

ROCK & HOLY ROLLERS:  
THE SPIRITUAL BELIEFS OF  
CHART-TOPPING ROCK STARS,  
IN THEIR LIVES AND LYRICS

by

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## INTRODUCTION

I grew up on the Canadian prairies, in a sprawling country house reverberating with the folk music of Gordon Lightfoot, Johnny Cash, and Simon & Garfunkel.

When I say “reverberating,” I am not exaggerating: Thanks to a father with a ham radio-operating background, nearly every room in the house had its own set of speaker boxes. Each of those contained four eight-inch cones. And, all boxes were wired in parallel, on the same circuit.

You can easily fill a sound-space with that sort of arrangement. Even without drums in the recordings.

Following many such country- and folk-filled years of rhythmic deprivation, a transfer of schools in junior high put me face to face with that bastard son of rhythm and blues: rock and roll.

I was quickly hooked on all the cock-rock which Spinal Tap later satirized so brilliantly. These were, after all, the glory days of the first wave of heavy metal: Ozzy was still fronting Black Sabbath, AC/DC shook you all night long, and if it had been possible to “run to the hills” with Iron Maiden, through wheat fields where you could literally see to the horizon in every direction, we would surely have tried.

With even more of an ear for melody and harmony, though, the first album I ever purchased was Boston's debut, featuring what is still my all-time favorite song, "More Than a Feeling." That piece of vinyl was obtained, if I recall correctly, one evening after I had grown bored with the presentation given by a spiritualist during a family outing in Winnipeg.

Displaying the item afterwards to my parents, I was immediately forbidden to ever buy another record—rock-music purchases being such an obvious waste of money.

A few high-school years later, with my driver's license secured, I grossly violated that rule—long ago forgotten by everyone except me—in greedily accumulating Genesis' and Peter Gabriel's entire back-catalogues in a single springtime road trip to the nearest mall.

It was, as they say, the start of a beautiful friendship, even if much of the meaning held in the words to such popular and unpopular songs remained puzzling or obscure.

Curiously, though, it turns out that many of our most-admired rock stars have been deeply influenced by nontraditional religious ideas, and their associated sagely purveyors. Further, musicians who participate in the actual writing of the songs which they perform invariably bring their spiritual beliefs into their art, particularly in the crafting of lyrics.

To put it more bluntly: To encounter rock music is also to encounter spirituality in its many guises.

One can easily find biblical allusions in the songs of the one-time Catholic altar boy, Bruce Springsteen, and even in the lyrics of the equally religiously schooled but now "dust thou art" Elvis Costello. The same clearly holds true for something like Paul Simon's gospel-influenced "Loves Me Like a Rock," just as an obvious if vague spirituality runs through his *Rhythm of the Saints*. For that matter, Tina Turner is a practicing, chanting Buddhist, who believes in reincarnation and astrology. Michael Jackson, in turn, is a devout Jehovah's Witness—without visibly bringing that faith into his music or his dealings with young boys and "Jesus juice."

Weezer (Rivers Cuomo), for his own part, spent many of his early years in the Yogaville ashram of the "Woodstock Swami," Satchidananda. He currently practices Buddhist *vipassana* meditation up to twelve hours a day, for weeks at a time, sequestered in closets and elsewhere. (Cuomo was re-introduced to that way of life by über-producer Rick Rubin, who

himself has been interviewed on New Age philosopher Ken Wilber's Integral Naked web forum.)

Similarly, the messianic Elvis Presley's interests in both H. P. Blavatsky's Theosophy and Paramahansa Yogananda's "Church of All Religions" writings could easily have merited a chapter here, had those beliefs made their way into his lyrics—as they might well have, had the "King of the Jukeboxes" been a songwriter himself. So, too, could the explicit Christianity of U2 have been included in the text, were their religious orientation not already so well-known, and its influence not so obvious and literal in their music.

Unlike those performers, however, the artists covered here have all repeatedly incorporated their own spiritual beliefs into their music in detailed, and deliberately meaning-filled, but not necessarily *obvious* ways. That is, this book is focused on the little-known esoteric symbolisms hidden in chart-topping popular music. It is less concerned with cataloguing the more widely known and obvious exoteric symbols or quotes, borrowed from one or another traditional scripture (e.g., the Bible). (Bob Dylan is almost an exception to that rule ... except that, as we shall see, his spiritual interests did not begin and end with his 1979 conversion to Pentecostal Christianity, but have more recently embraced a purported Jewish Messiah. By contrast, Weezer wrote his own "Pardon Me" after attending a meditation retreat where the teacher told him to mentally repeat: "I seek pardon from all those who have harmed me in action, speech or thought." But a single song merely inspired by such an instruction, with no other spiritual referent in its lyrics, would hardly fill out a chapter.)

So, one may or may not take seriously ideas such as meditation, yoga, astral travel, paganism, or the magick of Aleister Crowley. Nevertheless, a detailed understanding of those "spiritual paths" holds the key to a proper comprehension, not only of the private lives of our "guitar gods," from Jimi Hendrix on down, but of the deeper meanings behind songs which we hear every day on the radio—from the Beatles to Zeppelin, from Marilyn Manson to Billy Corgan to System of a Down.

I have relied largely on documented influences and meanings for each relevant song covered here, rather than bringing my own interpretations to bear on the words. In some cases, that has meant attaching significance to other people's interpretations; but in most, the meanings and influences are either provided by the artists themselves, or are simply obvious when

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one understands the belief system from within which the songs were written.

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Geoffrey D. Falk

CHAPTER 4

*White Light Fantasy*

*THE KINKS*

The introverted loner, songwriter, vocalist and rhythm guitarist, Ray Davies, and his extroverted lead-guitarist younger brother, Dave, released their first album as leaders of the Kinks in 1964.

The band took their name from “the kinky hats they wear on stage—the fashionable fat caps seen around—and their stylish boots.” Their cutting-edge guitar sound, by contrast, came via Dave’s application of a razor blade to his ten-watt Elpico amp, slashing the speaker cone (and then Selotaping and sticking drawing-pins into it) to produce a degree of jagged distortion previously unheard-of.

Driven by power chords passed through that innovative “Fart Box,” the first of their classic pop songs, “You Really Got Me,” rose quickly to U.K. #1. It was soon followed to #2 by “All Day and All of the Night.”

A string of Top 40 singles issued from “England’s green and pleasant band” over the next three years, from “Tired of Waiting for You” to “Autumn Almanac.”

Ray’s “Big Sky,” from *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* (1968), alluded to “the God of the village, who sees it all, good and bad, but seems somehow too occupied with other things to get involved.” (The same album’s “Wicked Annabella” concerned tales told about the village witch to get good children to go to sleep.) That, however, was more or less the extent of his involvement with, and tolerance for, spirituality.

Dave, by contrast, began studying astrology intensively soon after the birth of his first child in the autumn of 1967, to the point of casting horoscopes himself. In his soul-searching, he further dropped acid for the first time while touring America in support of 1969’s *Arthur (Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire)*. He was guided through the ensuing experience of the cosmic vistas by his “Captain”—“a being above my head,” later interpreted by a psychic as the voice of his “higher self.” Following that multi-dimensional journey to the heart of the universe, his latent interest in spiritualism and yoga came increasingly to the fore.

Thus, to 1970’s *Lola Versus Powerman and the Moneygoround*, Dave contributed “Strangers,” in which he suggested that “we are one.” The song was about “unconditional love” and “the realization that we all, at various times in our lives, have to give up a part of ourselves for the benefit of something greater to become part of a greater whole”—an idea which could certainly be read in metaphysical terms.

The same album’s co-title track, “Lola,” concerned a transvestite not unlike Andy Warhol’s “actress” friend Candy Darling, whom Ray Davies claimed to have briefly “dated.” (She was also the subject of the Velvet Underground’s “Candy Says” and Lou Reed’s “Walk on the Wild Side.”) The song’s “advertisement” of Coca-Cola®, however, proved an issue for the non-profit BBC—they were not allowed to mention product names on air. Rather than forfeit that essential airplay, the band quickly overdubbed the offending phrase to “cherry cola” instead.

In a New York hotel in August of 1972, paranoid and suicidal, Dave found himself feeling as if he was “being devoured by a dark psychic

swamp that was dragging [him] into its secret world in all its subtle and insidious power.” A fortuitous visit from an ex-girlfriend who was now a psychiatric nurse helped pull him out of those emotional depths, and set him on the path to higher consciousness:

“I know that I have been helped many times in my life, sometimes quite inexplicably.... I no longer believed in coincidence and from that day forward I started to believe in God.”

Dave consequently gave up drugs, became a vegetarian, and began reading books on Kabbalah, along with Vivekananda’s *Raja Yoga*—being sufficiently impressed by the latter “masterpiece” to quote directly and complementarily from it in his autobiography.

In the midst of a string of sociological concept albums and increasing slides-and-costumes theatricality, 1974 saw the release of the Kinks’ two-part vaudevillian rock opera, *Preservation*. The same period found Dave studying “under a trance medium in north London who channeled information from an ancient Egyptian child king.”

Three years later, “Sleepwalker,” from the album of the same name, concerned Ray Davies’ problems with insomnia. Its talk of “creatures of the night” had the unforeseen effect, however, of convincing a spell-casting Massachusetts witch that Ray and Dave were actually vampires.

On the same tour, Dave and one of the female backing singers began practicing “a mental visualization technique where you draw energy into the body, fill it with light, and project it out again, as healing.” The in-concert performance of that activity was soon credited by them with bringing a half-full Seattle show’s audience to life, midway through the group’s set.

Nineteen seventy-eight’s *Misfits* spawned the classic song “Rock ‘n’ Roll Fantasy,” putting words and music to the inner life of every teenager and adult who “lives for rock.”

Following *Low Budget*, the band’s *Give the People What They Want* spent nine months on the Billboard charts, with the group filling Madison Square Garden at the end of 1981. The album’s song “Killer’s Eyes” was about the Turkish gunman who had attempted to assassinate Pope John Paul II in the spring of that year.

Dave’s first solo record, the barcode-titled *AFLI-3603*, featured “Imagination’s Real”—a song “about how if everything around us is a product of our imagination, we can imagine the world being whatever we want it to be.” A year later, “Eastern Eyes,” from another solo project,

*Glamour*, was “a love song about finding enlightenment,” in a marriage of the material West with the spiritual East. The same album’s “Telepathy” predictably concerned the supposed ability of human beings to communicate via that power.

On January 13 of 1982, prior to the sound-check for a show in Richmond, Virginia, Dave Davies had an experience which was to forever alter his view of reality. Beginning with feelings of having an “invisible metal band” tightened around his head, he was soon hearing a total of five different internal voices, seemingly coming again from above his head.

“The intelligences took complete control of my being.... They told me that I was not to have sex, the reason being that part of what was happening to me was due to the fact that they were manipulating latent forces in my body....

“The intelligences also told me that certain spacecraft periodically orbit earth, and that they contain crystal computers that house information down to the minutest detail regarding all the thoughts and actions of every single person living or who has ever lived on earth....”

Later in the evening, at the concert itself, Dave recorded: “I could see in the surrounding ethers mischievous demon-like creatures impinging themselves on the auric bodies of the unsuspecting crowd, impressing them with negative images and thoughts. Confronted by this bad energy, the intelligences poured a brilliant beam of white light through my forehead and out to the crowd. The results were startling. The same people suddenly looked more pleasant.”

Immediately following that show, Dave “became acutely aware of the presence of Jesus,” at which point many unknown aspects of the savior and his teachings were revealed to him, in vision.

Most of the songs (in particular, “True Story”) on Dave’s 1983 solo release, *Chosen People*, were inspired by that January day’s spiritual experience. The title track itself, however, was based on the life story of the Lakota Indian medicine man, Black Elk, in his tribe’s prophecies of one day working in harmony with a “true white brother.”

In 1986, Dave purchased a camper van and telescope, and began “UFO-spotting” in North Wales and the surrounding area. Having spied a number of the shiny nighttime craft, he eagerly shared his findings in a letter to the Ministry of Defense, sadly receiving no reply.

All of that notwithstanding, the Kinks were inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in 1990. They performed together for the last time late in 1996.

Under the name Crystal Radio, Dave and his son released *Purusha and the Spiritual Planet* in 1998. (In Hindu theology, "Purusha" is the pure-consciousness Self which pervades the universe.) The mostly instrumental concept album told the story of a teenage boy "who collects ancient artifacts and comes across a strange pendant. His life then suddenly starts to change drastically taking him on an amazing adventure that changes his life forever!"

Ray—the "godfather of Britpop"—is currently working on a musical, *Come Dancing*, after the Kinks' nostalgic 1983 hit song of the same name. In 2004, he was awarded a CBE—Commander of the Order of the British Empire, one notch below knighthood—by the queen herself, for his "services to music."

Dave, by contrast, has yet to be properly heralded for his own unique contributions to the band's light shows.

CHAPTER 8

*A Saucerful of Sant Mat*

*PINK FLOYD*

Several years before the Beatles' visit to Rishikesh, guitarist Syd Barrett had already been deeply involved with the meditation-based Sant Mat path led by the guru Charan Singh. The hurtful rejection of his request for initiation as a "Sat Sanghi" in that astral-voyaging group, however, left him increasingly relying on LSD in his search for enlightenment.

Musically, Barrett had been joined in 1965 by bassist Roger Waters, keyboardist Rick Wright, and drummer Nick Mason—the "least neurotic" member of the band—to form Pink Floyd. Though ostensibly titled after blues legends Pink Anderson and Floyd "Dipper Boy" Council, Syd would later claim that the name "was transmitted to him from an overhead flying

saucer while he was sitting on the ley line crossing Glastonbury Tor in Somerset.”

Of their first single, objections from the BBC led to “Let’s Roll Another One” being renamed as “Candy and a Currant Bun.” Its flip side, the story of the cross-dressing “Arnold Layne,” was banned altogether by the Radio London pirate station.

The title for the group’s debut album, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, was of course taken from the seventh chapter of Kenneth Grahame’s children’s book, *The Wind in the Willows*—a favorite of Barrett’s—where it refers to the Greek god Pan. *Piper’s* galactic “Astronomy Domini” was actually billed in early mimeographed fliers as an “astral chant.” Syd’s obsession with the *I Ching* further provided the basis for the song “Chapter 24,” in the lyrical idea that “change returns success.”

From Richard Wilhelm’s translation of that ancient book’s twenty-fourth chapter, reproduced almost *verbatim* in Barrett’s lyrics: “All movements are accomplished in six stages, and the seventh brings return.... Therefore seven is the number of the young light, and it arises when six, the number of the great darkness, is increased by one.”

Syd himself was soon giving “every indication of having been launched into a permanent LSD orbit,” and accordingly failing to acceptably negotiate reality on a regular basis. At various times, he appeared on *Top of the Pops* dressed in rags; lip-synched not at all to “See Emily Play” on *Dick Clark’s American Bandstand*; responded to televised questions from Pat Boone with a vacant stare; and spent entire concerts playing only the middle-C note on his guitar. (One of his interviews was later played to the psychiatrist R. D. Laing, who reportedly concluded that Syd was “incurable” in his paranoia and catatonia.)

Thus, over Christmas in 1967, David Gilmour was brought in to initially complement, and—following Barrett’s disastrous final performance, at the Cambridge Corn Exchange—ultimately replace Syd on guitar and the majority of the lead vocals. The group’s next LP, *A Saucerful of Secrets*, consequently featured only a single, non-mystical Barrett composition (with Salvation Army band accompaniment), “Jugband Blues.” Among the album cover’s thirteen superimposed images, however, is a zodiac wheel, and a photo of an alchemist with his potion-filled bottles.

The marshlands outside of Cambridge, where Gilmour and other members of the band once lived, were legendarily haunted by “web-fingered mutants given to grunting uncouth phrases like ‘ummagumma.’”

(The word was also a “slang expression for copulation.”) On the half-studio, half-live 1969 double album of the same name, Rick Wright’s interminable instrumental, “Sisyphus,” referenced the Greek legend of Sisyphus—a mortal trickster who was eventually condemned to an eternity of rolling a boulder uphill and then watching it roll back down again before he had reached the top.

As the years passed, Roger Waters increasingly took over the band’s songwriting, especially in terms of crafting the prototypical acid-rock band’s lyrics—in spite of having “only used psychedelics twice” in his life. The most neurotic of the Floyds, he was responsible for the vast majority of the wartime references in later albums—his soldier father having been killed in WWII.

Though Syd was gone from the band, he was not forgotten, being eulogized in the lunacy of *Dark Side of the Moon*—particularly in terms of his penchant for “playing different tunes” than the set-list ones anticipated by the rest of the band, in concert. Likewise for the album’s overall theme of a young man being pushed toward insanity by the various pressures on his life—e.g., time flying by, and the need for money, always being “on the run” to catch the next flight. (The record’s “Great Gig in the Sky”—originally a two-part “Mortality Sequence” and “Religious Theme”—of course dealt with death and the beyond.)

The title song from 1975’s *Wish You Were Here* was also evidently inspired by Syd. Both parts of “Shine On You Crazy Diamond” similarly took the group’s former “piper” as “a symbol for all the extremes of absence some people have to indulge in because it’s the only way they can cope.” As far as spiritual references go, we find a few in the background of the sticker on the black shrink wrap concealing the artwork for the original release of the album. It was divided into elements of fire, air, water and earth, representing the four bandmembers’ astrological signs.

