Auslander's work approaches authenticity as a subjective judgment, because to gauge a music's authenticity is partially dependent upon an individual's extra-musical knowledge and taste, and furthermore the definition of authenticity varies across musical genres and subgenres (*Liveness* 77-8). Another commonality concerning authenticity, which has cropped up among scholars and pop music fans alike is that authenticity in the popular music world is becoming increasingly hard to find, if it is not already entirely extinct (Auslander, *Liveness* 98; Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise* 15; Moore 212). The main reason for this is that mediation of musical performances (regardless of genre) is becoming increasingly present. Even a live stadium concert in today's world, Auslander says, is so dependent upon technology such as the Jumbo Tron or the diamond screen that the event ceases to be live at all (*Liveness* 98). Technological mediation and an authentic performance are not mutually exclusive, however. Rather, all mediated performance is always "shot through with liveness" (Quirk and Toynbee 405).

Indeed, that authenticity may be gleaned from technological sources that fall outside of the primarily visual world of television and film only further proves the important position that technology holds in the world of popular music. *Rhythm and Noise*, for example, does not center upon the stage performances given by pop or rock artists, but instead considers the production

processes behind songwriting as a site that prompts musings on the nature of authenticity. In discussing the music of Bob Dylan, Gracyk summarizes Paul Williams' point from *Performing Artist: Music of Bob Dylan* to observe that it is nearly impossible to discuss any given song without also discussing the performance attached to it. What Williams fails to notice about his own work, Gracyk says, is that he is not actually discussing the performances of the songs as much as he is referring to particular recordings of them, an observation that puts emphasis on a precise series of musical moments that would not have been possible to hear without technology (ii). Thus rock music, for Gracyk, is defined as something simultaneously authentic and superficial by means of the recording technologies that are essential to record production. Performance, he suggests, ceases to be performance at all unless it can be *reproduced* (15). While Gracyk is referring to the aural components of a performance here, his statement can also be applied to the visual language through which a performance is represented. Thus performance footage of popular musicians is equally dependent upon the cameras and sound technologies that capture them to encourage interpretations of authenticity from audiences.

Auslander's book *Liveness* is primarily concerned with tracing the evolution of technology's increasingly intrusive role in popular music's mediation. Thus he notes that the 1960s experienced a complete rejection of technology in elements of popular music culture that were seen as authentic. Television broadcasts of a musical group performing for an in-studio audience, then, were interpreted as being shiny and fake; so much so that television was understood to be so far outside of the realm of authenticity that Auslander suggests it played no role whatsoever in the process of authentication. Even a record in the '60s and '70s were understood as processed products that demanded authentication, a criteria that could only be satisfactorily met when the performers played a live concert. Auslander goes on to suggest that

as time goes by, the ontological distinctions between a live musical performance and its mediated version are growing less and less apparent. After the rise of MTV in the early 1980s, television's grasp upon the average North American household was so tight that, as a medium, television assimilated music altogether – music had been made *into* television, television was no longer just a method of presenting music (105). To emphasize the voracious effect that television has had upon music, Auslander summarizes that live performances are now economically dependent upon, aesthetically influenced by (or to use Auslander's own word, *contaminated* by), and is ideologically and ontologically inseparable from television (*Liveness* 7). Auslander's discerning attitude towards the meeting point of technology and live performance pops up numerous of his essays, through which he hopes to convey his sadness in living in a culture where live performance, which is "something [he] continue[s] to value seems to have less and less presence and importance" (*Liveness* xi).

Similar to Nichols' description of the evolution of modes, Auslander suggests that each new method of mediating performance - from its original locus on a theatre stage, to the development of photography, film, television, and finally the Internet - develops on account of increasing irrelevance of the previous method. *Unlike* a new mode's tendency to take influence from the mode that preceded it, reworking its conventions to better suit new cultural demands, a new media form effectively demolishes that which came before it. This is Auslander's description of the "parasitic" media form (if it is not already obvious, his description of the evolution of media and performance is rooted in medical terminology to give it a suitably theatrical effect) (*Liveness* 22). Auslander's description of the way in which television replaced live theatrical performance is most effective. Television, he suggests, intended to fully replace live performance, taking *too much* inspiration from its aesthetic strategies, and thus forcing

theatre to re-mold itself under its newfound oppressive circumstances (18). The filmed aesthetics of stage performance is thus strikingly similar to that of performances seen on television – the angles are limited, the camera is stagnant (or at least it was up until the late 1950s, as I outlined in my discussion of the observational mode’s technological innovations above). Once cameras became mobile, Auslander says that the visual syntax of televisual discourse became that of cinema (21). Finally, in modern times, the live concert event is modeled to appear mediated and mediatized – that is, it must look like the music video that accompanies it on television or on the Internet. This concept of the parasitic media form proves that evidence of the process of mediation become part of the act of performing (31), and also asks that accounting for the part that the filmmaker and the technologies he or she has at hand be as much a part of popular music performance discourse as analysis of the musician and his music is. The parasitic media form is also suggests that traceability of one set of representational practices is essential to the act of authenticating a new media form.

Auslander’s book is rooted in contemporary culture, and he creates a grand narrative for mass mediated visions of live events through his overarching historical approach. He suggests that all forms of mediation have been evolving at a constant pace over time, leading us to this present cultural moment, and to this present method of musical consumption. Problematically, however, this attitude implies that mediation only gained its potential for being understood as an essential part of performance very recently, which in turn suggests that a connection between what audiences know is mediated and what they interpret as authentic is also only a recent phenomenon. Yet visual signs of authenticity have always been present in mediated examples of pop music performance. Indeed, this is an essentially postmodernist view (Frith 224) that begs for the establishment of a method through which audiences can come to understand the evolution

of mediation strategies that have been applied to popular music performers in the decades preceding MTV, and to understand that those strategies have always encouraged interpretations of authenticity.

Considerations of the type of representational strategies being applied to the filmmaking subject, which are themselves dependent upon the filmic mode in question, change the way authenticity must be visually expressed. In seeing a documentary, audiences are witness to a host of performance types that are taking place on numerous planes simultaneously: firstly, the film requires the performance of the director in order for it to be created in the first place; secondly, a film captures a form of performance on screen; and thirdly, the audience's act of perceiving the documentary encourages another form of performance on behalf of the viewer (Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation" 9). The representational strategies applied to both on- and off-stage performance are transferable between modes, however, although the intentions of the filmmaker in employing those representational strategies inevitably change as the mode dictates. The similarities in representational practices must be considered in order to understand what a filmmaker bases his own performance upon, much like the musician on-stage is conscious of the famous performances in music history when he goes on stage in front of his audience.

Cohen offers a series of close visual analyses in his work that help to create a case for the relevance of studying representational strategies applied to musical performers. The subject of study in his fourth chapter, for example, is that of the documented faces of violin players in international documentaries (69-89). Cohen notes that the visual component of performance is an important source of authentication because it helps cement the viewer's understanding of the ways in which the performer's physical movements produce the unique sounds that he or she is

capable of (1). Cohen is so invested in the significance of the visuals of musical performance, in fact, that he does not differentiate between a mediated work and the live experience of a performance. Instead, he oscillates between discussing the performances of the filmic subject and the nature of the visuals applied to him or her, without discussing the ontological distinctions between the types of performance that each element connotes. Mick Jagger, in his flamboyant costume and with his distinctive dancing at the Rolling Stones concert at Altamont in 1969 is not differentiated from the version of himself that was shot and edited together in the performance footage captured in *Gimme Shelter*. That Cohen does not make these distinctions is as solid a piece of evidence for Auslander's insistence that contemporary audiences have reached a newfound (and potentially problematic) level of comfort with mediation as could be hoped for.

Cohen has a very precise definition of performance, however, which interestingly lies in contrast with discussions surrounding performance studies generally (especially those of Frith), and with documentary filmmaking discourse. For example, Cohen excludes considerations of the music video from his book because "the form generally shows musicians lip-synching rather than performing live. Thus, the genre does not offer much that is relevant to musical performances or documentary cinema" (4). He thus rejects Auslander's idea that forms of media and their associated representational strategies may cross-pollinate, and he also suggests that any indication that a stage appearance was pre-planned means that the event was not performance proper. In expressing these ideas, Cohen is also indicating that a very particular set of representational strategies is what offers him an authentic-looking vision of a performance (and he seems to favour the documentary tradition, equating it with live stage performance).

Even given his rather aloof definition of the word authenticity, which he states has an unavoidably reductive effect (54), Cohen provides close analysis of the nature of the visuals

typically applied to musicians who play particular *kinds* of instruments, thus suggesting that representational strategies must be adjusted for the instrument in question if they are going to appear appropriate and authentic to their audience. Guitar players, he notes, do not so easily suffer from a visual separation from their body at large, mainly because guitars sit at the hip and call for longer shot scales. A guitarist might be visually detached from his role as a singer or vice-versa, however, since it is less interesting to a viewer to watch a concert from a long shot scale and it is impossible to offer viewers a close up of a face simultaneously with the guitar they hold. The violinist, however, does not offer the cameraman this problem. The violin is an instrument whose music provokes emotional reflection in the violinist's face and not through his or her body as a whole (70).

Cohen effectively highlights the ways in which seemingly simplistic or conventional choices are indicative of wider cultural values. The close up of a musical performer, for example, emphasizes the North American audience's obsession with the heroic individual (79). He also suggests that the full significance of the performance as a cultural moment cannot be fully expressed without considerations of the associated visuals (78), a point that stands in contrast to Gracyk's insistence that rock music's authenticity is primarily manifest in its aural components (*Rhythm and Noise* 7), but which is upheld by Grossberg, who suggests that it is the visuals of popular music, and not the performances nor the music itself that renders the genre authentic (qtd. in *Liveness* 84-5). Cohen's investment in the visuals of musical performance as an essential site of relatability, and where audiences can even glean empirical knowledge is significant for several reasons. Most simply, it shows that the way a performer is filmed is just as important as the performing body itself. Cohen's use of examples from the 1960s, too, displays that his

(almost subconscious) appreciation of the nature of visuals is applicable to performance footage from the pre-MTV era.

Cohen may have restricted himself to lauding the visuals associated with documentary performance of the 1960s, but it is fruitful, if not essential, to widen one's viewing scope beyond the documentary mode in order to grasp the fuller picture of a band's visual representation and self-reflection. Literature devoted to the Beatles is mostly concerned with their music and not with their films. Inglis likely carries with him the title of the scholar with the highest number of Beatles-centric essays and books written; indeed, much like the Beatles' own film canon, the topics that Inglis covers in the span of these works ranges from the significance of the Beatles' album cover art to a history of the animated depictions of the band (see " 'Nothing You Can See That Isn't Shown': Album Covers of the Beatles," and "From Fab to Fantasy: The Roots and Routes of the Cartoon Beatles" respectively), and all of his interests are tied together only through Inglis' limitless fascination with this band.

As was mentioned in the introduction, insights into the band's filmography are more difficult to trace. Neaverson's own book is perhaps the most "serious" and insightful of those wholly devoted to the Beatles' films. Neaverson goes beyond listing facts or trivia about the band or the behind-the-scene process of capturing them on film (although all of those elements do make their appearance), and instead is interested in placing the Beatles' films within a larger cultural context, emphasizing the ways in which this very British band was visually assimilated into American culture. He also muses on the reasons why their film collection was allowed to become so diverse and full of experimentation (117-8). While an obvious weakness in Neaverson's approach with his book is his choice to exclude certain Beatles films, such as *The Beatles!...* or *...Shea Stadium* (perhaps because these two works are of different modes than

AHDN, for example), he does briefly acknowledge that influences exist between the films that make up the Beatles' canon, an observation that pops up persistently in Beatles literature both preceding and following Neaverson. Indeed, repetition of information or of analytical conclusions must be the element that weakens Beatles literature on a larger scale. If one reads Neaverson's book, for example, then Roland Reiter's insights into the Beatles on screen adds a limited amount of additional knowledge. Reiter is revolutionary in terms of his project's scope, however, because he considers the documentaries made about the Beatles in as much detail as he does their studio-financed fictional films, or even the series of animated cartoons featuring the band simply titled *The Beatles* (ABC Television, 1965-69).

The criticism concerning specific directors that have worked with the Beatles, specifically the Maysles and Lester, Also helps to paint a larger picture about the Beatles films that span filmic modes but nonetheless are unified by their inclusion in this film canon. Sinyard's book focuses on Lester, for example, a man whose film career has been written upon extensively. Sinyard works to undo some of the simplification of facts and interpretations that surround the Beatles' films, including the ways that one film may or may not have visually influenced another; he also breaks some mythological assumptions concerning Lester's personal background and the type of cultural inspirations his work took from. While repetition of facts haunts these auteurist works as it does Beatles literature, there are some particularly relevant repetitions to note. Lester's obsession with the technological side of filmmaking, both in regards to the process and effect, makes a study of mediation in relation to his films a natural approach (see mentions by Sinyard 11; John Seelye 57). In particular, scholars and film critics refer to Lester's "illusory" use of editing and montage, wherein Lester manages to give audiences the visual impression that a sequence owes its exciting effects to rapid editing, when a careful eye

will note that staging and methods of juxtaposition also play a major part and that the number of shots, or the movement of the camera, are not as extreme as they seem (Sinyard 11-2; George Bluestone 15; Peter Tanguette, “Richard Lester” n.pag.). In a similar manner that a discussion of the Maysles and their use of the close up cannot be mutually exclusive, close analysis of Lester’s music sequences that will be the focus of Chapters One and Two will be performed with the emphasized role of Lester as a detail- and technique-oriented director in mind.

The view that authenticity has fostered an uneasy relationship with technology and methods of mediation only in recent decades is one that puts pre-MTV examples of popular music performance into an overly romanticized perspective. The observational documentary movement of the 1960s, with its reputation for offering audiences an objective viewpoint unto indexical reality, as well as providing audiences with the “naturalized” social actor rather than the contractually obligated traditional actor who is tied to a script offers the perfect historical cinematic moment from which the idealizations surrounding the observational documentary, and its relationship to the world of fiction filmmaking, may be shattered and re-fitted respectively. In exploring Nichols’s definition of the word mode more thoroughly, and using his performative mode as a methodology for watching (and re-watching) films that feature popular music performances, new space can be made for the director’s performative role in the creation of his or her film.

Sources of authenticity are ever changing, and the sheer diversity of sources from which it may be interpreted, even in regards to a singular band, are overwhelming. Chapters Two and Three will highlight the ways in which the films that feature the Beatles offer a wealth of sources from which authenticity, and especially its codependent relationship with technological means of mediation, may be deciphered.

