

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLMOUCI

FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Romana Sedláčková

**The Rise of the Concept Album: Rock Turns Complex**

Bakalářská práce

Vedoucí práce: David Livingstone, Ph.D.

Olomouc 2015

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne 6. 5. 2015

.....

Romana Sedláčková

Ráda bych poděkovala Davidu Livingstonovi, Ph.D. za vedení mé bakalářské práce a za poskytnutí informací a rad souvisejících s její tvorbou.

## Content

1 Introduction .....	5
2 Getting ready for the concept album	
a) Record marketing through the 1940s and the 1950s .....	7
b) Singles rule the music industry .....	9
c) The LP changes the philosophy .....	11
3 YES! We are ready: the arrival of the concept album	
a) Its pathfinders .....	14
b) Revolutionary <i>Sgt. Pepper</i> .....	16
c) A greater emphasis on lyrics .....	19
4 <i>Sgt. Pepper</i> inspires the late 1960s rockers	
a) The less significant after- <i>Sgt. Pepper</i> albums .....	22
b) The Kinks .....	23
c) The Who .....	27
5 The concept album floods the market	
a) Progressive rock .....	31
b) The Kinks and The Who in the progressive era (1970s) .....	32
c) Progressive concept albums .....	34
d) The backlash reaction .....	40
e) The concept album up to the present .....	41
6 Conclusion .....	43
7 Resumé .....	44
8 Bibliography .....	48
9 Annotation .....	51
10 List of appendices .....	53
11 Appendices .....	54

## 1 Introduction

When the Beatles released their 8th studio album entitled *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* in 1967, it contributed to the gradual change occurring in the music industry in the late 1960s. In that decade, musicians tried to be less dependent on the music companies that released their work. The musicians wanted to express their own thoughts and appeal to people through the power of music. The alternative sphere became mainstream. The above-mentioned album brought completely new trends into the creation of albums as well as into the subsequent listener's perception – the trend of theme unification and the overall message conveyed. The newly born tendencies needed a name and consequently, a simple coined term was established – the concept album.

As I have already mentioned, the concept album is a collection of songs that are connected in some way. Concept albums 'introduce non-musical ideas to structure an album' because 'it isn't really meaningful to call something a concept album if its tracks are only linked by musical approach or style.'<sup>1</sup> A sample concept album engages the lyrics, music and the cover artwork to fit the overall thematic frame or story. During the progressive era, the concept was brought even further; to the concert hall bandstand. Special attention will be paid to rock opera, together with the explication of the term and its comparison with the concept album.

Previously, a typical model of a studio album was a mixture of heterogeneous unconnected songs. It did not try to expose artists' thoughts and opinions in a manner that would force people to think further about the message of the lyrics. The mission was clear – create a single concerned with contemporary fashions and problems, become a hit and make a quick profit from it. The music market was based on singles and there were not many possibilities to express complexity in shorter forms such as single tracks or albums consisting of a small number of songs due to the limited technological opportunities of the time. The main focus was on a single, not on large-scale structures like an album.

Later, in the 1960s, prominent bands attempted to create more elaborate albums and soon the trend of focusing on albums spread. The historical period in

---

<sup>1</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 13.

which the album is an essential unit of recorded music is called The Album Era.<sup>2</sup> Initiated by *Sgt. Pepper* and the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* (from the previous year), the enormous success of these two albums enticed other musicians to dedicate themselves to this new concept.

Nevertheless, the new course would not be possible without technological developments that pushed the industry forward. The first important invention was vinyl long-playing (LP) album. Thanks to the 12-inch LPs that could play up to fifty two minutes (as opposed 7-inch singles), the idea of an album as the base medium for recorded music expanded.

This thesis attempts to trace the mutual progress of the concept album from its birth, through its early days and golden age to its decline, abandonment and recent slow revival. The process is accompanied by technological improvements, the overturn of a single oriented marketing, the turn from shallow and facile lyrics to deeper and purposeful texts, psychedelia and progressive rock and the counteraction against the later showy concept albums. It focuses on a different approach towards song-writing during the gradual transition of attention from mainstream singles to less popular albums. Lyrics find their way into the prominence and the music shifts from dancing to a listening one. The concept album changes the perception of rock music and influences the music industry for many decades ahead.

---

<sup>2</sup> Popular song, 'Albums of the Rock Era,' *Popular Song*, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.popularsong.org/rock-albums.html>.

## 2 Getting ready for the concept album

### a) Record marketing through the 1940s and the 1950s

To fully understand the development of the music sphere conceptualization, one also has to mind the technological progress which greatly advanced the album evolution, as well as the preferred marketing proceedings that were conditioned by technology. Until the 1940s, there was practically no possibility to produce a thematic album due to two aspects. First, technological state at that time was not prepared yet to produce recordings in the song-cycled fashion and second, the process of song-writing was coordinated by managers and music companies. It was not subordinated to artist's sentiments.

The first widespread recording format was the 78 rpm disc made from shellac.<sup>3</sup> This fragile disc comprised only three minutes of sound per side and therefore shellac was slowly substituted by nearly unbreakable and more sound-precise vinyl. After the Second World War, vinyl fully dominated the market by two basic formats: 33 1/3 rpm 10/12-inch LP developed by Columbia Records and 45 rpm 7-inch single developed by RCA as a marketing response to the preceding one. The end of the 1940s was the period of battling between these two formats. Each label tried hard to beat the other one in consumption of their format and 'after several years of competition between the two speeds, the companies pooled their talents and agreed to produce in both formats.'<sup>4</sup>

While both formats coexisted simultaneously, each concentrated on different type of music. The labels of popular artists (rock 'n' roll, soul, pop) applied a song-by-song strategy. These labels did not support mainstream musicians to publish whole albums and preferred to produce 45 rpm singles, 'only once an artist had a few successful singles could they look at putting these together on a long-player (LP).'<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the long-format market was first driven by soundtracks, classical music, collections of several artists and later by mood or exotica music compilations. Naturally, the 45 singles appealed to youths while LPs to adults and 'by 1952, the LP had become the major format for

---

<sup>3</sup> Rpm = revolutions per minute (the speed of spinning).

<sup>4</sup> Roy Shuker, *Popular Music: the Key Concepts* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003), 253.

<sup>5</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 11.

classical music and the 45 the format for single records for popular radio airplay, jukeboxes, and retail sales.<sup>6</sup>

The slip of the record also became a strategic aspect for record labels. Initially, the packaging of records was only a simple wrapper with emphasis on visible label (appendix 1 below). Later, ‘record labels found they could sell more copies if they printed a photography of pop artists on the sleeve.’<sup>7</sup> To become more eye-catching, the photos were gradually modified and altered. Eventually, the cover artwork happened to be an indispensable part of record marketing, in particular during the later concept-album-oriented period.



Appendix 1

Source: the photography of the 78 rpm shellac disc with the emphasis on the label

Rock ‘n’ roll was not considered to be a serious genre. Therefore, musicians had little endeavour to step out from the single-focused marketing and turn to song-cycled principle. 45s ruled the popular sphere. Moreover, to have a greater control over the artist’s outcome, record labels prioritized professional songwriters to compose songs for musicians, ‘which meant [the artists] were unable to purposefully write a complete set of tracks around one theme.’<sup>8</sup> Simply, the market was not prepared yet to welcome conceptualization.

Nevertheless, there were also exceptions amongst the musicians like Americans Lee Hazlewood, Johnny Cash or Woody Guthrie, who ‘wrote the *Dust*

---

<sup>6</sup> Roy Shuker, *Popular Music: the Key Concepts* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003), 253.

<sup>7</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.



*Bowl Ballads* (1935) and became the first major singer-songwriter.<sup>9</sup> These authors are also considered to be the first to attempt to create complex music (this will be further discussed in chapter 3 a)). However, these were rare exceptions in the 1930s to 1950s music industry interwoven with hired songwriters.

The increased consumption of LPs, by the end of 1950s, draw more attention to this format, 'so over the next few years more and more young, rock-oriented artists would try to find ways to enter that market.'<sup>10</sup> Artists endeavoured to be more self-reliant and produce authentic music. This resulted in pushing the professional songwriters into the background and in 'the emergence of a tradition of self-contained groups or performers writing their own songs (most notably the Beatles), which weakened the song-writing market' later in the 1960s.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, this new music direction was preceded by market predominantly interested in profiting singles.

#### b) Singles rule the music industry

As already mentioned, singles ruled the mainstream. Singles' sales served as a reflection of the music society tendencies and the companies altered their marketing strategies according to it. The public interest in singles gave rise to the music charts. In the United Kingdom, the first music chart was compiled in 1952 by the *New Musical Express* (NME) magazine, corresponding to its American counterpart *Billboard*. The chart's market survey was based on the single's sales numbers of twenty music shops. Within a few years, other magazines came up with their own charts, but according to The Official Charts Company, the NME chart is taken as canonical until 1959. From 1960 till 1969, the *Record Retailer's* chart is regarded as the official one.

The most influential music powers were the United Kingdom and the United States of America. During the 1950s and the 1960s, these two countries greatly affected each other's mainstream. Firstly, American rock 'n' roll infatuated the British scene, which projected onto the UK charts in the 1950s. According to the NME chart, only two British musicians managed to be number-

---

<sup>9</sup> Piero Scaruffi, *A History of Rock Music: 1951-2000* (Lincoln: iUniverse, Inc., 2003), 8.

<sup>10</sup> Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2009), 198.

<sup>11</sup> Roy Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003), 277.

one single of the year between the years 1952 and 1959 (one of which shared its position with American).<sup>12</sup> Bill Harry, British journalist from Liverpool, together with his peers, noticed that ‘there was a degree of American popular culture domination in Britain and people seemed to be copying it.’<sup>13</sup> Also the best-selling single of the 1950s decade comes from the US – Bill Haley & His Comets and their song ‘Rock Around the Clock.’ Out of four artists, who had three or more number-one hits, four come from America (Frankie Laine, Guy Mitchell, Elvis Presley and Johnnie Ray).