Syd even surfaced on *The Wall*—released in 1979 and originally inspired by an event on 1977’s *Animals* tour, in which Roger ended up spitting on a troublesome fan in Montreal. (The animal theme, birthing the group’s infamous forty-foot-long inflatable pig, was obliquely based on George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. In Waters’ hands it segmented humankind into categories of dogs, pigs, and sheep—or capitalist businessmen, politicians/moralists such as Mary Whitehouse, and blind followers. “Sheep” also contained a twisted, vocoder version of the twenty-third Psalm—“The Lord is my shepherd”—incorporating lamb cutlets and karate.) In *The*

*Wall*, the repeated stage-manager phrase “Time to go” in “Is There Anybody Out There?” was apparently based on a pre-gig catatonic trance evinced by the band’s then-leader at a 1967 show. The scene in the corresponding movie where Pink (Bob Geldof) shaves his head and eyebrows was likewise inspired by Syd’s appearance when he visited the band in studio, uninvited, during the mixing of *Wish You Were Here*. (Barrett followed that up by being mistaken for a Hare Krishna at Gilmour’s wedding reception later the same day.)

The absent Syd was actually later taken by one of his initiated friends to an early-’80s Sant Mat gathering, where he was immediately recognized, and consequently quickly fled the scene. He currently lives a quiet, non-musical life in Cambridge.

In 1985, following the tour for *The Final Cut*—consisting of songs which had been rejected by the band during the recording of *The Wall*—Roger disbanded the Floyd. The remaining band members nevertheless recorded *A Momentary Lapse of Reason* (1987) and *The Division Bell* (1994) without him, after winning a legal battle to continue using their established name. For the former disc, “Learning to Fly” began as an ode to David’s taking of flying lessons, and evolved into “a metaphor for a man’s attempt to take flight spiritually.” The tour for *Division Bell* included one show with science-fiction writer Douglas Adams on guitar, as a 42<sup>nd</sup> birthday present from Gilmour. (The band’s lavish ear-splitting and fish-killing concerts had formed the basis for Adams’ fictional rock group Disaster Area, in his *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* series. While the Floyd made use of mere *films* of solar flares in their shows, Disaster Area employed *real* ones.)

Touring extensively in the late ’80s in support of *Momentary Lapse*, the band was met in Columbus, Ohio, by Christian picketers with placards reading “WORSHIP GOD NOT PINK FLOYD SINNERS” and “REPENT PINK FLOYD IDOLATORS.”

Resolved to sin no more, Waters rejoined Gilmour, Mason and Wright to perform four classic Floyd songs at the London Live 8 concert in July of 2005. Earlier in the year, he had completed an opera entitled *Ça Ira*, based on the heroes of the French Revolution.

Et à propos, lequel l’un est Rose?

CHAPTER 16

***None More Black***

***BLACK SABBATH***

They are the burly, long-haired men who nearly single-handedly invented the heavy metal genre. Their lead singer was branded a devil-worshiper, stalked by covens, and threatened by Satanists—all before he had even tried to strangle his wife, been sued for allegedly encouraging the suicides of his fans, pissed on the Alamo, or gratuitously bitten the heads off of an assortment of live, flying animals.

They are Black Sabbath.

The teenage John Michael “Ozzy” Osbourne—dyslexic and suffering from attention deficit disorder—first met future Sab creative force Tony Iommi in high school in Birmingham, England, in the late 1960s. Osbourne had already been performing onstage in various Gilbert and Sullivan high-school operettas, including *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *The Mikado*.

Intensely disliking the Oz-brain's "high and girly" voice, among other things, Iommi would regularly beat him up for transgressions as seemingly innocuous as happily singing the Beatles' "I Want to Hold Your Hand" to himself during morning recess.

Having dropped out of school at age fifteen, Ozzy went to work at a succession of menial jobs, including two years at an abattoir:

"I loved killing animals.... It was definitely my forte. I used to stick them, stab them, chop them, totally torture the fuckers to death. And if the pigs had worms I used to bite their heads off."

From that outlet for his aggression he progressed to tuning car horns in a soundproof room, and eventually landed every metal-head's dream gig: a week as an assistant at a mortuary.

A more profitable life seemed to beckon from the criminal world, but several Stooze-like attempts at petty theft soon landed the young Ozzy in jail. Making good use of his time in the "nick," and having obtained a needle and pencil-lead, he emerged with his first monochromatic tattoos: "O-Z-Z-Y" on the knuckles of his left hand ... and soon after, smiling faces on each of his knees, so that he'd "get a little cheer every morning" when he woke up.

That month and a half in prison left the seventeen-year-old a changed man. Still hooked on the Beatles' sound, and fancying a rock star's life of "drinking beer, smoking dope and screwing chicks," the aspiring singer soon formed a band with future Sabbath bass player Terence "Geezer" Butler.

Years earlier, at age seven, Butler had been awakened by "a floating orb that glowed from within." Upon touching the bright object, it "filled his head with visions of his future and a better life" beyond Birmingham.

Ozzy and Geezer were quickly, if reluctantly, joined by former tormentor (now guitarist) Tony Iommi and drummer Bill Ward, to form what became the original lineup of Black Sabbath. The group's name was taken from their favorite Boris Karloff horror film, playing at a theater down the road from their rehearsal space.

In those early days, Geezer Butler couldn't afford an actual bass guitar. Thus, he simply restrung a six-string electric with four bass strings, and played it accordingly.

Tony Iommi's challenges as a guitarist, by contrast, were more manual than instrumental. For, in his job at a sheet metal factory during the same period, in a misadventure with a guillotine, he had quite accidentally

severed the tips of the ring and middle fingers on his right hand. He compensated for that loss via a combination of homemade prosthetics and a three-step downtuning of his left-handed guitar, to ease the strain on his tender fingers. Thus was born, in that lower register, a significant part of Sabbath's groundbreaking "heavy" sound, often-imitated in metal circles in the years since.

The band's maiden album, imaginatively titled *Black Sabbath*, was released on a Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> in early 1970. The cover featured a controversial upside-down cross, and an apocalyptic poem written inside the jacket.

Their namesake song, "Black Sabbath," has a smirking Satan manifesting to the narrator as a "black shape with eyes of fire." That disturbing lyrical visitation was actually based on a real-life experience had by Geezer Butler:

"Having borrowed a sixteenth-century tome of black magic from [Ozzy] Osbourne one afternoon, Butler awoke that night to find a black shape staring balefully at him from the foot of his bed. After a few frightening moments, the figure slowly vanished into thin air."

Geezer: "I told Ozzy about it. It stuck in his mind, and when we started playing 'Black Sabbath,' he just came out with those lyrics.... It had to come out, and it eventually did in that song—and then there was only one possible name for the band, really!"

From the same debut LP, "N.I.B." has often been taken by fans as an acronym for "Nativity in Black." The reality according to Ozzy, however, is far less demonic:

"We were all stoned in Hamburg and Bill used to have this really long, pointy beard and I said, 'Hey Bill, you look like a pen nib.' So when Geezer said, 'What are we going to call this song?' I said, 'Oh, call it N.I.B.'" (The song is nevertheless about the devil himself falling in love.)

The drummer's beard provided inspiration for the band at other times as well, once inducing Tony to set it on fire with his lighter:

"Bill was great ... he just breathed in this big cloud of fumes and said 'Hmmmmm—a good smoke, that.'"

Ward's attitude toward the source of the band's musical inspiration is itself worthy of note:

"I've always considered that there was some way where we were able to channel energy, and that energy was able to be, from another source, if you like, like a higher power or something, that was actually doing the work. I've often thought of us just being actually just the earthly beings

that played the music because it was uncanny. Some of this music came out extremely uncanny....

“A lot of the times we didn’t write the fucking songs at all. We showed up and something else wrote them for us. We were conduits.”

The group’s real and imagined interests in the occult and black magic soon resulted in them being asked to perform at the “Night of Satan” festival planned for Stonehenge by a local satanic cult. Declining that request, they found themselves on the wrong end of a threatened hex.

The Sab Four’s second effort, *Paranoid*, led off with the anti-Vietnam “War Pigs”—originally called “Walpurgis,” after the witches’-sabbath celebration of the arrival of spring. Use of the same title for the record itself had been vetoed by their record company, but too late to change the cover art. Thus, the jacket front displays a literal male “war pig” in pink leotards, armed with a sword and shield. Inside, the disc’s heavy-laden, drug-oriented “Hand of Doom” later formed the basis for the entire “Doom” sub-genre of metal music.

And so on to late 1971’s *Master of Reality*. Oddly, its second track, “After Forever,” could have easily passed for Christian rock, not least in its talk of soul-salvation, “seeing the light,” and the proselytizing assertion that “God is the only way to love.”

Reassuringly, “Lord of This World” was back to typical Sabbath fare, being written explicitly about “Old Nick.” It was sung by Ozzy from the perspective of that *other* Prince of Darkness to our earth’s greedy and prideful horde, who will know their sinful master even better after death.

The ensuing promotional tour found the walls of the band’s dressing room in Memphis covered in crosses drawn with animals’ blood, prior to their show. During the concert itself, an audience member wishing to sacrifice Tony Iommi’s soul to the devil accosted him onstage with a sacrificial knife.

Sab’s welcome to America also included being cheered by Charles Manson’s followers in Los Angeles. Not to be outdone, in San Francisco a parade was held in their honor by the Church of Satan and its High Priest, Anton LaVey.

Ozzy did his own part for the spread of evil during those months by regularly burning the Gideon’s Bibles found in the group’s hotel rooms.

The narrators for the songs on 1972’s *Vol. 4* variously “got no religion” and “don’t want no preacher telling me about the god in the sky” or about the afterlife.

Rehearsals for the band's fifth album, *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*, took place in the dungeons of a haunted castle in Wales. Too frightened by the ghosts manifesting around the ancient building's armory to sleep there overnight, the Masters of Evil chose to commute to work instead.

Studio work on the album did not lessen the supernatural component. For, while recording in Bel Air, one night in his bedroom Geezer "looked up to see several specters glaring at him from above with overpowering effect. Awash with fear, he immediately awakened Bill, Tony, and Ozzy to tell them what had happened. Geezer soon discovered that all of his fellow bandmates had experienced similar events."

The front cover of the finished album shows a selection of demons possessing a man. Above a satanic "666," a human skull beams. Within, "A National Acrobat" muses on reincarnation, saying: "Don't believe the life you have will be the only one."

Nineteen seventy-five's *Sabotage*, arguably the "last great Sabbath album," opened with the thunderous "Hole in the Sky." The song was, in Iommi's understanding of Geezer's lyrics, "basically about the astral plane."

"The Thrill of It All" called for help from "Mr. Jesus." As well the Sabbath members might have needed, given the poor initial sales of the *We Sold Our Soul for Rock 'n' Roll* (U.S. #48) compilation follow-up, and the subsequent *Technical Ecstasy* studio album (U.S. #51). The latter was itself succeeded unsuccessfully by the use of a fifteen-piece horn section by the "founders of heavy metal" on 1978's U.S. #69 record, *Never Say Die!*

One look at Geezer Butler's drooping mustache and long black hair makes it obvious that he was a primary inspiration for the Derek Smalls bassist character in the brilliant mockumentary film, *This is Spinal Tap*. Tony Iommi himself opined that the movie was "about a lot of groups, but the main part of it is about Black Sabbath. The Stonehenge thing that they used in *Spinal Tap* we had, only ours went the other way. We drew on a piece of paper what we wanted as the Stonehenge set, and the company made it bigger than the real Stonehenge, so consequently we couldn't fit it on the stage. Everything was too big; it was blown way out of proportion. We took it to America and we had to send it back; it wouldn't fit. We couldn't give it away. We tried to give it to America, in the desert where London Bridge went, and they wouldn't have it."

Or, in Ozzy Osbourne's view: "I thought it was a documentary about Black Sabbath!.... I lived that life; it was just a real situation for me."

Through a combination of musical differences, drug abuse, and regular unexcused absences, Ozzy was fired from the band in 1979. He was quickly replaced by the elf-like Ronnie James Dio, formerly of the group Rainbow.

Ozzy spent three or more months living in a hotel room in Hollywood with the drapes permanently shut, drinking heavily. With the aid of his future wife, Sharon, he eventually got together a band, consisting of former members of Quiet Riot, Uriah Heep, and Rainbow, to record his first solo album, 1981's *Blizzard of Ozz*.

On that first step of his way back up to the top, he nevertheless found time to dis his former group:

"They'll probably sound very much like Foreigner—that was the last album they were into!"

The solo band's attempts at recording, however, were predictably complicated by the apparent presence of a poltergeist in the studio.

Ozzy: "Most days we would wake up and windows would be smashed, crockery shattered, doors were broken off their hinges and our clothes would be floating in the stream outside. The studio owner was insisting that it was us getting drunk every night and tearing up the studio, but we stuck by our story that it was always the poltergeist."

The Evil Quotient for the album was upped by the inclusion of "Mr. Crowley"—with the magickal Antichrist lyrically riding the symbolic white horse from Revelation, as the first of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. *Spin* magazine (April, 2002) has actually reported Osbourne to own a signed first edition of Crowley's *1001 Notable Nativities*, containing Aleister's handwritten notes in the margins. From Ozzy's own perspective:

"It was all hype when I started, but I really learned to believe in the devil. I dedicated *The Blizzard of Ozz* to Aleister Crowley."

The album in question also featured the infamous "Suicide Solution."

Ozzy regularly insisted that he had written the song as a warning against the dangers of alcohol, spurred by the fate of his late friend Bon Scott, the former lead singer of AC/DC, who choked to death on his own vomit. ("Solution" was to be taken as "liquid," i.e., alcohol, not as a suggested way out of one's problems.) His own bass player Bob Daisley, however, had a different take on the situation, claiming that *he* had written

the lyrics, and that they were specifically about *Ozzy's* problems with substance abuse.

Either way, the parents of a teenager who shot himself in 1984 while listening to the song sued *Ozzy*, alleging that their son had been made vulnerable to killing himself by hidden messages in the music. (Those purported communications were heard by some as "Why try, why try? Get the gun and try it. Shoot, shoot, shoot." The First Amendment, freedom-of-speech case was dismissed in 1986.)

Well prior to those lawsuits, however, *Ozzy* and the band had put out their sophomore disc, *Diary of a Madman*. Named after Crowley's autobiography, its "Over the Mountain" was a song about "life's magic astral plane," while "Little Dolls," pricked by pins and needles, concerned voodoo.

The opening act for the ensuing tour was, somewhat surprisingly, none other than *Foreigner*.

Those busy months on the road were to further include the inhumane abuse of doves and bats, the parabolic flight of vast quantities of raw meat, and an indiscreet cross-dressing urination in Texas.

First, in the spring of 1981, in a boardroom meeting with top executives at CBS in L.A., *Ozzy* bit the head off a dove. The dove may or may not have already been dead; the Oz-man may or may not have been drunk at the time; it may or may not have all been a publicity stunt cooked up by Sharon. Either way, the world was soon minus one uncooked baby doveling, and had one more rocker banned from setting foot in the CBS building.

The Humane Society followed up on the sound and fury by campaigning to have *Ozzy* banned from performing in the U.S.

And then there was the bat. Thrown onto the stage by a fan in Des Moines, Iowa, in January of 1982. *Ozzy* might have thought it was just a harmless rubber toy. Either way, one small bite for *Ozzy*; a giant series of painful rabies shots for *Ozzy's* behind.

And the look on the Humane Society's face: priceless.

The relative normality of a live bat being thrown onstage becomes clearer when one realizes that, throughout the concert tour, in a throwback to *Ozzy's* abattoir days, fans were invited to bring raw meat (e.g., dead cats, dogs, rats, snakes, lizards, and humongous swamp frogs) to the shows, to throw at the band. As a signal that the audience was to begin

discharging their offal at *him*, Ozzy would first catapult a bucket full of rotting pigs' intestines and calves' livers at *them*.

Sharon: "We got attention as a result, but the stuff about sawing the legs off a Doberman and blowing up small animals was pure fabrication."

The shows also featured the mock execution of a dwarf, coincidentally nicknamed "Ronnie."

A mere month later, the traveling rock circus pulled into San Antonio. Home of the Alamo. Visited for a photo-op by a "drunk as a skunk" Ozzy one morning wearing his wife's green evening dress.

A tumbled-down historical brick wall. Pissed on. Arrested and briefly jailed for. Banned from performing in the city for a decade afterwards.

The American leg of the tour for Osbourne's 1982 live album, *Speak of the Devil* (outside the U.S., *Talk of the Devil*), was met with priest-led record burnings, and warnings from Deep South preachers that "the madman was coming!"

Oddly enough, all of that actually qualified as Ozzy getting his life and career finally back on track, following the depression he experienced after the split from Sabbath. Looking back in 1984 on his "wilder and crazier" early days, he reflected:

"I really wish I knew why I've done some of the things I've done over the years. Sometimes I think that I'm possessed by some outside spirit. A few years ago, I was convinced of that—I thought I truly was possessed by the devil. I remember sitting through *The Exorcist* a dozen times, saying to myself, 'Yeah, I can relate to that.'"

The Dio-led Black Sabbath, meanwhile, released *Heaven and Hell* (with "Neon Knights" and "Children of the Sea") in 1980. It was on the tour for that album that Ronnie James popularized the now-ubiquitous "devil horns" hand gesture, the intricacies of which should not be lost on the discerning fan:

"According to European mediaeval folklore, subtleties regarding the position of the thumb whilst holding this symbol are of paramount import. With the thumb held under the fingers it is the sign of the horned god Cernunnos, with the thumb above the fingers and the extended digits pointed towards a person it is a device for cursing an individual."

Sabbath's *Mob Rules* was released in 1981. The title of its instrumental "E5150" was a Roman-numeral representation of the word "evil." ("5" = "V," "50" = "L," so "E5150" = "EV1L.")