Chapter Two: The Visible Camera in 1964

Together, Albert and David Maysles created the film *The Beatles!...* for the British television company Granada in early 1964. The filmmaking duo was reportedly given two hours notice to plant themselves at New York's Kennedy Airport before the Beatles arrived, which only adds to the film's reputation for spontaneity. After completion, the film was released via television to Great Britain in February of 1964 as a 36-minute segment entitled *Yeah Yeah Yeah! The Beatles in New York*, and then was subsequently released in patchwork form to American audiences later that year (Reiter 35). It is the irregular nature of its release, and also its status as a work of televised nonfiction contributes to the fact that *The Beatles!...* remains one of the lesser known films in the Beatles' canon.¹⁰ However, it is the fact that this footage was destined for release via television that makes considerations of mediation, and medium specificity, especially interesting in regards to it. As well, as Baker points out, the fact that the film was not given the opportunity to run in theatres should not suggest that its imagery and even its soundscape were not influential to rockumentaries generally and to the Beatles' films specifically – especially *AHDN*: “The lasting iconography of the Beatles could have been very different, indeed, if the Maysles hadn't first captured and enshrined the group's playful spirit and confidence in front of the cameras within a nonfictional context” (131). That the identity of the Maysles and their particular presence as filmmakers is never excluded from discussions of their films makes a consideration of their relationship with their filmic subjects an essential one.

In the five decades that Albert Maysles has been making films, his position regarding the role of his camera has remained consistent. In 1964, Albert said, “I am interested in using the motion

¹⁰ Even Neaverson's otherwise extensive book excludes the film, mentioning it only when it relates to his discussions of the aesthetic influence it had upon *AHDN* (see page 16).

picture camera as a personal device” (Vogels 21). Forty-nine years later, in an interview included in *The Making of...* where Albert realizes that he is much less visible in the pair’s films than his brother David, Albert explains that the reason audiences of this making-of feature are privy to so many shots of David at the end of each sequence is because David needed to sync the sound to the image by clapping a card against his mobile mic. “But,” says Albert, “you see me too, because you’re looking through my eye when you’re looking at the screen.” This parallel drawn between the camera and the eye places emphasis on both the man holding the camera and the personalized process of filmmaking, and Albert thus asserts that the filmmaker, *in combination* with his tools of mediation assume the form of an on-screen presence. In short, the Maysles and their camera are performers who are subject to interpretations of authenticity.

The idea of a camera representing or reflecting the artistic presence of the director is one that the auteur theory was founded upon. Helped in large part by the ideas pioneered in Alexandre Astruc’s 1948 essay, published in the journal *L’Ecran Francais* and entitled “The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: *La Camera Stylo*,” this essay presented the concept of the director as an artist capable of inscribing his personal signature into his film through idiosyncratic visual style or themes (n.pag.). However, there is an essential distinction between the auteur theory’s construction of the role of the camera and Albert Maysles’ above ruminations. Astruc’s definition of the camera as a pen that is capable of leaving behind an imprint of an author implies that a director’s camera is capable only of *mediating* his ideas, leaving a gap between the person responsible for harbouring a concept and the mechanical representation of it. In *The Beatles!...*, evidence of mediation is essential to an audience’s interpretation of the film as an authentic work, and the gap between what the filmmaker wants to express and his camera’s capabilities is minimized. This is not to say that observational cinema is objective or unbiased; it certainly is

not. Rather, the cinema of the Maysles encourages audiences to understand the aesthetic influence of the tools of mediation to the same degree that they may desire to understand the filmmaker as an artist.

In a similar way that Cohen ventures into a detailed investigation of how the changes in film technology affect the way a musical performer is filmed (I purposefully save his concepts pertaining to the camera's relationship to the performer's body for my next chapter), I am now going to explore the ways in which the Maysles and Lester experiment with the visual strategies associated with their associated filmic mode. The scenes that I offer for analysis in the upcoming sections will illustrate the appearance and effects of Auslander's parasitic media form, as well as offer evidence of Baker's chronology of the rockumentary's visual evolution. I hope to show that both *The Beatles!* and *AHDN* are important to consider within performance studies because the relationship between the Beatles, the Maysles, and Lester creates space for another relationship that is not often made welcome in the realm of observational filmmaking or in Hollywood studio films: that between the audience and the camera.

2.1 The Performers and Their Subjects: The Maysles as Participants in *The Beatles! The First U.S. Visit* and *The Making of The Beatles! The First U.S. Visit*

Performance is the primary theme in *The Beatles!...*, which is perhaps unsurprising since a celebrity's public life is one inherently crowded with performance. The early films of the Maysles were all concerned with unpacking the conception of the American celebrity in some way, as with *Showman* (1963), which follows the skilled movie salesman Joseph Levine, or *Meet Marlon Brando* (1965) which captures a series of interviews given by a very sarcastic Brando over the course of a single day, and indeed with *The Beatles!...* . Vogels notes that such subject

matter was an obsession of direct cinema in general in its early days (that is, the late 1950s and early 1960s). In response to contemporaneous television and movies, which increasingly featured the presence of heavily manufactured stars, the filmmakers associated with the direct cinema movement sought to critique the American public's idolization of singular heroes and heroines, and they did this through establishing what I propose to call an "authenticating" set of representational practices. This involved undoing the "pseudo event" as Vogels calls it (which refers to any routine, well-planned, and thus inherently staged event that celebrities must repeatedly endure, such as a press conference) by means of a mobile camera and unscripted action (21- 2). In doing away with stagnant shots taken from cameras placed on stable tripods that might capture a musical performance, for example, the musician in question can be filmed from new angles that reveal a renewed sense of closeness between performer and his audience.

One of the more frequently discussed sequences in *The Beatles!...* is that of their outdoor photo shoot in New York, where the Beatles are pushed and pulled to various locations in Central Park by a large troupe of magazine and newspaper photographers. The tone of the scene conveys not only the Maysles' joy in being able to visually "undo" the conventional representational strategies being applied to the band members, but also those photographers' impatience with the sluggishness of the media tools they use to capture the band. Baker notes this effect, using it to highlight the significance of the Maysles' personal relationship with the band members. Baker points out that the lone camera that the Maysles carry is both innovative and unobtrusive enough to prolong the boys' tolerance for it, while the same cannot be said of the countless photographer's cameras (130-1). The orders that these anonymous journalists shout, such as "Say Beatles! Hey Beatles, this way!" in an attempt to get the three present band members to look and pose in a certain direction fall back upon them, verbally mocked by Paul

McCartney and John Lennon. While this occurs, the Maysles focus their mechanical eye upon the sea of still photo cameras (as opposed to the faces of the photographers holding them), and it becomes apparent that Albert, too, is silently mocking the photographers for their slowness that has everything to do with their working medium. As Baker notes, this sequence is significant for two major reasons: that it displays the close relationship that the Maysles achieved with the Beatles, and also that it provides documentation of the *act* of documentation (130). The sequence highlights the Beatles' proficiency for performance – indeed, they were so good at it that they never fully “turned off” when they were in front of any kind of camera, whether that was one belonging to an impatient journalist or the Maysles (Ehrenstein and Reed, *Rock on Film* 57.).

Thus for scholars David Ehrenstien and Bill Reed, the fact that the Beatles were in a constant state of performance made them less interesting, because the goals of an observational documentary (which included allowing its viewers an all-access pass to the secret lives of their favourite stars) did not seem to *work* on them. I would contend that the Beatles' persistent state of performance is what is responsible for inspiring the Maysles to subsequently enter a state of performance themselves, a performance that can be interpreted from the filmmakers' precise visual language in *The Beatles!...* . Most telling is Albert's close up on Paul as he answers journalist's questions concerning what the Beatles had done the night before, it being their first night in America. “Yeah, [watch the television is] all we did last night...and listened to the radio.” Albert does not offer the reporter any screen time here, and instead focuses only on Paul's face, hinting to viewers that he is on the Beatles' “side” in this press affair and that the presence of reporters is redundant.

Indeed, if the press reporters held the same kind of relationship with the Beatles that the Maysles did, then they (like viewers) would *already* know what the Beatles had done last night,

since the footage of the previous sequence in *The Beatles!...* documents the lads relaxing in their hotel room and making some phone calls home. Indeed, the photo shoot as a whole seems a bit of a mess: the Maysles avoid granting viewers an establishing shot of the situation and instead offer a disorienting whip pan, thus characterizing the blurred group of photographers as a like-minded mass who work for the types of popular media outlets that the Beatles and the Maysles must simply endure. Shots of the Beatles from Albert Maysles' perspective are low angle and very close up, sometimes taken from behind the band members. As viewers watching the film have little choice but to align themselves with the Maysles since all is revealed through Albert's mechanical eye, sides of the Beatles that are not of typical aesthetic interest to press photographers are revealed. In this photo shoot sequence, it is close-ups, taken from unconventional angles, as well as Albert's tendency to focus his camera upon the mechanical apparatuses that serve the photojournalists, while showing a lack of interest in regards to revealing their individual personalities that functions to both critique, and formally undo Vogel's idea of the pseudo-event. In applying unconventional views of their subjects to their audience, the Maysles make their own performance apparent.

Equally pivotal to aligning the celebrity with the critical position of the filmmaker is the impression that the celebrity is "shown working against the superficiality of the situation" (Vogels 22). The Maysles ensure that virtually every scene in *The Beatles!...* explores this idea, and scenes in *The Making of...* documentary take this concept even further. Each moment in this documentary, which is partly comprised of all the sequences that were shot during the band's five-day tour but which were later deemed unworthy of inclusion in the final cut, emphasize the self-reflexive presence of technology that went along for the Beatles' journey.

During the train ride from New York to Washington, for example, Albert and David take some time, away in the corner of an otherwise reporter-filled train car, to show the Beatles the mechanics behind the lightweight camera and its mobile microphone counterpart, catching the whole sequence on film as they do so. From an objective viewpoint, it is easy to understand why this scene was cut from the final film: David appears in it, which creates a level of self-reflexivity that would have upset the objective reputation of observational filmmaking as the 1960s defined it. For audiences of 2003 and onward, however, this scene is the perfect example of the type of extreme reflexivity audiences are comfortable with and fascinated by, and thus *The Making of...* documentary stands as an important illustration of how those expectations have changed over time. This scene, and other outtakes from Smeaton's *The Making of...* film find similarities with some contemporary rockumentary films, which Baker describes as works that do not subscribe to the definitions set by his journalistic or impressionistic visual strategies. These terms describe the clear, compositional aesthetic applied to performing subjects via a stable camera and good lighting conditions, versus a more free from, stylized, and abstracted documentation style respectively (115-6). Instead, the filmmakers

“...re-imagine the *liveness* of popular music performance by situating the artist in commonplace environments...capturing the performance in a single continuous take - it is not the illusion of co-presence between the performer and home audience, but rather the co-presence of the performer and the filmmaker-as-creative-force who serves as a surrogate for the viewer as she carves out the performance from quotidian spaces.”

(Baker 253)

The camera angles in this sequence are lazy in comparison to those in the rest of the film: extreme low angles are applied to John, who stands nearest to the camera, and sometimes a

man's arm cuts clean across the screen (at one point George Harrison remarks that Albert has been filming without even looking through his viewfinder). Both George and Paul look straight into the camera's lens many times, interested in the machine itself and not necessarily with breaching the fourth wall between themselves and their audience. It is a technology-heavy scene, as the camera becomes the topic of conversation and pieces of it are visible in the shot. Most problematically for the Maysles (but beneficial for my project) is the revelation that the technologies responsible for capturing the Beatles onscreen are at least as, if not more, interesting than the Beatles themselves. In participating directly with these technologies and admitting that they don't fully understand how they work, but trying hard to do so, the Beatles reveal the reciprocal performative relationship between themselves and their filmmakers: now audiences realize that the Maysles have as much an agenda, and a commission to fill, as the Beatles do, though the scale of the Maysles' obligations is admittedly smaller. Laying bare the contrivance of their pop cultural takeover of America in 1964 aligns the Beatles not with the corporations that work to exploit their image but rather with the ideals of the friendly filmmakers, Albert and David. Indeed, the Maysles are the true performers in this sequence, in that the mechanics behind their filmmaking strategies become very much exposed. Here is the mechanical equivalent of catching Paul Anka in his underwear in his dressing room.

These select examples from *The Beatles!...* suggest that the Maysles do not only rely upon the revelation of their filmic subjects' personalities in order to garner an impression of authenticity from their audiences. They also rely on the nature of the events that tend to follow a band of pop idols, as well as the filmmaker's understanding of how the politics surrounding those events may be commented upon via film form. In other words, while the Maysles don't necessarily need the Beatles in particular to authenticate their representational strategies, the

Beatles *do* need the Maysles in order to be rendered as subjects who are on the “right side” of consumerism and who are therefore capable of inspiring interpretations of authenticity from their audience.

As this alternate method of filming the pseudo-event became more common in the early-to mid-1960s, experimentation with form became the observational filmmaker’s obligation, and these experimentations eventually became convention within the observational mode generally (Vogels 20-1, 45-6). Baker’s work on the evolution of the formal characteristics of the rockumentary genre chronicles this progression, and he notes that the development of the representational strategies currently associated with rockumentary stems from a larger series of patterns seen in the visual depiction of popular music across mediums. This includes photojournalism, album art, promo material such as the music video, and also fiction film’s depiction of popular music performers (108-9). The influence across all of these visual mediums works reciprocally.

Any representation of media technologies is inseparable from a discussion of the representational strategies that have been applied to performance spaces in the visualization of popular music over the decades. The representation of different kinds of spaces in the “behind – the-scenes biography,” a subgenre of Baker’s rockumentary genre (119) follows a certain number of representational conventions, and in doing so elicits questions of medium specificity and connotations of performance as is promoted by each type of performance space in question. As per the labels granted by Romney, the hotel room, the space behind the stage, as well as candid moments captured aboard cars or trains account for my conceptualization of “off-stage” space (83). These spaces stand in contrast to stage space, which may refer to the music hall, television or film studio. On- and off-stage space call for different connotations of performance

to occur in each, and for precise representational strategies to be applied in order to satisfactorily capture the performances that occur in that space. For example, Baker notes that the visual strategy most commonly applied to on-stage concert footage is that of frontality, where the camera is positioned so as to mimic the frontal point of view of the audience members. Rarely does the camera trespass the stage/audience boundary in these instances, and the realization that the camera is attached to a heavy and relatively immobile tripod is what accounts for the aesthetic of limited angles (Baker 81), to which Albert Maysles' angles applied to the Beatles during their aforementioned photo shoot stand in contrast.

While the representational strategies that are applied to certain performance spaces account for how audiences are encouraged to interpret authenticity from those performances, this effect is also dependent upon the ontology of the type of mediation being employed. In his essay "Performativity of Performance Documentation," Auslander uses examples of performance art to examine his points. While I do not intend to suggest that performance art is ontologically identical to popular music performance, Auslander's insistence that a consideration of the *type* of mediation being applied to a particular kind of performance contributes to the nature of one's authentic interpretation of the work is essential here.

The Maysles' formal approach to filming the Beatles is one that suggests that these filmmakers were very aware of the novelty of their own camera and synchronized sound system, and of its potential for great success or great failure among a highly competitive industry. The textual examples analyzed above give testament to the Maysles' persistent disdain for the media tools that their hand crafted cameras encounter (and in nearly every interview he gives, Albert will verbally do the same). Other sequences in this film display Auslander's concept of the parasitic media form, outlined briefly in the introduction and in the literature review, which

suggests that one newly developed media form seeks not to formally cooperate with the representational strategies that came before it, but rather to assimilate – even consume – them (*Liveness* 22). For the Maysles, the technique of their newly designed camera consuming the less-than-authentic media forms that similarly attempt to mediate the Beatles manifests itself in their visual override of those media objects.