With the arrival of the new decade, the lust for novel British music was rising. British artists extricated from duplicating the American style. The 1960s belonged to the Beatles, together with other British bands, who turned the course and invaded massively into the charts of the US. The British new sound pervaded the one of the US. The starting point of The British Invasion is according to Bill Harry considered to be the year 1964.<sup>14</sup> The year when the Beatles’ song ‘I Want to Hold Your Hand’ was released in America and mastered the charts. ‘For the rest of the decade, British bands and artists stormed the American charts and airwaves with rebellious reinterpretations of American rock ‘n’ roll.’<sup>15</sup> Between 1960 and 1969, according to Record Retailer in the UK, out of the thirteen most successful number-one hits’ artists are only three Americans (and one Australian), the rest is British.<sup>16</sup> American Billboard shows that between 1958 and 1969 the Beatles had eighteen number-ones, being the most successful hit parade band. The Beatles also hold the first position for best-selling single ‘She Loves You.’<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, bands or solo musicians with more than one number-one hit singles were exceptions, particularly in the 1950s. In America, ‘of the seventy-eight recording artists listed in the 1955–1959 charts, seventy-four percent had only one number-one hit on the list. Presley, on the other hand, accounted for fifteen percent of the hits during this five-year period.’<sup>18</sup> One-hit wonders were

---

<sup>12</sup> Official Charts Company, ‘All the Number 1 Singles,’ *Official Charts*, accessed April 12, 2015, [http://www.officialcharts.com/chart-news/all-the-number-1-singles\\_\\_7931/#1950s](http://www.officialcharts.com/chart-news/all-the-number-1-singles__7931/#1950s).

<sup>13</sup> Bill Harry, *The British Invasion: How the Beatles and Other UK Bands Conquered America*, (Surrey: Chrome Dreams, 2004), 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Official Charts Company, ‘All the Number 1 Singles,’ *Official Charts*, accessed April 16, 2015, [http://www.officialcharts.com/chart-news/all-the-number-1-singles\\_\\_7931/#1950s](http://www.officialcharts.com/chart-news/all-the-number-1-singles__7931/#1950s)

<sup>17</sup> Billboard Charts Archive, ‘The Hot 100,’ *Billboard*, accessed April 14, 2015.

<https://www.billboard.com/archive/charts/1969/hot-100>.

<sup>18</sup> Don Tyler, *Music of the Postwar Era* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008), 201.

prevalent to stable musicians in both, in the UK and the US. Therefore, there was not much space for elaborate composition, these were to come in the later 1960s.

The changeover comes together with the Beatles and their realisation how powerful music can be. Their attitude towards music stood in opposition with the trends. The Beatles promoted the musician's craft to the artist's one by composing, performing and living accordingly. 'From then on, the most important popular music would generally be recorded not as stand-alone single songs, but as collections of songs that were linked by a concept or style.'<sup>19</sup>

### c) The LP changes the philosophy

While the 45 singles, mostly produced by one-hit wonders, dominated the music charts worldwide, there was also another, not so prominent, more and more profitable stream slowly bubbling up to the music foreground - the stream of LP admirers. The growing number of LP followers eventually led to different approaches towards LP format as well as indicated the market alternation and affected the process of song-writing.

Back then, before the Beatles introduced a massive production of pop albums, the long-playing disc, in a mainstream environment, was considered to be a side product for extra money. A successful career, which meant few successful singles occupying a high position in music chart, was a good reason to join these hits and create the LP. Either including one or ten arbitrary artists, the LP increased the profits and also honoured the included artists. Nevertheless, 'while the compilation LP remained the primary focus of the major record companies, several new independent labels experimented with the longer-playing format.'<sup>20</sup>

These labels, whose artists primarily focused on creating complex music during the 'single era', inclined to be overshadowed by the mainstream ones. The labels usually pumped from traditional music styles like folk or jazz. These labels fell into the non-commercial and more serious music sphere and 'highlighted its separation from 'commercial' music by adopting the LP format.'<sup>21</sup> Despite that, these artists were also appreciated by a wide range of followers. Mostly, they

---

<sup>19</sup> David Galenson, *From 'White Christmas' to Sgt. Pepper: The Conceptual Revolution in Popular Music* (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2007), 22.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Osborne, *Vinyl: A History of the Analogue Record* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), 102.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

attracted adults and college students. Gradually, when the folk revival was at its peak and LPs started to reach singles in sales, the scope of interest in LP format had broadened.

Due to the increasing interest in LPs, both record companies and musicians realised that LP has a future. Not speaking about the user friendlier advantages - longer musical pleasure, technical convenience and spending approximately the same money (as for singles) for more music. Of course, these upsides were mostly attractive to adults. A mediocre teenager did not have enough money to buy the LP. However, the LP was at least quarter cheaper than a collection of the same amount of singles. Naturally, adults were the leading buyers of LP format and that was a noticeable part of the population. Therefore, commercial record labels were looking for ways how to enter this market and make it prosperous.

First successful examples are Frank Sinatra's mood albums produced by Capitol Records (he joined the label in 1953). Sinatra's recording team was negotiating for a long time how to grasp the LP extended format and the most logical method seemed to be the satisfactory one: 'Sinatra drew on his experience of live performance – one place where popular music was not arbitrarily strung together – to sequence his LPs.'<sup>22</sup> The clear intent of making the LP, sequencing it and adding a thematic tint exemplarily contrasted the compilation LPs. Another example, may be Bob Dylan and his folk career primarily oriented on LPs. In an interview for Chronicle he says: 'Folksingers, jazz artists and classical musicians made LPs, long-playing records with heaps of songs in the grooves – they forged identities and tipped the scales, gave more of the big picture.'<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, their LPs did not fit the prevalent single-era pop scene.

Elvis Presley and, more significantly the Beatles are musicians who subsumed the LP into the popular scene. Elvis Presley during recording also used the 'LP first' philosophy during the recording - 'pop music now had a performer who, rather than having to compile LPs out of hit singles, could release LPs of new material that would be hits themselves.'<sup>24</sup> However, to please the market he also had to produce another, more affordable formats such as single or extended-play single and these still overcame LPs in Presley's profits.

---

<sup>22</sup> Richard Osborne, *Vinyl: A History of the Analogue Record* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), 157.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

However, the new LP trend had also its drawbacks. Heretofore, the professional songwriters were the essential part of major record labels. The craft of professional song-writing was no longer needed since the labels enabled musicians to compose their own work. A new term was coined to describe musicians who are self-reliant in the process of the music creation and its presentation – a singer songwriter. Roy Shuker's definition says: 'The term singer songwriter has been given to artists who both write and perform their material, and who are able to perform solo, usually on an acoustic guitar or piano. 'An emphasis on lyrics has resulted in the work of such performers often being referred to as song poets, accorded auteur status, and made the subject of intensive lyric analysis.'<sup>25</sup> Musicians were promoted to something more than just a 'handsome figure with a talent to sing'.

Consequently, bands' focus slowly moved from the bandstand to studios. Managers provided artists with more control over their outcome, more time for the band to think over their music and thus, artists had more time to compose profound and coherent music. This orientation opened doors to concept albums as Shute claims: 'the concept album is a creative form that requires the songwriter to have a large amount of control over the music they are creating and how it is packaged.'<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Roy Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003), 277.

<sup>26</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 18.

### 3 Yes! We are ready: the arrival of the concept album

#### a) Its pathfinders

As well as rock 'n' roll, evolving from rhythm 'n' blues and American folk, did not appear on the scene out of the blue, the concept album also underwent gradual development. The break that hindered the bloom of the concept album until the late 1960s was the single-oriented marketing and its song-writing policy of hired composers. Also the natural environment for cycled songs differed. Even though, one can mark the concept albums rather as a matter of (progressive) rock, the principles were taken from other genres, more traditional ones like jazz or folk. Rock 'n' roll was not a genre designed for large-scale works.

A credit for being a forerunner and first drawing the attention to the thematic concept receives Woody Guthrie. In his traditional folk album *Dust Bowl Ballads* (1940), Guthrie 'altered the lyrics to fit with contemporary situations.'<sup>27</sup> The album describes hardships of the 1930s Oklahoma farmers migrating away from the dust storm. His overlooked legacy of self-reliant singer songwriter was grasped again much later. Johnny Cash, inspired by Guthrie's thematic conceptions, twenty years after *Dust Bowl Ballads*, in the early 1960s, also released albums concerned with contemporary problems in America, out of which *Bitter Tears* (1964), the most influential one, was about Native Americans' afflictions. Another influential singer songwriter was Bob Dylan, also producing songs commenting on contemporary events. So far, the theme albums remained output of folk musicians, usually producing establishment-protest songs.

Frank Sinatra's work is sometimes considered to fit the early concept albums, yet it does not agree with Shute's definition of the intentionally created concept album. The tracks in Sinatra's *In the Wee Small Hours* (1955) 'were in fact composed by a variety of songwriters and collected together retrospectively, so the intention to write a conceptual work simply wasn't there.'<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, his 1950s albums do cohere around a theme.

These musicians certainly helped the concept album to expand, yet we cannot label them as the exemplary ones. Shute argues that 'what is important that there is clear intent to write a thematic work, rather than this just being a result of

---

<sup>27</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 18.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

the artist's circumstances at the time of writing.<sup>29</sup> This statement disproves the classification of Guthrie's, Cash's, Dylan's and Sinatra's work as being the concept album. Nevertheless, the complex music remained in traditional genres as Shute acknowledges: 'While country music may have had a tradition of storytelling works, this did not exist within the newly emerged genre of rock 'n' roll.'<sup>21</sup> The golden age of rock concept albums was yet to come.

The early concept albums are differentiable from the later ones by its degree of connectedness. According to Shute, we can 'distinguish between 'narrative' concept albums and 'thematic' concept albums', out of which the thematic albums fit in the early concept albums by Guthrie or Cash.<sup>30</sup> Their albums spin around a certain theme, but the overall interconnection comprising lyrics, music and artwork is still missing. These are applied in the narrative album, which interlinks the lyrics by employing a plot (mostly fictional). The plot is a typical attribute of later, the most successful concept albums such as The Who's *Tommy*. The narrative albums, being at its peak during the era of the progressive rock, made this form famous. Still, having differences, these two types share the distinguishing feature that discerns the concept album from a standard album (a collection of heterogeneous songs): 'a concept from outside of music.'<sup>31</sup> Basically, the first intent is to process some non-musical idea and the second, conditioned by the first, is to create music. This model seems counteractive to soon retreating single-driven mainstream.

As the second half of the 1960s' decade was reached, the elaborateness and complexity were expanded through the structures of the early concept albums. Brian Wilson, the leading member of Californian band the Beach Boys, inspired by the already experimental approach of the Beatles, intended to produce musically innovative album, applying different newfangled techniques and finally 'creating *Pet Sounds* in 1966 as a musically and harmonically rich song-cycle.'<sup>32</sup> Argued by some, to be the first concept album whatsoever, justly or not, *Pet Sounds* enlisted into the music history. The same year, another two albums containing a hint of conceptualization were released. The Kink's *Face to Face*,

---

<sup>29</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 13.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Hegarty, Martin Halliwell, *Beyond and Before: Progressive Rock since the 1960s* (London: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 33.

observing social matters, and the Mothers of Invention's *Freak Out!*, loosely expressing opinions about American pop. Out of these three 1966 releases, *Pet Sounds* is the most significant album because it pushed further the Beatles' perception of music, in particular, the experimental side of the album. The album's historical importance is certified by Paul McCartney's affirmation that '*Pet Sounds* was the single greatest influence on the Beatles' landmark album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.'<sup>33</sup> The concept album is warmly invited into rock.

b) Revolutionary *Sgt. Pepper*

*Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* represents a revolutionary approach towards music production in all the three most important spheres structuring the concept album – it engages the music composition, lyrics and the cover for the creation of the album. Still, when we analyse these spheres, we will reveal that this album actually does not precisely suit the definition of the concept album.