Two years later, the band recorded *Born Again* with Deep Purple's Ian Gillan on lead vocals, in place of Dio. Following it, the band once again flirted with Christian rock, bringing future minister Jeff Fenholt in as their new singer, for what may or may not have been originally intended as a Tony Iommi solo project. (Fenholt had formerly played the lead role in "Jesus Christ Superstar," as did Gillan at one time.)

Also in 1983, the title track of Ozzy's *Bark at the Moon* was blamed for compelling another fan of the genre to stab a woman and her two sons to death on New Year's Eve.

Jeff Fenholt was replaced by Glenn Hughes of Deep Purple before the final mix of Sabbath's *Seventh Star* in 1986. The completed album's "In for the Kill" nevertheless dealt not only with Vlad the Impaler [the inspiration for Bram Stoker's *Dracula*] but also with "the accountability humanity will face in the Armageddon of Revelations." The title song, for its own part, had a multitude of souls "waiting judgment from God's hand."

Ozzy's *The Ultimate Sin* (1986, U.S. #1) led to *No Rest for the Wicked* in 1988. The latter's "Miracle Man" hit back at hypocritical televangelists such as Jimmy Swaggart—rocker Jerry Lee Lewis' scandalous cousin—for getting "busted with his pants down." (The same theme was covered by Sabbath themselves four years later, on *Tyr*.)

On other occasions, no less than the former Archbishop of New York, Cardinal John O'Connor, had railed against Ozzy as purportedly being "hell's own messenger." Still, when Oral Roberts attempted to raise \$7 million against the Heavenly Father's unveiled threat to do him in should he fail to get the money on time, who was there to help out? None other than Ozzy, who donated a dollar, suggesting that it might go towards paying Roberts' psychiatric bill.

On "Blood Bath in Paradise," a song about the Manson murders, Ozzy's previous troubles with alleged subliminal messages provoked him to include a real backward-masked phrase: "Your mother sells whelks in Hull." His odd choice of words becomes more understandable when one relates it to the *Exorcist* quote, "Your mother sucks cocks in hell." A whelk, for those keeping score, is an edible marine gastropod.

After *Headless Cross* in 1989, the reconstituted Black Sabbath let loose the next calendar year with *Tyr*—named after the Norse god of law and order. Though written with their heads in "Valhalla" and "Odin's Court," the band's feet were still firmly planted on "The Sabbath Stones"—a song about the Ten Commandments.

Nineteen eighty-nine also found Ozzy charged with attempted murder for his furious, vodka-induced efforts at choking Sharon to death.

As she later said: “He was totally insane from all the drink and drugs he was doing, and well, these things happen.”

Two years later, Ozzy’s first sober album in decades, *No More Tears*, eventually brought him a Grammy for Best Metal Performance, for “I Don’t Want to Change the World.” It also, however, led to a brief retirement on his part, after being misdiagnosed as having Parkinson’s disease.

The process of writing forty new tunes with the brilliant guitarist Steve Vai enticed the Oz-brain back into the studio to record a new album for 1995, *Ozzmosis*. (Only one of their songs together, “My Little Man,” made it onto the final track listing.)

Of Vai himself, a friend and former roommate noted the intensity of his spiritual search: “One day he flat out told me that he was going to work really hard for ten years, make a lot of money, retire, and then go into the wilderness to meditate.”

More recently, after 2001’s *Down to Earth*, Osbourne has been trying his luck at writing a Broadway musical, taking as his subject the Russian mad monk, Rasputin. Fans of the idea that life imitates art will not fail to notice the parallel there with the musical based on the life of Jack the Ripper (*Saucy Jack*) that was planned by the fictional members of Spinal Tap a good two decades ago.

After all the hard living and accusations of Satan-worship, then, the Oz-man gave his once-over view on religion:

“I don’t believe in God as a physical thing sat somewhere on a cloud in heaven. I reckon heaven and hell are what we make of life right here on earth. I don’t believe in the afterlife, I think when you die you’re just simply like a piece of shit that needs flushing away.”

Ironically, then, Christmas Eve of 1995 found Ozzy and his family attending midnight mass at their local Catholic church.

Even more ironically, in discussing the meaning of “See You on the Other Side,” from *Ozzmosis*, the increasingly religious man stated:

“I absolutely adore my wife. The love that I have for her and the love she has for me will never die. I truly believe that if I pop off first or she goes, then we’ll meet up on the other side. I believe in life after death...”

In facing Sharon’s later battle with cancer, Osbourne further admitted that he had “done a lot of praying, believe it or not.”

*Rock & Holy Rollers*

At any rate, early 2002 and a guest appearance on the Howard Stern show found Ozzy disclosing a new addiction: Viagra. Indeed, he claimed to be swallowing up to fifteen of those pills daily. His use began innocently enough, after a month of being unable to perform with Sharon, but he apparently “enjoyed the taste so much that he couldn’t stop chewing them.”

By contrast, 2004 saw Ozzy receiving a *New Musical Express* award for “godlike genius.”

It is, as they say, a fine line between clever and stupid.

A *very* fine line.

CHAPTER 29

*In My Eyes*

*PETER GABRIEL*

There are surely many fans of Peter Gabriel's music—both before and after his breakthrough hit, "Sledgehammer"—who would be surprised to learn that he and Phil Collins once played together in a rather famous old band. A once-relevant group whose best days were far behind them when Phil left to focus on his solo career in 1992. A band which many critics expected to be unable to carry on following Peter's departure seventeen years earlier, after their final tour together in 1975. A prog rock band called Genesis, whose members incorporated religious and mythological references into their songs from their earliest days together.

The soul music-influenced Peter Gabriel met the classically trained keyboardist Tony Banks in 1963. At the time, they were thirteen-year-old

students at the Charterhouse boys' boarding school, located twenty miles southeast of London.

Gabriel and Banks' band (The Garden Wall) soon merged with members of another local group (The Anon), including guitarist/bassist Mike Rutherford. Their original intention was to function as a songwriting cooperative, creating songs for others to perform.

Lack of interest in their (300+) still-amateurish lyrical offerings, however, plus a fortuitous visit by Charterhouse alumnus and pop wonder Jonathan King ("Everyone's Gone to the Moon"), eventually led to King producing the still-unnamed group's first album.

Replete with an attempt at imitating the Bee Gees' style of writing ("The Silent Sun"), the pretentious overall theme of the acoustic-based album, as charged by King, was to be a history of the universe from the beginning of creation to the end of time, in song.

The group was christened "Genesis"—after "Gabriel's Angels" had been rejected by all members of the band, save one. King was soon chagrined, however, to find that there was already a group in the U.S. performing under that name. Recovering quickly and intending to bill the group as Revelation, in America, the completed album was given the title *From Genesis to Revelation*, with the band's name being indicated only via that label.

Packaged with Gothic gold foil lettering on a black background—with songs including "In the Beginning" and "The Serpent"—the "lesson in marketing" album was understandably quickly routed to the religious bin of the few record shops that even bothered to carry it. (In its initial 1969 issue, the disc sold only around a thousand copies, mostly to friends and acquaintances of the band.)

Soon permanently *sans* Mr. King and under new management, in 1970 the group released their follow-up—*Trespass*. It was highlighted by an "aggressive number about [a] revolutionary figure on a power trip." Ironically, that seven-minute piece ("The Knife") was actually inspired by "a book about the life of Gandhi," rooted in the idea that revolutions brought about by violence will invariably end up with dictators in charge. (The lyrics were also partially about Peter "being a public schoolboy rebelling against [his] background.")

The song in turn inspired Gabriel, in concert, to use his microphone like a sword, "attacking" the audience with it. It also led him to take a literal flying leap off a five-foot-high stage into the audience near the end of

a June, 1971 show in Aylesbury, presaging his later solo crowd surfing ... and breaking his ankle, to the point of needing to have two metal screws inserted in his leg to set it.

Rehearsals for the group's third offering, *Nursery Cryme*, took place in a spooky Tudor house formerly occupied by the likes of Leonard Cohen and the Monkees' Michael Nesmith. As the band's new drummer, Phil Collins, described the place: "I'm sure the house was haunted.... There were some weird vibes. There was a picture with eyes that followed you everywhere, and other strange things."

Collins, in addition to his previous drumming for one album with Flaming Youth, had child-acted the part of the Artful Dodger in a West End stage production of the musical *Oliver!* That skill was later to serve him in good stead for a mid-'80s guest-star appearance (as "Phil the Shill") on the second season of television's *Miami Vice*. There, he delivered lines like "You must take me for a right wanker" with all due aplomb.

That third album also marked the addition of Steve Hackett to the group—functioning alternately as a searing lead guitarist and as a one-man "special effects department" within the band's constraining arrangements.

*Cryme* opened with the ten-minute-long "Musical Box," telling the story of a young boy (Henry) who had his head removed at the croquet mallet of a slightly older girl, Cynthia. He later returned, in spirit, as an aging crippled man. While a music box played, Henry attempted a seduction of the girl, his ghostly form calling out, "Touch me, now!" Hearing the disturbance, Cynthia's nanny entered the room, throwing the musical box at the bearded spirit-child, thus destroying both.

In a similarly fantastic vein, lyrics for the album-closing "Fountain of Salmacis" were derived from the Greek mythological explanation for the origin of hermaphroditism (i.e., the presence of both male and female reproductive organs in flowers, animals or human beings). The myth involves the excessive union of the boy Hermaphroditus—offspring of Hermes and Aphrodite—with the water-nymph Salmacis, to no happy ending.

The record quickly rose to the #1 chart position ... in Belgium.

In the autumn of 1972 Peter began developing the visual aspect of the band's live shows, acting out their songs' characters via a wide array of theatrical costumes and face masks.

The most controversial of those was a shocking red dress (belonging to his wife, Jill) and fox's head. That apparel had nothing to do with the

music being played while it was worn, but nevertheless garnered some coveted media attention—quickly doubling the group’s concert fee. (The costume was later replaced by an “old man” latex mask, allowing Gabriel to act out the “Musical Box” story from *Nursery Cryme*.)

The “foxy lady” gag actually derived from the drawn cover of the band’s next unintentionally low-fidelity album, *Foxtrot*—their first album to chart in England.

The meaning of the various images on that cover was explained by the artist, Paul Whitehead, in Armando Gallo’s *Genesis: I Know What I Like*. Initially, the painting was conceived simply as a put-down on fox-hunting as an aristocratic sport—as an extension of the satirical croquet theme on the *Nursery Cryme* cover, the latter of which is itself reproduced in part in the background of the *Foxtrot* jacket. As Whitehead became familiar with the subject matter of the contained songs, however, he soon incorporated the four horsemen of the Apocalypse in that “fox-hunt”:

“The ice floating on water is like the soul floating in the human body. The fox [standing on the ice] is a passion, a violent aspect, but it has used its cunning and adopted a disguise and the ice to escape its pursuers [i.e., the four horsemen with their bloodhounds, assembled on the shore]. The cover is adopted into half land and half sea, and it shows that there is as much life in the sea as there is on the land. There is also death in the sea, as signified by Cynthia’s [croquet] mallet, the shark, the Hogweed [referring to another fantasial/botanical song on *Cryme*] and the nuclear submarine.”

The cyclist on the cover was Peter himself—apparently he once turned up for a meeting on a bike, but couldn’t ride particularly well. The hotel in the background was intended to be symbolic of all the road trips that the band would be taking in their coming years.

From that disc, side one’s “Watcher of the Skies” was written by Banks and Rutherford, inspired by a lifeless landscape of buildings and fields which presented itself to them as they gazed one day from their hotel in Naples. The inanimate scene below struck them as approximating what an alien being might see, in coming to the deserted planet after some catastrophe. (Davin Seay, writing from a Christian perspective in his *Stairway to Heaven*, would prefer for that “Watcher” to be God. He is, however, quite mistaken. Interestingly, the phrase “watcher of the skies” also occurs in John Keats’ poem “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer,” very possibly being borrowed by Tony and Mike from that

source. In the poem, the experience of reading Chapman's translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is compared to the feeling which the Spanish explorer Cortez must have had in first seeing the Pacific Ocean.) Performed in concert as the set-opener, the piece found Gabriel sporting ultraviolet-illuminated day-glo eyes, batwings, and a floor-length cape to complement the song's doom-laden Mellotron introduction.

Side two, however, is where the band, by their own testimony, began "sounding really good on records." That plane of vinyl is given entirely over to a single, apocalyptic song: the episodic, biblically influenced tale of good and evil, "Supper's Ready."

Peter Gabriel himself confirmed the song's religious basis: "I ended up reading Revelations in the Bible. This explains the apocalyptic bit at the end of 'Supper's Ready.' I think it was one of the first times that I felt as if I was really singing from my soul—almost like singing for my life."

The song's title refers to Revelation 19, verse 9: "Then the angel said to me, 'Write: "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"'"

The work itself consists of seven sections:

- i Lover's Leap
- ii The Guaranteed Eternal Sanctuary Man
- iii Ikhnaton and Itsacon and Their Band of Merry Men
- iv How Dare I Be So Beautiful?
- v Willow Farm
- vi Apocalypse in 9/8
- vii As Sure as Eggs is Eggs (Aching Men's Feet)

The first movement, "Lover's Leap," where the narrator sees his lover's "face change," was based on an actual paranormal experience had by Peter and his wife Jill, one night in her parents' apartment:

"I saw this very old face in Jill, there was this sense that it wasn't her there....

"I tried calming her down and holding her, but nothing seemed to get through.... The window flew open, there was this horrible coldness and we got the shivers.... I made a cross with candlesticks, which helped, I don't know why."

At the height of that experience, Jill had been speaking in tongues, and reacting like a "wild animal."

Peter further recorded: “I did feel that I saw figures outside, figures in white cloaks, and the lawn I saw them on wasn’t the lawn that was outside.” (Thus, “six saintly shrouded men,” led by a seventh carrying a cross, are included on the *Foxtrot* album cover.)

Part two, “The Guaranteed Eternal Sanctuary Man,” concerns the head of a “highly disciplined scientific religion” who falsely claims to possess “a secret new ingredient capable of fighting fire.”

A number of twentieth-century guru-figures, including the Maharishi and Paramahansa Yogananda, have presented their techniques of meditation as being “scientific,” and even as (dubiously) having had their efficacy proved in controlled studies.

Further, the mantra “Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama” is one of two chants which are especially recommended in the Vedas for delivering one to “the realm beyond material existence”—the other such mantra being “Om.” (The Hare Krishnas themselves use a slightly modified version of the former chant.) Such chanting could be said to be the practice of a “*supersonic* mantric science.”

Further, when directed outwardly, the so-called kundalini energy is believed to give rise to sexual desire. (The kundalini “fire” is a subtle energy held to reside at the base of the spine; its coiled nature accounts for the bulk of extant scriptural references to “serpents.”) The Hare Krishnas, however, like many yogic groups, are supposed to be strictly celibate. That is, they and other groups with similar emphases on celibacy as a purported means toward spiritual enlightenment are “fighting fire,” in that regard.

The kundalini reference is further supported by the choir of school-children singing softly, even against the claims of that “science”: “We will rock you, rock you, *little snake*.” (For the relevance of the views of children in the realm of spirituality, cf. Matthew 5:8—“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”)

The next section, “Ikhnaton and Itsacon and Their Band of Merry Men,” concerns an army summoned out of the ground at the Guaranteed Eternal Sanctuary Man’s command, attacking all those who are not members in good standing of the religion.

Ikhnaton (1379 – 1362 BC) was an Egyptian king, husband of the legendarily beautiful Nefertiti, who developed the monotheistic solar cult of Aton. (Freud, interestingly, believed that Moses was a high-born priest of the same royal sun god, Aton, whose cult had been overthrown in a palace coup.)

Its-a-con has been read by some as referring to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness—ISKCON—popularly called the Hare Krishnas, and known for their bands of chanting, merry men. The organization has its U.K. headquarters at Bhaktivedanta Manor in northwest London.

Moving right along, in Genesis' early days Jonathan King had been in the habit of looking into the mirror and exclaiming, "How dare I be so beautiful!" From that, Peter conceived the same description as applying to the egoic Narcissus, in part four here. Our narrator and his company join the mythological figure-turned-flower in staring into a pool, and "are pulled into their own reflections in the water."

For the following "Willow Farm," Gabriel donned his infamous "Flower" costume—modeled after a character he had seen in a children's television show. Climbing out of the pool, then, the song's witnesses "are once again in a different existence. They're right in the middle of a myriad of bright colors, filled with all manner of objects, plants, animals and humans. Life flows freely and everything is mindlessly busy. At random, a whistle blows and every single thing is instantly changed into another," losing the firm boundaries and rigid identification of consciousness with its prior forms.

"At one whistle the lovers become seeds in the soil, where they recognize other seeds to be people from the world in which they had originated. While they wait for spring, they are returned to their old world to see the Apocalypse of St. John in full progress."

Thus, we arrive at the "Apocalypse in 9/8 (Co-Starring the Delicious Talents of Gabble Ratchet)."

*Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, under "Gabble Ratchet," advises: "See GABRIEL'S HOUNDS." From which: "Wild geese. The noise of geese in flight is like that of a pack of hounds in full cry. The legend is that they are the souls of unbaptized children wandering through the air till the Day of JUDGMENT."

This segment, loosely based on Revelation's Chapter 13, includes a reference to the "guards of Magog"—in biblical terms, people who are "recruited to be the evil army of Satan after he gets out of prison."

Finally, we have the appropriately numbered seventh movement, "As Sure as Eggs is Eggs (Aching Mens' Feet)." Seven trumpets—or, in the yogic interpretation, spinal chakras—blow the vibration of "sweet rock and roll" into the hero's astral and causal bodies. The river of life energy

in the spine joins the ocean of Cosmic Consciousness, freeing the soul from its *mayic* or Satanic (“666”) bondage.