The Maysles tend to film the Beatles in the same way regardless of the type of performance space they inhabit. In *The Making of...* documentary that contains many examples of footage that Albert and David recorded for *The Beatles!*... but which were ultimately rejected from the final cut of the film, Albert comments on the sequence involving his filming of an American family with three young girls as they watch the Beatles' performance broadcast live on television.¹¹ While Albert and David panicked initially at the idea of being denied the opportunity to sit in the in-studio audience at the *Ed Sullivan Show*, they quickly thought of an alternative solution, and simply followed the sound of Beatles music projecting from a family's home television set in an apartment close to the television studio where they could insert themselves and their camera. This alternative is theoretically quite interesting, and Albert comments that the low-lit space of the family's home suited the aesthetic desires of himself and his brother more so than being "stuck" in a well-lit studio with a host of cameras glued to tripods would have done. He lauds instead this "real-life" situation that he has stumbled upon, thus always insisting that no matter the situation he and his camera are placed in, it is the superior one precisely because it has been brought under the gaze of his objective camera (*The Making of...*).

¹¹ This same sequence exists among the documentary footage released within the Maysles' original televised film. Because *The Beatles!*... has suffered an edited re-release, some copies, such as my own from 1991, inserts the footage of the Beatles performing on the *Ed Sullivan Show* in place of the Maysles' footage of the family in their living room.

In this sequence the Maysles are intent upon emphasizing their closeness with the Beatles and also their own ability to capture spontaneous moments, no matter how technologically restricted they may be at the time. Albert focuses his camera upon the images being projected from the family's television set, offering close-ups on the faces of the Beatles as they are projected from the flickering screen. Since the Maysles cannot reinstate their physical closeness with the Beatles as they did during the band's experience with the photojournalists in my previous example, they instead come close to the object responsible for mediating them. This negates the space between the Maysles' "live" audience in the living room of the apartment they have been invited into and the performing musicians, who are physically removed from the space.

Auslander insists that television in particular is a medium that must be understood to be mutually exclusive from interpretations of authenticity (*Liveness* 105). Offering a counterpoint to this pervasive view is Wurtzler, as he outlines the audience's spatial and temporal co-presence (or lack thereof) to certain types of performance events. The live event, he says, involves total spatial and temporal co-presence, while the recorded event, such as the fiction film or previously recorded radio programs, account for spatial and temporal absence (89). Live television, like the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan*, occupies what Wurtzler calls a "transitional" space in between, due to the home audience's spatial absence, but temporal co-presence with the live event being transmitted through their set (91). For all of its shiny, carefully staged mediation, says Wurtzler, television carries important characteristics of a truly live event, the most important of these characteristics being that it is *experienced* as live by the home viewing audience.

The fact that within *The Beatles!*... lie examples of a *doubly* mediated live television event renders an audience's hope for locating authenticity through evidence of perceived

qualities of “liveness” hopeless from the beginning; the presence of too many media objects and self-reflexive representational strategies ensures this. Auslander’s figuration of the process of authenticating any given popular band in the 1960s and 1970s denies television any part of the process of authenticity, as he suggests that the medium as a whole is perceived by audiences as being full of lip-synching and trickery (105).

The camera work of the Maysles does not deny this impression, but they deal with the reputation of the medium in an interesting way that results in a Wurtzler-esque impression of closeness to the performer onstage: they add another layer of mediation, and this time the right *kind* of mediation of the footage broadcast on television in 1964, which is perhaps not television as Auslander would define it. Albert visually erases the representational strategies inherent to studio television filmmaking by impressing upon the set his characteristic representational strategy, the close-up. This is Albert’s ticket to encouraging interpretations of authenticity, because in applying the visual strategies that viewers associate with his mobile camera, he acknowledges the shiny, fake qualities of the journalistic representational practices being applied to the Beatles in the television studio (see Auslander, *Liveness* 105) and positions himself on the other side of them.¹² Thus the Maysles empathize with the “duped” television audience. The Maysles’ unraveling of the connotations that their broadcast medium normally connotes is indicative of a wider need for scholars to consider each example of the medium individually, as labeling all examples of televised broadcasts as inauthentic is too simplistic.

¹² See Auslander’s discussion of television’s inherently “fake” qualities in *Liveness*, page 105.

2.2 Lights, Camera, and Even More Cameras: The Conflation of Representational Strategies in *A Hard Day's Night*

In Lester's film *AHDN*, the phenomenon of double mediation reappears. Its inclusion in a heavily stylized fiction film rather than an observational documentary implies that the camera and filmmaker are not responsible for reminding audiences of the ongoing process of mediation and authentication here, as is the case with the Maysles' film. Lester's tendency to allow the representational strategies associated with television and commercials, and to shuffle them in with his decidedly more experimental and freely mobile (which I will be referring to as "cinematic") techniques is where his visual language of authenticity lies. Lester's cameras do not seek to consume, or to out-perform each other as the Maysles' do, nor does Lester achieve the impression of authenticity by allowing his audiences to feel physically closer to the Beatles through the technique of the close-up and unconventional angles (although both of those visual elements are certainly present). Instead, Lester's representational strategies are akin to a celebration of mediation and performance types.

During moments of musical performance, the Beatles perform for one diegetic television camera while they are simultaneously exposed to the wandering cinematic camera that Lester carries; the merging of Waugh's "presentational" versus "representational" performance strategies comes to a head in such instances as the Beatles are arguably employing both strategies simultaneously (qtd. in Baker 130-1). In light of this, the definition of Lester's own performance lies in his ability to (literally) mediate this fusion of performance types and to occupy a new type of space in between his fictionalized "live" audience and the audiences of his films. In addition to perusing the entire span of the television studio and music hall where the Beatles rehearse and perform, Lester's ground for exploring the ontology of performance lies in

his visualization of media objects within his *mise en scene* as he includes shots of the cameras, sound equipment, television monitors and the people who operate them. Thus the media object in *AHDN* obtains the same mythical status as the behind-the-scenes spaces that are typically explored by the rockumentary genre – it is part of what contributes to the felt authenticity that Lester’s otherwise highly polished studio works produce.

Richard Lester’s fiction film *AHDN* bears a particular weight in scholarly and critical discussions pertaining to authenticity because it is consistently “paired” with *The Beatles!...* which also provides fertile grounds for discourse pertaining to said topic. Discussions of the films’ purported dialogue, however, particularly in regards to the formal components of each work, have been oversimplified in the past. Neaverson suggests that *AHDN* "grants the illusion of documentary style realism," achieved because the Beatles are effectively "playing themselves" in real locations and with naturalistic lighting, all of which are qualities normally attributed to observational documentary's form.¹³ Neaverson claims that Lester’s film becomes "almost indistinguishable" from the Maysles’ film as a result of their visual similarities (*The Beatles Movies* 16). In terms of camerawork, however, these films are executed very differently on account of the vastly different politics demanded of each works’ respective mode.

The essential similarities between the films reside in the nature of the self-reflexive representational strategies employed. My previous analysis supposed that *The Beatles!...* is primarily concerned with negating audiences’ conception of space between themselves as their celebrity idols, while highlighting the leading role that the act of mediation plays in eliciting and executing performance in all of its incarnations. Lester's persistent challenging of the

¹³ This opinion has been reiterated many times in casual Beatles literature, such as Andy Murray and Lorrain Rolston’s condensed “guide book” to *AHDN* (49), as well as in scholarly texts. See Baker, (131), Reiter, (47-49, 50-51), Sinyard (36) and Dave Saunders (*Direct Cinema* 46).

representational strategies inherent to the stage highlights conventions of off-stage performance by proxy and liberates viewer's conceptions of the type of performance(s) a stage can host.

Lester's films occupy the unique position of being fit to dwell in both American film texts and British ones, since Lester is an American-born filmmaker, and his projects were financed from American production companies – *AHDN* is the first of the Beatles' three films that would fulfill their contract with United Artists (the other two being *Help!*, and *Let It Be*). However, Lester's films are also chock-full of British cast members and crew, and in the case of *AHDN*, it is largely Alun Owen's script that injects the film with its essential "Liverpuddlian" qualities (Sinyard 35-6). Lester has produced films that form a range of genres, including comedies, such as his co-production with the Goons entitled *The Running Jumping and Standing Still Film* (1960) (the film that initially fired the Beatles' personal interest in Lester as a filmmaker), the dramatic romance *Petulia* (1968), and action films such as *Superman II* (1980). Overall, though, there is a notable increase in attention being granted to his contribution to the Beatles' filmography, and in particular to *AHDN* (Tanguette, 2003).¹⁴ This is due to several factors, the most obvious being that with *AHDN* Lester thusly became associated with the world's most popular band at the time (Sinyard 5), and also because the pop musical film, as Smith calls it, gained huge popularity in the early- to mid-1960s as the business worlds of popular music and film production came together in newly sophisticated ways (Smith 2; also see

¹⁴ The attention paid to his Beatles contributions is on another increase currently, due to 2014 marking the 50th anniversary of many of the Beatles' landmark career events. In 2014, *AHDN* was granted a place in the Criterion Collection, where it is hailed as a representation of the "moment" wherein the Beatles rose from being a mere temporary pop phenomenon to being the "singular, irreverent idols of their generation". The film's "incalculable influence on the music video" is also one of its paraded features here. It is interesting to note that the former feature is indicative of the film's consistently articulated relationship to the documentary form, while the latter hails its highly stylized and effective editing strategies, which are more akin to advertising techniques of the 1950s and 1960s (and thus, with consumerism as falsity) ("Synopsis").

Baker 108; Sinyard 36). While Lester's films are often given a brief overview in texts consolidating the most significant British, or 1960s films, or some combination of the two topics (see Melanie Williams' entry in Sarah Barrow and John White's *Fifty Key British Films*, page 122-7, or the work of Reiter), Sinyard has contributed interpretations of Lester's stylistic and thematic tendencies that go beyond offering narratives of behind-the-scenes production tales.

Sinyard's book seeks to undo common Lester-myths, calling for audiences to pay closer attention to the director's camerawork, especially in regards to his sequences featuring musical performance. Lester's approach to documenting musical performances contributes to his reputation as the forefather of the music video, and by extension MTV. In his review of the film from 1996, Ebert notes: "Today when we watch TV and see quick cutting, hand-held cameras, interviews conducted on the run with moving targets, quickly intercut snatches of dialogue, music under documentary action and all the other trademarks of the modern style, we are looking at the children of "A Hard Day's Night" ("*A Hard Day's Night*," rogerebert.com, no pagination). Andrew Sarris' contemporaneous review of the film, which appeared in *The Village Voice* in 1964 also acknowledges Lester's revolutionary tendency to mix and match the representational strategies from a variety of filmic modes, wherein the film may be understood as a "...crystallization of such diverse cultural particles as the pop movie, rock'n'roll, *cinema verite*, the *nouvelle vague*, free cinema, the affectedly handheld camera, frenzied cutting...the semi-documentary, and studied spontaneity" ("*A Hard Day's Night*," *Read the Beatles* 56-7). In borrowing the aesthetic strategies associated with these burgeoning filmmaking movements that were born in the 1960s, Lester both showcases these strategies without having to subscribe to their politics.

Indeed, *AHDN* carries with it all of the connotations of a studio production, which in turn implies that its potential for being seen as an authentic product must reside in very different sources than were defined in the context of *The Beatles!...* . The Beatles' relationship with Lester does not depend upon the filmmaker's visual representation of the Beatles as resisters of consumer culture, because the form of *AHDN* does not carry the politics of objectivity that the observational mode does. While it is true that the characters that the Beatles portray (which are essentially fictionalized versions of their public personas) are generally resistant to the rules and regulations concerning the "proper" way to organize a television broadcast of a live musical performance, their rebellion is sparked only by the fact that they are a group of restless young men who are being forced to comply with a rigorous performance schedule, and so does not carry political ideals. Deprived of these motives, then, the question remains as to how Lester's film manages to maintain any felt authenticity at all; what is its source?

A rather ironic factor in the context of discussing how Lester may be understood as an authentic influence upon his work (where "authentic" implies undermining the Western world's prolific consumer system, as described in relation to the Maysles' camerawork) is Lester's resume - he worked for both television productions and creating commercials before working with the Beatles. His work was everything that the Maysles opposed, but it was in his television work that Lester mastered the craft of creating the illusion of spontaneity through total control of his medium (Bluestone 14). During his work on commercials, for example, Lester learned to be very precise with his framing and to edit them together very quickly – evidence of which can be learned from reading the production history of *AHDN*, which was filmed over the span of only two months and which was cut in just two and a half weeks (Ebert, n.pag.; Neaverson 12-3; Murray and Rolston 24) . The film's reputation for creativity and experimentation contributes, to

this day, to its status as an “accidental” success (qtd. in the comment section on *rogerebert.com*, by user Stephen Taylor, 2013; Neaverson 15). Much like the Maysles’ film, however, the source of authenticity in *AHDN* is located in Lester’s use, and depiction of the various media tools that mediate the Beatles and populate this film’s *mise en scene*.

The fact that the Beatles in particular are subjects of Lester’s film is not an irrelevant one, and their competence with performing for a *camera* and not only for an audience affected how Lester filmed the band. While Sinyard suggests that the real star of *AHDN* is the camera itself (32), this statement prevents the Beatles, as unique performers, from forging a participatory relationship with Lester's camera. Indeed, Frith and Neaverson suggest that when performers are treated merely as performers, they are reduced to being aesthetic objects that are essentially replaceable (Frith, 204-5; Neaverson, 16). This approach grants the camera and the filmmakers *too* much power. Bluestone notes in his transcription of an interview with Lester that the band members were particularly adept in recreating the authentic look of live performance, “...right down to reproducing those small, dramatic facial subtleties that are often lost in rerecording.” Due to the Beatles’ mastery of this particular element of the visual expression of their music, Lester was unafraid to include a great number of close-ups and extreme close-ups in his representations of on-stage performance (65). Just as the filmmaker-subject relationship is pivotal to the success of any of the Maysles’ film endeavours, then, so it is here.