The original purport to create a song-cycled album, describing growing up in Liverpool was abandoned and the Beatles decided to produce, according to Paul McCartney's idea, an album that would introduce the live show of a fictional band (whose name carries the album) and which would conduct the listener through the whole album. This concept of concealing themselves provided the Beatles with freedom in musical experimenting. Nevertheless, the presence of the Sgt. Pepper's band is evident only in the first two songs ('Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' and 'With a Little Help from My Friends'), which are fluently connected, next, in the song number seven 'Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!' (bringing back the ambience of the live show) and finally, in the reprise of the first song at the end of the album. So much for the internal cohesion. In fact, the structure of the album does not fit much the definition of the concept album.

The overall theme does not seem to fulfil the standards of the concept album too. There is no apparent theme, and although John Lennon proclaimed that 'every other song could have been on any other album', it was embraced as a one tightly connected thematic whole by contemporary young generation, in particular,

---

<sup>33</sup> Larry Starr, Christopher Waterman, *American Popular Music: The Rock Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2006), 122.



by the wide spreading flower power movement.<sup>34</sup> The movement, according to unobtrusive hints, interpreted the lyrics as an invocation to use drugs. For instance the third song ‘Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds’, where the capitalized letters could stand for LSD, or in the song ‘Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!’ appears the name ‘Henry the Horse’, which was a common slang term for heroin. Even though these assumptions had never been supported by the band, the whole album was received as one complex unit reflecting the cultural changes in the 1960s.

The sudden interest in deciphering lyrics was caused by a heretofore singular move – printing the texts on the album cover, ‘signalling that they were central to the experience and perhaps worth reading on their own.’<sup>35</sup> Contrasted to the Beatles’ early tracks, largely comprising of facile love song lyrics, *Sgt. Pepper* offers the hearer much more profound ones. The lyrics non-violently compel the hearer to attentively listen to the words. In the case of *Sgt. Pepper*, it was no longer a mere dance album, but it was composed for listening. The Beatles shifted rock from dance music to music designed for listening. Their fascination in ‘lyrics was clearly influenced by folk music’, which was originally more lyrics’ oriented than rock.<sup>36</sup>

The conception of the album sleeve was innovative on account of two reasons. Firstly, because of the printed texts on the sleeve, whereby the band brought the concept across to cover. Secondly, thanks to the unique front picture. ‘The Beatles’ intention was to create a record whose musical impact would be complemented by its visual impact.’<sup>37</sup> In the central part of the cover are the Beatles dressed in costumes like Lonely Hearts Club Band and behind them stand more than fifty heterogeneous famous persons (including Marilyn Monroe, Bob Dylan, Edgar Allan Poe, Oscar Wilde and many more). In front of the band is a sign ‘BEATLES’ formed by red flowers growing in a colourful flowerbed. The sign alludes to the growing hippie movement. The inventive cover raised a great upheaval and is ‘credited with providing an early impetus for the expansion of the graphic design industry into the imagery of popular music, and perceived as

---

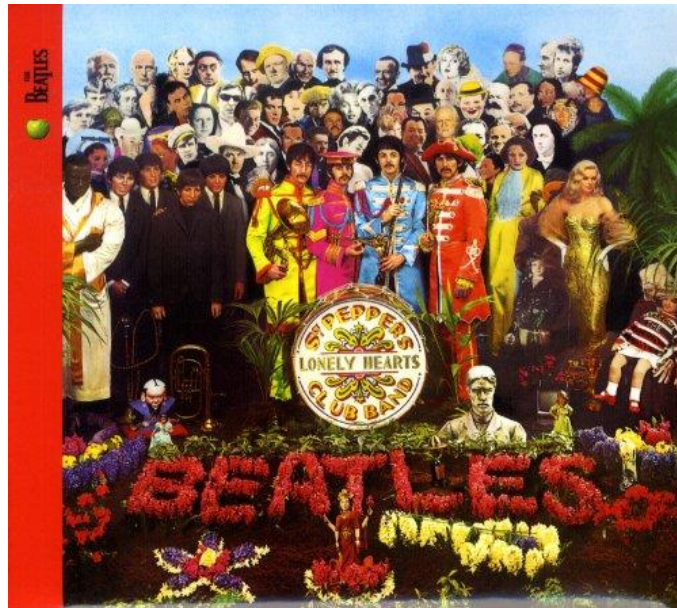
<sup>34</sup> David Sheff, *All We Are Saying: The Last Major Interview with John Lennon and Yoko Ono*, 2nd edn. (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2000), 197.

<sup>35</sup> John Rudolph Covach, Andrew Flory, *What’s That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (W.W. Norton, 2012), 261.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 174.

<sup>37</sup> Ian Inglis, ‘Cover story: magic, myth and music,’ In the *Sgt. Pepper and the Beatles: It Was Forty Years Ago Today*, edited by Olivier Julien, 91- 102 (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), 91.

largely responsible for the connections between art and pop to be made explicit.<sup>38</sup>  
The artwork is shown on the picture below (appendix 2).



Appendix 2

Source: Blake, Peter. Haworth, Jan, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, 1967. *Albumart* Accessed April 18, 2016.  
<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=sgt+pepper&itempage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.

Musically, *Sgt. Pepper* is very rich. It applies diverse genres from rock 'n' roll, through jazz to vaudeville. Also the variety of instruments played exceeds their previous albums. In fact, the plentiful instrumentation of *Sgt. Pepper* exceptionally surpasses the majority of up-to-then albums. Playing guitars and drums, the Beatles used also exotic instruments like Indian tamboura, congas, organ or tubular bells. This experimentation influenced other musicians to employ a wider variety of instruments too.

So far, one can see that the labelling of the album as the concept album is not justified. John Lennon also opposes this categorization saying: '*Sgt. Pepper* is called the first concept album, but it doesn't go anywhere. All my contributions to the album have absolutely nothing to do with this idea of Sergeant Pepper and his band; but it works 'cause we *said* it worked, and that's how the album appeared.'<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, 'Lennon's objections did little to discourage rock fans

---

<sup>38</sup> Ian Inglis, 'Cover story: magic, myth and music,' In the *Sgt. Pepper and the Beatles: It Was Forty Years Ago Today*, edited by Olivier Julien, 91- 102 (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), 102.

<sup>39</sup> David Sheff, *All We Are Saying: The Last Major Interview with John Lennon and Yoko Ono*, 2nd edn, (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000), 197.

from lauding, and musicians from imitating, this aspect of *Sgt. Pepper*, and in the wake of its release concept albums seemed to pop up everywhere.<sup>40</sup> The listeners saw the conceptual aspiration and that was crucial.

The album had an enormous success, even though none of the songs reached the number-one position in music charts. In particular, it assisted to change the prevailing attitude towards rock. The Beatles, together with the Beach Boys, demonstrated that even rock music can be artistic. Thanks to them the public accepted rock as a serious genre. Furthermore, the great success of *Sgt. Pepper* showed the music companies that independent musicians can be successful. Managers became more willing to let the musicians be the kings of their outcome. Lastly, as mentioned before, the conceptual side of the album, although far from being representative, encouraged other musicians to scrutinize further this concept and ‘proved that just a hint of a central concept could be enough to spark the imagination of listeners and create a sense of cohesion across the album.’<sup>41</sup> *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* is a milestone in the music history, rock in particular and ‘perhaps one of the most important and influential aspects of *Sgt. Pepper* is that it created a new focus on the album as opposed to the single.’<sup>42</sup> The most important musicians of the next decade devoted themselves to the creation of albums.

### c) A greater emphasis on lyrics

The Beatles’ artistic progress excels particularly in their texts. Thus, it is worth comparing the early Beatles’ lyrics with the lyrics forming *Sgt. Pepper*. One can expose the band’s concealed talent which is being uncovered between their first album and *Sgt. Pepper*. The reputation of the Beatles steadily evolved from a juvenile rock band to mature musicians.

The Beatles’ debut studio album *Please Please Me*, released in 1963, consists of fourteen songs, out of which eight are composed by Lennon or McCartney and the album is concluded by the covered song ‘Twist and Shout’. On the other hand, *Sgt. Pepper* contains thirteen songs, whereas each of them is

---

<sup>40</sup> John Rudolph Covach, Andrew Flory, *What’s That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (W.W. Norton, 2012), 261.

<sup>41</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 21.

<sup>42</sup> John Rudolph Covach, Andrew Flory, *What’s That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (W.W. Norton, 2012), 262.

written by a member of the Beatles (twelve by song-writing companions Lennon - McCartney and one by Harrison). The Beatles' 'craftsmanship and imagination increased with their productivity as the Beatles wrote and released eighteen original compositions in 1963, twenty-four in 1964, and thirty in 1965.'<sup>43</sup> Little by little they took over the control and during the four years, between 1963 and 1967, solely the members of the band proceeded into the charge of composing.

Within the four years, the Beatles' subject matter changed radically. Each song from *Please Please Me* (except 'Twist and Shout') deals with love emotions or relationships. 'The Beatles' early lyrics were direct, innocent, joyful celebrations of adolescent love, almost thoughtlessly perpetuating pop conventions.'<sup>44</sup> The transformation began when, in 1964, the band met Bob Dylan, who 'was the first to challenge Lennon and McCartney to move past teenage love tunes.'<sup>45</sup> In contrast to *Please Please Me*, *Sgt. Pepper* (leaving out the musical dissimilarity) provides the hearer with wider gamut of topics. Ranging from identifying oneself in a community ('With a Little Help from My Friends', 'Fixing a Hole'), aptitude to transform personality to better ('Getting Better'), generation divergences ('She's Leaving Home'), philosophical meditations ('Within You Without You'), worries of being lonesome when being old ('When I'm Sixty-Four'), or diverse perception of the world ('Good Morning Good Morning'). Nevertheless, in spite of these palpable messages, *Sgt. Pepper's* most appealing aspect remains the openness for interpretations driven by the equivocal lyrics. This accounts for the evergreen album's legacy. Moreover, the inconspicuous conceptualization enhances the solemnity of the album.

Altered approach towards the respectability of the lyrics changed the methods of creating them. The Beatles commenced to treat their lyrics with a caring precision of a writer. McCartney stated: 'it was now to do more like writing your novel.'<sup>46</sup> Music critic William Mann described their innovative approach, saying: 'gone are the frothy pitches to teen-aged libidos. They are

---

<sup>43</sup> Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Analogy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 8.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>45</sup> John Rudolph Covach, Andrew Flory, *What's That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (W.W. Norton, 2012), 174.