As Paramahansa Yogananda explained, in his *Autobiography of a Yogi*: “Revelation contains the symbolic exposition of a yogic science, taught to John and other close disciples by Lord Jesus. John mentions (Rev. 1:20) the ‘mystery of the seven stars’ and the ‘seven churches’; these symbols refer to the seven lotuses of light, described in yoga treatises as the seven ‘trap doors’ in the cerebrospinal axis. Through these divinely planned ‘exits,’ the yogi, by scientific meditation, escapes from the bodily prison and resumes his true identity as Spirit.”

Peter Gabriel actually had both of his daughters—Anna, born in late July of 1974; and Melanie, born 1976—“confirmed and christened ... in six different religions” at Yogananda’s Self-Realization Fellowship Lake Shrine temple in Los Angeles. He could not possibly have gotten to that point, of bringing his family into the organization in such a significant way, without having read Yogananda’s *Autobiography*. Gabriel is also on record as having been inspired by *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, various “books on Zen Buddhism,” and Carlos Castaneda’s *Journey to Ixtlan*—concerning the exploits of the fictional Yaqui sorcerer, Don Juan. (Castaneda’s books were similarly regarded by high-pitched songstress Joni Mitchell as being “a magnificent synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophies.” Peter sang on Joni’s 1990 *Chalk Mark In a Rainstorm* album, on “My Secret Place.”) He further took both Silva Mind Control and est training—the latter of which was alleged to make use of “brainwashing” techniques—in the 1970s.

In concert, Gabriel would remove his black cloak at this penultimate point in the song to reveal a silver suit, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil. Photos further show him holding a violet fluorescent tube vertically over his head, during the closing “New Jerusalem” section. (The New Jerusalem is the “place of peace” where “mankind is finally reunited with God after having been redeemed from sin.”)

The reason for that is obvious from a yogic perspective: The tube was another clear reference to the spiritualized spine, by which the individual’s victory of good over evil in Self-realization is held to be obtained.

*Selling England by the Pound* was the group’s next studio effort, composed in the summer of 1973. It offered much in the way of Her Majesty’s Britannia, but less than one had become accustomed to as far as religious allusions. A small exception to that unusual dearth was PG’s “kar-

macanic” (i.e., “karma mechanic,” as a sort of religious mechanism). That invented word was to be found in “The Battle of Epping Forest”—a story about rival gangs fighting each other for protection rights in tradition-loving East End London.

More ethereally, the beginning of the album’s epic “Cinema Show” derived from T. S. Eliot’s poem “The Wasteland.” The same song also offered an explicit reference to Tiresias—the narrator of Eliot’s poem, who had “crossed between the poles” of male and female.

In Greek mythology, Tiresias had accidentally struck a pair of mating snakes with his stick. For that error, he was transformed “from male into female for seven years; and then back to male again, when striking the snakes a second time. After those encounters he was made blind to the outer world, but given the gift of prophecy, i.e., had his inner eye opened.”

In those two mating snakes, one can easily see the same two life currents as are said to be symbolized in the intertwining snakes of the caduceus: one masculine or solar (*pingala*), and the other feminine or lunar (*ida*). Those two currents are believed to criss-cross the spine from its base to a point between the eyebrows, in the manner of a repeated figure-eight.

On more of a grounded, terrestrial note, the tour for *Selling England* resulted in Genesis being elected “Top Stage Band” in the *New Musical Express* (U.K.) Readers’ Poll. They were further hailed in certain quarters as being “The most significant rock band to happen since the Beatles.”

Nineteen seventy-four saw the group composing their double-album gold-selling opus, *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*. The story and lyrics were written almost exclusively by Gabriel, and the music done almost solely by the rest of the band.

Just prior to that intensive writing, however, Peter had been contacted by William Friedkin, director of *The Exorcist*. (When just out of Charterhouse, Gabriel had been accepted by the London School of Film Technique, and had seriously considered pursuing that avenue rather than a musical career.) The ensuing offer of a screenwriting job resulted in Peter briefly leaving the band, before Friedkin’s own lack of commitment and his focus on PG as a source of “weird ideas” rather than a full-time writer caused the latter to return, if somewhat sheepishly, to the Genesis fold.

“*The Lamb* was intended to be like a *Pilgrim’s Progress* ... an adventure through which one gets a better understanding of self—the transformation theme,” said Gabriel. The story’s hero, Rael, was a streetwise

Puerto Rican from the Bronx ghettos; his appearance on the album predated the actual punk movement by a full two years.

As Peter further explained in Chris Welch's *The Secret Life of Peter Gabriel*: "The story begins with a dose of reality, establishing an earthy character which develops into more fantastic things. Rael is half Puerto Rican and lives in New York.... *He's alienated in an aggressive situation.* The Lamb arrives on Broadway and acts like a catalyst. A very oppressive sky descends over the city and solidifies. It becomes a screen like a TV with the camera behind it. Real life is projected on the screen and starts to break up.... The screen that Rael sees is sucking him in. When he regains consciousness he is in another underworld."

From waking to find himself wrapped safely in a woolen cocoon, Rael is soon fearfully trapped in one of a network of cages, then witnesses the Grand Parade of Lifeless Packaging—an exhibition of human shells without free will. He then returns, in memory, to his street life in New York City, reliving his first sexual encounter.

Next down a carpeted corridor saturated with esoteric mystical symbols, and then up a spiral staircase—cf. Solomon's temple—he finds a hemispherical chamber of thirty-two doors (or channels for life energy), only one of which leads out to the next level of reality. Led by the Lily-white Lilith guru-figure through a tunnel of light, Rael confronts Death, then passes through another corridor to find a rose-water pool inhabited by three beautiful half-woman, half-snake creatures, the Lamia.

"The Lamia enter his body and they die. He finds a more feminine side of his personality which is totally foreign to him, and yet he has fallen in love with a delectable Lamia creature and becomes so engrossed in its attractiveness and the newer side to his personality he never believed existed, that he doesn't notice a strange blue light which causes him to sweat. The Lamia nibble at his buttocks [i.e., at the base of the spine] and are killed...."

Sorrowfully leaving that scene by the same door through which he had entered, the now-deformed Rael comes upon the Colony of Slippermen.

"The Slippermen are grotesque and totally sensual beings whose entire day is spent gratifying every orifice, including nose, mouth and ear. The only way out of this situation is castration. A bird comes down and carries off a tube containing the offending member. He can go through a window to get back where he was in New York."

Rael forgoes the skylight, selflessly choosing to save his brother instead, and scrambles down the mountainside to the river below, where John is drowning. (“Brother John” is a collective name for the American people; as rendered in the lyrics sheet, the initial capitals taken by the two words are highly significant.) But as he looks into John’s eyes, he sees only his own face there.

“His brother turns out to be another illusion. Eventually he is absorbed into a substance called IT, a purple haze.” That absorption and the diffusion of Rael’s consciousness equally into both bodies occurs with a “sudden rush of energy up both spinal columns.” And *that* is proof, for anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of yoga, that the entire story was meant as a spiritual allegory, given in sections corresponding to the physical, astral, causal, and Self-realized aspects of mystical reality. (Rael undergoes three “deaths” during his journey—the initial “wall of death” in Times Square, his meeting with the Supernatural Anaesthetist, and his eventual dissolution into the purple haze. He also, correspondingly, passes through three [spinal] corridors or tunnels: in the “Carpet Crawlers” section, then on his way to the Lamia, and finally in chasing the raven toward the river.)

All of that, at least, is the *short* version of what seems to be going on in *The Lamb*, coming largely from Peter’s own reliable mouth. Yet, the more one looks at the details of the images and storyline, the more references one can find to ideas which seem to be taken straight from Yogananda’s *Autobiography* and other Eastern spiritual texts.

Interestingly, Mike Rutherford’s (outvoted) idea for the album, in early band meetings, had been for them to do a musical version of the children’s book *The Little Prince*.

If you ever need proof that you shouldn’t listen to your bass player for song ideas....

For his own part, Phil Collins has since admitted: “I can’t remember too much about the *Lamb* tour. That was my grass tour. I sank beneath my headphones every night to play the whole of *The Lamb* and thoroughly enjoyed myself!”

If you ever need proof that you shouldn’t listen to your drummer for song ideas....

In 102 live shows across America, Canada and Europe, from late 1974 onward, the hour-and-a-half-long *Lamb* was performed in full, backed by over one thousand slides projected onto three screens. Rael was

played onstage by Gabriel with a short all-American haircut, dressed in turned-up blue jeans, white T-shirt and a leather motorcycle jacket. He didn't put on his first costume until three-quarters of the way through the set, for "The Lamia." There, "he was covered in a cone-like object bathed in ultraviolet light that was meant to signify the tourbillion, the wheel that catapults beings into the mystical world." That was followed by "The Colony of Slippermen," in which Peter emerged from a (transparent pink, phallic) plastic tunnel garbed in "a monstrous, bulbous costume with out-sized inflatable genitals." For the album's finale, "It," following an onstage explosion, PG was joined by a "dummy" Rael mannequin, with strobe lights flashing alternately on the two of them, deliberately confusing the audience as to which was the "real" Rael.

As to the reception which the multimedia extravaganza received, Peter relates: "The Who and Yes weren't able to play easily entire works like *Tommy* and *Topographic Oceans*.... Our audiences initially tolerated *The Lamb* and eventually became positive towards it."

A mere six weeks into their planned six-month world tour, however, Gabriel announced to Genesis' management that he would be leaving the group at the end of that commitment, in May of 1975.

In the two-month holiday which followed Peter's final concert with the group, guitarist Steve Hackett recorded his first solo album, *Voyage of the Acolyte*. Musically ornate but lyrically sparse—only three of the tunes have words—the disc is noteworthy for having each of its songs named after a specific card in the tarot deck: Ace of Wands, Hands of the Priestess, Tower Struck Down, Hermit, Star of Sirius, Lovers, and Shadow of the Hierophant. (Hackett's second solo album, *Please Don't Touch*, featured "Narnia," a song derived from C. S. Lewis' Christian spiritual allegory *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. His later *Spectral Mornings* would contain the instrumental "Clocks—The Angel of Mons." The title referred to a collective vision of the Virgin Mary purportedly seen by British soldiers in Normandy during World War II.)

After auditioning numerous potential replacements for Gabriel, it was decided that Phil Collins would take over the lead-singing duties, in addition to his drumming. (Phil had already contributed backing vocals to a number of Genesis songs, and lead vocals to *Selling England's* "More Fool Me.")

The band would release two more studio albums prior to Hackett's departure in 1977. The first of those, *A Trick of the Tail*, featured the song

“Squonk”—sketching a wart-covered, rat-like creature from American mythology, said to dissolve itself into a pool of tears when surprised, frightened or captured.

Beyond that, religion and mythology in the lyrics of Genesis (and their members’ solo projects) were to be essentially a thing of the past. So, through the glorious *Wind and Wuthering*, *And Then There Were Three*, *Duke* and 1981’s *Abacab*, we find plenty of easily digestible pop songs, and little need to puzzle over the deep metaphysical meaning of the words. (The singular exception is perhaps “One for the Vine,” on *Wind and Wuthering* from late 1976. There, the hero claims to be “the chosen one,” and in turn inadvertently produces other, less willing messiahs.) Likewise for their self-titled 1983 LP, whose hit single “Mama” concerned the relationship of an inexperienced boy with a much older, maternal prostitute.

With 1986’s top-selling, poppy *Invisible Touch*, long-term Genesis fans such as myself predictably began to seriously lose interest, in spite of the band’s record-breaking stint of four consecutive shows at London’s Wembley Stadium. Still, anyone who stuck around for another half-dozen years, for their next studio release—late 1991’s *We Can’t Dance*, the last to feature Phil Collins—would have been rewarded with “Jesus He Knows Me.”

The song was another distant cousin, in general subject matter at least, to the Talking Heads’ “Once in a Lifetime” (whose own four verses all “came directly from preachers”). As such, it reflected the breaking sexual and monetary scandals of various American televanglists, amid their claims to be on intimate terms with Jesus. The song was actually banned in certain parts of the U.S., while the BBC itself refused to play the video.

The group finally called it quits after 1997’s *Calling All Stations*, having been fronted for that one effort by ex-Stiltskin singer Ray Wilson. A planned tour of the States in support of the album had already been cancelled, owing to a distinct lack of public interest as manifested in slow ticket sales, not merely for the original arena dates but even for a humbly scaled-down, theater-venue version. (The album failed to crack the Top 50 in America, though still rising to the #2 position ... in Britain.)

Rutherford, interestingly, considered that failure to be the product of “something of an anti-English movement” in the United States.

In marked contrast to that “slow and painful death” of a once-ground-breaking band, Peter Gabriel’s own post-split career has rarely suffered from any dearth of innovation, creativity or spirituality. Indeed, the very

first song (“Moribund The Bürgermeister”) on his very first solo album (now known as “Car”) was a lyrical rendition of St. Vitus’ Dance.

Medically, St. Vitus’ Dance is a disorder of the nervous system, primarily afflicting young children. Its victims display rapid, jerky, involuntary movements, typically of the face and limbs, with a resulting inability to maintain any posture.

Historically, however, the Dance was a mass hysteria which swept Europe at various times between the eleventh and seventeenth centuries, in which tens of thousands of people exhibited similarly chaotic movements. That “plague” was sympathetically passed along by “sight alone,” and medievally taken as a demonic manifestation.

The illness was prevalent in Germany in 1374, accounting for Peter’s choice of locale: A “bürg[h]ermeister” is a castle master or mayor—in this case, evidently one with an overbearing mother. (Gabriel, of course, also later released phonetically sung German versions of his third and fourth albums.) In the song, that leader orders that the palace grounds be sealed off to prevent the spread of the ailment.

In the fourteenth-century German outbreak, some dancers “afterward asserted that they felt as if they had been immersed in a stream [i.e., “torrent”] of blood.... Others, during the paroxysm, saw the heavens open and the Savior enthroned with the Virgin Mary.”

Suffering parties sought out the chapels of St. Vitus, hoping for a miraculous cure.

Of the afflicted, Robert Burton (1577 – 1640), in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, further records: “Music above all things they love; and therefore magistrates in Germany will hire musicians to play to them.” (In the Strasburg outbreak of 1418, actual bagpipers followed the dancers around.)

Regarding “waxen dolls” as a tried-but-failed cure for the Dance: The Middle-Aged physician Paracelsus advised the victim of the illness to make a miniature replica of himself in wax or resin. Then, via a supreme effort of thought, he was to concentrate all of his blasphemies and sins into that image. The doll was then burned completely.

Other remedies advocated by Paracelsus included potions “composed of the quintessences,” i.e., substances rich in elemental (alchemical) ether.

PG’s solo debut album also featured “Down the Dolce Vita” and “Here Comes the Flood.” (A more sparsely produced version of the latter song, preferred by Gabriel himself, appears on Robert Fripp’s *Exposure*.)

Those tunes were part of a six-song mythological “Mozo” suite—from an intended rock opera—which Gabriel had written following his departure from Genesis. Other songs from that cycle have turned up on albums up to and including PG’s worldwide hit, *So*, as we shall see.

The Mozo protagonist “was partly based on Moses, but he was a fictional character who came from nowhere, disrupting people’s lives and causing changes and then disappearing.” That is, Mozo acted as a catalyst for spiritual transformation in those around him—a metaphor which Gabriel borrowed from the alchemical treatise *Aurora Consurgens*. The book was championed by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung as purportedly being the work of Thomas Aquinas.

The Mozo suite is set in a quasi-Mediterranean fishing village whose volcanic sand lends its red color to the rough sea, where the “great macho feat is to cross the water, which no one has done.”

Disturbed by Mozo’s presence in their community, and projecting their own fears onto him, the people who had discovered him living in a garbage-hut on the outskirts attempt to throw him out of the city. He evades them, and returns as a hero after having successfully crossed the forbidding sea.

The orchestral “Down the Dolce Vita,” then, depicts “a ship leaving harbor on an intrepid journey” across that sea. Like Mozo himself, the Aeron (Aaron) and Gorham characters mentioned in the song have corrupted biblical names. (Aaron was the older brother of Moses.) And, as with all spiritual journeys, “looking behind the egoic face” of the prospective heroes is an essential part of the transformation.

“Here Comes the Flood,” in turn, was written by Peter “after a burst of meditation.” At the time, he was fascinated by the way in which short-wave radio signals would increase in volume as night fell:

“I felt as if psychic energy levels would also increase in the night. I had had an apocalyptic dream in which the psychic barriers which normally prevent us from seeing into each others’ thoughts had been completely eroded producing a mental flood. Those that had been used to having their innermost thoughts exposed would handle this torrent and those inclined to concealment would drown in it.”

Regarding the “early warnings” given by those growing shortwave signals: Perhaps significantly, the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line was a system of radar stations in Canada’s Arctic Circle, intended to detect

Soviet intrusions during the Cold War; and “Car” was recorded in Toronto.

The Mozo theme continued on Gabriel’s next album—predictably untitled then, but now known as “Scratch”—with both “On the Air” and “Exposure” being drawn from that song cycle.

In the former, Mozo, though being completely ignored in daily life on the street, becomes a shortwave hero at night, broadcasting invented characters such as Captain Zero from his trash-built cabin by the river.

“Exposure” concerns “the struggle for salvation.” Significantly, then, the version of the song recorded (with Gabriel’s vocals) for Robert Fripp’s album of the same name begins (and continues, intermittently) with a recording of the English “sage” John G. Bennett repeatedly proclaiming: “It is impossible to achieve the aim without suffering.”