Lester’s camera allows audiences to enter the space of the television studio set, a space that connotes a certain wealth of journalistic representational strategies that would undoubtedly have been familiar to audiences of 1964. At this time, televised pop performances arguably had a larger impact upon the way pop musical films were executed than any other medium, to the extent that television had a heavy hand in the swift ascension and subsequent decline of the

British pop musical in particular (Medhurst, *It Sort of Happened Here* 69). Audiences of *AHDN* would have likely tuned into the Beatles' performances on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in February of 1964, or the Maysles' observational documentary, and both of those segments establish the unique aesthetics of a Beatles concert performance. Paul stands on stage left, John on stage right, George is in the middle, and Ringo Starr's drums are raised in the background. Cohen notes that at least two of the Beatles are often staged around a single microphone in order to achieve their famous harmonies, and also to promote the impression of group unity (59). As well, because Paul played bass with this left hand, the Beatles achieved a uniquely symmetrical blocking arrangement (Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love* 152).¹⁵

In Lester's rehearsal scene, this conventional set up is abandoned and the Beatles' stage positions, as well as the nature of their physical performance, take on a deviant quality. Here the television studio set has been revealed to viewers in a state of construction, wherein all the hard work that goes into making a final performance seem spontaneous is revealed (Romney 83). Props are scattered about, the television cameras are not yet in position, and crewmembers crawl around the stage space like ants. Paul, John and George position themselves around Ringo's drum kit in an almost circular arrangement that stands in contrast to their conventional blocking described above, and the Beatles' own instruments are in the same state of unreadiness as the rest of the set: Ringo's drums need to set up before he can play them and so he slowly does this while Paul tunes his bass guitar. John sits down with his acoustic guitar directly beside Ringo, and Paul plays to Ringo's right. At one point, Shake (John Junkin), a member of the Beatles' road

¹⁵ Graham Hutchins notes that "The casting director of *The Monkees* TV show would have killed for that uniformity", referring both to the aforementioned physical staging arrangement and to the fact that the three guitar-playing Beatles were each 5'11" in height (*Eight Days A Week* 95).

management in the film, enters the foreground of the shot in order to set up a speaker, which George promptly leans against.

The viewer is granted this short intrusion into the process the musician undertakes to suit his personal preferences concerning the set up of his own instrument, as well as the process that the television crew members must go through in order to prepare for the Beatles' eventual performance. Thus the stage and the moment of musical performance is made equivalent to the fantasy space that Romney maintains backstage areas usually hold in the pop musical (83). Here the Beatles as musicians are romanticized in that they are seemingly unable to resist using the stage space for song, regardless of its deconstructed state. This is the manifestation of Romney's insistence that the stage is more than just the area where an artist does his or her work, but is the place that holds onto "a spectacular, ritualized display of their very being" (86). Indeed, the Beatles are attracted to stages in this film and never resist spontaneous performance, but the nature of those performances suggests that the band members not only control the spaces where they perform, but are self-aware of the type of performance demanded of them at all times. During the first performance of "If I Fell,"¹⁶ the Beatles are conscious that they do not need to be offering a performance fit for television, or for a live audience; instead they can pose for Lester's camera alone, which assumes the politics (if not the aesthetic strategies) of an observational documentary camera. It is Lester's decision to capture these self-aware attitudes in this performative moment, and at many other times throughout the film, that is indicative of a mutually dependent performance on the part of the Beatles and Lester.

Lester's camerawork is interested in capturing a crucial amount of ironic distance between the Beatles and the connotations of premeditated performance, which is expressed

¹⁶ To clarify, this song is performed twice in the film: once during this "impromptu" practice scene, and again during the film's climactic final concert.

through the Beatles' filmed relationship to their instruments. When "If I Fell" enters the soundtrack for the first time, the fact that the Beatles are lip-synching to the previously recorded track could not be made more obvious – but this is the point, and as a result this scene comes across as a light-hearted parody of the band's other televised performances (and of performance sequences in the pop musical in general). At times, John neglects to strum his guitar or to lip-synch, and George often does not pretend to sing at all. In addition to these medium shots of the Beatles that are determined to represent the band *not* giving in to the conventions of staged performance, Lester employs shots of the band taken from behind, which in turn neglects the faces and fingers of all of the band members. It is in these moments, where Lester does not seem interested in capturing the faces of his performers *or* their instruments that his camerawork contributes to the stylization of performance as something superfluous (Cohen 69-70). The Beatles' physical performance here, as well as Lester's roving camerawork tears apart the relationship between performance space (the stage) and conventions of film form, which Cohen sees as so essential to the legitimization of live or mediated performance. Instead, the Beatles and Lester work together to solidify a different language of mediation dependent upon the conflation of a cinematic camera's representational strategies with those of television and documentary film.

The emphasis of Lester as a performer is less attached to the director's personalized camera, which for Albert Maysles acted as an extension of his own physical body, and more upon the space that Lester occupies, which becomes a new type of performance space that only comes into being through its mediation. This newfound space, which sits in between the stage as a site of performance and the off-stage, a site of fetishized non-performance (or at least a performance of the musician in his "off-stage" attitude [Romney, 83]) is in the case of *AHDN*

defined by the presence of media objects. In the final televised concert sequence in the film, the Beatles perform four songs (“Tell Me Why,” “If I Fell,” “I Should Have Known Better,” and “She Loves You,” in that order) for a host of audiences, some members of which are within the film’s diegesis and others whom are of the hypothetical variety. First, there is the fictional television studio UTV and its “live” in-house audience; second, the fictional television audience implied by the presence of the large static cameras housed in the UTV studio; and third is the audience that viewers of *AHDN* comprise. The Beatles must perform for all three, which implies that they also must acknowledge the fact that they are surrounded by media objects that will assist in speaking to each “type” of audience, and which in turn are responsible for alerting audiences of the film that the performance given here results in excessively mediated versions of the band members.

Lester’s camerawork during this final concert sequence uses representational strategies manifest in a variety of filmic modes, highlighting the impact that particular types of media tools have upon the nature of the visual strategies created by them. In keeping with the great myths of the observational documentary, Lester employs hand-held camera work upon the most “live” portion of this sequence’s three audience types that are outlined above: the live in-studio audience. This camera offers shaky hand-held shots, mainly close-ups of the (largely female) fans, achieving a spontaneously artful aesthetic by including views from behind the rails of the balcony and by employing whip pans to achieve an impressionistic, abstracting vision of the screaming audience. Standing in contrast to the more lived, thrilling experience of the Beatle fan is the relatively more controlled view of the composed and professional television cameraman responsible for recording the performance for television. Indeed, journalistic representational strategies abound just as those associated with observational cinema do; profile shots of Paul and

his microphone, or of George during his guitar solos function to offer audiences a clear and steady view of the performers and the space they are in. The straight-on shot of the band performing “She Loves You” is indicative of the kinds of spaces associated with the journalistic representational strategies, as viewers are only granted visual access to the stage and not its boundaries. Still, Lester’s inclusion of the three television cameras responsible for filming the Beatles for live television allow audiences to cement the multi-camera aesthetic of this concert unto a tangible element of the *mise en scene*. In other words, it is the journalistic shots that are the only ones that can be “accounted for”: the television floor director is even given a small speaking role in the film (he is played by Robin Ray). Television’s “live” aesthetic, which Auslander suggests cannot be mimicked by any cinematic means (13), is incorporated into the diegesis and makes the hand-held camerawork stand out through that juxtaposition.

Equally strange are the distinctly cinematic shots employed here, which are essentially those that cannot fall under either of the two previously described categories and which are the most removed from any perceived sense of “liveness”. These shots instead transmit a type of authenticity that does not hail from the director’s attempt to erase evidence of other media tools, and instead Lester emphasizes the presence of those tools. When Lester allows his viewers glimpses of the television monitors inside of the control room on stage right, he not only steps over the boundaries that separate the stage space from backstage space (*during* a musical performance, no less), but he also momentarily submits to the power of the televised image, which here offers us an alternative means to see the Beatles perform on stage. The television director (played by Victor Spinetti) and his assistant fiddle with the controls, and during the film’s second performance of “If I Fell” viewers are privy to profile shots of Paul, a straight-on long shot of all four band members, and a side shot of George, all displayed simultaneously in a

row upon the television monitors. In the background of the shot sit the audience members, and this staging suggests the presence of a *television* audience – those at home watching their screens, being exposed to these selectively framed shots of the Beatles – and not only a live studio audience. A cinematic audience is also implied because Lester’s roving camera has captured a series of spaces that only viewers of the film are able to travel to, as no other “kind” of audience is able to flit between images of the stage taken from the studio audience’s perspective, to that of the workers in the control room, to a bird’s eye view of the stage, to the floor level shots taken from behind Ringo’s drum kit. The boundaries between the various on- and off-stage spaces defined by Romney are made completely fluid here, and this is due to the compounded aesthetics of multiple filmic modes all employed upon one sustained instance of musical performance. Lester achieves the impression of authenticity in this heavily media-object populated sequence because of his decision to embrace the aesthetic, and by proxy the theoretical, effects of a multiplicity of media modes simultaneously. The observational documentary’s conception of space as something immediate and interactive is placed against that of television, the latter of which opts for clarity of space and a manufactured sense of liveness achieved through multiple cameras. Finally, Lester’s cinematic camera envelops all of these modes inside of a new set of representational strategies defined by their mobility.

The continued success and relevance of both *The Beatles!...* and *AHDN* lies in more than just the fact that both works document the most well-known band in pop/rock history: the Maysles and Lester both successfully inspire impressions of authenticity from their audiences through mediated means in each of their respective films. There is sociological evidence that audiences have developed and maintained a favourable relationship with the self-reflexive presence of media tools in the face of performance at large. In Auslander’s compounded figures

from a study by the *Survey of Public Participation* in 2004, he notes that general audience's attendance of live events of all kinds (including dance, theatre) was always lower for the live shows than for their mediated versions (*Liveness* 23). Indeed, I argue that for contemporary audiences who see MTV aesthetics as normative, or for audiences of 1964 who may have been more surprised to see Lester separate conventional musical performance from its soundtrack, evidence of mediation is essential to that effect.

There is a certain limit to the experimental effects of the Maysles' and Lester's cameras in both of these films. Even given all of the examples in which these directors defy the conventions of representational strategies applied to musical performance, the Beatles are consistently occupying the type of on- and off-screen spaces that typify a rockumentary. Within the span of the following year, the representational strategies applied to the Beatles would help define an entirely new conception of the band within performance spaces and in regards to their relationship to media objects, as I will now explore in the context of ABC's television special ...*Shea Stadium* and Richard Lester's *Help!*. In these films, the Beatles are at risk of being overwhelmed by their performance venue, or evacuate normative performance spaces respectively.

Chapter 3 - The Changing Spaces of 1965

In *The Beatles!...* and *AHDN*, the Beatles had welcomed the media object into their performance space. In 1964 the band's performance space was one that the live studio audience could readily share with their musical idols, and more often than not there was more than one type of live audience watching the Beatles during an on-stage performance at one time – an in-studio or concert audience, and those who watched the same event whilst gathered around their television screens at home. I argue in my previous chapter that even those who watched the Beatles on television felt a distinct proximity to the band members as a result of two factors: first, the filmmakers capturing the band neutralized the felt effects of that distance by means of their representational strategies of choice; second, the filmic mode particular to each filmmaker in question helped to dictate the effective execution of those strategies.

A return to the Beatle-centric material by Richard Lester, and to another example of a Beatles made-for-television documentary (this time, a concert documentary) helps illustrate the totality of the Beatles' changed attitudes towards fame, their relationship with their fans, and to their identity as live performers versus their increasing interest in the creative potential of staying in the studio, all of which occurred, or was in the process of occurring between 1964 and 1965. In the interest of keeping consistent with the organization that characterized Chapter Two, which explored the films of focus chronologically, this chapter will begin with an analysis of *Help!*, which finished filming in 1965, and then *...Shea Stadium*. The latter film covers the Beatles' impressively massive live concert event "as it happened" (so claims its opening title card) also in 1965. However, *...Shea Stadium* was filmed later in the year in August, and was not released in the UK until 1966, and in North America, 1967. The significance of the changes that manifest in the Beatles' films of 1965 when compared to the films I have explored from 1964 display the

Beatles' increasing distance from their fans, depicted through the exotic locales they are dropped in in *Help!*, and the vastness of the venue that makes their concert at Shea Stadium infamous. As performers, too, the Beatles are growing apart from the confinement of the stage, which ...*Shea Stadium* proves is a location that can no longer serve the Beatles efficiently. Indeed, *Help!* does away with stages altogether, in favour of highlighting the recording studio as an increasingly attractive creative space for the band, and the record as the band's main method of communicating with their fans.

Both of these films present the question "Where?" as one that is important in regards to the manner in which they represent musical performance and performance space. While Romney's essay deals with cataloguing the types of spaces that a musical performer might be seen to inhabit in any given rockumentary, he is more interested in the social ramifications of each of those spaces (where the images of the rock star backstage have adopted a seemingly inherent significance as a place where the rock star's "ineffable precious essence...lies shielded from sight" [83]) as opposed to how these spaces are captured aesthetically. Since the rockumentary is a genre that is dependent upon the use and re-use of a catalogue of settings in order to allow audiences to read them most effectively (and in an attempt to keep up with the system of analysis that I have already established in earlier chapters), I intend to offer a more aesthetically-oriented reading of the way that the spaces the Beatles perform within over the course of *Help!* and ...*Shea Stadium* differ and compare. I will focus on how the Beatles' removal from traditional performance spaces affects their ability to inspire interpretations of authenticity in their audiences, if it does at all.

Over the course of *Help!*, the Beatles are forced to run from their suburban homes in England, to the Swiss Alps, to the Bahamas. Although I am not so interested in the miles the

Beatles cover for the sake of narrative progression, I will investigate Lester's decision to make abstract the relationship between these spaces and the nature of the Beatles' performances within them. This film is an important one in the Beatles' canon because it is the first of the band's feature-length films to deny space for a live audience of any variety (in-studio, or a live at-home television audience, for example) to be made visually present in the film.

While *Help!* has too many performance sequences in it to offer a comprehensive consideration of them all in this thesis - an issue further complicated by the fact that each performance is so visually and conceptually unique - I will focus upon those that feature the Beatles surrounded by their recording equipment or their "unplugged" instruments: in particular, the sequence in which the band plays "Another Girl" on the beach in the Bahamas, and also the sequence that features the performance of "I Need You"/ "The Night Before" in an open field, surrounded by sound recording equipment. Although Lester makes the settings of the Beatles' performances unconventional and even unnatural, all of the other procedures and processes associated with song writing, recording, and performing are made to look effortless. By inserting the non-functional sound equipment and unplugged electric guitars into the mise-en-scene of the geographically disparate performance settings, Lester suggests that the Beatles are moving away from the dangerous hassle of live performance by instead highlighting the status of their songs in this film as recorded, consumable objects, separate from the traditional aesthetics of live performance.

Geography and the seemingly omnipresent question of "where" is again a feature of ...*Shea Stadium*, and in this film also offers interesting points of departure from the concepts of Cohen, who suggests that the performer's physical body offers empirical evidence for the sound it produces in the context of a live concert document (1). ...*Shea Stadium* is most well known

for the fact that its visuals do not “match” its soundtrack with any verisimilitude, an issue that holds great significance in the context of the documentary mode that I will detail later in this chapter. This documentary is one that is focused upon much more than the concert at hand (which was a grand enough event on its own), but is also a mediation on the difficulties that crop up while attempting to capture a live event of such proportions on film. Indeed, because of the inconsistencies between the live version of the concert (which would have been almost inaudible, and where the Beatles would have been largely impossible to see from the perspective of most audience members) and the version that was broadcast by ABC television into the homes of American and Britain, the concert at Shea Stadium offers the perfect ground for proving Auslander’s point that the document of a musical performance is something inherently different from the live performance (“Performing Texts,” *Youtube*). The Beatles as performing bodies in this documentary do not provide the evidentiary information that documentary subjects typically do, and so in the context of ...*Shea Stadium* they can only serve to inspire authenticity up to a point. An additional “body” that is most thoroughly observed by the documentary cameras is that of the stadium itself, as well as the spaces surrounding the stadium, such as the dressing rooms and even New York City as a whole. In ...*Shea Stadium*, the geography of performance space is investigated as compensation for the misinformation provided by the performing body.