<sup>46</sup> Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Analogy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 99.

trying hard to say important things.’<sup>47</sup> Eventually, to draw more attention to the lyrics, the band decided to print the texts on the album sleeve.

The slow craftsmanship adolescence, concentration on unlike form (from singles to albums), increased attention to lyrics and attempts to unify album’s ideas – these groundbreaking steps enlisted into the 1960s evolution of the Beatles. These procedures were not innate only to them, indeed. The inclination to become a solemn artist (not only a musician) grew in the careers of other significant bands of the 1960s and the inclinations were prone to have a similar course as the one of the Beatles.

---

<sup>47</sup> George Martin, *Making Music: The Guide to Writing, Performing and Recording* (New York: Quill, 1983), 152.

#### **4 *Sgt. Pepper* inspires the late 1960s rockers**

##### a) The less significant after-*Sgt. Pepper* albums

The Beatles is a typical example band whose interest in lyrics slowly grew during their career. The importance of lyrics in their early works was trivial while in the later ones gained prominence. This progression, from shallow to profound, apart from some exceptions, is a typical evolution of the most significant groups of the 1960s. In addition, the rising value of lyrics is correspondingly connected to rising interest in conceptualization. The Beatles are marked to be the trigger band to launch the concept album boom. This chapter evaluates the careers of the most prominent 1960s bands and confirms the simple-to-complex theory.

Before presenting the list of model bands which fit into my theory, I would like to point out one counterexample. Nirvana's (not to be confused with the 1990s American band) *The Story of Simon Simopath* from 1967, whilst being their debut album suits the early concept album standards and thus, it does not fit to my theory of development. This album presents Simon and his decline into madness. Stewart Mason describes the album as being a 'rather silly story' with 'deliberately childlike tone.'<sup>48</sup> The actual narrative is, for a correct understanding, explained in detail in the liner notes. The failed success of the album indicates that the concept was grasped from a wrong angle. The second reason for the minor public reception is that the society was not prepared yet for a loosely narrative concept album. Nevertheless, the album provides an 'uniformly solid set of well-constructed psych-pop tunes with attractive melodies' and, in spite of its underachievement, the album, owing to its structure, must be tagged as the concept album.<sup>49</sup> The simplicity of the lyrics, which could not bear the story unaided, had to be supported by expositive paragraphs. Thus, while being Nirvana's first album, there is no progress in lyrics visible and the little experience led to a rather abortive concept album.

Similarly, *S.F. Sorrow* recorded by The Pretty Things in 1968, a year and two months after *The Story of Simon Simopath*, did not appeal to a much wider percentage of the audience. One can ascribe it to the narrative resemblance to the preceding album. Likewise, it carries the listener through the entire life of a male

---

<sup>48</sup> Stewart Mason, 'Review by Stewart Mason,' *AllMusic*, accessed November 3, 2015, <http://www.allmusic.com/album/the-story-of-simon-simopath-mw0000084577>.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

protagonist. While Simon, in the previous album, completes his story with a happy ending, the life of Sebastian, from the later album, who also experiences madness, leans towards misfortune finale. ‘The tale and the songs are a bit downbeat and no amount of scrutiny can disguise the fact that the rock opera *S.F. Sorrow* is ultimately a bit of a confusing effort -- these boys were musicians, not authors or dramatists’ remarks Richie Unterberger in his review.<sup>50</sup> He also qualifies the album to be rock opera and claims: ‘Although it may have helped inspire Tommy, it is, simply, not nearly as good.’<sup>51</sup>

*S. F. Sorrow* is the band’s fourth studio album and their first concept album. Owing to that, the album, unlike *The Story of Simon Simopath*, matches my theory. The Pretty Things’ debut album from 1965, entitled *The Pretty Things*, introduces chiefly rock ‘n’ roll covers. Out of twelve songs, only three are composed by the band members. Quite the opposite is their 1968 release, consisting of genuine records recorded by the group itself. In the same way as the Beatles, the Pretty Things, from relying on imitating an American R&B scene, proceeded to more British-like approach towards music. Commencing like a standard British boy-band from the half of the 1960s, they climaxed as a British psychedelic band with *S.F. Sorrow*. The creative development is evident.

#### b) The Kinks

The Kinks is the archetypal example of a band with a huge potential to produce something deeper than just a compilation of covers, even though their career, as the careers of most musicians, began with covering. The influential potential was hidden in incipient songwriter Ray Davies. The Kinks’ debut album from 1964, self-titled *Kinks*, softly uncovers Davies’ song-writing talent – he composed six tracks for the album. Five other songs are covers of American musicians (Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and others), and two songs (‘Bald Headed Woman’, ‘I’ve Been Driving on Bald Mountain’) were written by the Kinks’ producer Shel Talmy – these two were marked by Unterberger as ‘simply abominable.’<sup>52</sup> Ray Davies’

---

<sup>50</sup>Richie Unterberger, ‘Review by Richie Unterberger,’ *AllMusic*, accessed March 11, 2015, <http://www.allmusic.com/album/sf-sorrow-mw0000308955>.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>Unterberger, Richie. ‘Review by Richie Unterberger.’ *Allmusic*. Accessed April 9, 2015. <http://www.allmusic.com/album/kinks-mw0001983603>.

songs, ‘You Really Got Me’ or ‘So Mystifying’, achieved much warmer response, generally appealing to youngsters.

Being the band’s first album, *Kinks*, similar to the Beatles’ debut album, contains songs depicting love. All Davies’ contributions to the album (‘So Mystifying’, ‘Just Can’t Go to Sleep’, ‘I Took My Baby Home’, ‘You Really Got Me’, and ‘Stop Your Sobbing’) concern the theme of love affection (apart from the instrumental song ‘Revenge’). ‘Despite the inclusion of other material of dubious quality’, meaning the covers and the Talmy’s part, ‘the brilliant songs written by Ray Davies made the Kinks’ first two albums much better and more influential than the work of any other competent British R&B band of the day.’<sup>53</sup> However, Davies fully liberated his composing abilities after securing the Kinks’ position in public awareness by producing the mainstream attractive pop tunes. Then, by the time ‘as the Beatles grew more serious and ambitious with their lyrics in 1965, so did Davies.’<sup>54</sup>

Throughout the first three albums, Davies had been earning his position of the chief composer, and eventually, the fourth album *Face to Face* (1966) comprised exclusively of his arrangements. This album represents the foretaste of Davies’ ‘social observer’ role. Although, he strived to push through his early conceptual ideas into *Face to Face*, only a few hints exhibit his intentions (sound effects in songs ‘Holiday in Waikiki’ or ‘Party Line’). He gained more space in the next album *Something Else by The Kinks* which offered ‘a collection of short stories and character sketches, that climaxed with the glorious “End Of the Season”’ presenting ‘clever and biting critiques of 1960s culture.’<sup>55, 56</sup> These albums led him to the creation of the Kinks’ first righteous concept album – *Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* (hereafter only *Village Green*).

*Village Green*, being the Kinks’ sixth studio album, released in 1968, occurs to be a grand opposite to their debut album *Kinks*. Proffering fifteen songs in total, each of them is written by Ray Davies. The whole album drags you in by its English atmosphere. Clearly, the Kinks untied themselves from imitating their

---

<sup>53</sup> James E. Perone, *Mods, Rockers, and the Music of the British Invasion* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2009), 102.

<sup>54</sup> John Rudolph Covach, Andrew Flory, *What’s That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (W.W. Norton, 2012), 189.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Buckley, *The Rough Guide to Rock* (London: The Penguin Group, 2003), 560.

<sup>56</sup> John Rudolph Covach, Andrew Flory, *What’s That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (W.W. Norton, 2012), 189.



American colleagues that were an obvious influence of their debut album. Besides, the songs in *Village Green* progressed from love songs to more complex tracks. Lauding for the old-style and preventing from the modern, the album brings an idealized vision of old England. Shute summarizes the album's theme as an 'ode to traditional English lifestyle.'<sup>57</sup>

The album opens with a song, having the same title as the album, and which functions as a foreword outlining the theme and the tone of the following content. The song lists a series of traditional characters (for instance, Sherlock Holmes), genres (vaudeville), cultural heritage ('we are the Skyscraper condemnation Affiliate; God save tudor houses, antique tables and billiards') and other visions of idyllic England ('Custard Pie Appreciation Consortium; Draught Beer Preservation Society'). Eventually, the song sums the album's attitude by the lyrics: 'Preserving the old ways from being abused; Protecting the new ways for me and for you.'<sup>58</sup> The rest of the album remains in the same mood.

Nevertheless, marking the album as the narrative would not be accurate. It rather reminds the collection of different situations, imageries and memories, which altogether emit an exceptionally powerful mission. The whole album is motivated by Davies' 1966 song 'Village Green'. Narrated from the perspective of a boy who leaves his hometown rural village for fame, the song praises 'all the simple people, [...], morning dew, fresh air and Sunday school' and reveals the narrator's lust for return back.<sup>59</sup> Another song 'Starstruck' condemns the life in big cities, arguing it destructs the characters of naive village inhabitants. 'Animal Farm' depicts country as a safe, peaceful place opposite to metropolis singing: 'It's a quiet, quiet life; By a dirty old shack.'<sup>60</sup> Other tracks describe different village characters ranging from local beauty 'Monica', childhood friends 'Do You Remember Walter?', outcast 'Johnny Thunder' to residential witch 'Wicked Annabella'. To conclude, discussed album matches the thematic concept albums.

Even though the album was not widely acclaimed by the public, critics consider it to be a milestone in the Kinks' career. The Kinks subsumed the band to an entirely different category of musicians. They no longer represented a teenage band. Throughout the years, 'Ray's song-writing was developing faster than

---

<sup>57</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 40.

<sup>58</sup> Ray Davies, Kinks, *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* (London: Pye, 1968).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

anyone else's' and eventually, his creativity pulled him to difficult pieces which piled up to concept albums.<sup>61</sup> The next Davies' project was to compose a narrative conceptual album and his plan came out successful –the story of British citizen Arthur from 1969.

*Arthur (Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire)* continues with describing Britishness and English ambience, particularly the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century England, through the character Arthur – an ordinary, working-class Englishman. The album starts with 'Victoria', the song which returned the Kinks to the music charts. It portrays an industrial era during the Queen Victoria from the working-class point of view. Next two songs, 'Yes Sir, No Sir' and 'Some Mother's Son', give the picture of Arthur's brother period of military service and subsequent death in World War I. In 'Drivin'', Arthur tries to relax his wife's mind by mindlessly driving in car to suppress thinking about another war coming. 'Shangri-la', the album's song with the highest potential, illustrates Arthur's meaningless comfortable home life. Other songs draw the life and trends of the era, for instance, common emigrations to 'Australia', consequences of the Second World War ('She's Bought a Hat Like Princess Marina') or alienation between generations ('Nothing to Say').