Bennett (1897 – 1974) co-founded the British headquarters of the Subud movement. (Subud teaches that humans have the ability to surrender to God or the Universe, and to thus feel a quickening of the omnipresent cosmic life force. The increased contact with that force is supposed to lead one to a spontaneously right way of living.) He had earlier been a student of the Russian “crazy wisdom” spiritual teacher, Gurdjieff.

PG3 (“Melt,” from 1980) took a break from myth and mysticism, but still managed to introduce a drum sound which was to become ubiquitous over the next decade.

Composing in a new drum machine-led style, Gabriel had invited Phil Collins to perform on the gestating album, with the revolutionary (for rock) stipulation that he was to use no cymbals in accenting the music. Collins began by playing around with a simple rhythm, as producer Steve Lillywhite and engineer Hugh Padgham slapped a gate compressor on the reverberating sound. With Peter recognizing and recording the ensuing riff—and then writing the album’s opening cut, “Intruder,” on top of it—a new sound was born.

The same “gated reverb” effect (on the snare drum, esp.) later featured prominently on Collins’ “In the Air Tonight,” Men At Work’s “Who Can It Be Now?” and numerous other ’80s tunes, and beyond.

Gabriel’s fourth solo venture, *Security*, featured the Grammy-nominated “Shock the Monkey”—his first single to chart in the United States. The piece was not about anything like shock therapy, but is rather “just a love song, although it’s not really seen as that. It refers to jealousy as a trigger for an animal nature to surface.”

The Fairlight-infused album's first track, "The Rhythm of the Heat," was inspired by Carl Jung's experiences with a group of African tribal drummers. (The Fairlight CMI was an early digital sampler, now obsolete.)

"There was this one scene in which he joins a group of drummers and dances, and for the first time really loses himself totally and is taken over by what is happening. And as this sort of primordial fear which [*sic*] overwhelms him, he is so terrified by the thing that he stops the dance and orders the drums away and has to beg and pay for them to move apart. And that seemed a very powerful example, Jung obviously being a pivotal figure of the mind, actually confronting something in himself which he was afraid of."

In a related vein, "San Jacinto" concerned the initiation ceremony undergone by an Apache Indian whom Peter Gabriel had met during an American tour. The boy had been taken up into the mountains by his tribe's medicine man, along with a sack containing two rattlesnakes.

"[T]he snakes were made to bite the boy's arm and he was left on the mountain to have his visions. And if he got back down at the end of it, he was a brave. If not, he was dead."

The culturally holy San Jacinto Mountains border on Palm Springs, California; that resort town is known for its artificial "white man's" world of golf courses and swimming pools.

"And so in 'San Jacinto,' there's the intent for this one man to find this [spiritual relationship to the natural world] and to *hold onto this line* of instinct and not be seduced into this world which increasingly is moving around him."

Later in the record, the crowd-surfing anthem "Lay Your Hands On Me" was oddly misconstrued by some reviewers as an example of Peter displaying "Christ-like tendencies." It is rather about the concepts of "trust, healing and sacrifice." One is further strongly tempted to trace the narrator's mention of the washing of dishes, while others pursue miraculous phenomena, to dishwashing voluntarily done by Peter one evening in California, when the rest of the party were enjoying an after-dinner joint.

The album-closing "Kiss of Life," with much more of a spiritual referent but less potential for misinterpretation, was about "a large Brazilian woman with abundant life-force raising a man from the dead."

*So*, the recording which established Peter Gabriel as an international superstar, was released in 1986. Produced by Daniel Lanois, it yielded

Gabriel's first U.S. #1 single, the Otis Redding-influenced "Sledgehammer." The accompanying "Claymation" video was ranked #1 by *Rolling Stone* in their 1993 "100 Top Music Videos" list.

Two songs on the first half of the CD went all the way back to Peter's "Mozo" period: "Red Rain" and "That Voice Again."

"Red Rain" begins with sparse drumbeats and twinkling hi-hats that increase in both frequency and intensity, suggesting a mounting storm. In the video, parched ground cracks—its orange-red color indicating the volcanic sand of Mozo's homeland.

The song itself originated in a recurring dream which Peter used to have:

"I was swimming in a swirling sea of red and black. I remember a tremendous turmoil as the sea was parted by two white walls. A series of bottles, of human shape, were carrying the red water from one wall to another, then dropping down to smash into little pieces at the bottom of the second wall. I used this for a scene in a story in which the red sea and red rain from which it was formed represented thoughts and feelings that were being denied. I do believe that if feelings of pain do not get brought out, not only do they fester and grow stronger but they manifest themselves in the external world. For example, if a personal storm cannot be outwardly expressed it will appear in life in events with other people—in this case a cloudburst."

That idea is actually an entirely yogic one, lifted straight from Yogananda's teachings: "Every earthquake is a manifestation of man's violent thoughts, every mosquito an embodiment of someone's biting speech."

Closing the first half of the album, "That Voice Again" was originally titled "First Stone"—as in John 8:7, "Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone."

The lyric itself is about "judgmental attitudes being a barrier between people. The voice is the voice of judgment. A haunting internal voice [i.e., a 'sharp tongue'] that instead of accepting experience is always analyzing, moralizing and evaluating it"—or "seeing right and wrong so clearly," thus driving love away.

The immediately following gorgeous love song, "In Your Eyes," was written, with intentional ambiguity, for both woman and God—an idea which Peter borrowed from Senegalese music. In it, he takes churches as being the site of both human and divine (chakric) union, effected in experiences of light and heat when the façade of prideful ego has been

burned away, via one's reaching out "from the inside" in prayer or silent meditation.

The song also reflects Gabriel's personal views on the spiritual nature of human eye contact:

"If you really want to beam in anyone, who they are or what they are, you can do so through their eyes.... I know I can look into people if I want to now.... I used to do some sort of eye meditation. A Japanese meditation which you do with a mirror, where you look at your own image until it disappears. You try and put your consciousness into the mirror image, rather than where you are. What happened for me was that I would get a flash, I would lose myself, effectively."

For his next project, Gabriel scored the soundtrack to director Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Scorsese "wanted to present the struggle between the humanity and divinity of Christ in a powerful and original way," and found PG sympathetic to his vision. The ensuing innovative world music went on to win a Grammy award in the New Age category, in 1990.

Several years of psychotherapy for Peter, and the associated "digging in the dirt" of his own mind and heart, produced 1992's dark relationship album, *Us*.

Of its hymn-like "Washing of the Water," Gabriel suggested that "in the desire for the water to wash over me there is a spiritual yearning as a result of emotional pain."

"Kiss That Frog," by contrast, is based on psychologist Bruno Bettelheim's interpretation of the "Frog Prince" children's story. The idea there was that something which might initially appear to be repulsive—one's first sexual experiences, in this case—could later reveal itself to be exquisitely beautiful. (The same applies, on a deeper level, to any unpleasant truth.)

Of course, the same story which Bettelheim reduces to an adaptive children's tale can also easily be read as incorporating the most profound metaphysics. For, in that narrative, a frog who has been cast spellbound by a *wicked witch* (i.e., *maya*) retrieves a *golden ball* (or seventh-level sphere) which a (divine) princess has dropped into a *well* (i.e., a spinal-symbol column filled with the Water of Life, or life-energy).

"Such frogs are beset by the incarnational curse of being confined as amphibians—equally at home in the water of earth as in the air of heaven—to a well in a 'great, dark forest' of *maya*. They are then freed to

return to their true, handsome-prince form, by the princess's (Cosmic Beloved's) *kiss* [on the 'mouth of God' or sixth chakra]. Or, freed by being thrown against the princess's *castle bedroom* (seventh chakra, cf. royal nuptial chamber) wall, in the original Brothers Grimm version."

Still, whatever original meaning one prefers, in Gabriel's expert hands it makes for a fine, danceable tune about oral sex.

Towering above all of the rest of the songs on the album, though, is the stunningly emotional "Blood of Eden"—a powerful display of sexual poetry, set in the context of a couple who are trying to work through a failing relationship.

The innate darkness in a man's heart is seen and clearly recognized by him, but is still allowed to work further, in untying the cords which bind him to his lover. Simultaneously, the uncertainties and failed promises of love become a "dagger or a crucifix" in the hand of the beloved—or else are merely imagined, Macbeth-like, in the man's own fevered mind.

Peter: "I wanted to use the biblical image in 'Blood of Eden' because it was the time when man and woman were in one body, and in a sense in a relationship, in making love, there's that sort of struggle to get some form of merging of boundaries, a real powerful union."

From that personal tension and resolution, the song reaches outward to include the lonely fate of countless distant "unheard souls," each one searching for comfort with another.

The long-awaited *Up*, released in late 2002, showed Peter grieving over the recent loss of a loved one, and then finding a way to let go of the pain and carry on with life—even if "life goes on" becomes a mere platitude when received in the midst of such sorrow. The same "I Grieve" song further voiced Gabriel's belief that the physical body is merely a "car" in which we drive around for a few years, or a house in which we temporarily reside. When the soul has been released from that flesh and bone at death, there is indeed "no one home" in that "empty cage."

He then asks: Is that belief in the continuation of consciousness beyond death a naïve dream ... or have we, in taking life as the only reality and death as an end to existence, merely been "believing in a dream"? Either way, the sorrow at the loss of a loved one is all too real.

Later in the album, "More Than This" suggests that there is more to life than what we see in our everyday world, without specifying what form that "more" might take—as God, the afterlife, mere paranormal phenomena or otherwise.

Interestingly, as early as 1975 Peter disclosed that he had already “attempted levitation and telepathy.” (Hoped-for levitation based on the recitation of mantras is not unique to the Maharishi: Yogananda, too, gives a purported technique in his *SRF Lessons*, involving the chanting of the “sacred syllable” of “Om.”)

Said Peter: “A lot of things which interest me are coming to the surface like ESP, telepathy, UFOs, astrology, Tarot, the rise in mysticism.... I believe all people have experiences which they can’t easily relate into their own terms, whether it is seeing ghosts or having premonitions of an accident. I have been working on various techniques which have produced some amazing results—like picking up experiences recorded in rooms.”

Has PG, then, ever brought his psychic powers to bear in a concert environment?

According to the man himself, yes:

“There are certain things I have felt during some performances resulting in the old shivers down the spine, when things were really happening. It could be the result of controllable energy flows. At times strange things seem to happen within me.”

Around the time of 1982’s *Security*, Peter had been experimenting with a theta wave-stimulating sensory-deprivation tank, having been inspired by John C. Lilly’s claims of out-of-the-body experiences supposedly induced by that environment, as related in his *The Center of the Cyclone*. Even earlier, back in the ’70s with Genesis, Gabriel had imaginatively hoped to attach biofeedback machines to the band members, to control the light and sound of the *Lamb* shows. Shortly thereafter, he had learned the yogic “Breath of Fire”—a form of hyperventilation—which he credited with getting his “head floating.” (That effect, of course, requires nothing of parapsychology to understand.)

Peter has further stated unequivocally that, since *The Lamb*, “he has developed all his shows according to the *I Ching* and the principles of *yin* and *yang*.” (That bent presumably accounts for the separate square [“male”] and round [“female”] stage areas on 1993’s “Secret World” tour.) Indeed, Gabriel claims to have “taken some of his biggest decisions on the toss of a coin” (though less for feeling bound by that random result than as a means to discover what he really *wanted* to do in the first place).

Well, it’s obviously worked for him so far, given that no one in popular culture has been so commercially successful and simultaneously unre-

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lently creative as PG, over the past four decades. But as every gambler knows....

CHAPTER 30

***Trip Like a Butterfly, Sting Like a Bee***

*STING*

As a child, one of Gordon Sumner's favorite sweaters featured alternating black and yellow horizontal stripes, giving him something of the appearance of a bumblebee.

That, however, is not where his famous nickname began. Rather, the moniker derived from his early-twenties days in the Phoenix Jazzmen—the house rhythm section at the Wheatsheaf pub in Newcastle. There, he one day wore a yellow-and-black striped soccer pullover to rehearsal.

That, however, is still not where the nickname originated. For, the wearing of that knit apparently came only *after* bandleader and trombonist Gordon Solomon, surveying the intense demeanor of his new bass player, had christened the young man “Sting.”

Born to an engineer/milkman father and a hairdresser mother, the ex-Gordon had briefly considered a vocation in the Catholic priesthood in his early teens, after time as an altar boy. The future lead singer later worked at various times as a ditch digger, soccer coach at a convent school, and secondary-school English teacher.

The aforementioned religious upbringing was to have long-lasting effects on Sting, even in his adulthood:

“I’m not a devout Catholic and I don’t go to mass, but I’m not so sure I’ve broken away from it. I still believe in a heaven and hell, mortal sins—all that’s inside my psyche and I don’t think will ever come out.”

Hooking up with guitarist Andy Summers and bassist Stewart Copeland in 1977, the trio called themselves the Police, soon defining a new punk-reggae sound for the world. (Jamaican reggae itself is of course strongly associated with the Rastafarian religion, as popularized in songs by Bob Marley and others. Rastafarianism takes the late Ethiopian ruler Haile Selassie as having been God incarnate or the Black Messiah—against Selassie’s own protests that he was no such thing—and regards marijuana as a sacrament.)

Stewart Copeland has joked that the group took the “Police” name because it gave them free publicity in every country in the world. However, his father Miles (Sr.) had been a founding father and field agent for the CIA, later writing two books about those experiences. And Stewart had decided on the name even before forming the band.

Andy’s pre-Police career was commemorated in Jenny Fabian’s book *Groupie*, where his genitals are described by those in the know as being “perfectly formed.” In the same psychedelic era, he was predictably experimenting with LSD:

“My first few acid trips were all deeply religious experiences and I started to get the White Light and all that.”

In 1978, the group released the first of their five studio albums, *Outlandos d’Amour*—nonsense words which loosely “translate” as “Outlaws of Love,” referring simultaneously to the dangerous and the romantic sides of the band. It was highlighted by the tango-esque “Roxanne”—the story of a man in love with a prostitute. Sting wrote the song following a walk in the red-light district of Paris after an early Police concert; the name “Roxanne” was actually taken directly from the love-interest in Rostand’s classic play, *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Uncomfortable with the song's controversial subject matter, the BBC quickly banned it from their tea-time airwaves.

The 1979 gold album *Regatta de Blanc* topped the charts with its two loneliness-inspired singles—"Message in a Bottle" and "The Bed's Too Big Without You"—and for one about not feeling the effects of gravity so much when in love: "Walking on the Moon." It also, however, contained "Bring On the Night," a song originally about Pontius Pilate, based on the late English poet Ted Hughes' work, "King of Carrion." (Another Hughes poem, "Truth Kills Everybody," inspired *Outlandos*' "Truth Hits Everybody.")

*Zenyatta Mondatta*, with a cover featuring the bandmembers' shadowed heads within a sacred pyramidal form, landed on record-store shelves a year later. Its U.K. #1 hit, "Don't Stand So Close to Me," was based on Vladimir Nabokov's novel, *Lolita*, whose storyline in turn involved the sexual relationship of a prepubescent girl with an older man.

"De Do Do Do, De Da Da Da" laid bare a more mature relationship—albeit a non-carnal one, concerning as it does the unfettered use of catchwords and slogans by authorities to manipulate and subjugate others, and the comparatively refreshing nature of pure, unadulterated babble. It was, in Sting's words, "an articulate song about being inarticulate," pertaining to "banality and the abuse of words."

With at least equal sophistication, "Spirits in the Material World," from the 1981 album *Ghost in the Machine*, was based on the writings of Arthur Koestler. Koestler's text concerned the mind-body split, the relation between reason and imagination, and the potential for our higher logical functions to be overpowered by hate and anger. That is, to be swayed by the more primitive core brain structures enfolded from our earlier periods of "troubled evolution." (Those primitive structures are the "ghost in the machine," invisibly shaping our use of reason and language.) Attempted political, constitutional and revolutionary solutions to our world's problems will ever run aground on that underlying penchant for destruction.

"Secret Journey," with its talk of holy men and "light in the darkness," was based on Gurdjieff's book, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. The text narrated the exploits of a group of spiritual adventurers out searching for hidden mysteries, emotionally unattached to phenomena which are ultimately as fleeting as the rain, and thereby finding joy and love in life's play of sadness and pain. In one of the semi-autobiographical

tales, Gurdjieff himself was blindfolded (“His blindness was his wisdom”) and led to an enigmatic monastery.

By contrast, “Rehumanize Yourself,” after resisting the urge to break into an up-tempo version of Simon and Garfunkel’s “Mrs. Robinson” in a variety of keys, grafted alienated-by-technology-and-violence characters onto Koestler’s notion that “society is gradually dehumanizing itself.”

The title song of the Police’s final studio album, *Synchronicity*, from 1983, was inspired by the writings of C. G. Jung. The Swiss psychiatrist postulated an “acausal connecting principle,” whereby seemingly coincidental events were held to have an underlying relation. That, he believed, offered an explanation for ostensibly paranormal occurrences such as phone calls arriving from people just as we have been thinking about them.

In “Synchronicity II,” unusually harmonious picket lines surround the industrial workplace of the song’s emasculated father-character, protesting the environmental contamination unleashed by that factory. Simultaneously, a vengeful Ness-like creature emerges from a polluted Scottish lake, many miles away ... or as close as the stressed father’s teeming subconscious, the beast inside him being on the verge of wreaking havoc just as the distant monster arises. (In the video for the song, the “cottage” finally approached by the creature on the strand of the dark lake becomes Bole-skinne House, on the eastern shore of Loch Ness. A century ago, the mansion was owned by Aleister Crowley, and more recently, by Jimmy Page.)

The album’s “O My God” then asks how God can seem to be so far away, allowing misfortunes and unfairness to exist in the world.