3.1 Abandoning the Stage: The Beatles as Recording Artists in *Help!*

A return to the Beatle-centric material by Richard Lester helps illustrate the totality of the Beatles’ changed attitudes towards fame, the nature of their fandom, and their own image that occurred between 1964 and 1965. *Help!*, in glorious colour, takes the Beatles away from the

stage and television spaces that characterize *AHDN*, and the band is now seen wearing casual (and even non-matching) clothes. The most important departure however, at least in the context of this thesis, is the fact that the Beatles have been utterly removed from the types of performance spaces that they usually populate. The narrative of *Help!* does not motivate the musical performances that populate the film in any way, a departure from the storyline in *AHDN* and a feature that gives the musical performances in *Help!* the potential to inspire authenticity in viewers via means that are separated from traditional staged performance spaces. Lester's innovative new aesthetics that litter *Help!* necessarily followed the Beatles' more visually conservative performances elsewhere, "readying" the audience for the Beatles' departure from the Ed-Sullivan-esque stages that welcomed them into America in 1964. Much like *..Shea Stadium*, which seeks to familiarize viewers with the venue and even the geography surrounding it, *Help!* offers viewers a plethora of new places to see; however, the point of the Beatles performing on beaches, mountains, and open fields is to highlight the strangeness of those spaces and maintain their unfamiliarity for viewers. By doing so, Lester introduces the Beatles' transformation into *recording* artists as well as performing artists. To aid in achieving this transformation, *Help!* does away with the element that so threatens to overwhelm the Beatles at Shea Stadium – the audience.

Indeed, this is the first of the Beatles' feature length films to entirely exclude visual depictions of the live, or the "in-studio" television audience. In addition, because of its status as a fiction film, *Help!* also eliminates the possibility of communicating with a live television audience. Thus all facets of "liveness" that are manifest in each of the films I have so far discussed are wiped clean from *Help!*. While this could have a potentially detrimental effect of on audience's interpretations of the films' performances as authentic ones, Lester's

representational strategies are so inventive that it is impossible not to revel in the aesthetic liberties that this freedom from the stage offers.¹⁷ Lester presents the (literally) unstaged and (in practical terms) untenable performances that he does via a generous application of heavily stylized aesthetics, which include wide-angle lenses, coloured lens filters, canted angles, and rapid editing, while also consistently places the Beatles in the often-outdoor, largely symbolic locations during the instances when the band's music overtakes the soundtrack. Narratively, the Beatles as song-makers is irrelevant to the plot of *Help!*. Their songs are already written, they have no deadlines and there is no final show to play at the end of the film as there is in *AHDN*. Bluestone notes that in most of the Beatles' film fare, the (often maddeningly repetitive) process of recording a song is skipped over in the interest of making the Beatles' musicality look as effortless as possible. While it is true that *Help!* greatly romanticizes the recording process, it is interesting that it shows it at all, and I wish to explore the significance of the Beatles' "free as easy" (as Bluestone puts it) performance abilities in relation to their potential to inspire interpretations of authenticity from their audience (15). If the impression is that the Beatles do not have to do any "work" to get through a performance (Frith 207) how can their works still elicit authentic readings?

Logistically and ontologically, of course, all the songs that exist in a pop musical are recordings, but it is in *Help!* that their status as such is celebrated. Mediation, then, is again made into a subject in Lester's film, but here it is the technology behind recording a song – rather than

¹⁷ A comparison of the "Can't Buy Me Love" sequence in *AHDN*, the only sequence in that film that entirely separates the Beatles from all pretense of performance, is informative. This sequence is one that catches the attention of casual viewers, critics, and scholars the most easily. Says Sinyard: "The greatest sequence in [*AHDN*] is the "Can't Buy Me Love" romp in the field. It is memorable for the sheer bounce of the number and the way the camera and performance combine to create a short ballet of youthful high spirits" (38). Similarly, Reiter suggests that it is in part due to this sequence that the "full illustrative potential of pop music" was realized (60).

that required to film a performance - that is featured. Both Cohen and Jerrold Levinson would cringe, however, at the way in which Lester has illustrated the Beatles' departure from the stage, because the Beatles' performances in *Help!* refuse to take the "expressive potential," a term coined by Levinson of the performing body seriously. In reinforcing Cohen's attitude towards the performer's physical body and the sounds the audience expects that musician to produce, whether this refers to vocals or instrumental sounds, Levinson expands upon the idea of expressive potential: "Since the expressive value of a [musical] passage is partly determined by the musical gestures that are properly heard within it... expressive content is not detachable from the means of performance". Seeing is experiencing, for Levinson; and the detachment of a performer's physical actions from the sounds that the listener hears causes a disruption in that performance's authentic potential (qtd in Gracyk, "Listening to Music" 146). However, as I stated in the introduction of this thesis, the question of whether or not the Beatles are authentic performers is one that is easily answered by the band's seemingly everlasting reputation across the world. If the Beatles' musical gestures *can* be separated from their expressive content, and audiences may *still* interpret the band's performances in *Help!* as authentic ones, then the Beatles have successfully transgressed this singular method of visually representing musical performance .

In the context of Gracyk's essay "Listening to Music: Performances and Recordings," Levinson's claim provides the ammunition that Gracyk requires to argue that there is no ontological distinction made by Levinson between seeing these gestures in a live setting and seeing them on film (which in turn is a restatement, in another context, of Auslander's thesis in

Liveness) (146).¹⁸ Gracyk goes on to praise the aesthetic potential of the music video, which may simultaneously provide visualization of the musician playing his or her song, with the artists' movements being "bound up with making the sounds"; alternatively, the same music video may be able to offer "highly stylized tableaux," which communicate the recording's "emotional flavor" (147). Far from being negatively affected by a music video's heavily mediated nature, Gracyk embraces it and acknowledges that MTV in particular is expert at providing its intended audience with "their own species of authentic (albeit mediated) performance" (147). *Help!* offers interesting grounds from which to take Gracyk's claims even further, in that this film does not seek to provide its viewers with any indication that the Beatles' performances are valuable in regards to the empirical value of their physical gestures, as Cohen refers to it (1), or to their expressive potential, as Levinson labels it. The representational strategies instead highlight that the Beatles are lip-synching their songs, in exotic locales that are inhospitable to musical performance of the live or even the staged variety. *Help!* is the first of the Beatles' feature works that begins to define the band as *recording* artists, which translates into an even more dramatic increase in aesthetic innovation on the part of Lester.

The fact that *Help!* is so different from *AHDN*, both in terms of its plot and in regards to how it treats the representation of musical performance, is not surprising. As the Beatles had signed a three-film deal with United Artists in 1963, the projects that fulfilled that contract (which would be *AHDN*, *Help!* and *Let It Be*) had to be markedly different from one another so that fans and critics would continue to see Beatles films. However, *Help!* is even incomparable to any other mainstream pop musical that came before it. It has a narrative that largely riffs off of the popular James Bond franchise that became especially successful in 1964 with the release of

¹⁸ Which is in turn a restatement (in another context) of Auslander's thesis in *Liveness* (see specifically page 7).

Goldfinger (Guy Hamilton),¹⁹ but it is too surreal, comedic, and (of course) full of the Beatles to succeed as only a heist and spy film. Sinyard notes that *Help!* acts as a sort of geographical summary of British history, filled as it is with colonialism and conquest: there is reference to Scott and Titus Oats, as well as a large band of villains from the “mystic East” (as virtually every character in the film refers to it); there is also a set of references to Britain’s more modern problems concerning the slowness of commercial, industrial and social reform in the post-war period, embodied by Foot (Victor Spinetti) and Algernon (Roy Kinnear), the “brain drain” scientists whose experiments consistently fail due to their lack of government funding (46-7). Reiter notes that the film has stylistic similarities to a comic book, wherein the camera angles, jump shots, and the presence of bright and interruptive intertitles mimic a comic book’s illustrative energy (73). *Help!* is certainly a hyperactive film, in regards to the pacing of its plot, the scope of its historical references, the span of geographical spaces it covers, and in its depiction of the four band members whom, at this point in their careers, are some of the busiest men in the world.

Even given the general praise and high box office return garnered for the film, its reviews were not as shining as those for *AHDN*. Much of the negative critical reception of *Help!* comes from American critics, who express frustration with how stylistically flamboyant Lester has become with this film. Seelye, in his contemporaneous review of the film for *Film Quarterly* complains that sections of the film look much like “a lengthy martini ad,” and that the film is “worth seeing if you like technical virtuosity largely for its own sake” (58). Indeed, throughout his entire review it is the technical aspects of the film that are stressed, suggesting that it is the

¹⁹ For a discussion of what this film meant for the marketability of the popular song in a film soundtrack, see Jeff Smith’s chapter “The Midas Touch: John Barry and *Goldfinger*” in *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music*.

work's stylishness that is both the reason for its success (or at least one of those reasons, since the presence of the Beatles is likely another) as well as the source of its undoing.

While Seelye does not specify which portions of the film offend him so in his review, he is almost certainly discussing the song sequences, the stylistic features of which are so experimental in comparison to those applied to the rest of the film that these sequences seem to halt the narrative altogether. Still, if these sequences seem, if not surprising, then at least unconventional to contemporary audiences, they likely would have struck audiences of 1964 as very artful indeed (there are legends surrounding the reception of these musical sequences in *Help!*, and in particular with "Ticket to Ride" wherein the audience stood up and cheered at the end of this song sequence, pleasantly shocked by its innovative techniques [Neaverson 44]). It is from these song sequences that Lester's reputation as the "Grandfather of MTV" – more specifically, of the music video - was spurred. As I outlined in Chapter Two, Lester's career did indeed begin with television, and it was from that business that Lester mastered the art of editing that he so eagerly translated into the quick, kinetic feel of the musical sequences in his Beatles films. It is also interesting that in much post-MTV scholarship, it is this connection to this television station in particular that contributes to Lester's reputation for a brand of stylization that is devoid of meaning, a reputation that also haunts MTV itself (Seelye, 58; Sinyard, 11-12).

Contributing to this "empty" reputation is the fact that the narrative function of the musical sequences in this film is always an interruptive one, wherein these sequences do not contribute to the progress of the film's narrative or to the Beatles' characterizations within. The majority of the film is dedicated to establishing the plot of the mysterious sacrificial ring that has unfortunately made Ringo's finger its home and which refuses to move, thus making him the target for a group of Eastern religious extremists led by a man named Clang (Leo McKern).

While Sinyard contends that Clang's gang of Eastern villains, who represent the older generation unfamiliar with and disapproving of the Beatles' music and cultural connotations, are constantly undoing the Beatles' musical performances (46), they notably never succeed. Even though the Beatles' in-studio performance ends with Ringo's drum kit (with Ringo still sitting behind it) being dropped through the studio floor to the level below, or that the band's recording process for "The Night Before" ends in their being shot at, the Beatles are always allowed to set up for, and complete their performance sequences. As well, their songs figure prominently on the mix for their entire duration, and even Clang's yelling when he emerges from the sewer drain during the sequence where the band strums "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away" is not only silenced, but edited so that Clang appears to be lip synching to the song. The Beatles' music is never interrupted, but instead temporarily dominates the film, visually and sonically, whenever it appears. By means of comparison, *AHDN* is filled with instances wherein the Beatles' performances are constantly interrupted, usually aurally. The screams of the audience are audible during the films' climactic concert performance mimic the sonic experience of any given documented performance of the Beatles' live shows (their appearance at Shea Stadium being a prime example). In addition, the Beatles take joy in interrupting the rehearsal process of the other shows being readied for the film's fictional television station in *AHDN*. These performances, unlike those in *Help!* are permeable. The status of the songs in *Help!* as recorded works that float above the narrative cannot be interrupted. As well, the Beatles seem to realize that these songs do not require their expressive potential to be considered complete. Paul leans on a bookcase while playing his bass, while an overhead shot displays Ringo lying artfully at John's feet, occasionally hitting a tambourine.

In fact the *effortless* musicality of the Beatles, expressed most effectively through these song sequences, is maintained as an essential defining element of their individual and collective characterization in *Help!* (Bluestone 15). If the members of Clang's group catch Ringo, it is not so much the loss of his finger and subsequent handicap that such an injury would entail that Ringo and the rest of the Beatles would lament, but rather it is the fact that he could not drum for the Beatles anymore that is hardest to take. At one point, a particularly dangerous narrative moment – wherein Ringo finds himself locked in a cellar with a tiger – is solved through encouraging all the people of England to join in on a collective chant of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, a piece that always lulls said tiger to sleep. The first time we see the Beatles in the film, it is when they are in the midst of a self-reflexive film-within-a-film, wherein the young girl who is meant to be sacrifice to Kaili (but who is found to be missing a certain ring at the last moment and so is spared) watches the Beatles on a projector in front of her sacrificial altar while Clang throws darts at the band's projected image from afar. This highly staged screened performance, which looks like it is something out of *AHDN*, is the only one of its type that will appear in this film (that darts speckle the screen throughout the performance is perhaps making mocking commentary on the sort of conventional types of performances that the Beatles used to give, but which they are growing out of by 1965). That the Beatles are musicians is of course emphasized, but the idea that they must function as beings who are either on-stage and performing, or waiting for the opportunity to be on stage in order to express their musicality is too restrictive, and indeed too repetitive for a film that needed to play follow-up to *AHDN*.

In considering the effect of the musical sequences overall, it is notable that the Beatles sing along to at least one of their songs in each new space or location they arrive in. The act of singing again cements the Beatles' identity as musicians, even in lands where there is otherwise

nothing familiar. During the film's scenes shot in the Bahamas, the introduction of the song "Another Girl" enters the soundtrack suddenly, following a series of shots that establish Clang setting up his (small) army with which to bombard the Beatles, as Foot and Algernon clumsily sail a boat toward the Beatles, whom they've spotted near the beach. But the Beatles perform their song regardless of who is pursuing them, and this particular performance is notable in that none of the band members adhere to their usual stage performance poses, although all of their instruments are there: Ringo's drum kit is placed on a rocky outcrop near the shore while the other band mates hold their guitars around him. The guitars are not plugged in, the Beatles only sometimes pretend to lip-synch, and they also never stay still.

Lester uses the Beatles' bodies, or some steps, or perhaps the line of the water across the horizon to create a sequence of aesthetically pleasing abstract compositions, all of which are edited so as to complement the rhythm of the song that overtakes the soundtrack. Included in this series of artful poses are a small group of bikini-clad women (who evidently were at the same beach on the same day as the Beatles), one of whom even takes the place of Paul's guitar temporarily, as he holds her arm out as per the neck of a guitar and "strums" along the side of her body. The Beatles switch instruments, and mime their playing; John jokingly bashes away on Ringo's drums, obviously off-beat in comparison to the song playing on the soundtrack, while Ringo stoically strums John's guitar, then breaks into a smile, unable to take his own seriousness seriously. Thus, in order to be rendered as authentic performers in *Help!*, the Beatles do not need to be seen as masters of their instruments (they do not even need to be seen playing them at all), nor do they need to be in front of any incarnation of a live audience, or even the type of space where a live audience would normally be invited. The strangeness of the various spaces that the Beatles find themselves in over the course of the film are tests of the band members' seemingly

unstoppable musical capabilities, which even a busy Bond-style plot cannot silence. These spaces also highlight the status of the band's songs in the film as necessarily polished recordings, for a beach in the Bahamas is no place to house a live performance.