The whole album was originally intended to appear on television. Nevertheless, the project was abandoned and only LP was released. *Arthur*, opposite to *Village Green*, offers the dark and less romantic description of England and 'if it weren't for some of Ray's most beautiful tunes, it would have been thoroughly depressing.'<sup>62</sup> Commercially more successful than the previous album, *Arthur*'s 'crumbling self-image of Britain with the shadow of war ever present' settled down the band's position of influential concept album composers.<sup>63</sup>

In summary, speaking about the maturity of their lyrics, complexity of the albums, the emphasis on the album as a whole and giving less significance to particular singles, the Kinks experienced the same development as the Beatles. Ray Davies 'blossomed into one of the best and most prolific songwriters of his

---

<sup>61</sup> Peter Buckley, *The Rough Guide to Rock* (London: The Penguin Group, 2003), 560.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 560.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 560.

generation'<sup>64</sup> and his persistence in writing themed works climaxed in 1970s by composing *Preservation Act One* (1973) and *Preservation Act Two* (1974) further discussed in following chapter). He persisted in injecting his 'keen observations or empathetic (even when satirical) portraits' into music.<sup>65</sup>

### c) The Who

As well as the Kinks' song-writing production relied solely on one group member (Ray Davies), the Who depended on composing abilities of Peter 'Pete' Townshend. Nevertheless, 'in contrast to the Kinks, [...], the Who was a much more volatile combination, in which each member vied to attract attention', and each for different reasons.<sup>66</sup> Pete's aggressive guitar technique (not once concluded with the destruction of the instrument) and his experimentation with amplifier, Keith Moon's fierce drum style, Roger Daltrey, who embodies the charismatic singer and John Entwistle on bass representing the traditional mild musician, altogether formed a very mighty, although disparate, group. Still, Pete's composing skills pulled the band to its success.

Pete secured his position of the leading composer right at the beginning of his career. The Who's debut studio album *My Generation* (1965) contains eight Pete's compositions, one instrumental song ('The Ox') composed by the whole band and three covers of songs from American R&B musicians (James Brown and Bo Diddley). The song 'My Generation' was the most successful single of the album (it peaked to number 2 position in the Record Retailer as a single) and nowadays, the song is still coveted for its rebellious content. The song was embraced as a hymn by the mod culture ('mods') of the 1960s.<sup>67</sup> The album was generally successful and brought wider attention to the band.

The content of the lyrics, as in the debut albums of the Beatles and the Kinks, concerned mostly love and relationships. Five of Pete's songs on the album deal with relationships, but, opposite to the positive approach of the bands mentioned before, the songs usually indicate feelings of discontent, unhappiness

---

<sup>64</sup> Craig Morrison, *American Popular Music: Rock and Roll* (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2006), 128.

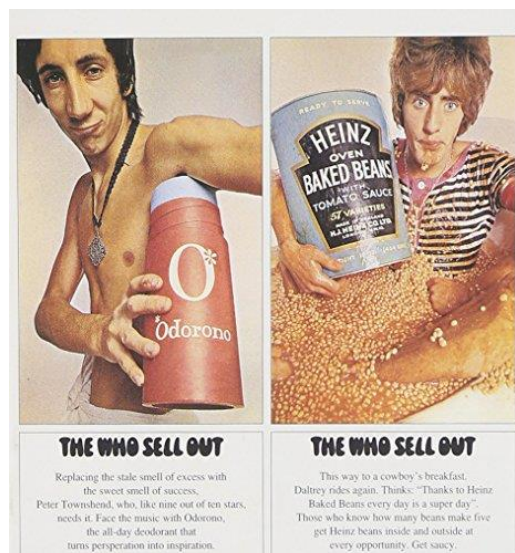
<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>66</sup> Charlie Gillet, *The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock & Roll* (London: Souvenir Press Ltd., 1996), 277.

<sup>67</sup> Mods is a youth movement of the 1960s, notable for their fashion style, scooters, good relationship with drugs and hatred towards their enemies 'rockers'.

and troubles. ‘My Generation’ signifies the course soon accepted by Pete. His songs (in later albums) introduced individuals with disunited personalities, tricked and examined by society, desperately searching their place in the world.

The second album *A Quick One* (1966), contrasted to the previous one, comprises only from four songs written by Pete, and that’s because, for this album, producers required each member to compose a song. Nevertheless, the album is important because it shows Pete’s development. The title song ‘A Quick One, While He’s Away’ lasts extended nine minutes and itself consist of six short songs which narrate the story of unfaithfulness and final forgiveness. ‘As a writer, Townshend grew increasingly more interested in extended, multimovement works.’<sup>68</sup> A year later, the Who released their third album *The Who Sell Out* and though the songs are not thematically connected, it already includes conceptual features. Between each song is inserted a short fake advertisement or public announcement and the theme of the commercials is also carried over to the album cover. The cover captures ads with Townshend using an antiperspirant and Daltrey bathing in Heinz beans (appendix 3 below). This album shows Pete’s composing supremacy again – out of thirteen songs, nine are written by him. The album is concluded by the song ‘Rael’ which presents Pete’s plot idea. This track and ‘A Quick One’ directed Pete to expand his ideas over the whole album and eventually, *Tommy* was born.



Appendix 3

Source: Montgomery, David. *The Who. The Who Sell Out*, 1967. Accessed April 18, 2015.

<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=the+who+sell+out&itempage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.

<sup>68</sup> James E. Perone, *Mods, Rockers, and the Music of the British Invasion* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2009), 115.

*Tommy*, released in 1969, is respected to be the first and probably the most prominent rock opera whatsoever. What aspects entitle the album to call it opera? First, Townshend consciously attempted to ‘write a truly dramatic work within the rock album format’ and second, he himself ‘coined the phrase ‘rock opera’ to describe what he was trying to achieve.’<sup>69</sup> Rock opera, a newly emerged genre, has undoubtedly accomplished all formal requirements of the concept album – in this case the narrative concept album. The album uses a stronger resources than just an overall theme. It has a strong storyline where every song fits the plot and for emphasis, the majority of the songs is sung by the characters from the first point of view. On the advice of the Who’s producer (Kit Lambert), Pete even utilizes ordering typical to opera (‘Overture’ and ‘Underture’).

The album describes the story of Tommy, who, after witnessing his father’s murder by his mother’s lover, becomes deaf, dumb and blind towards everything around him. He is bullied by his brutal ‘Cousin Kevin’ and abused by his Uncle Ernie (‘Fiddle About’), all those horrors isolate him even more. Then, his parents notice that actually Tommy can see, hear and speak. He only does not respond to the outer world. Tommy’s blocked senses are finally broken through after the discovery of his marvellous ability to play pinball. As a ‘Pinball Wizard’ he earns fame and fortune and after the return of his lost senses, he becomes worshipped by thousands of people who accept him as their spiritual leader. Tommy establishes ‘Tommy’s Holiday Camp’ where he gathers his followers. The story of Tommy ends by the turn away of his fans, because Tommy turns out to be only a guise to make money. The whole story alternate between tragically depressive tone, dark-humour passages and also extremely positive segments.

Undoubtedly, *Tommy* was Pete’s project. Still, he cooperated with his bandmates, particularly on songs difficult to express for Pete due to its autobiographical subject (Entwistle’s songs). The whole album comprises of twenty four songs and due to its extended length, it had to be issued as a double album. Twenty songs wrote Townshend, two composed Entwistle, one is based upon the idea of Moon (‘Tommy’s Holiday Camp’) and one is covered version of Williamson’s ‘Eyesight to the Blind’.

---

<sup>69</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 30.

An intense interconnection is an essential feature of rock opera. Besides the straight fluent storyline, the plot is interwoven by the repetition of lyrics. First, the lyrics ‘You didn’t hear it; You didn’t see it; You won’t say nothing to no one ever in your life; You never heard it’ in the song ‘1921’ build up Tommy’s psychical block and later, when his mother and stepfather want to break their ‘spell’, they address him saying: ‘Tommy can you hear me,’ and even though Tommy is not able to answer, his inner voice is heard saying: ‘See me, feel me; Touch me, heal me’ (‘Christmas’).<sup>70</sup> The repetition in various forms appears in songs ‘Go to the Mirror’, ‘Tommy, Can You Hear Me’, ‘Smash the Mirror’ and least of all in the song ‘We’re Not Gonna Take It’ in which Tommy addresses his dead parents by the lyrics of his inner voice. This repetitive aspect provides the album with smooth progression of the plot and strong inner link.

The Who’s career carries the same pattern of progression (from facile to more complex) as the Beatles’ or the Kinks’ and in fact, the Who pushed the scope of rock even further than the preceding ones. By enlarging the possibilities of concept albums they broadened the interest in producing them and also ‘helped to establish rock opera [...] as a viable art form.’<sup>71</sup> The Who reaffirmed the public that the position of rock in artistic sphere is justified. Furthermore, by pushing the boundaries of the concept album, they have created a new subgenre rock opera and its features suggest that practically, rock opera is the purest and the most indubitable form of the concept album.

To finish the whole chapter, even though each concept-album-oriented band finally set off in different ways, their rudiments were similar. Beginning with covers and love oriented tracks that would suit the mainstream, the bands, eventually, accomplished to loosen from these limits. Another characteristic point is one leading songwriter within the band. The Kinks and the Who, ‘like the Beatles, both bands depended on members’ strong song-writing for their best material.’<sup>72</sup> The albums described in this chapter were forerunners to era yet to come. The era of the 1970s, where the conceptualization became an essential aspect of rock music production, in particular of the progressive ‘prog’ rock.

---

<sup>70</sup> Pete Townshend, The Who, *Tommy* (London: IBC Studios, 1969).

<sup>71</sup> James E. Perone, *Mods, Rockers, and the Music of the British Invasion* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2009), 115.

<sup>72</sup> John Rudolph Covach, Andrew Flory, *What’s That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (W.W. Norton, 2012), 187.

## 5 The concept album floods the market

### a) Progressive rock

Progressive rock (later only ‘prog’) emerged in the second half of the 1960s, loosely continuing in the legacy of falling psychedelic rock, and dominated the scene for the whole 1970s, reaching its popularity peak in the middle of the decade. The new subgenre of rock was born in the United Kingdom, where the early prog bands did have a steady psychedelic basis to build the genre on. Eventually, by the end of the 1970s, the interest in prog slowly disappeared and later it returned several times in altered forms (for instance in the early 1980s as neo-prog). Even though the genre dominated only one decade, the bands and their music still resonate in the ears of every rock fan.