“Wrapped Around Your Finger” depicts an inexperienced youth trapped between “Scylla and Charybdis,” in a dangerous liaison with a married woman. That is, caught between two equally perilous alternatives, where moving away from one danger takes him closer to the other. Such perils were encountered by Odysseus (in Homer’s *Odyssey*) as a pair of former nymphs turned into lethal sea-monsters.

This older, seductive woman may not be the rebellious fallen angel, Mephistopheles, of Goethe’s *Faust*. It is nevertheless clear that her extra-collegiate “teachings” are designed to enslave the young soul to whom they are applied.

The song’s “devil and the deep blue sea” is a sailing term. In the construction of wooden vessels, the “devil” was the longest seam in the deck planking, running from stem to stern. The act of caulking that seam re-

quired one to be precariously suspended in the bilges, literally between the “devil” and the aquamarine ocean. The same position has since come to be regarded as akin to one’s being caught between a rock (e.g., the one on which Scylla lived) and a hard place (or the difficult, drowning whirlpool of Charybdis).

Closing the present song, then, the student imagines his otherwise-betrothed conjugal teacher and her perils as being in his own past, from a future vantage point when he will be more knowledgeable than she is, being in a position to teach and mesmerize her with *his* expertise.

“Every Breath You Take,” on the other hand, though often taken as a devoted love song, was actually about a man stalking his ex-girlfriend.

The album’s closing jazz-rock melody, “Murder by Numbers,” charted a course to success for the most aspiring of politicians, proposing an easy means whereby they might eliminate their competition. That cut-throat suggestion, however, only increased the wrath of televangelist Jimmy Swaggart, to the point of insisting that the song had been written by Satan himself, and performed by the sons of Beelzebub.

The London home which Sting now shared with Trudie Styler following the divorce from his first wife was believed by them to be haunted by the ghosts of a mother and her child. Accordingly, Sting awoke one night to find the two spirits in his bedroom, and on a later occasion again saw the same pair of wraiths in the corner of a room.

The ensuing cleansing of the property at the hands of a local spiritualist, however, was apparently insufficient to allow all souls associated with the house to rest in peace. Rather, even afterward, “on one occasion a kitchen knife rose from a table and embedded itself in the wall.”

Notwithstanding such concerns, during his 1984 sabbatical Sting was reportedly “planning a private expedition in search of the abominable snowman with a veteran yeti hunter.”

In 1985 he released his debut solo album, the jazz-influenced *Dream of the Blue Turtles*.

The title came from an actual dream of Sting’s, worthy of the Beatles’ “Yellow Submarine” or “Octopus’s Garden.” In it, he saw an immaculate and sheltered English garden being destroyed by a marauding group of large blue turtles.

In a Jungian analysis of the dream the dramatic, shocking turtles were taken as symbolic of Sting’s new (solo) band and its chaotic but needed

effect on his staid and comfortable life in the Police. This confirmed for Sting the value of striking out on his own.

The album's lounge-like "Moon Over Bourbon Street" was inspired by Anne Rice's *Interview with a Vampire*. Actually written by Sting under a full moon, it detailed the conundrum of a blood-sucker troubled by his own conscience over his need to kill in order to stay "alive."

His (Sting's) next solo work, *Nothing Like the Sun*, possessed a title derived from Shakespeare's sonnet CXXX, which opens with "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun"—a line also quoted in the album's "Sister Moon."

Two other songs, "Lazarus Heart" and "Rock Steady," have obvious biblical references.

The former, written for his late mother, deals with the theme of sacrifice for a greater good, via wounds given not for vengeance or anger but rather for emotional growth and resurrection/rebirth.

The bouncy "Rock Steady" adds a couple of new passengers to Noah's Ark, who find use in "sailing with the Lord" when times are tough, but forget about God as soon as the rain stops.

In late '87, in the jungles surrounding Rio de Janeiro, Sting had his only life-changing "genuine religious experience," under the influence of the ayahuasca plant. After the obligatory period of retching, he saw himself on a fear-filled battlefield, escorted by a shadowy "companion"; then back in his mother's womb; then reliving his various familial relationships. Up an elevator-like shaft, he arrived in a chamber, and was soon playing chess with a seductive goddess—ultimately being checkmated by her.

He later shared his feelings upon leaving the isolated church, in his autobiography, *Broken Music*:

"I have never felt so consciously connected before.... I seem to be perceiving the world on a molecular level, where the normal barriers that separate 'me' from everything else have been removed....

"This sensation of connectedness is overwhelming. It's like floating in a buoyant limitless ocean of feeling that I can't really begin to describe unless I evoke the word *love*."

Sting was soon appropriately campaigning on behalf of environmental concerns, including the Amazon rainforests—spearheading the creation of a national park for the native Xingú tribe in the late '80s. Meetings with various heads of state finally led to an audience with the pope for himself

and the Indians' Chief Raoni. There, Raoni informed His Holiness that "My god is saying to your god that your missionaries should get off our land ... *Now.*"

Around the same time, Sting also toured with Peter Gabriel and Bruce Springsteen in support of Amnesty International.

Following an extended writer's block, *The Soul Cages* finally came together in 1991—its title song touting our eventual "swimming to the light" and "sailing to the island of souls," as birds freed from bodily cages at death. The album was dedicated to Sting's recently deceased father.

"All This Time" was appropriately about a man wishing to bury his father at sea as an individualized last show of respect. Instead, he suffers through learned and learning priests who subject the expired one to their canonized rituals. All of those rites, however, have their foundation in the existence of an invisible savior who has too little effect on the real world. For that matter, no faith in any god has ever prevented an individual's or worshiping culture's ultimate demise—including the fall of the Roman empire which founded Sting's own childhood home of Wallsend in north-east England.

From the same album, the middle-eastern flavored "Mad About You" was inspired by the adulterous relationship of King David and Uriah's wife, Bathsheba—later, mother of King Solomon. The song pictures David restlessly longing for his illicit lover, his kingdom meaning nothing without her. (In the biblical story, of course, David arranged for Uriah to be slain in battle, later being exposed in that guilt by the prophet Nathan.)

"Jeremiah Blues," in turn, lambasted the corruption and hypocrisy of the Catholic Church. The track included another Shakespearean reference in "something wicked this way comes," for an elegantly dressed, violent, money-hungry world happily ticking down toward some form of apocalypse—a "midnight at noon." ("And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day"—Amos 8:9.)

Ironically, just a year after the release of the song, Pope John Paul II finally publicly admitted that his Church had been wrong in their Inquisition's persecution of Galileo for his contrary-to-the-Bible suggestion that the earth was not the center of the universe.

"A pope claimed that he'd been wrong in the past...."

Nineteen ninety-three saw *Ten Summoner's Tales*—a pun on Sting's real surname, Sumner, and also a reference to Chaucer's *Canterbury*

*Tales*. That fifteenth-century tome includes stories told by, among other figures, a summoner, i.e., a court figure charged with calling others to appear before royalty or for some other important, formal function.

The included musical tale “St. Augustine in Hell” found its protagonist caught in his own “eternal fire” of uncontrollable sexual attraction to a woman dating his best friend. In his pique, he proposes a corresponding rightfully earned torturous eternity for cardinals, archbishops, accountants who misuse the investment funds entrusted to them ... and music critics.

Augustine’s own prayer to God in the face of temptation, as quoted in the song, was exactly “Lord, make me chaste, but not just yet.”

Further risking his own place amid such fire and brimstone, at least in the eyes of the priests, the former Police-man has actually been heavily involved with yoga and meditation since the early '90s, following the *Soul Cages* album. Like Madonna, he at one time embraced Ashtanga Vinyasa yoga, a “method of yoga [which] involves synchronizing the breath with [a] progressive series of postures—a process producing intense internal heat and a profuse, purifying sweat that detoxifies muscles and organs.” Through comparable tantric practices, Sting has further claimed to be able to make love with his wife for up to five hours at a stretch ... although later qualifying that figure to include “dinner and a movie.”

As of 1996, he was also practicing Tai Chi and Qigong, and reportedly believing in crop circles and UFOs. His reading has included books on religion and philosophy by authors from Krishnamurti to Ayn Rand. With Trudie, he currently owns a yoga center in Manhattan.

In the best tradition of the New Age “quantum physics and consciousness” set (Fritjof Capra, Amit Goswami, etc.), he has further averred:

“Protestantism is based on Cartesian philosophy and Newtonian physics, which have largely been discredited.”

In India to perform for tsunami relief in early 2005, Sting explicitly declared what one should already have suspected, given all of the above:

“In a sense I am more of a Hindu ... I like the Hindu religion more than anything else at the moment.... I would not consider myself a Christian any longer. My beliefs are much wider than that.... I will spend the rest of my life discovering your wonderful country. I’ve become addicted to it.”

Of the application of such spiritual pursuits to his music, the composer of “Roxanne” has ventured:

*Rock & Holy Rollers*

“In the composing of music you have to enter virtually a trance state to transmit songs. I don’t think you write songs. They come through you. It’s trusting that they exist out there and you have to be the transmitter. For that you need a certain amount of mental purity. Yoga is just a different route to that same process. You’re taking something from our higher selves and putting it to use in normal life, I think....

“As I get older I find that I am unwilling to accept an existential universe without a God. It doesn’t actually make logical sense anymore.”

After all, as every (ex-)Catholic knows: Every step you take, every move you make, God is watching you.

CHAPTER 31

*Afternoons and Satan Worship*

*CRASH TEST DUMMIES*

Brad Roberts graduated from the University of Winnipeg in 1988 with an honors degree (and academic gold medal) in English literature and philosophy, intending to continue his studies through to a Ph.D. and eventual professorship.

Tending bar as a recent post-grad at the local Spectrum (now Pyramid) Cabaret nightclub, he worked, sang lead vocals and played guitar alongside his younger (coat-checker/bassist) brother, Dan. Assisting them with serving up drinks and her own sweet-as-prairie-rain harmonies was their close platonic friend, the cocktail waitress and keyboardist Ellen Reid (B.A. in History).

A subsequently well-received demo landed them, their drummer, and country/blues-influenced multi-instrumentalist Benjamin Darvill a record deal, resulting in 1991's CTD debut, *The Ghosts That Haunt Me*.

With cover art deriving from an extant illustration for Coleridge's epic poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Roberts' foghorn baritone guided listeners through electric-folk arrangements of nine original songs and one cover.

Included among the originals was the Dummies' first North American hit, the cello- and piano-backed "Superman's Song," detailing the moral integrity of the Man of Steel. (Impressively, it was the first song Brad had ever written, following a Lyle Lovett workshop at the Winnipeg Folk Festival.) Also gracing the album was the frantically Celtic "Here On Earth (I'll Have My Cake)," in which Roberts imagined meeting St. Peter at the pearly gates, wisely not having waited to enjoy his existence until reaching the realms beyond that point. The disc closed with the "At My Funeral" dirge, in which the narrator ponders where he will be going after death, perhaps to meet his Maker.

The cover for 1993's *God Shuffled His Feet* had the five bandmembers' heads skillfully grafted onto Titian's sixteenth-century Renaissance painting, "Bacchus and Ariadne."

The title track depicted an audience asking questions of an uneasily mute God in heaven, on the seventh day of creation, set aside for relaxation, picnics, wine, and putting quaint philosophical conundrums to the Lord.

The theme for fan-favorite "Afternoons & Coffeespoons" came directly from a phrase in mystical poet T. S. Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock":

For I have known them all already, known them all:—  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons

The shuffling album's unlikely smash hit single, "Mmm Mmm Mmm Mmm," told the stories of three misfit children. The first returned to school white-haired after an accident; another was birthmarked yet embarrassingly forced to change clothes in front of others for gym class. The third was kept from after-school contact with his classmates and required by his parents to attend an ancestral, Quaker-like church. (Brad himself

has a fist-sized birthmark on his back, below the waist. Winnipeg and the surrounding southern Manitoba community have a heavy concentration of Mennonites, employed in farming, teaching, and otherwise. Their traditionally pacifistic religion and culture have many points of contact with Quaker values.)

Finally, “The Psychic” mused on the knowledge of past and future events supposedly possessed by clairvoyants via palm-reading, Tarot cards and the like, seemingly relating one of Brad’s own experiences as a client with such a visionary woman.

In 1995, responding to the three Grammy nominations which the group had received for *God Shuffled His Feet*, Roberts quipped: “Perhaps our pact with Satan is finally paying off.”

Predictably, that throwaway line later gave rise to sincere concerns on the part of fans and others about the band’s religious orientation.

Comparably well-intentioned jesting by the man to the effect that his deep voice arose from his possession of a third testicle got equally out of hand, again giving rise to serious, if misled, interest.

Brad’s response to a question from a mid-’90s MuchMusic audience as to whether he believed in God will not have helped the former satanic controversy:

“I really don’t have any personal spiritual beliefs. I’ve never resorted to talking to an imaginary friend when I’ve been in trouble, as much as I’d like to sometimes.”

Having discovered how much fun it is to plug an electric guitar into an amplifier and play it as loud as you can, Brad & Co. released the fully world-class *A Worm’s Life* in 1996.

The album’s artwork was dominated by an ill-advised “corporate takeover” marketing scheme, with all of the bandmembers sporting conservative blue suits and depressingly shortened hair.

If one can look past that superficial image, however, one finds the guitar-driven “Overachiever.” Its lyrics allude to historically answered prayers, in the form of a female saint who successfully petitioned God to let her grow a beard, so that the hitherto problematic attention of men might not distract her from worship.

*Give Yourself a Hand*, the Dummies’ near-techno fourth CD, was Benjamin Darvill’s last with the band, but the first to feature Ellen Reid’s lead vocals on some tracks, and Brad’s falsetto on others. For 2001’s frequently hillbilly-esque and decidedly uncommercial follow-up, *I Don’t*

*Care That You Don't Mind*, Ellen's vocals were conspicuous by their near-absence. As was the rest of the band, for what was originally intended as a solo project, being replaced by musical friends whom Brad had met in the Canadian Maritimes in late 2000, while recovering from a near-fatal car accident.

Following a Christmas-themed album and 2003's lasciviously upbeat *Puss 'n' Boots*, CTD released their eighth studio album in October of 2004: the melancholy *Songs of the Unforgiven*. Recorded in the Sacred Heart Church in Duluth, Minnesota, and backed by a nineteenth-century pipe organ, the songs cover themes of evil, corruption, death and apocalypse. With grave lyrics carried on pallbearing melodies, occasionally surrounded by angelic harmonies, the funereal undertaking would be an impressive homage to the most suicidal lamentations of Leonard Cohen, had it only been intended as such.

As one reviewer noted, "by the end you will be praying for deliverance."

Or praying for God to let you grow a beard.

Or perhaps for a third testicle.

"Ask, and ye shall receive."

CHAPTER 33

*Integral Pumpkins*

*BILLY CORGAN, ETC.*

The Smashing Pumpkins formed around Billy Corgan in Chicago, in 1988.

Prior to that confluence, Billy's first teenage band, the Marked—named after the strawberry-colored birthmarks possessed by both himself and the band's drummer—had provided him with an outlet for playing “Hindu-influenced gloom music”:

“I just remember ... being entranced by this thread of spirituality running throughout the world. There seemed to be this kind of secret chant for forgiveness and spiritual redemption.”

Seeking to combine psychedelic rock with the power of Zeppelin and the emotion of John Lennon, Corgan disbanded the Marked and soon linked up with the Japanese-American guitarist James Iha, fetching bassist

D'Arcy Wretzky, and jazz-trained drummer Jimmy Chamberlin. As the Smashing Pumpkins, they released the first of their five major albums, *Gish*—after silent film star Lillian Gish—in the summer of 1991.

“I Am One” opened the disc with a brief consideration of the Trinity and Messiah. “Siva,” the record’s acid-ic second track, was named after the third (Destroyer) member of the Hindu Trimurti; Brahma the Creator and Vishnu the Preserver being the other two.

The album’s final song, “Daydream,” sung by Wretzky, included a line concerning the “Sacred Heart.” Corgan explained its significance:

“To me, the Sacred Heart is a symbol that is fraught with contradiction.... I mean, the Western understanding of achieving higher consciousness or nirvana is fraught with pain and suffering, whereas the Eastern view has to do with the removal of suffering.”

He continued:

“That symbol is very symbolic to me, because you cannot just love Jesus without pain, and you cannot just feel love without suffering. The Sacred Heart is this intense, contradictory symbol—it can’t just be Jesus’ heart, it has to have thorns in it and it has to be bleeding.”

Understandably, after statements such as those rumors began to circulate that Billy was in fact a practicing Christian.

The subsequent tour nevertheless saw Corgan and Iha “wearing dresses onstage,” with Billy’s songs sounding “ambisexual enough to have been written by a woman.”

Following the Grammy-nominated *Siamese Dream* in 1993, *Pisces Iscariot*—a collection of B-sides, named after Corgan’s own astrological sign—was released in 1994. It included a cover of the Animals’ “Girl Named Sandoz,” in which LSD teaches the narrator that his “mind has wings.”

In the same year, the Pumpkins headlined the two-month Lollapalooza tour. That negative experience later birthed the “rat in a cage” line in “Bullet with Butterfly Wings,” alongside Corgan’s in-song announcement that “I still believe that I cannot be saved,” i.e., cannot be given salvation by mere belief-based religion.

All of which merely set the stage for the group’s commercial and critical high-water mark.

*Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*—bearing a message of “self-inflicted despair”—became the first double album to top the American charts since Pink Floyd’s *The Wall* had, back in 1980. The disc went on to

secure *Time* magazine's Album Of The Year award for 1995. In its "Zero," Corgan mused—as either an emotional rant against the Divine or a Zen truism—that “god is empty just like me.”