In contrast to *AHDN*, *Help!* entirely erases the presence of the media object from the sequences that feature musical performance. At least, the objects that are related to the *filming* of these musical performances are made invisible – but the tools used for making a record are now given spotlight. Wherein *AHDN* emphasizes the presence of the television cameras in the studio space, and viewers are granted a look into the inside of the control room as the Beatles' "live" and "televised" performance is being recorded, it is in *Help!* that viewers see the Beatles recording a song ("You're Gonna Lose That Girl") in-studio, and even in a mock-studio, the latter of which is situated outside in the grassy hills near Stonehenge and which houses the group's performances of "I Need You" and "The Night Before". The Beatles seem intent upon recording some songs in the midst of this grassy field, and this time their performances are intercut with footage of Clang and his band of scoundrels attempting to ambush the Beatles from all sides (even underground).

During these intercut sequences, Ahme (Eleanor Bron), a younger female who is part of Clang's group of villains but whom, due to her youth (and also her femininity, it is suggested, as she develops an immediate affection for Paul) could not resist becoming a fan of the Beatles the more she helped to try to kill them. Ahme is undoing Clang's plan to plant a bomb underneath the Beatles' performance space with an idea of her own. In order to prove her accurate proximity to the group to Clang, Ahme simply places her walkie-talkie next to her radio that is also blaring a previously recorded song by the Beatles: "She's A Woman," thus giving Clang the impression that she and her bomb are situated directly beneath their target.

The use of the recording as a method of deception is indicative of its unfortunate place in the hierarchy of authentic musical forms as set forth by Auslander, wherein the record (and particularly the record as it was perceived in the 1960s and 1970s) was considered a highly processed product that needed to be “authenticated” via live performance (*Liveness* 105). What audiences of this particular sequence are offered as means of authentication is the Beatles making a record outdoors in this expansive field. Although this sequence is not as artful as that of “Another Girl” in that the band members never leave their instruments, it is obvious that there are times when John is not lip synching with much interest in accuracy, that Paul is laughing too much, and that all of the band members are too affected by the cold and wet weather to be able to mime the playing of their instruments. Lester’s aesthetic strategies become increasingly unrestrained as the songs go on, inserting a high angle fisheye view of Paul’s hands as they pluck at the strings of his bass guitar, or flips the image of George playing his guitar solo so that George appears to be playing sideways.

In this sequence there is also the visible presence of the sound mixing technician, sitting behind all of his sound equipment; even the window that typically separates a recording studio from the technician’s boundaries is set up between this man and the Beatles, creating a studio without walls (or ceiling). The visualization of the props needed to make a record are the feature of this musical sequence, although it is significant that all of the work that goes into that process is bypassed. Again, all of the Beatles’ songs are already in finished form.

Far from being a deterrent in regards to authentic interpretations of these sequences, however, it is in acknowledging the omnipresence of the recorded song that *Help!* makes a nod towards what is likely the “normative” listening experience that most film viewers are exposed to with any regularity. The recorded work, suggests Gracyk, is not only the “handiest way” for a

mass amount of people to become acquainted with the work of their musical idols, but is also an excellent stand in for live performance itself (139). Lester's acknowledgment of the Beatles' recorded work in this film creates a new space for the Beatles' fan base to reinsert their own narrative of how their perceived relationship with the band developed: one that was and still is, for the vast majority of fans, established via the record or the radio (now, between the digital recording and the radio, perhaps). For contemporary audiences, of course, the recordings that are played throughout *Help!*, which are the same ones that appeared on the Beatles' accompanying album of the same name, are the only ones available to be heard anymore, since a live Beatles concert is no longer possible. In this way, *Help!* is a more honest representation of the Beatles' relationship with the majority of their fan base, in that there *are* no fans present in this film. This complete removal of the audience from the band's performance space also foreshadows the Beatles' decision to retire from the live performance scene after 1966, a decision that thereafter placed even more emphasis on the band's activities in the studio.²⁰

While it may be relatively easy to make a case for this film's authentic approach towards the ontology of the recorded piece in that it reflects the fan's more frequent interaction with the record than the Beatles at a live concert, there is still the question of aesthetics. Sonically, it is true that most Beatles fans are only able to access heavily polished, and highly mediated versions of the band's work. However, during the early and mid-1960s the Beatles were also frequently on television and had already had the two feature-length films discussed in Chapter Two made about them, with ...*Shea Stadium* on the way. As *Help!* employs the typically journalistic

²⁰ Interestingly, the promotional videos that the Beatles produced after 1966, such as those for "Rain", "Paperback Writer", "Penny Lane", or "Strawberry Fields Forever" would also see the Beatles placed in increasingly unconventional or inhospitable performance locales, and the band members would be seen doing anything other than playing their instruments. If the record was no longer made to be played live, there is indeed little point in limiting the visualization of the song's performance to a stage.

representational strategies that are at work in countless documents featuring musical performance to some degree, Lester's frequent visual deviations from those journalistic strategies should logically be understood as techniques which discourage authenticity, as Seelye and Sinyard mention above. Seeing the Beatles pretend to play along to a recording of "Another Girl" should not be considered an example of technical experimentation without purpose, however. It is Lester's decision to juxtapose close-up shots of Paul's hand dancing along the neck of his guitar, alongside shots of the band members standing on top of an architectural ruin that allow audiences to transgress the perceived boundary between *performer* and *stage*.

The Beatles, far from being reduced to aesthetic objects that merely decorate the various "stages" that Lester has set up for them (See Frith 204-5) are humanized by their departure from their standard positions behind their instruments. It is arguably the musical sequences in *Help!* that serve as the only individuating sequences in the whole film, as Sinyard notes that the film's plot has reduced the band members to being rather one-dimensional caricatures of their star personas: Paul has become vain, Ringo loveable, John cynical, and George mean (45). The band members' collective identity is based upon their innate musicality, which is emphasized by their adaptation to the uninviting performance spaces that they find themselves in throughout the film. That the Beatles are becoming more ostracized by their fans is an issue navigated by technology and by the products of those technologies – specifically, the visible presence of sound technologies and the music records they produce. The full scale of the Beatles' fame in 1965 is measured by the documentary that I explore next, ...*Shea Stadium*.

3.2 “Can Anybody Hear Me?”: Creating Space in *The Beatles at Shea Stadium*

...*Shea Stadium* is a patchwork quilt of a documentary, simultaneously functioning to provide footage of the Beatles as charismatic live performers, to provide information about who the boys are, where they have come from (both geographically and musically), and to act as a sort of sociological study on the curious (and potentially harmful, as was the common viewpoint of older generations of Americans)²¹ projections of youthful enthusiasm on the part of their fans. In the scholarly community, the film is perhaps most well known for its aural and visual touch-ups, however. Since much of the original footage of the live concert yielded an overwhelmed soundtrack due to the presence of 50,000 teenagers crammed into Shea Stadium, all of whom endlessly scream at their idols from a baseball field’s length away, there was perhaps little hope that the Beatles could have delivered an in-tune (or even audible) performance from the concert’s beginning. In order for the soundtrack to be brought up to television broadcasting standards, the Beatles were required to overdub all of their songs in-studio in early 1966 (Baker 135-6). As such, the final edit of this documentary tells the story of the difficulties in visually capturing this hectic event as much as it attempts to document the performances it is composed of.

I will be focusing upon the introductory sequence of this film, which offers audiences a glimpse of the construction of the performance space before the concert actually occurs, as well as the variety of cutaways the audiences is afforded that shows the Beatles’ view from their helicopter which hangs over New York. Temporal and spatial disorientation through

²¹ Paul McCartney provides a rebuttal to this opinion in voice over during ...*Shea Stadium*, commenting that if this concert isn’t an example of teenagers enjoying themselves then he doesn’t know what is; Ringo similarly highlights the effects of the generation gap implied by such a question when he says, “What [do these newspaper men] know about it, ‘cus [they’re] about ninety.”

performance footage, in contrast with the film's repeated attempts to locate the audience very firmly within the geographical location of Shea Stadium suggests that mediation of the live event is not only essential to making this "too big for real life" concert comprehensible, but that the recorded document that is ...*Shea Stadium* also inverts the hierarchy that typifies discussions of authenticity so that audiences are imbued with the idea that the mediated event is preferable to the live one.

The visual style of the documentary is composed of a combination of representational strategies, though these are not as diverse as the strategies that Lester juxtaposes against one another in *AHDN*. One obvious reason for this relative lack of complexity in this regard is that Lester's film was a work of fiction that appeared to combine visual experimentation and narrative comedy with ease. In contrast, ...*Shea Stadium* is a made-for-television documentary that is conceptually much less ad-hoc than *The Beatles!* due to the fact that its content revolved around the staging of a massive concert that demanded thorough planning on the part of all involved. The techniques used to film the event reflect the epic atmosphere of the concert, with thirteen cameras spaced throughout the stadium (some in the balconies of the stadium, others in front of the stage, and more positioned behind the performers) and others beyond it (with at least one camera attached to a helicopter to afford overhead shots of the stage's position in its massive venue) (Baker 131-2). ...*Shea Stadium*, as Auslander notes, does not inspire authenticity through any kind of perceived closeness to the Beatles (*The Beatles as Virtual Performers* n.pag.), whether that infers a relationship between performing subject and filmmaker, or between performer and audience.

During their performances of ten songs from albums new and old at the stadium, the Beatles are frequently granted low angle medium shots and are constantly being reframed. This

aesthetic emphasizes this concert's chaotic atmosphere through the camera's refusal to stay still. In longer shot scales, the Beatles alternate between looking very small, overwhelmed by their stage space and its empty black background, or are granted close-ups, which capture the intense physical effort put into this performance. The concert took place outdoors in August in New York, and so the band members are sweating even before they get on stage. They make exaggerated their physical movements in hopes that their audience will be able to "interpret" the sounds they are making via their gestures. Paul swings the neck of his bass guitar across his body during "Help!" to help emphasize the three characteristic bass notes in the song's chorus; John addresses the audience with his arms stretched wide during the intervals between songs, simultaneously reveling in, and frustrated by the fact that he can shout nonsense into his microphone and the audience will cheer on regardless.

Cohen's adoration of the relationship between the body and music made visual by means of physical gestures is predicated upon the idea that the performer's audience will give the music and the musician their full attention. In the case of the Beatles drowning in their own stardom at Shea Stadium, the band members' bodies only scream of the fact that they are incapable of producing any sort of audible sound whatsoever. Thus the physical actions of the subjects of this documentary consistently emphasize the lack of sufficient sound technology at the stadium, while the comparably clear re-dubbed soundtrack plays on. Audiences of the film are offered two conflicting accounts of this concert event that the film's audience is exposed to but which the contemporaneous, live audience was not. Whereas the polished-up soundtrack highlights the film's dedication to the principle of legibility (at the expense of realism) (Baker 247-8), the visuals still highlight the existing difficulties that have been smoothed over in post-production. In regards to Cohen's argument that it is through watching the performer's body, more so than any

other source that an audience is reunited with the “genuine”²² relationship between the bodies that make music and the sound that we hear, ..*Shea Stadium* is incapable of delivering.

Indeed, although Cohen does offer the disclaimer that he is intentionally excluding films that are not recordings of the original live event from his own analysis (4), it is the fact that ...*Shea Stadium* exists precisely at the halfway point between live-ness and staged-ness that it complicates his otherwise easy divide. The combined journalistic and impressionistic visual strategies used to film the Beatles and the other opening acts that precede them suggest realism inherently through these representational strategies’ relationship with documentary film practices. While the term journalistic and impressionistic as aesthetic descriptors are useful because they have loosed themselves from the more politicized words that might be associated with a particular documentary mode (observational documentary’s propensity towards the handheld camera technique has been imbibed with connotations of authenticity through its amateur and mobile aesthetic, for example), both are still attached to the documentary genre at large. As such, that these representational strategies also encourage authenticity is assumed, but the images in ...*Shea Stadium* highlight the fact that documentary imagery cannot be seen as authentic unless their soundtrack complies with those images.

To provide a running parallel narrative to the aural and visual contradictions that the Beatles as performing bodies introduce, ...*Shea Stadium* is also filled with footage that highlights the multitude of steps required in transporting the Beatles to this location (such as plane helicopter, and car), in preparing the Stadium itself, and in keeping the audience’s quarters

²² This is Cohen’s own descriptor. It is debatable as to whether this word is meant to connote the “heartfelt” connection that results from receiving visual confirmation that the performing body is actually making the sounds that the viewer is simultaneously hearing on the soundtrack, or if this process supports a confirmation of authenticity via that match up, or both. My own use assumes both meanings.

separated from the relatively miniscule stage that the Beatles and their opening acts must inhabit. These “preparation” sequences function to provide more than just anticipation for the Beatles’ arrival. I argue that audiences of the film can use these types of shots to negotiate the aural and visual inconsistency outlined above, because the editing of ...*Shea Stadium* emphasizes the venue and the broader geography of New York City as an alternative “star” of the documentary, and as the source from which authenticity is harvested.

The live audience of the concert at Shea Stadium experienced a very different version of the concert than the (much more numerous) audience of the documented concert do. This provides ample justification for Auslander’s claim that the act of documenting a live musical performance automatically produces a wholly new work. Thus to film a concert is to fulfill a performative utterance, an idea which Auslander credits to Austin, and which has also been expanded upon by scholars such as Bruzzi as I outlined in my literature review. *Shea Stadium* presents a space that, due to its scale, is better suited to being experienced via documentation than in its live state – at least, this is the “thesis” of the film, and this claim is expressed via the countless images that display the overwhelmed faces of the Beatles (which I have detailed above) and the downright unpleasant-looking audience experience, the members of which are crying, fainting, covered with sweat, and who at times seem equally as overwhelmed by the volume of the sound they collectively produce as the Beatles themselves are.

The nature of the mediation of performance space in ...*Shea Stadium* is what re-inscribes the Beatles with one very important element of their own performance identity for the fans watching the Beatles at home. In their early days of performing live, particularly in Hamburg, the Beatles enjoyed speaking directly with the relatively small audience that populated venues such as the Cavern Club (Inglis, *The Beatles in Hamburg* 35-6; Auslander, *The Beatles as Virtual*

Performers n.pag; Auslander, *Liveness* 88). Over the years, as the logistics for setting up concerts with the safety of the fans and the band members became more and more complicated, this usually intimate performance style was abandoned by necessity. Auslander notes in his own essay that Inglis believed this steadily increasing distance between themselves and their fans to be one of the most unattractive features of live performance for the Beatles as their career progressed, and is one of the main reasons why they eventually stopped performing live altogether in 1966. Indeed, in this short essay, Auslander uses *...Shea Stadium* as an example of a venue that showcases just how much of this intimacy has been lost (*The Beatles as Virtual Performers*, n.pag.).