The beginnings of the prog are connected with expressing countercultural oppression to the takings-oriented market. Prog musicians extended the artistic side of rock and composed with ‘an attitude of art-music “seriousness.”’<sup>73</sup> Clearly, the musicians did not aim to gain economical profits but, they longed for sophisticated works of high quality. ‘The Beatles, [...], and the Who were clear influences on 1970s progressive rock.’<sup>74</sup> The *Sgt. Pepper*’s inspirational combination of music of all varieties or its groundbreaking cover, and the Who’s application of classical music elements to rock, visibly enthused prog rockers.

Two other terms are closely connected to, sometimes even used instead of, the expression ‘progressive rock’. Alternative rock and art-rock which both share, first, a deeper devotion to artistic approach and second, the non-commercial intentions. Paradoxically, despite the genre’s unprofitable concern, after few successful bands it soon converted to its opposite.

The typical format element of prog albums is the extended length of the songs. For example Pink Floyd’s album *Wish You Were Here* (1975) includes five songs only, out of which the first and the last lasts more than twelve minutes each. Some musicians even spread one song across the whole album. In contrast to mainstream singles, the prog extended song can be at least three times longer. This also accounts for the fact, that prog rock was ‘primarily not intended for

---

<sup>73</sup>John Rudolph Covach, ‘Progressive Rock, Close to the Edge, and the Boundaries of Style,’ in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, edited by John Rudolph Covach and Graeme M. Boone, 3-31 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.

<sup>74</sup> John Rudolph Covach, Andrew Flory, *What’s That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (W.W. Norton, 2012), 318.

dancing, so [it] largely avoids the standard rock beat.’<sup>75</sup> Apparition of guitar solos and long instrumental passages typifies the genre. Other prog characteristic derived from psychedelia, primarily drawing on *Sgt. Pepper*, caused ‘that extreme care was often lavished on the cover art.’<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the prog musicians modified the general view upon concerts. Principally, the bands discovered the power of lights used during the show. By incorporating them into the concerts, prog artists evoked the psychedelic (hippie culture longing for LSD abuse) roots of the genre. Later employing more novel ingredients, concerts commenced to be perceived ‘as a multimedia experience.’<sup>77</sup> John Covach stamps it as ‘a kind of “concert-hall rock”’ and ascribes the trend to the estrangement from dance music too.<sup>78</sup>

The genre can be also typified by its spiritual mood, fantastic supernatural imageries, obscure themes or lyrics and altogether, the prog rock is overwhelmed by a mystical tint. The mysticism is even more underlined by the mixture of genres employed by prog musicians. The implication of classical music, jazz and other genres makes the music very diverse. The musicians were ‘eager to integrate classical-music influences to create longer, more intricate musical arrangements.’<sup>79</sup> So far, all the aspects form a perfect hinterland for composing concept albums and in reality, ‘progressive rock bands turned the practice into an obsession within rock music.’<sup>80</sup> In the 1970s, concept albums seemed, opposite to the previous decade, to become a standard format of rock albums.

#### b) The Kinks and the Who in the progressive era (the 1970s)

In the 1970s, the number of bands enjoying concept albums became much higher than in the previous decade. Indisputably, the 1970s music belonged to the progressive rock and progressive rock adopted concept albums. ‘In fact, the continuing association between prog and concept albums over this period may

---

<sup>75</sup> Roy Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003), 233.

<sup>76</sup> Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1997), 58.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>78</sup> John Rudolph Covach, ‘Progressive Rock, Close to the Edge, and the Boundaries of Style,’ in *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, edited by John Rudolph Covach and Graeme M. Boone, 3-31 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>79</sup> John Rudolph Covach, Andrew Flory, *What’s That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (W.W. Norton, 2012), 320.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.



have been part of the reason that the form was not pursued by acts from outside this genre.’<sup>81</sup> Therefore, when prog retrieved into the musical background (in the late 70s), it was accompanied by the concept album too. First, I want to mention the Who’s and the Kink’s lasting interest in this concept and second, I will write about the most significant contributors of the 1970s.

The Kinks remained faithful to concept albums until 1977, when they returned to the non-themed song-writing craft. Nevertheless, between the years 1970 and 1977, the band released eight concept albums. The most appealing ones were *Lola Versus the Powerman and the Moneygoround, Part One (Lola)* from 1970, and *Preservation: Act 1* (1973) and *Act 2* (1974). Through *Lola*, ‘after three years off the singles charts, the Kinks, [...], returned to commercial success, principally with [the song] ‘Lola’’.<sup>82</sup> *Lola*’s overall theme satirically illustrates different snares of the music industry, first-hand experienced by the band itself.

*Preservation Acts* loosely return to the Englishness presented in the 1968 *Village Green*. *Acts* account to be the largest project of Ray Davies because of the vast amount of material included. Eventually, two albums were released, out of which *Act 2* is a double-album. Critical responses were not very positive. Even Dave Davies ‘admitted that he felt entirely disconnected from the band’s creative process’ claiming that he ‘wanted to get back playing straight ahead rock ‘n’ roll again.’<sup>83</sup> Evidently, Ray’s concept album ideas reached the point of its decline. *Acts* introduce corrupted Mr Flash and trustworthy Mr Black, two political opponents, who struggle against each other to gain power in their country. People’s blind believe in Mr Black’s ideas lead them, before realising that, to a totalitarian regime with Mr Black in charge. The brainwashed population is, finally, manipulated and brainwashed, forced to be ‘happy’. After *Preservation Acts*, Ray Davies wrote another two concept albums (*Soap Opera* and *Schoolboys in Disgrace*), but, in the second half of the decade, the negative critical responses finally led him to the decision of returning back to direct rock albums.

The Who, having a slower pace in releasing material, produced four studio albums in the 1970s. In contrary to the Kinks, each album was successful. Pete Townshend blasted off the decade by an elaborate project called *Lifhouse*.

---

<sup>81</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 112.

<sup>82</sup> Craig Morrison, *American Popular Music: Rock and Roll* (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2006), 128.

<sup>83</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 43.

Nevertheless, the band and the producers did not manage to cover the project's high demands and it was abandoned in the end. Some of the already composed material was used to form the Who's next release – *Who's Next* (1971). Pete did not feel discouraged by the previous failure and presented another ambitious plan for the next album. In this case, everything worked out well and, in 1973, the Who's second rock opera was born – *Quadrophenia*.

*Quadrophenia* introduces a young man Jimmy, who, being a fan of the Who, belongs to a group of mods in London, 1965, and suffers a personality crisis. Through the songs Jimmy's life, full of indecisiveness, unfulfilled love desires, drugs, poor jobs and general misunderstanding with the persons around him, is described. Townshend employed realistic character and also one real event in the story, opposite to fictive *Tommy*.<sup>84</sup> The double-album was a great success and in 1979 it was turned into a movie (also *Tommy* was filmed in 1975). *Quadrophenia* was the last complex project of the Who. Another two albums, *The Who by Numbers* (1975) and *Who Are You* (1978), did not comprise of songs connected by such a tight story as the rock operas. To conclude, the Who and the Kinks early concept albums ordained the base to the format and afterward, 'prog musicians greatly expanded the possibilities of the album format through their effort to tie together all the elements of their creative output.'<sup>85</sup> Now, I will list the most significant prog musicians who contributed to the development of concept albums.

### c) Progressive concept albums

The album respected for bestowing the foundations of succeeding progressive albums is *In the Court of the Crimson King*. Released in 1969 by the British group King Crimson, the early album 'had an especially powerful impact on the nascent progressive rock movement, and just may be the most influential progressive rock album ever released.'<sup>86</sup> Musically, the album combines rock music with symphonic components and jazz. Also the interest in extended pieces is included in this album. It consists only from five songs. The concept of the album, having 'both the apocalyptic subject matter and the medieval imagery and mystical

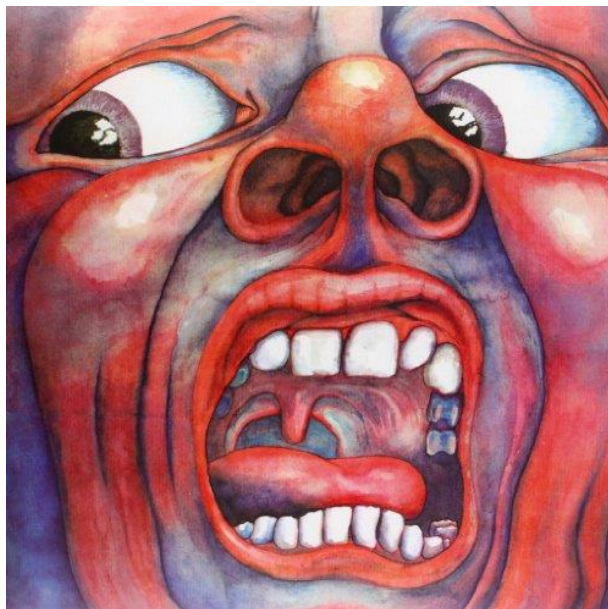
---

<sup>84</sup> The riot commemorates unrests in south England of 1964, where mods and rockers collided and fought for few days.

<sup>85</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 67.

<sup>86</sup> Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1997), 23.

undertones,' presents themes extremely common to the later progressive albums.<sup>87</sup> Last but not least, the cover artwork of *In the Court of the Crimson King*, surrealistically reflecting the nature of the music, drew attention of prog musicians and conducted them to treat the cover as an essential part of their future albums (appendix 4 below).



Appendix 4

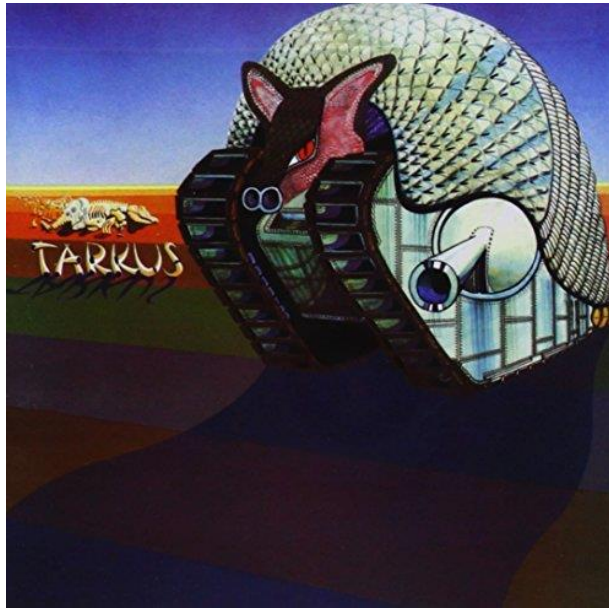
Source: Gober, Barry. *In the Court of the Crimson King*, 1969. Accessed April 18, 2015.

<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=in+the+court+of+king+crimson&itempage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=MUSIC>.