A mere two months of chart-time for 1998's relatively subdued *Adore*, however, led the increasingly testy and unhappy Corgan to publicly blame the group's fans for purportedly not giving the record a chance.

The Smashing Pumpkins' final record-company release—their lowest-selling album ever—came about in 2000, as *Machina/The Machines of God*.

On an exoteric level, the postmodern concept album centers on the exploits of a half-dimensional hero, Glass.

Glass exists in a future alienated technological society as the lead singer of a band called The Machines of God ... which used to be named “the smashing pumpkins.” He further hears the voice of God through the radio, and believes that the former has asked him to “try to change the world.” He proceeds to attempt to do so, using his band as a vehicle to spread the simplistic message that “only love can be the answer.” Thus, TMOG begin by releasing a pretentious album titled *Machina* ... which is suitably ignored by their fans.

Beyond that, boy meets girl soul-mate after a concert; boy neglects to save himself before saving others; boy loses soul-mate to drugs and then to a fatal accident; boy blames fans for not supporting the band; boy plays final concert and dissolves band; and then-homeless boy ultimately faces his own doubts and mortality, learns to love without attachment to the fruits of that action, and realizes that God has always been with him after all.

By Corgan's own testimony, though, the album was really “all based on alchemy.” And the alchemists' esoteric goal, of course, was to effect spiritual evolution—of which the transmutation of base metals into gold was merely a lower analog—“through the union of the feminine element (mercury) and the masculine element (sulphur).” Thus, we have songs like “The Crying Tree of Mercury” on *Machina*.

With life imitating art, the Pumpkins themselves broke up in late 2000. Corgan and Chamberlin, however, soon reunited in a new group, Zwan—featuring a three-guitar attack and a retired reverend in the band. The only album released during their brief collective lifetime was 2003's *Mary Star of the Sea*. The first half of its fourteen-minute “Jesus, I / Mary Star of the Sea” reworked an old hymn, with the narrator taking up his

own cross to follow Jesus. The same record's "Desires" took an Eastern approach to egoic pursuits, wishing for such mental graspings to "fade away," and distancing the singer from persons who could not let them go.

In mid-2005, Corgan released his first explicitly solo album, the robotic/atmospheric *TheFutureEmbrace*. In its "Walking Shade," he suggested that "on the ninth day God created shame."

Pushing forty now, and less of a claustrophobic "rat in a cage" than a hissy-fit-prone "cat in a rage," in early 2004 Corgan blasted James Iha for allegedly being to blame for breakin' up the Pumpkins. He further absolved himself of any role in that disintegration by alleging that bassist D'Arcy "was fired for being a mean spirited drug addict, who refused to get help." (Drummer Jimmy Chamberlin had earlier been fired and then rehired for similar reported indulgences.)

Somewhat surprisingly, then, in late June of 2005—on precisely the same day as the release of *TheFutureEmbrace*—Corgan took out full-page ads in both the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, announcing his intention to reform the Punkins.

Understandably, at the time of this writing only Chamberlin had expressed any interest in stepping back onto that legendary emotional merry-go-round.

The manically depressive Corgan long ago proudly admitted to being heavily influenced by Black Sabbath in his musically formative years, crediting their *Master of Reality* album with being "the way music should sound." Given that admiration, it is doubly unfortunate that in episode #2 of *The Osbournes*, in front of an entire nation and more, Ozzy's own daughter Kelly smartly trashed Billy's then-recent live offerings as "boring ... like elevator background music."

Corgan had actually been managed for several months prior to the release of *Machina* by Sharon Osbourne herself. She, however, quit for "medical reasons": In her words, "Billy Corgan was making me sick!" (The last straw: Corgan had reportedly "demanded that both control over, and the copyright in any interviews he granted be surrendered to him." Transplant that same sort of absurdly controlling behavior into a band context, and you need not wonder why Billy's groups keep self-destructing.)

Even more recently, from early 2004 onward, an understated Corgan has drably guested a number of times, with his guitar and without, on New Age philosopher Ken Wilber's Integral Naked web forum.

Wilber himself has been generously regarded since the late 1970s as being the “Einstein of consciousness research.” (Among the persons elevating him to that position via their status in the transpersonal psychology community are ones who genuinely believe that leprechauns are real.) At the core of his current “integral” philosophy is the idea that all experiences, on all levels of reality, exist in at least four hierarchical quadrants. That is, all events are believed to have objective (e.g., measurable in the realm of physics), subjective (psychological), interobjective (sociological) and intersubjective (cultural studies) components.

Further, those same quadrants are believed to be correlated with one another. Thus, for example, nation/state societies will tend to occur along with a “rational” (as opposed to “magical” or “mythical”) culture, with its members being, on the average, at the level of Piaget’s formal operational thinking, and with that thinking resting on some unspecified development of the physical brain and body. (In Western cultures, abstract formop thinking typically first manifests itself around age eleven.)

Among Wilber’s other professional claims are the following:

- Meditation has been shown, in properly controlled experiments, to advance its practitioners by up to two stages of hierarchical psychological development (as measured by standard tests) in a mere four years of practice
- Skeptics accept the reality of the “Maharishi effect,” whereby small numbers of meditators are claimed to be able to measurably influence world events. (That claim was made by kw in a dreadfully written work of “fiction”—*Boomeritis*—which, until a few weeks prior to its completion, was going to be published as a non-fiction book)
- “Every statistician agrees” that the existence of psychic phenomena is “one hundred percent certain”
- Intelligent Design, rather than Darwinian evolution, is required in order to explain the complexity of living beings. (Wilber actually recommends that readers turn to the “arguments from ignorance” of the ID-proponent Michael Behe for further enlightenment on that subject)

Any informed critic, however, would disagree *vehemently* with all four of the above claims, including the completely false suggestion that skeptics acknowledge the “Maharishi effect” as being a real phenomenon, and the fanciful notion that statisticians widely accept the meta-analyses (of Dean Radin) which give rise to Wilber’s certainty as to the existence of paranormal phenomena. They do not. *Not at all.*

In any case, Billy Corgan is by no means the only recognizable name in popular music to have found value in Wilber’s ideas: The long-time Vancouver band 54\*40 have felt equally inspired by kw’s wide-ranging intellectual musings.

Formed in 1980 by lead singer and primary songwriter Neil Osborne, 54\*40 have long been seen as Canada’s alt-rock answer to the jangling college-pop of R.E.M. The band took its ironic name from U.S. president (1845 – 1849) James Polk’s pro-Manifest Destiny slogan, “54° 40' or Fight!”

Manifest Destiny was a belief, committed to journalistic print in the middle of the nineteenth century, that the United States had a divinely inspired mission to expand, particularly across the North American frontier toward the Pacific Ocean. It viewed the white race as “God’s chosen” one, believing that its members were bound to displace the “primitive” people in their way.

Related to all that, 54° 40'—the present-day latitude of the border between Canada and Alaska—was the desired extent of American expansion to the north into Canadian territory. The land was to be taken by force if necessary.

The world’s longest unguarded national border was eventually drawn by compromise at the forty-ninth parallel, five degrees and forty minutes short of the “divinely ordained” ideal.

In any event, Osborne’s guitar-based garage band debuted at Vancouver’s rustic Smilin’ Buddha Cabaret on New Year’s Eve of 1980, later titling an album after the same punk-rock club. Their songs have since addressed social injustice, human rights, and environmental concerns, among other topics.

In 1995, the #1-selling pop act Hootie & The Blowfish covered 54\*40’s “I Go Blind” for the B-side of their hit single “Hold My Hand,” indirectly introducing the band to U.S. listeners.

A 2001 album (*Casual Viewin’ USA*) by the Canadian group was partly inspired by the ideas of Marshall McLuhan, famed for his notion

that “the medium is the message”—an assertion which certainly applies, however unintentionally, to parapsychological claims of conversations with the dead, such as have been made by some of Wilber’s colleagues (e.g., in the “Afterlife Experiments” of Gary Schwartz).

In 2003, 54\*40 independently released their tenth full-length studio effort, the critically acclaimed *Goodbye Flatland*. The album spawned the singles “Take Me Out” and “Animal in Pain.” The latter finds Osborne spitting out the words “Do it do it do it all night” in his best “Twist and Shout” voice, against a pelvis-wrenching backing track which sounds something like a cross between “I Saw Her Standing There” and an early-’60s version of Robert Palmer’s “Bad Case of Loving You (Doctor, Doctor).”

Aiming for greater intellectual upliftment overall, the band proudly states in the *Flatland* liner notes that the disc’s songs are explicitly “inspired by the writing of Ken Wilber.” As Osborne put it:

“The problem is that the empirical [i.e., kw’s Upper Left quadrant, of objective ‘its’ conceptually divorced from subjective and intersubjective feelings/prehensions] has become so dominant in the West that our perspective is flat.... Music is a way to reach out a bit beyond the flatland ... into other states of being.”

Offering surprisingly little verbal information about its purported subject matter and inspiration, the album’s initially sleepy title track nevertheless finds the band saying “goodbye to Flatland,” and anticipating the spread of the integral philosophy.

In the later “Giants” tune from the same CD, Osborne regurgitates: “They say we’re only given so many breaths.”

The idea that each one of us has been given only a limited, preordained number of breaths or heartbeats for this life, has a rich yogic/Vedic tradition. In various communities it has led to persons being afraid to exert themselves in physical labor, for not wanting to “waste” their preordained breaths and heartbeats.

Osborne has guested on Wilber’s weekly Integral Naked talks several times since early 2004. There, he has demonstrated, for one, a wildly unpitched singing voice in performing the paisley-hued “One Gun” unplugged, live and solo.

A more recent album release by the almost-famous group, *Yes to Everything*, features Buddhism-inspired lyrics in “This is Here, This is Now.”

And yet, with dramatic contrast, Matt Johnson (“DJ Skeptic”), 54\*40’s drummer since 1985, describes himself as being a “loyal subscriber to both *Skeptic Magazine* and *The Skeptical Inquirer*.” He further openly touts the promotion by those magazines of “the value of scientific inquiry, reason and critical thought.”

Significantly, then, Wilber’s transpersonal notions again consistently do not fare at all well when subjected to even the gentlest of skeptical analyses. Specifically, Behe’s neo-creationism and the claimed “Maharishi effect” have been wholly debunked in both of the periodicals to which Johnson is a loyal subscriber.

Whichever side one may take in that debate, then, it is obvious that were the drummer and the lead singer to deeply understand and apply their respective ideologies, it would surely generate much irresolvable tension in the band.

Stuart Davis, a self-styled “post-apocalyptic punk” singer/songwriter, is another huge fan of Wilber’s spacious philosophy, to the point of being the latter’s best friend, and even marrying his ex-wife. Davis is actually “the artist laureate of Integral Institute and the first guest to ever appear on *Integral Naked*.”

Stuart has included numerous songs with psychic, Buddhist or other mystical references in them, on his ten-plus studio albums. Among them:

- “Fall Awake” details his frustrations with the “structured learning” of school, against the tendency to slip spontaneously into mystical experiences
- “Ladder,” from Davis’ self-titled 2001 album, presents Mother Teresa and the caste-conscious Ramana Maharshi (the bigoted “greatest sage of the twentieth century”) as dubious proof that “there’s more to evolution than a little DNA,” i.e., more than can be explained by random mutations, in the purported evolution of consciousness “up from Eden”
- “Kid Mystic,” from the CD of the same name, describes a family awash in paranormality
- *Bright Apocalypse* (1999) lists eight spiritual texts in its “bibliography,” from Wilber’s *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* down to the Bhagavad Gita. Stuart’s *Bell*, from 2003, was similarly conceptual, and equally spiritually directed

Davis has further gifted the musical world with his own musings on Mali's Dogon tribe. (He actually takes them as "Dagon" in the "Universe Communion" song on his musically and lyrically brilliant *Self-Untitled* record, but they're definitely "Dogon.")

Dagon was the national god of the Philistines. The Dogon, by contrast, are an African people with an animistic religion who, only in the most generous and credulous of interpretations, knew of the white dwarf star Sirius B prior to its western astronomical discovery. That knowledge is held to have been obtained either via contact with an amphibious alien species or by the Dogon's claimed "telescopic vision." The former amphibious-alien conjecture comes largely from Robert Temple's book *The Sirius Mystery*, first published in the mid-1970s. The latter hypothesized sight was ostensibly due to the peoples' high concentrations of melanin.

A beautiful song, then, by Davis. But simultaneously a brutally uninformed diatribe against the ostensible limitations of "arrogant" science to explain such an acquisition of knowledge—of human potential supposedly being "choked under the scientific yoke."

Interestingly, Live's Ed Kowalczyk—another fan of Wilber's work—has called Davis "the greatest lyricist I've ever heard." Kowalczyk himself, though, had at least one hand in three of the most unforgettably awful lines to have forced themselves on popular music.

From *Secret Samadhi's* "Rattlesnake": "Let's go hang out in a bar/It's not too far/We'll take my \_\_\_\_."

What will we take?

Rhymes with "far."

Can be used to get to a nearby watering hole.

No luck? You're trying too hard.

Pretend that you're back in grade three, unfathomably streetwise for your single-digit age, and trying to write your very first poem.

Yes, "We'll take my *car*."

Groan.

Thankfully, that triplet was the distinct nadir, not the zenith, of Live's otherwise-reasonable attempts at lyricism.

*Rolling Stone*, interestingly, had earlier dissed Live's first album, *Mental Jewelry*, as purveying an "adolescent brand of Kmart mysticism." Yet its follow-up, the multi-million-selling *Throwing Copper*, was enthu-

siastically embraced by Ken Wilber himself as being “one of my favorites.”

‘Cause even Kmart customers have four quadrants, after all.

Kowalczyk, further, has predictably appeared numerous times on kw’s Integral Naked forum.

On a mystical note, then, over the course of more than half a dozen albums: in “Tired of ‘Me’” Kowalczyk sings about letting his brainwaves go, and waxes philosophical about the limitations of the intellect, and the futility of hoping for *future* spiritual realization (as opposed to living in the “always-already” witnessing consciousness *now*). “The Beauty of Gray” touts the dissolution of boundaries in one’s perception of reality, as do “Take My Anthem” and “You Are the World.” (The latter was also the title of the first book by Jiddu Krishnamurti which Kowalczyk ever read, back in his late-teenage years. Eddie actually named a pet turtle “Murti,” after the same anointed theosophical “World Teacher.”)

The song “Unsheathed,” then, mentions Ramana Maharshi; while “Century” touches on Aldous Huxley and the hallucinogenic mescaline. “Meltdown” endorses the Hindu idea that the world is currently in a Kali Yuga, or spiritual “Dark Age.” “We Walk in the Dream” avers that “we are not these bodies alone.” In “They Stood Up for Love” Kowalczyk sings, “I give my heart and soul to the one.” “The Ride” opens with mention of the sound of Om. “Feel the Quiet River Rage” covers salvation via holy spinal rivers such as are symbolized in the Ganges, while “Dance with You” has the “karmic ocean” drying up. Finally, “The Dam at Otter Creek” encourages us to (in Ram Dass’ phrase) “be here now.”

There’s more, but that’s probably enough.

Kowalczyk has further blurbed for a book by the infamously “problematic” guru-figure Adi Da, foolishly and dangerously affirming him to be “Real God, here and incarnate.” That, after having been “transported into a state of wonderment and awe” by at least one of Da’s vastly over-rated and painfully derivative books. Indeed, Kowalczyk has further stated that the entire (1999) Live album *The Distance to Here* is “the story of the guru-devotee relationship that I was enjoying at that time” of being an official student/devotee of Da’s.

In addition to Corgan, Neil Osborne, Davis and Kowalczyk, Serj Tankian, vocalist for System of a Down, appeared on Integral Naked in February of 2004.

System of a Down first played Ozzfest in 1998, on the strength of their self-titled debut album. *Toxicity*, the band's sophomore release from 2001, has sold over six million copies. SOAD were subsequently voted as the #1 band of 2002 by leading critics.

With the invasion of Iraq, however, their 2003 video for "Boom!" (directed by Michael Moore) was banned by MTV Europe. Apparently, the video's war images and lyrical commentary against the spending of money for bombs in the midst of widespread starvation were regarded by executives there as being too controversial for broadcast at that historical juncture.

Guitarist/singer Daron Malakian, for his own part, "collects Manson material, and owns copies of all the cult leader and convicted felon's parole hearings." He has further reportedly publicly defended Charles' "good, ecological, planet-protecting" side against the "reductionistic distortion" of him by the general media. Thus, "ATWA," from *Toxicity*, concerns Manson's anti-pollution organization: Air, Trees, Water, Animals.

(Of course, by the same lopsided reasoning, since no one is ever "pure evil" without any redeeming qualities, Daron could just as well justify accumulating mementos expressing the good side of any genocidal dictator, etc., and publicly tout that "ignored" positive side over the media's "distorted" focus on the same figure's war crimes. The bizarre irony in SOAD's speaking out regularly against exactly such brutal abuses should not be lost on anyone.)

Appropriately, then, the members of System of a Down were named "Best Agitators" in *Esquire's* 2005 Esqy Music Awards.

In his conversation with Serj, Wilber credited the band's music with "transcend[ing] and includ[ing] pretty much every genre I can think of"—a fair enough assessment, given that Down's arrangements span from gothic influences to thrash to nu-metal to Armenian folk music ... sometimes all in a single song.

In the same interview, Tankian expressed his view of spirituality in general:

"I do think that the Truth is one, and it's undeniable, and it runs through all of these rivers of religion, and it's a matter of deciphering that Truth for yourself and feeling it in your heart."