Auslander is certainly correct about this in regards to the live audience's experience of the concert at Shea Stadium, but I assert that audiences of the television special were exposed to techniques of mediation that helped them to negotiate this anxiety. These techniques are at play in *...Shea Stadium* almost immediately. The opening sequence consists of static establishing shots of the inside of the empty stadium bowl, which emphasize the barren geometry of the space. A lone bird chirps on the soundtrack, highlighting the silence that is soon to be so enthusiastically broken. Then enters the sound of a helicopter and the voice over of various Beatles. Slowly, movement and people are introduced to the stadium. At one point during this opening sequence, and a technique that will be repeated throughout the film, a camera placed on the ground floor of the stadium zooms in upon the once-tiny speck of a woman who patrols the stadium's upper levels. The camera's ability to so easily traverse the span of the space it occupies by means of the zoom lens, and to scope out all of the nooks and crannies of the massive stadium is what imbricates the camera's view with such importance.

During musical performance sequences, the editing most frequently involves cuts between long or medium shots of the performer in question (from Murray “the K” Kaufmann, who makes another appearance here as he did in *The Beatles!...*, to the Discotheque Dancers, to the Beatles themselves) and long shots of sections of the audience members. These juxtapositions may be interpreted as reactive shot-reverse-shot exchanges, where a shot of John addressing the audience is answered by shots of fans hysterically screaming his name. Whether these shots are temporally chronological is a question that stands outside of their intended effect. While there are several moments when the camera lingers on the established border between the audience and stage, which is populated by short wooden barricades and a plethora of policemen, the vast distance between the Beatles and this border that keeps their audience at bay is only ever clearly rendered when it functions to *impress* the film’s audience (with the thoroughness of the venue’s safety precautions), and as such this visualization of the border does not have a distancing effect. For example, an extreme overhead long shot that clearly shows just how small the stage appears in the middle of the vast stadium appears under the title card, a shot that is repeated each time the original broadcast of the film broke for commercials. Upon repetition, this establishing shot becomes symbolic of both the reach of the Beatles as a social phenomenon and of the camera as a powerful force of mediation that is capable of capturing them, no matter how large the band’s reach may be.

In addition with offering fans the opportunity to connect with the Beatles and the vast spaces they perform within, ...*Shea Stadium* also includes footage of the Beatles’ journey to the stadium from the airport as well as their brief backstage rehearsal before going onstage. It is for these reasons that Baker feels inspired to interpret this documentary as an example of a concert-film/making-of documentary hybrid, a structure that is common in our contemporary age but of

which ...*Shea Stadium* stands as a notably early example (132). Perhaps the strangest inclusion in these sequences that do not feature musical performance are shots of seemingly miscellaneous viewpoints of a New York highway films from the front seat of a car while George's voice over narrates his ambition to rent a car and drive about the city one day. The Beatles are then seen running towards their helicopter and piling inside, and viewers are granted a high angle viewpoint of their aircraft lifting off, as our cameraman is evidently inside another helicopter of his own. Although the cameras here are still constantly reframing their subjects, and viewers are subject to frames that oscillate between being firmly static and rather jerky and seemingly handheld (bearing great resemblance to the aesthetic of observational cinema), the subjects of these cameras are not the Beatles or the Beatles' fans, but rather the modes of transport that house the band members or the city streets that they pass through on their way to the stadium. That shot scales are so frequently taken from a much greater distance than those that the Maysles Brothers so employed again stands as evidence that there was a curious distance developing between the Beatles and their admirers. In the case of ...*Shea Stadium*, there is a certain amount of distance maintained between the camera crew responsible for capturing them as well.

There is an extended establishing shot of the New York City skyline that interrupts the performance of Brenda Holloway in the Stadium, which at times includes a sighting of the Beatle's helicopter "hanging up there in the sky" (to use George's own words) while Central Park and eventually the Stadium itself looms below. In a similar way that the Beatles' personas share the spotlight as the most interesting subjects of the Maysles' footage in *The Making Of...* documentary that I highlighted in Chapter Two, New York City (as opposed to the novelty of a handmade camera and sound system) becomes the alternative star subject of ...*Shea Stadium* in

such a way that it contributes to the film audience's interpretations of the Beatles as authentic performers.

That the makers of ...*Shea Stadium*, a film and an event that had the potential to fail because of its large and untested size, should recognize that the audiences of the films would need to comprehend the nature of the spaces that the Stadium is nestled within is unique to contemporaneous rockumentaries. There is a tendency by documentary filmmakers who are responsible for capturing live musical performance to repeat the "types" of spaces that a rock star inhabits in order to demystify it. Ironically, as Romney notes, the repetition of spaces "only serves to *remystify*" them, and even in 1965 the main role that backstage rehearsals, hotel room chatter, and quiet backseat car rides occupy in the context of the rockumentary was already solidifying (83, emphasis my own).²³ In ...*Shea Stadium*, it is the journey to and from these places, and also the viewer's orientation within these transitory spaces that are privileged and made familiar. Indeed, while this documentary is important for a great many aesthetic and socio-cultural reasons, ...*Shea Stadium* is especially significant in that it illustrates that authenticity is not only to be extracted from physical gestures, a band's image or a band's sound, but also from their ever-changing geography and their interactions with the spaces they perform within.

²³ Romney uses D.A. Pennebaker's *Dont Look Back* (1965) as his main example in setting up these sorts of spaces throughout this essay. This documentary takes great care to ensure that its audience is never oriented in the many spaces that Dylan and his crew must travel to. As such Dylan's own frustration and impatience displayed throughout the film as he verbally attacks members of the press who question him seems like it springs from the well of disorientation he must be feeling as an introverted performer in the midst of his jump from the folk scene to the electric one.

Conclusion

The scope of this thesis is wide. It includes elements of popular music scholarship, performance theory, the depiction of musical performance on film, the changing nature of mediation across a variety of filmic modes— to name but a few areas of academic discourse I have touched upon. This inclusivity is just the point, because all of these areas of study deal with or relate to the word authenticity in some capacity. While the term authenticity may be challenging to discuss formally because it is so difficult to define, its consistent presence in academia and in casual musical discourse alike is suggestive of its sustained cultural relevance.

Authenticity must be understood as something that is as apt to change as music audiences are. Says Gracyk: "...do not treat the categories of authenticity and originality as fixed universals dwelling in some Platonic heaven. The rock community adapts them to its own needs" (*Rhythm and Noise* x). In today's concert-going experience, after decades of television and film's persistent, parasitic (to use Auslander's word) presence in the life of the average North American family, the visual representation of music onscreen has become experientially and ontologically synonymous with live performance. The gap between what a camera can bring an audience, and what audiences see when they pay to attend a 50,000 person-strong stadium concert, is lessening all the time (*Liveness* 7, 73-4). Thus it is apparent that contemporary audiences' interaction with mediated performance is becoming normalized. The pitfall of this outlook, which outlines the slow but steady crescendo of technology's impeding influence, is that scholars tend to view musical performances of earlier decades – the pre-MTV era in particular – in a romantic light, as a time when technology's iron fisted-grip on qualities of liveness was much more forgiving. I have explored the Beatles' films in order to prove that evidence of the present media object has never been truly erased from films that feature musicians or musical performance. The

audience's successful interpretation of authenticity does not depend on the impression that the media tool has been erased from the films that their musical idols start in. Rather, it relies on the presence of those tools and the representational strategies they communicate through.

The work of Auslander, Moore and Gracyk all make excellent use of the idea of authenticity as an *ascribed* quality (Moore, 210) and compose my main theoretical grounds upon which I base the methodology for my own textual analysis of select Beatles films. It is the Beatles' sheer propensity towards mediation, made apparent via the number of films, promotional videos, and television performances that are now so readily available that makes the band an excellent case study for a project that considers the visual representation of musicians and musical performance. The expanse of the Beatles' film canon is especially notable given the brevity of their career (they exploded onto the scene in 1964 and had dismantled before 1970). Indeed, my own experience in learning about the Beatles came almost solely through their films and compiled clips of their various television performances, and the Beatles as visual creatures were made more interesting when considered in combination with the idea of the Beatles as innovative musicians. I suspect I am not the only one who, for example, would rather watch the musical performance sequence of "Your Mother Should Know," from the Beatles' self-directed film *Magical Mystery Tour*, than listen to the song *without* the visuals.

The fact that the Beatles' canon spans a variety of filmic modes also complicates the grounds upon which their authenticity may be judged by fans. Some of their films are documentary, while *Yellow Submarine* (George Dunning, 1968) is animated, and others yet are studio-financed narrative films. I selected four of the Beatles' feature-length films to focus on throughout this thesis, as well as one supplementary documentary, including *The Beatles!...*, *The Making of...*, *AHDN*, *Help!*, and *...Shea Stadium*. Documentary films weigh most heavily

throughout this project in many regards, not least of which because more than half of my focus films *are* documentaries, but also because the aesthetic influence of the *The Beatles!...* is the most frequent point of comparison between this film and *AHDN*. To expand upon the nature of, and the politics behind the documentary film, Nichols' books have been my main reference point. Nichols separates the documentary genre into five filmic modes (including the expository, observational, interactive, reflexive, and performative modes [see *Representing Reality* 32; *Blurred Boundaries* 95]), and I focus most intently upon the observational and performative modes. Distinguishing between Baker's definition of the words *mode* and *genre* have been pivotal in allowing me to emphasize the idea that mode also describes the performative process behind filmmaking, a concept that Bruzzi's relatively contemporary interpretation of the performative documentary also supports (Baker 9-10; Bruzzi 186, 196). I contend that the performative mode describes a method of filmmaking and a method of viewing rather than embodying the definition of a mode proper as the other four do. This interpretation allows me to view the filmmakers responsible for filming the Beatles as performers themselves, whose representational strategies are dictated by the kind of performance they understand to be demanded of them by their audiences.

As this above segue proves, performance theorists, such as Auslander, Frith, and Cohen so often wander into topics of mediation that it is often impossible to separate the two. Frith's work is perhaps most successful at this separation, and he uses the example of the live concert event to comment on what the idea of performance as a social act entails. Stage performance conventions, and methods of reception, easily bleed into the concept of everyday life as being performative (204). The Beatles are infamous in this regard, and it has been commented upon by scholars such as Saunders, Vogels, and also by the Maysles, that the Beatles never fully "turn off," or step out

of their assumed star personas. Rather, they are performing for some incarnation of an audience at all times. The idea the Beatles' performances are ongoing creates a simultaneous air of hard work and naturalism about them at all times, qualities that Frith suggests are essential to inspiring authenticity for audiences (207) and which are tested by Lester's films especially. In other ways, too, the Beatles' attention to the constant demands of performance calls attention to the performance of the directors that are responsible for filming them. I suggest that to film a performing subject is to *be* a performing subject, and the role of the camera man's technology, or the implications that media objects make when they are made visible on screen, are all elements that must be considered when one is looking to label new sources of authenticity as such. Therefore, the thirteen cameramen who helped to document ...*Shea Stadium*, as well as Lester and the Maysles, all are to be considered performing subjects. The representational strategies they employ are the means through which they attain a visual language of authenticity.

All media tools have a generally poor reputation in discourse surrounding authenticity, although this negative view does not persist in all scholarship. Auslander, for example, is largely accepting of the technical changes that overwhelm the state of "live" musical performance in our contemporary age (such as the Jumbo Trons or Diamond Screens that populate stadium concerts) in that he acknowledges their immense aesthetic, economic, and cultural impact. However, the reigning argument of his book *Liveness* is that the loss of the *truly* unmediated concert event is something to be lamented (3-4). Auslander suggests that technology and the mediated event is understood to be synonymous with the live event, and that there is no ontological distinction between them. The 1960s and 1970s, he states, relied on instances of live performance to help audiences authenticate their given musical idol(s), who otherwise only appear on television or by means of their latest album. A band's performance on television, or the distribution of their latest

album, signifies too much about the commodification of popular music to be a considered an authentic means through which to experience the band (*Liveness* 105). It is only in contemporary times that the relationship between the media tools and the experience of the event those tools mediate is improving.

The films that populate this thesis acknowledge that it is the responsibility of the media tool to negotiate this distance between spectator and their musical idols when live performances are unavailable. Certain manifestations of this concept, such as the depiction of the audience at Shea Stadium, even suggest that the mediated event is an aesthetically richer, more enjoyable experience than attending a concert in person. Cohen's writings assert that the representational strategies applied to the performer's body and his instrument in particular are the most direct means through which an audience may come to understand the correlation between physical movement, and the sound that movement produces. In other words, it is the tools of mediation that help viewers to glean valuable knowledge about the empirical nature of a musical performance; the camera is essential to that experience (1). Similarly Gracyk notes throughout *Rhythm and Noise* that the primary object in rock music is not the live concert event, or even the music itself, but the technologies that mediate that music and the commodities that result from that mediation.

A very recent essay, published as I wrote this thesis, goes even further with the question of the role of the camera in the rockumentary, and what its aesthetic strategies mean for its audiences' perceived relationship with a performing subject. Michael Chanan's "Music, Documentary, Music Documentary" suggests that the camera that is responsible for filming a musical performance is understood by the spectator to assume the position of "any other listener" (qtd. in Jordan, " 'Oh, What a Beautiful City' " 36). The camera in such positions as the

rockumentary is apt to present, is thus not a distancing device, but quite the opposite; it is an essential tool through which audiences gain something that their attendance at the live event would otherwise have been unable to give them. I hope that it is an encouraging thought, for contemporary audiences and music fans who may feel overwhelmed by the persistence of mediation that so infiltrates our daily life and our fandom, to feel that technology can assume a similar position as the people who hold them, and that the process of documenting performance not only supplements our fandom but also provides a new method of enjoying a performance that is unique unto itself.

I have explored the films that helped to characterize the Beatles in the eyes of the public during 1964 and 1965. In creating this temporal gap I do not mean to suggest that the Beatles' career would continue to regularly progress this way, where they become visually reinvented with the turn of each new calendar year; rather, these time stamps are offered in order to highlight the Beatles' propensity to change, in regards to their musical creativity and their collective image, in a short amount of time. For the sake of offering a crude narrative of the Beatles' patterns of change, these formative years have been selected because they each featured heavy activity in terms of the Beatles' participation in feature-length filmmaking. After 1965, there would be a relative lull in this regard, as Lester's association with the band is over, and the aesthetic influence that is apparent between each of these pairs of films does not exist in such a conveniently "timed" package.

In Chapter Two, I suggest that Albert and David Maysles' film *The Beatles!...* was seminal in grounding the Beatles' reputation as a group of media-savvy men. The Beatles understood that while their fan base was becoming wider and more unmanageable all the time, it was increasingly essential to maintain a sense of closeness with them. The Maysles'

unconventional cameras, developed personally by the brothers, and the equally unconventional representational strategies they employed ensure that this closeness is communicated. The Maysles also employ these auteurist representational strategies during the moments when the Beatles are participating in what Vogels calls the “pseudo event”. This is defined as any pre-planned event that this band (and any band) must repeatedly endure over the course of their career, such as press conferences, photo shoots, and personal interviews (21-1). The Beatles’ photo shoot in New York’s Central Park serves as my main example of this “undoing” of the pseudo event, a sequence that is otherwise filled to capacity with older photographers equipped with equipment that is less modern, functional, and not personally aligned with the Beatles than the Maysles’ handmade camera is. The Maysles establish themselves as the “right” kind of filmmakers, who are not in this to sell the Beatles out or commodify them, but to spend time with them and allow their film’s audience to feel closer to the Fab Four.