King Crimson's first album embodied a model album for the major prog bands – Emerson, Lake and Palmer (ELP), Jethro Tull, Yes, Genesis and finally, the most prominent progressive group Pink Floyd. ELP's output characterises their dystopia-themed album *Tarkus* (1971). Tarkus is a being, half creature and half machine, which, shaped as a tank, destroys everything around him. Through the songs, ELP express their hatred towards war and its absurdity. The creature is illustrated, in different situations, in the cover and also inside of the gatefold sleeve (appendix 5 below). Moreover, ELP constructed an enormous model of Tarkus, which accompanied the band during concerts. 'Bringing album imagery on stage would go on to be a trademark of seventies rock.'<sup>88</sup> The side one of the album comprises only one twenty-minutes long song 'Tarkus', which is further divided into seven parts.

<sup>87</sup>Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1997), 23.

<sup>88</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 67.



Appendix 5

Source: Neal, William. Tarkus, 1971. Accessed April 18, 2015.

<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=tarkus&itempage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.

Jethro Tull's *Thick as a Brick* (1972) and Yes' *Tales of Topographic Oceans* (*Tales*), from 1973, exemplify the extended-length feature of prog. *Thick as a Brick* encompasses only one song divided into two parts – 'Thick as a Brick, Part I' and 'Thick as a Brick, Part II', and *Tales* includes one song per each side of the album (each around twenty minutes long). For the recording of the album, Jethro Tull used a wide range of different instruments – trumpet, timpani, xylophone and others. The album's cover was unique because it was designed as twelve-page long newspapers (appendix 6 below). The articles include lyrics of the whole album and the front-page presents a story about a disqualified boy from a poetry conquest who wrote the poem 'Thick as a Brick' (originally the lyrics are written by Ian Anderson). The originality of the Yes' cover was appreciated too. The Rolling Stone readers labelled it 'as the best cover art of all time' (appendix 7 below).<sup>89</sup>

---

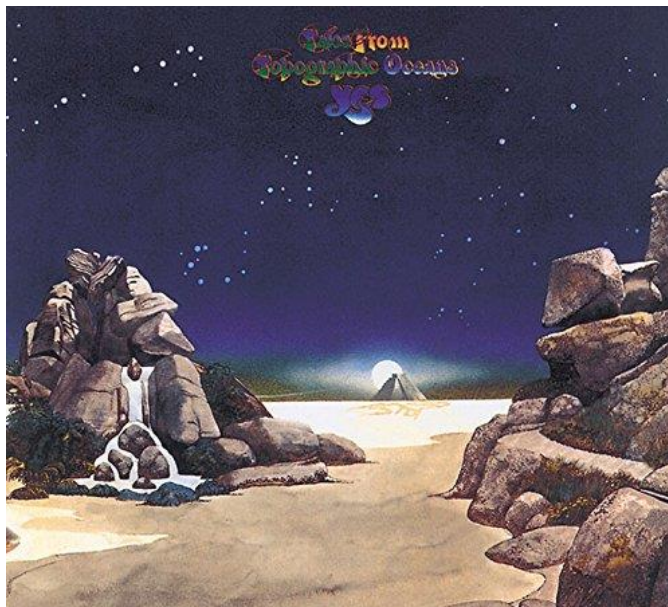
<sup>89</sup> Sarah Lyall, 'Dreaming Between the Grooves,' accessed April 4, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/24/garden/dreaming-between-the-grooves.html?pagewanted=all>.



Appendix 6

Source: Elridge, Roy. Jethro Tull. *Thick as a Brick*, 1972. Accessed April 18, 2015.

<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=thick+as+a+brick&itempage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.



Appendix 7

Source: Dean, Roger. *Tales of Topographic Oceans*, 1973. Accessed April 19, 2015.

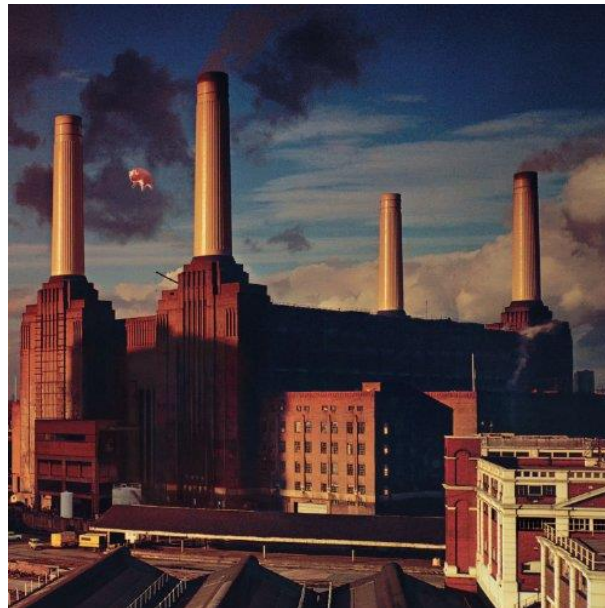
<http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51MB9HamciL.jpg>.

Genesis' work is packed with fantastic tales, abstract lyrics and harsh comments on Britishness. In 1972, they produced *Foxtrot* which includes a twenty two minutes' long song 'Supper's Ready'. In 1974, Genesis released *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* – a double concept album, centred on a bizarre story of Rael. Yet, the Genesis' most noteworthy contribution to prog remains in shifting



the live show boundaries. They ‘extended the rock opera ambitions of the concept album into the concert hall’ by using masks and properties to bring alive the characters and the stories from the album.<sup>90</sup> Genesis invited drama to their bandstand.

Pink Floyd pushed the live show boundaries even further. During *The Wall* tour (1980), a real wall, from huge paper bricks, was gradually built between the group and the audience. *The Wall* album itself, expresses the Roger Waters’ feeling of alienation between the group and their fans shaped during their career. From the beginning of the Pink Floyd’s career, the group experimented with lights to emphasize the psychedelic side of the music. Later, they added to their shows other stage effects (for instance a flying pig that accompanied the band during the tour promoting the album *Animals* released in 1977). Pink Floyd’s 1970s covers are, without an exception, designed by English art group Hipgnosis. All covers reflect the themes and concepts of the albums (appendix 8 and 9 below).



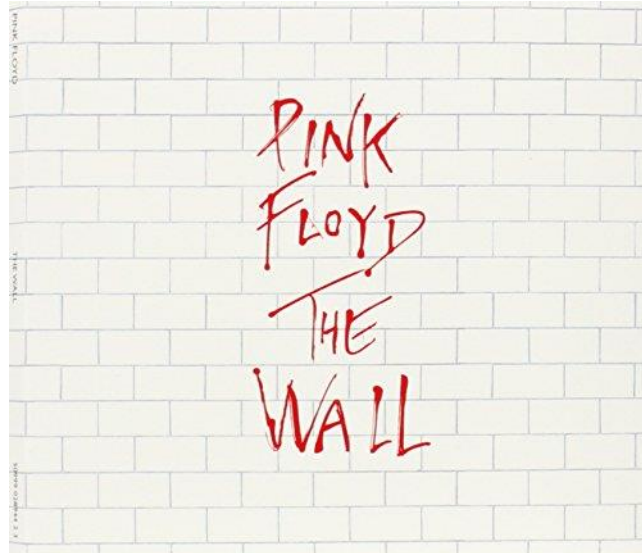
Appendix 8

Source: Hipgnosis. *Animals*, 1977. Accessed April 19, 2015.

<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=animals&itempage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.

---

<sup>90</sup> John Rudolph Covach, Andrew Flory, *What’s That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (W.W. Norton, 2012), 322.



#### Appendix 9

Source: Hipgnosis. *The Wall*, 1979. Accessed April 19, 2015.

<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=the+wall&itempage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.

Pink Floyd's work concerns negative and gloomy themes. *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1973) deals with mental illness (alluding to the band's previous member Syd Barrett, who struggled with one), death, madness and religion. *Wish You Were Here* (1975) criticizes the zeal for money in the music industry and again remembers Syd Barrett in 'Shine on You Crazy Diamond'. The next album, *Animals* (1977) utilises Gorge Orwell's concept from his novel *Animal Farm*. The album disparages the capitalistic direction of the UK and the classes in society. All the concepts finally lead Roger Waters to compose a rock opera. *The Wall* (1979) tells the story of a fictional musician Pink Floyd, who undergoes different kinds of isolation (imaginary walls) during his life. Firstly, he is isolated from the outer world by his protective mother and later, when he becomes a rock star, a 'wall' between him and the audience is built. His fascistic tendencies finally put him on trial, which helps him to release from the isolation and to destroy the wall.

Pink Floyd very often employ different sound effects to create the thematic atmosphere - sound of chattering crowd, scream, storm, accelerated breath, animals and many more. Also the long instrumental passages without singing, typical of progressive rock, can be frequently found in Pink Floyd's compositions.

Sooner or later, these 1970s overproduced prog albums were to oppose an unlike enemy soon. The sombre impression associated with the 1970s rock caused the rise of a strong countercultural movement. In the second half of the 1970s, 'punk had arrived and heralded a return to short, sharp songs delivered with

aggressive energy.<sup>91</sup> The concept albums clashed with straightforward rock albums again.

d) The backlash reaction

Punk rock launched the return to the 1960s music's simplicity originating in rhythm & blues. This 'back to the roots' attitude was even more emphasized by its wild and aggressive delivery. Punk was based on simple rhythmic patterns, opposite to elaborate prog rock compositions. 'What counted for music in this sub-culture seemed to be defined through the uncompromising negation of those aesthetic criteria which had in the meantime made rock music an accepted part of the contemporary cultural activity.'<sup>92</sup> Every complex aspect of prog music was wrenched and buried by punks. Instead, they planted a fresh, raw and direct style.

The mentioned 'aesthetic criteria' meant every aspect of the music production and its subsequent presentation. Three poignant aspects portrayed punk the most, being 'a music which distrusted polished performances, rejected utopian fantasies, and discouraged any but the crudest dancing.'<sup>93</sup> Punk rock bands replaced the lengthened prog form with a typical 1960s track duration (around three minutes). The words happen to be less significant (scarcely worth reading on their own), because 'with often shouted, snarled vocals, punk emphasizes the sound (voice plus instruments), rather than lyrical meaning.'<sup>94</sup> The fierce style also dominates punk rock concerts. Punk musicians do not take the trouble to overwhelm the audience with costumes or mighty stage effects. The music performed precisely agrees with the music recorded on the studio album. No special instruments or special sound effects are used – just raw music. The typical instrumentation of punk rock band is very simple too. Drums, electric guitars and bass were enough to express the angry attitude of the subculture. The noteworthy early punk bands are Sex Pistols and The Clash.