Suitably, then, "Innervision" (from 2002's *Steal This Album!*) speaks of the mind's roaming and then returning to a sacred, silent home. The shame-conceptualizing "Ego Brain" reprises a "Row, Row, Row Your

Boat” view of reality (“Life is but a dream”); and “Thetawaves” lauds the practical uses of the “unsettled mind.” (Theta waves are prevalent in deep meditation and dreaming states.) Indeed, even the first song (“Suite-Pee”) on their maiden album was a “depiction of an out-of-body experience.”

“Jet Pilot,” from *Toxicity*, offers further insight into the group’s spiritual leanings, stating of the microcosmic and macrocosmic Spirit, possibly in the context of an astral-traveling horse: “My source is the source of all creation.” (“A horse is a source/Of course, of course,” etc. The same album includes a Davis-like tirade against the purported “failings of science” in the face of omnipresent Spirit—which, too, has oddly failed to provide cures for cancer and AIDS, etc.—in the song “Science.”) Likewise for the #1 hit, “Aerials” (whose video features a child with telekinetic powers causing a car to bounce up and down). There, amid references to oneness, the void, and “the Fall,” Serj and his bandmates declare that being released from “small mind”—such mind being the antithesis of Zen’s concept-devoid “beginner’s mind”—will “free your life.”

Perhaps. And certainly, especially with all of these well-meaning rock stars who have gone public with their earnestly held beliefs, in *Machina*-like attempts to “spread the word” to others, one can only hope that meditation-based spirituality in particular is more than just a different type of fairy tale.

If we have learned one thing from Spinal Tap’s classic rock anthem “Heavy Duty,” however, it would have to be this:

“That meditation stuff can make you go blind.”

CHAPTER 34

***Rock On....***

From Kether to Malkuth, from the Maharishi to Kabbalah, from voodoo to Wilber—when rock stars look for meaning in life, this is what they find.

Whatever one may think of those various nontraditional beliefs, though, the same ideas have provided the basis for some of the very best of the music created by our culture.

So, rock on....

*Rock & Holy Rollers*

***Introduction***

- "I seek pardon ... speech or thought": Grigoriadis (2005).

***4: White Light Fantasy***

- "the kinky hats ... their stylish boots": Shearman (1997), p. 30.
- "England's green and pleasant band": Marten and Hudson (1996), p. 204.
- "the God of ... to get involved": Marten and Hudson (1996), p. 85.
- "Captain": Davies (1996), p. 127.
- "a being above my head": Davies (1996), p. 127.
- "higher self": Davies (1996), p. 130.
- "unconditional love": Davies (1996), p. 132.
- "the realization that ... a greater whole": Davies (1996), p. 133.
- "dated": Marten and Hudson (1996), p. 93.
- "being devoured by ... and insidious power": Davies (1996), p. 153.
- "I know that ... believe in God": Davies (1996), p. 155.
- "masterpiece": Davis (1996), p. 161.
- "under a trance ... Egyptian child king": Davies (1996), p. 165.
- "a mental visualization ... again, as healing": Davies (1996), p. 177.
- "about how if ... it to be": Davies (1996), p. 200.
- "a love song about finding enlightenment": Davies (1996), p. 205.
- "invisible metal band": Davies (1996), p. 209.
- "The intelligences took ... lived on earth": Davies (1996), p. 211-4.
- "I could see ... looked more pleasant": Davies (1996), p. 216.
- "became acutely aware ... presence of Jesus": Davies (1996), p. 217.
- "true white brother": Davies (1996), p. 225.
- "UFO-spotting": Davies (1996), p. 241.
- "who collects ancient ... his life forever!": Davies (2005).

**8: A Saucerful of Sant Mat**

- “least neurotic”: Schaffner (1991), p. 37.
- “was transmitted to ... Tor in Somerset”: Watkinson and Anderson (2001), p. 31.
- “astral chant”: Schaffner (1991), p. 31.
- “All movements are ... increased by one”: Wilhelm (1968), p. 98.
- “every indication of ... permanent LSD orbit”: Schaffner (1991), p. 76.
- “incurable”: Schaffner (1991), p. 107.
- “web-fingered mutants ... phrases like ‘ummagumma’”: Schaffner (1991), p. 15.
- “slang expression for copulation”: Schaffner (1991), p. 151.
- “only used psychedelics twice”: Schaffner (1991), p. 143.
- “a symbol for ... they can cope”: Watkinson and Anderson (2001), p. 121.
- “a metaphor for ... take flight spiritually”: Schaffner (1991), p. 289.

**16: None More Black**

- devil-worshiper, pissed on Alamo, etc.: Clerk (2002), p. 6.
- “high and girly”: Nickson (2002), p. 13.
- “I loved killing ... their heads off”: Crawford (2003), p. 27.
- “get a little cheer every morning”: Osbournes and Gold (2002), p. 35.
- “drinking beer, smoking dope and screwing chicks”: Crawford (2003), p. 35.
- “a floating orb that glowed from within”: Conte and Henderson (2000), no pagination.
- “filled his head ... a better life”: Conte and Henderson (2000), no pagination.
- “Having borrowed a ... into thin air”: Butler (2001), p. 67.
- “I told Ozzy ... the band, really!”: Butler (2001), p. 67.
- “We were all ... call it N.I.B.”: Clerk (2002), p. 18.
- “Bill was great ... good smoke, that””: Shaw (2002), p. 22.
- “I’ve always considered ... extremely uncanny”: Stark (2002), p. 6-7.
- “old Nick”: Clerk (2002), p. 36.
- “looked up to ... experienced similar events”: Conte (2000), p. 19.

- "about a lot ... wouldn't have it.": Stark (2002), p. 83.
- "I thought it ... situation for me": Nickson (2002), p. 69.
- "They'll probably sound ... they were into!": Shaw (2002), p. 41.
- "Most days we ... always the poltergeist": Clerk (2002), p. 74.
- "It was all ... to Aleister Crowley": Barger (1990), p. 133.
- "We got attention ... was pure fabrication": Nickson (2002), p. 49.
- "the madman was coming!": Crawford (2003), p. 114.
- "I really wish ... relate to that": Hit Parader (1984), p. 49.
- "According to European ... cursing an individual": Sharpe-Young (2003), p. 36.
- "the accountability humanity ... Armageddon of Revelations": Sharpe-Young (2003), p. 166.
- "hell's own messenger": Clerk (2002).
- "One day he ... wilderness to meditate": Harris (1999), p. 95-6.
- "He was totally ... these things happen": Nickson (2002), p. 89.
- "I absolutely adore ... life after death": Clerk (2002), p. 127-8.
- "done a lot ... it or not": Clerk (2002), p. 128.
- "enjoyed the taste ... stop chewing them": Crawford (2003), p. 173.

### **29: *In My Eyes***

- "aggressive number about this revolutionary figure on a power trip": Peter Gabriel, in Gallo (1984), no pagination.
- "a book about the life of Gandhi": Waller (1985), p. 24.
- "being a public ... against [his] background": Fielder (1984), p. 29.
- "I'm sure the ... other strange things": Gallo (1980). p. 39.
- "special effects department": Schacht (1984), p. 31.
- "The ice floating ... the nuclear submarine": Gallo (1980).
- "I ended up ... for my life": Fielder (1984), p. 62.
- "sounding really good on records": Phil Collins, quoted in Gallo (1980), p. 50.
- "I saw this ... don't know why": Bright (1999), p. 67.
- "wild animal": Gallo (1980), p. 49.
- "I did feel ... that was outside": Gallo (1980), p. 49.
- "highly disciplined scientific religion" in Platts (2001), p. 56.
- "a secret new ... of fighting fire": in Platts (2001), p. 56.
- "the realm beyond material existence": Knapp (2005).

- “are pulled into their own reflections in the water”: in Platts (2001), p. 57.
- “are once again ... changed into another”: in Platts (2001), p. 57.
- “At one whistle ... in full progress”: in Platts (2001), p. 57.
- “Gabriel’s Hounds, called ... Day of JUDGMENT”: Brewer (1981), p. 461.
- “recruited to be ... out of prison”: McMahan (1998), p. 357.
- “Revelation contains the ... identity as Spirit”: Yogananda (1998), p. 184.
- “confirmed and christened ... in six different religions”: Bright (1999), p. 153.
- “books on Zen Buddhism”: Bright (1999), p. 14.
- “a magnificent synthesis ... and Western philosophies”: in Luftig (2000), p. 17.
- “brainwashing”: Brewer (1975).
- “mankind is finally ... redeemed from sin”: McMahan (1998), p. 359.
- “from male into ... inner eye opened”: Falk (2004), p.105.
- “Top Stage Band”: Gallo (1984), no pagination.
- “The most significant rock band to happen since the Beatles”: Bruce Meyer, quoted in Gallo (1984), no pagination.
- “weird ideas”: Fielder (198x), p. 91.
- “*The Lamb* was ... the transformation theme”: Bright (1999), p. 79.
- “The story begins ... in another underworld”: Welch (1998), p. 87.
- “The Lamia enter ... and are killed”: Peter Gabriel, in Welch (1998), p. 87.
- “The Slippermen are ... in New York”: Peter Gabriel, in Welch (1998), p. 87-8.
- “His brother turns ... a purple haze”: Peter Gabriel, in Welch (1998), p. 88.
- “I can’t remember ... thoroughly enjoyed myself”: Fielder (1984), p. 93.
- “just something to hang songs on”: in Welch (1995), p. 39.
- “he was covered ... the mystical world”: Bright (1999), p. 81.
- “a monstrous, bulbous ... outsized inflatable genitals”: Bright (1999), p. 81
- “The Who and Yes ... positive towards it”: Schacht (1984), p. 38.

- “came directly from preachers”: Reese (1982), p. 91.
- “something of an anti-English movement”: Platts (2001), p. 152.
- “afterward asserted that ... the Virgin Mary”: Hecker (1905), p. 187-201.
- “Music above all ... play to them”: Burton (2001), p. 143.
- “composed of the quintessences”: Hecker (1905), p. 187-201.
- “was partly based ... and then disappearing”: in Bright (1999), p. 161-2.
- “great macho feat ... one has done”: Bright (1999), p. 162.
- “a ship leaving harbor on an intrepid journey”: Bright (1999), p. 162.
- “burst of meditation”: Gallo (1986), no pagination.
- “I felt as ... drown in it”: Gallo (1986), p. no pagination.
- “the struggle for salvation”: Welch (1998), p. 111.
- “just a love ... nature to surface”: White (1990), p. 722.
- “There was this ... was afraid of”: Southbank (1982).
- “[T]he snakes were ... he was dead”: Gabriel (1994).
- “And so in ... moving around him”: Southbank (1982); italics added.
- “Christ-like tendencies”: Welch (1998), p. 134.
- “trust, healing and sacrifice”: Welch (1998), p. 134.
- “a large Brazilian ... from the dead”: Bright (1999), p. 207.
- “I was swimming ... case a cloudburst.”: St. Michael (1994).
- ““Every earthquake is ... someone’s biting speech”: Yogananda (1968).
- “judgmental attitudes being ... and evaluating it”: Bright (1999), p. 164.
- ““If you really ... lose myself, effectively”: Bright (1999), p. 247-8.
- “in the desire ... of emotional pain”: Box (1992).
- “Such frogs are ... Brothers Grimm version”: Falk (2004), p. 136.
- “I wanted to ... real powerful union”: Box (1992).
- “wanted to present ... and original way”: Gabriel (1989).
- “attempted levitation and telepathy”: Welch (1998), p. 94.
- “A lot of ... recorded in rooms”: in Welch (1998), p. 95.
- “There are certain ... happen within me”: in Welch (1998), p. 99-100.
- “head floating”: Bright (1999), p. 152.

- “he has developed ... *yin* and *yang*”: Bright (1999), p. 386.
- “He has taken ... of a coin”: Bright (1999), p. 11.

**30: *Trip Like a Butterfly, Sting Like a Bee***

- “I’m not a ... ever come out”: in Nikart (1984), p. 22.
- “perfectly formed”: Fabian (2005).
- “My first few ... and all that”: Sutcliffe and Fielder (1981), p. 46.
- “banality and the abuse of words”: Sellers (1989), p. 40.
- “society is gradually dehumanizing itself”: Sellers (1989), p. 43.
- “on one occasion ... in the wall”: Sandford (1998), p. 137.
- “planning a private ... veteran yeti hunter”: Nikart (1984), p. 134.
- “genuine religious experience”: Sting (2003), p. 14.
- “I have never ... the word *love*”: Sting (2003), p. 46.
- “My god is ... our land ... *Now*”: Sandford (1998), p. 210.
- “method of yoga ... muscles and organs”: Ashtanga (2005).
- “dinner and a movie”: Sandford (1998), p. 258.
- “Protestantism is based ... largely been discredited”: in Cohen (1984), p. 149.
- “In a sense ... your beautiful country”: Sangghvi (2005).
- “In the composing ... logical sense anymore”: Ganga (1997).

**31: *Afternoons and Satan Worship***

- “Perhaps our pact ... finally paying off”: Ostick (1995), p. 12.
- “I really don’t ... like to sometimes”: Ostick (1995), p. 191.

**33: *Integral Pumpkins***

- “Hindu-influenced gloom music”: Billy Corgan, in Stapleton (2001), p. 17.
- “I just remember ... and spiritual redemption”: in Stapleton (2001), p. 9.
- “To me, the ... removal of suffering”: in Stapleton (1994), p. 42.
- “That symbol is ... to be bleeding”: in Stapleton (1994), p. 42.
- “wearing dresses onstage”: Stapleton (2001), p. 59.
- “ambisexual enough to ... written by a woman”: Stapleton (2001), p. 59.
- “self-inflicted despair”: Hanson (2004), p. 127.
- “try to change the world”: Corgan (2000).

- “only love can be the answer”: Corgan (2000).
- “all based on alchemy”: Corgan and Wilber (2004).
- “through the union ... masculine element (sulphur)”: Silva (2000).
- “was fired for ... to get help”: Corgan (2004).
- “the way music should sound”: in Clerk (2002), p. 30.
- “boring ... like elevator background music”: in Osbournes (2002), p. 39.
- “medical reasons”: in Nickson (2002), p. 203.
- “Billy Corgan was making me sick”: in Nickson (2002), p. 203.
- “demanded that both ... surrendered to him”: Hanson (2004), p. 187.
- “Einstein of consciousness research”: in Wilber (1991), p. 6.
- “Every statistician agrees,” “one hundred percent certain”: Wilber (2001). The full quote from kw is: Dean Radin’s book, *The Conscious Universe*, “puts [the existence of psychic phenomena] beyond dispute, and every statistician agrees.... Another experiment is not going to change. It’s already one hundred percent certain.” For a long-extant *statistical* debunking of Radin’s work, however, see Carroll (2005a).
- “The problem is ... states of being”: in Integral Naked (2004).
- “loyal subscriber to ... *The Skeptical Inquirer*”: Johnson (2005).
- “the value of ... and critical thought”: Johnson (2005).
- “the artist laureate ... on Integral Naked”: Integral Naked (2004).
- “greatest sage of the twentieth century”: Ken Wilber, in Maharshi (2000).
- For a debunking of the Dogon claims, see Ridpath (1978) and Carroll (2005).
- “the greatest lyricist I’ve ever heard”: in Davis (2005).
- “adolescent brand of Kmart mysticism”: Rolling Stone (1997).
- “one of my favorites”: Wilber (2000), p. 192.
- “Real God, here and incarnate”: in Da (2005).
- “transported into a ... wonderment and awe”: in Da (2005).
- “the story of ... at that time”: Kowalczyk and Davis (2004).
- “collects Manson material ... felon’s parole hearings”: Sumison (2001).
- “transcend[ing] and includ[ing] ... can think of”: Tankian and Wilber (2004).

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- “I do think ... in your heart”: Tankian and Wilber (2004).
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He has two other books in print: *Stripping the Gurus: Sex, Violence, Abuse and Enlightenment*, and *The Science of the Soul: On Consciousness and the Structure of Reality*. He currently divides his time between writing, programming, and music composition.

Holy Rock "Rollers. In Hicksville, Long Island, on any given Sunday afternoon, pierced and tattooed teenagers in black clothing gather to listen and watch as groups of kids like themselves tear their fingertips on. By Lauren Sandler. December 23, 2002. It makes a kind of sense that these disaffected kids have found hope and meaning in their own "personal relationships with Jesus," in their literal reading of the Gospel, and in their collective desire to spread the word "in their own words. And yet it's still surprising to see these punks in metal cuffs and fatigues, the girls in too much eye makeup, the guys in too much hair dye, setting up a table at this show to dispense leaflets against pornography, masturbation and, most significant, abortion. [Verse: Aesop Rock] Holy smokes! Father, black suit white collar Kiddie porn dungeon, guns, and three fingers for your daughter's Caught belly-up, antique Nazi paraphernalia You cannot pay your bills with holy water and Hail Mary luck [Oh my!] Shucks fucker, enjoy the Alcatraz shower fun And mommy's mad I'm cliché generation X agnostic front It ain't the nifty fate, the 1958, before the New-New Testament-approved Altar-boy fisting rape And "take me to your leader" Long as he don't manipulate toddler beaver [Leave him alone!] Call me crazy, but I bet that wasn Which rock songs have the best lyrics? Which songwriters were the best poets? Who wrote the most poetic songs of all time? pop, rock, soul, jazz, hip-hop, rap, country, bluegrass, traditional and folk? My personal top ten Rock Poets are: Billy Joel and Bernie Taupin (tie), Laura Nyro, Mick Jagger/Keith Richards, John Lennon/Paul McCartney, Carole King, Leonard Cohen and Dan Fogelberg (tie), Prince, Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon, and Bob Dylan. Dylan Thomas also inspired the Beat poets, from whom the Beatles took their name. (The Beatles paid homage to Dylan Thomas by including his image on the cover of the "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" album.)