Indeed, the perception of closeness is most important in this chapter’s second example from the same film, which involves the Maysles being rejected from the Ed Sullivan television studio during the Beatles’ now infamous performance there on February 9th, 1964. As an alternative, the Maysles choose to film the reactions of a small family watching the Beatles’ live televised performance on their small living room set in an apartment close to the Ed Sullivan studio. The Maysles’ persistent use of close ups on the faces of the family members and upon the screen of the television itself throws into question the ontological implications of film and television: these close ups are an example of Auslander’s concept of the parasitic media form, in that the Maysles attempt to by-pass the mediation of the television set by erasing its visible frame via close-up. Thus the Maysles “make up” for the lack of liveness in this American family’s

living room, displaying that what matters is that the concert even is *experienced* as though it were live.

The release of Smeaton's *The Making of...* decades later in 2003 displays that contemporary audiences have an increased comfort with the media object being self-reflexively present in the *mise en scene* of the observational documentary. The superficiality of any given situation, including the pseudo event, is here placed on display. This film is composed mainly of footage that was excluded from the Maysles' final version of the documentary discussed above, and almost all of these clips significantly include examples of the filmmakers and their subjects interacting with the innovative technology that made this film's intimate observational aesthetic possible. I refer to the example wherein the Beatles and the Maysles brothers take a "break" from their interactions with the journalists and photographers that accompany them on the train ride from New York to Washington, during which the Beatles take the time to poke around, and ask questions about the Maysles' personally developed camera and synch-sound system. This is a highly self-reflexive scene, thus suggesting that what audiences define as a satisfactory glimpse of "behind the scenes" activities change dramatically over time. The films of the Beatles from 1964 stress that the Beatles are always performing, but are also consistently aware of what sort of performance to give.

The second half of Chapter Two featured a comparatively generous celebration of the media object - such as cameras, booms, and control panels – all of which are things that Lester frequently places within the *mise en scene* of *AHDN*. Taking a departure from the types of examples explored in the previous half of this chapter, it is only the musical performance sequences that interest me in *AHDN* because those are the moments when these media objects are featured. Rather than displaying the tendency for one new media tool to overtake those that

come before it, as per the Maysles' aesthetics, Lester's juxtaposition of the representational strategies of one media type (for example, the journalistic representational strategies associated with live television documentation) alongside those of another (such as cinema), the result is that much is revealed about the process of performance, and about the functionality of certain types of performance space. This is a new interpretation of Romney's conception of the "demystifying" performance spaces that are so often discussed in relation to the rockumentary genre. Backstage environments, he suggests, give viewers a glimpse into the musician's real life, while revealing their real selves to us; or at least that is their intent. In reality, Romney notes that the mediation of these spaces only serves to glamorize the backstage area all over again, *remystifying* what it has attempted to reveal (83). In this sense, *AHDN* self-reflexive visual strategies applied to the preparation for the ad-hoc performance of "If I Fell" functions to both de-, and remystify the Beatles as performing artists, in that the Beatles are presented as being halfway in, and halfway out of performance mode. They begin to sing and play their instruments for an audience that does not exist within the diegesis, and so their usually strict staging is undone. George leans against a speaker, while John sits alongside Ringo behind his drum kit, and in allowing audiences to see a performance unravel, its processes are revealed.

The Beatles' final concert, which occupies a large amount of the film's final minutes, is the best extended example of this reflexive undoing. Here the Beatles are exposed to a myriad of Waugh's outlined audience "types," including the (fictional) live, in-studio television audience of UTV, the hypothetical audience who watch that broadcast at home (just as the family did under the gaze of the Maysles' handheld camera in my previous example from *The Beatles!...*), and for the viewers of Lester's actual film. The equipment necessary to achieve the elaborately staged broadcasting of performance is revealed through this sequence's complex

cinematography. Certain static shots represent the journalistic representational strategies associated with television performance, while hand-held shots taken from the in-studio audience's perspective account for the documentary-esque experience of "being there". Finally, the shots that are comparably more artistic are what I label Lester's "cinematic" shots. These include those shots taken from behind Ringo and which capture the entirety of the television studio, including the working cameras of UTV, or the extreme, canted angle close ups of John's hand strumming away on guitar.

While *The Beatles!...* and *AHDN* are frequently discussed alongside one another in the brunt of Beatles' scholarship due to the former film's aesthetic influence upon the latter, I ask that more attention be paid to the particular aesthetic strategies applied to the musical performance sequences in this film. I contend that it is not the visual similarities between these two films that tie them together (indeed, because the films belong to very different modes, their politics and their visuals are not comparable in any literal sense), but instead it is the effects of those representational strategies that each film employs. Both the Maysles and Lester use their respective technologies to negate the difference between audiences and the Beatles, and this reinserted closeness is what inspires readings of authenticity.

Chapter Three is a departure from Chapter Two, although my analytical methodology has remained consistent between the two sections. Rather than engaging with the depiction of media objects that were used to film the Beatles in 1964, or which appear in the *mise en scene* of *The Beatles!...* and *AHDN*, both *Help!* and *...Shea Stadium* highlight the vastness of the Beatles' new performance spaces, which in turn reflect the band's changing relationship with their fans. As the Beatles' level of fame becomes unwieldy, both their felt proximity (by which I mean the extent to which the band gives the impression of being accessible) and their physical proximity

(especially during live concert events) to their fans necessarily increases, often for safety's sake. This distance has the potential to undo the band's reputation, which so hinges upon their history as live performers and as a group of relatable young men, as Inglis and Auslander mention when they discuss the band's formative time in Hamburg, and the Beatles' slow evolution into "virtual performers" respectively (see *The Beatles in Hamburg* 35-6; Auslander, *The Beatles as Virtual Performers* n.pag.). Thus the nature of the representational strategies that are employed in both *Help!* and *...Shea Stadium* negotiate the excessive nature of their depicted performance spaces, wherein *Help!* is filled with strange and inhospitable performance spaces and Shea Stadium, as a concert venue in 1965, was simply too big to be functional and is filmed in a manner that emphasizes this fact. This chapter harkens back once more to the ideas of Romney and his own consideration of the nature of performance spaces. However, Romney's analysis is a cultural and social-oriented study, and not an aesthetic one, and so my third and final chapter is an attempt to also consider what it means to interpretations of authenticity when audiences deem one performance space as aesthetically conventional and another as deviant.

The Beatles' value as live performers is entirely rejected in Lester's film *Help!*. The recorded song, and the seemingly easy process that creating a record involves is projected as the key means through which the Beatles can still define their musicality and communicate with their fans, both diegetically and literally. The Beatles are displayed to be so naturally musical (Bluestone 15) that no matter where they are, or how inhospitable their environment and situation may be, they still must sing and play their instruments. The nature of the performance spaces in this film are quite different from those in *AHDN*, and certainly different from those in *The Beatles!...* or *...Shea Stadium*. The Beatles play their songs in the middle of a field, or tinker playfully on a piano that is mysteriously set in the middle of the Swiss Alps whilst "Ticket to

Ride” overwhelms the soundtrack. The clarity of the songs we hear sits in contrast to the dysfunctional (but still fun in tone) performances that accompany them. As well, the significance of performance space, and what it means for the performer who inhabits it, has lost solid meaning because it has taken a departure from the visual signs that define it as such – the stage, the lights, the cameras, the area of audience seating (indeed, there are no audiences in *Help!*, either).

Two main examples have been explored from the film that exemplify Lester’s visualization of the process of recording, which is always made to seem a very easy one, as Bluestone notes (15), and his also the ways in which the nature of the film’s soundtrack emphasize the primacy of the recorded song over any other version. First, the inhospitable performance-scape that a beach in the Bahamas offers encourages audiences to dwell on the clear and polished state of the song “Another Girl” as a separate, recorded object. The Beatles only sometimes lip synch along to the song, and at one point they even switch instruments with one another or are seen posing stoically on the top of an unnamed (but artful looking) ruin. In another song sequence that features another visually flamboyant song performance, the Beatles play “I Need You” and “The Night Before” in the midst of the grassy fields near Stonehenge. Surrounding them in this field are all of the technologies that usually populate a music studio, such as microphones and a large sound mixing panel, complete with a real live sound engineer sitting behind it. These performance spaces reflect the abstract notion of performance as is defined by a recorded song, which is not traceable to any single, shareable experience like a concert, or a film of a live performance, are. Gracyk’s work focuses on the significance of the technologies of rock music in particular in his book *Rhythm and Noise*, and claims that they are the main means through which audiences interact with music and with performers, and idea that

is applicable here as I suggest that *Help!* establishes the recorded songs as the Beatles' primary way of maintaining closeness with their vast fan base.

Paired with *Help!* within Chapter Three is the television documentary *...Shea Stadium*, filmed in 1965, but not released until 1966 and 1967 in the UK and America respectively. This concert documentary was produced by ABC and filmed by a vast team of cameramen – thus the production scale reflects the epic proportions of this concert. Indeed, *...Shea Stadium* is a documentary that is as much about the Beatles' historical concert event as it is about the difficulties in capturing the event on film, visually and sonically. This documentary stands in apparent contradiction of its own function, as is announced by a title card that introduces the film (“Filmed as it happened...in New York City”), in that it offers extended instances of sonic and visual inconsistency. The sound that audiences of the film hear are not those that the live audiences at Shea Stadium were exposed to because the sound quality captured by the present cameras the event was so poor that it called for the Beatles to perform overdubs. Therefore the actions of the Beatles during this concert, during which they must strain to be heard or to be seen, are not verisimilitudinous to the sound that they appear to be creating. Cohen's thesis that it is through visuals, and particularly through the visuals offered in documentaries that feature musical performances, that empirical evidence of the sound being created by the performer and his or her instrument is collected, is undone by *...Shea Stadium*. The Beatles' physical bodies are not the source of authenticity in this film, and the mobile camera crew's tendency to explore the geography of the venue and even that of New York City itself helps negotiate with this loss of the audience's conventional sources of authenticity.

Yet *...Shea Stadium* is not a disappointing documentary because of the fact that its visuals do not offer the type of empirical evidence that Cohen and many

audiences would expect. The aesthetics of this documentary, which include a combination of what Baker terms journalistic and impressionistic representational strategies (115-6), make the experience of being in the audience at Shea Stadium downright undesirable. In my analysis, I refer to the repeated shots of the audience, which show young people screaming, crying, sweating, fainting, climbing fences, and attempting to make a run past the hundreds of policemen that separate the fans from the stage. The fans at the live event cannot trespass this distance, but those of the film's audience can. The cameras allow viewers to traverse these distances by means of a simple zoom in, or via the juxtaposition of shots of the Beatles and shots of the audience, which create the illusion that there is less space between the two. The audience of the film, in addition to being offered the benefit of some medium close ups, and close ups of the Beatles themselves (viewpoints that the live audience would again be deprived of), are also taken on several short interspersed visual tours of New York City over the course of the hour-long film. This film's fascination with performance space, and even all of the area beyond the stage, is its most notable feature....*Shea Stadium* offers this visual exploration of the venue and the city beyond in compensation for the fact that the performer's body is not capable of providing audiences with a satisfactory source from which authenticity may be inferred. This film is an excellent example of Auslander's idea that the documentation of an event necessarily creates something wholly different than the live experience ("Performing Texts", *YouTube*). In this case, it is much more enjoyable to be a member of the audience for the *mediated* version of the Beatles' concert at Shea Stadium than it appeared to have been for those in the live audience.

The films I have explored throughout this project generate questions and present moments of self-reflexivity that render their creators, their subjects, and the nature of their representational strategies as fascinating channels through which to explore notions of mass and

personal fandom. While this study has primarily been a visual one, with some small hints made towards the significance of the sound-image relationship that so often crops up during discussions of authenticity, there is much more to be gleaned from an in-depth study of the nature of sound in films that features musicians and musical performance. Since the presence of musical instruments, musicians, and friends of musicians so often populate these films, the significance of their sound design is arguably of more immediate topical concern than any other type of film. Many performance scholars venture into the territory of sound in these films, just as film scholars venture into performance studies; however, it is rare that the subject is made the singular focus of any given work, or that considerations of sound move beyond the music itself, in favour of considering the nature of the other sounds that so often comprise the soundscape of a rockumentary or pop musical film. Baker's dissertation explores the impact that the nature of film sound in the rockumentary has upon audience's impressions of an event's liveness, and highlighting the important role that high sound quality during live events has upon audience's expectations of what a live, or documented live event should provide. He notes that the level of attention paid to the construction of the sound in a rockumentary mirrors the "increasingly mediated" nature of the genre's visuals as the decades passed by (192). Baker's work provides a rich starting point for more discussions of the nature of sound in the rockumentary, but by nature of the his project it is necessarily limited to those films that seek to present a live, or "realistic" representation of the concert at hand (231-2), and could thus be expanded into the realms of alternate filmmaking modes that also adopt the musician or musical performance as subject matter.

There is no better band to serve as a case study than the massively popular, and heavily mediated Beatles. Indeed, this project had good timing, as this year marks the fiftieth anniversary

of their pop cultural takeover of America. With that anniversary came the Criterion Collection's formal acceptance of Lester's *AHDN* into their library ("Synopsis", Criterion.com n.pag.), while cinematheques around the world held screenings of the remastered film. New Beatles fans are bound to grow out of the reintroduction of the band's image into popular culture, and the only means through which these fans will be able to "Meet the Beatles" is via the lenses of those films that the band starred in over the course of their short but potent career. I contend that the fandom of contemporary Beatles fans, or those who were simply never able to attend a live performance of the band in the 1960s, is no less authentic than is the fandom of those lucky enough to have "been there" because the visual language of authenticity allows for intensified proximity to the Beatles via mediated means.

I also offer a more positive outlook towards audience's necessary run-ins with technology, the means through which we now approach so many musicians and bands from contemporary times and from days gone by. The mediated version of a concert event or of a musical performance should not be viewed as something to be turned to only when the possibility of a live performance is exhausted, as if time, geographical distance, (and perhaps a lack of money to spend on a concert) leaves audiences with no other choice than to watch a documented performance, or a pop musical film that features one's favourite musicians. Instead I propose that the presence of technology has been an essential means by which audiences have established relationships with the star personas of performers, enjoyed their music, and enjoyed the way those performers look while playing their music since well before the era of MTV. As such, the visual languages of the films that feature popular musicians are imbued with possible loci of authenticity. The means through which the Beatles are represented visually are extremely varied and sophisticated, and all of the directors that capture the band have employed

representational strategies that highlight and navigate the felt distance between the Beatles and their adoring fans, tightening the gap when audiences demanded it, and widening it when necessary. Technology imbues process of musical performance documentation with a great deal of humanism.

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