Apparently, punk rock revives the values of pre-*Sgt. Pepper* rock. This also means that punk rock does not accept the complexity of albums, thence the

---

<sup>91</sup> Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (Investigations Publishing, 2013), 95.

<sup>92</sup> Peter Wicke, *Rock Music: Culture, aesthetics and sociology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 136.

<sup>93</sup> David Nicholls, *The Cambridge History of American Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 373.

<sup>94</sup> Roy Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003), 237.



concept album resumes to abandonment again. ‘The polished sound structures of a rock “art” concerned with “content” were now opposed by a challenging dilettantism which only had to sound loud, aggressive and chaotic to be accepted as rock music.’<sup>95</sup> Rock music created by punks denied the listening conception and returned to dancing approach again, even though in the form of furious pogo.

Together with punk rock, another style appeared on the scene – new-wave. New-wave also preaches for the return to straightforward music, nevertheless new-wave musicians do not practice it in such a violent way as punks. The style is open to incorporation of different styles and the lyrics does not necessarily have to be a side product. New-wave 1970s to 1980s bands are for example Elvis Costello, The Police, Talking Heads or Blondie.

Even though, the blockbusting era of concept albums was concluded simultaneously with the emergence of punks and the concept album has never reached such a popularity as during the progressive rock era, the concept album leftovers can still be found in the music of the 1980s, 1990s and even in the new millennium. Embraced by a variety of styles since then, the concept album awakens the interest of musicians even nowadays.

e) The concept album up to the present

During the 1980s, the music sphere seemed to be flooded by the concept albums of the previous decade and musicians, getting bored of the overmuch pompous ideas, lost the fascination towards the format. This was perhaps caused by the pretentious side of the concept albums, very often described by fans and musicians as insincere and showy. Another factor that influences the music industry still nowadays is the arrival of Music Television (MTV). ‘It’s perhaps no coincidence that [concept albums] fell out of favour at the same time as the emergence of MTV, which was all about the chart-busting single – not albums.’<sup>96</sup> The days of the concept album’s golden age had ended.

Even though concept albums were still produced, the weary market was very critical about them. Only a few exceptions managed to obtain positive

---

<sup>95</sup> Peter Wicke, *Rock Music: Culture, aesthetics and sociology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 136-137.

<sup>96</sup> Fiona Sturges, ‘The return of concept album,’ *Rolling Stone*, accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/the-return-of-concept-album-1796064.html>.

responses. Styx's *Kilroy Was Here* (1983) fulfils the requirements of concept albums and, in the times of concept album rejection, the critiques were overly optimistic. Iron Maiden's *Seventh son of a Seventh Son* (1988), although being a concept album only partially, was also a very successful one.

'Throughout the 1990s, concept albums remained thin on the ground', indeed they were even more infrequent than in the 1980s.<sup>97</sup> Popular concept albums returned, though being remarkably less frequent than in the 70s, with the arrival of the new millennium. 'The closest that we come to a true concept album in the 1990s is Rage Against the Machine's *Battle of Los Angeles*'<sup>98</sup>. Interesting twist accompanies the 21<sup>st</sup> century concept albums. Extremely successful concept album *American Idiot* (2004), from an American band Green Day, offers essentially punk rock. Obviously, the reasons why the punk culture refused the concept album was forgotten and the concept album is looked upon differently. It is liberated from the seeming superiority and cosmic mystics, and reappears with the basic characteristic only (only overall theme connecting the album).

Despite the single oriented market of the new millennium, the concept album attracts musicians of different styles - above mentioned punk and heavy metal (Iron Maiden), indie rock (Arcade Fire) and other rock offshoots (My Chemical Romance), funky and hip-hop (Janelle Monáe) or multi-genre groups like Gorillaz. These bands, regardless of the difficulties connected with producing and propagation of such an elaborate material in the era of the single revival, did not let themselves daunted and dared to enrich the market by nearly forgotten concept albums.

To conclude, the concept album, though already far from its best years, still occupies an honourable place in the awareness of musicians. Dating its beginnings back to 1967 when *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* awoke the interest of other bands, the concept album is still alive. The future is open to the concept and the question is whether it is capable of accomplishing such popularity as in the progressive 1970s again.

---

<sup>97</sup> Fiona Sturges, 'The return of concept album,' *Rolling Stone*, accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/the-return-of-concept-album-1796064.html>.

<sup>98</sup> Gabriel 38g enterprises 2013, 'The Concept Album Part Two: The 1980s until Today,' accessed April 12, 2015, <http://mofizzy.blogspot.cz/2014/07/the-concept-album-part-two-1980s-until.html>.

## 6 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to provide the reader with an important era of musical history, which still resonates in the ears of music devotees, rock music in particular. It describes the era of the concept album ascent, dating back to the 1960s, its pinnacle in the 1970s and after all, the gradual decline.

The thesis begins with the description of the technological circumstances and the trends of music market before the 1960s, when the concept album was not ready to infatuate the rockers yet. Subsequent expansion of the LP sets the ground for the concept album at last.

The third chapter evaluates deeply the significance of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, which considered to be the downright milestone in the music history, influenced other musicians to admire the concept album. The album's world-shattering composition of lyrics, music and cover artwork found loads of followers. The next chapter lists the major bands who continued in the legacy of *Sgt. Pepper*. The attention is paid to bands the Who and the Kinks, that remain the most concept album dedicated bands of the late 1960s. The Who pushed the concept album even further and created the rock opera.

The fifth chapter defines the progressive rock as a genre, which shines above all the other rock genres, particularly for its outstanding concept albums of the 1970s. The chapter describes further musical development of the Who and the Kinks and also some pure progressive rock albums. Further the aggressive reaction to sophisticated concept albums is outlined.

The last part of the thesis shows that the concept album is not lifeless. The musicians still return to the concept album format, even though the times of its popularity are gone long ago. The concept album certainly represents an important part of the music history.

## 7 Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se snaží čtenáře seznámit s nepřehlédnutelným trendem hudební minulosti – s konceptuálním albem. Doba, kdy konceptuální alba dominovala na hudebním trhu, stále rezonuje v uších hudebních nadšenců, rockových zvláště. Práce hodnotí a popisuje vzestup konceptuálního alba v letech šedesátých, jeho vrcholnou fázi v letech sedmdesátých, a také objasňuje jeho postupný zánik.

V úvodu se čtenář seznamuje s definicí a vymezením pojmu konceptuální album, kdy zjišťuje, že konceptuální album je odlišné od alb ostatních pro svou formu. Řádné konceptuální album se snaží co nejpevněji provázat veškeré aspekty, které album vytváří. Jedná se tedy o texty, hudbu, obal alba a celkovou tematiku vytvářenou těmito aspekty. Konceptuální album je také rozdílné v tom, že prvotním impulsem pro vytvoření alba není hudba, ale podnět nevycházející z muziky samotné. Umělec se tedy snaží posluchači nabídnout víc než pouze několik neprovázaných písní, a vytváří koherentní dílo, které svou provázaností odhaluje umělcovy myšlenky a názory. Svou propracovaností a uměleckým zapálením pro věc si konceptuální alba získala mnoho příznivců.

Další kapitola načrtává doby před jeho vznikem (v letech padesátých a šedesátých), kdy technologie a hudební trh nebyl zdaleka připraven přijmout práce tak obsáhlé jako konceptuální album. Tehdejší hudební trh byl ovládnut hudebními společnostmi, které nahlíželi na hudbu pouze jako rychlý zdroj peněz. Mimoto, ve většině případů muzikanti nevydávali hudbu, kterou by sami i složili. Tuhle práci obstarávali profesionální skladatelé, které najímali hudební společnosti. Komerce tedy preferovala singly (rychlejší a jednodušší na produkci) nad alby. Tehdejší technologie také nebyly přívětivé ke vzniku obsáhlejších alb. Před druhou světovou válkou, gramofonová deska vyráběná z křehkého shellacu byla schopna pojmout pouze tři minuty záznamu na každé straně desky. Až po válce byl představen vinyl, který shellac poslal do ústraní. Vinylové desky se vyráběly ve dvou provedeních – single play (SP o průměru 17 cm a s rychlostí 45 ot/min) a long play (LP o průměru 30 cm a s rychlostí 33 1/3 ot/min). SP desky byly populárnější mezi mládeží pro svou výrazně atraktivnost a nižší cenu. Naopak LP desky lákaly spíše dospělí. To také vedlo k tomu, že populární hudba se vydávala spíše ve formátu single (rock 'n' roll, pop) a klasické žánry (jazz, trad,

klasická hudba) využívaly LP formát. Nicméně rozmach alb v LP formátu v letech šedesátých pomohl ke změně názoru na alba jako taková.

Třetí kapitola podrobně hodnotí význam alba *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (z roku 1967) od the Beatles, které, považováno za hudební milník, podnítilo nespočet dalších muzikantů, aby se věnovali konceptuálnímu albu. Revoluční kompozice hudby, textů a obalu desky také vedla k veřejné změně názoru na rock jako takový. The Beatles dokázali, že i rocková hudba může mít hloubku a kvalitu. První část kapitoly poukazuje na umělce, takzvané písničkáře (skladatele a zároveň hudebníky), kteří svou nezávislostí ovlivnily the Beatles (Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan nebo Johnny Cash). Ovšem tím největším zdrojem inspirace bylo album *Pet Sounds* (1966) od the Beach Boys, jejichž zvukově experimentální provedení podnítilo the Beatles také experimentovat.

Druhá a třetí část dále rozebírá samotné album. Nejvíce poukazuje na jeho revoluční obal, neotřelý zvuk kombinující směsici žánrů a množství nástrojů, a v neposlední řadě se zabývá rozvojem skladatelských schopností Johna Lennona a Paula McCartneyho. Texty písní z alba *Sgt. Pepper* jsou dále porovnány s texty jejich prvního alba *Please Please Me*. Výsledky porovnání ukazují, že se u Lennona a McCartneyho rozvinuly nejen skladatelské schopnosti (mimo jiné v podobě větší slovní zásoby), hudební vyspělost, ale i rozsah témat. Témata jejich brzké tvorby zahrnovala víceméně pouze vyjádření lásky nebo trápení se pro ni. *Sgt. Pepper* nabízí mnohem rozmanitější obsah, který výstižně vyjadřuje tehdejší dobu. Po hudební stránce se the Beatles posunuli od imitování amerického rock 'n' rollu po nalezení vlastního stylu.

Další kapitola rozebírá hlavní představitele, kteří pokračovali v odkazu alba *Sgt. Pepper*. Nejprve popisuje alba významná, která se avšak nesečkala s příliš velkou popularitou. Dále je kapitola především zaměřena na tvorbu the Kinks a the Who, kteří zůstávají nejvýznamnějšími přispívajícími ke konceptuálnímu albu v pozdních šedesátých letech. Jejich tvorba je rozebrána stejným principem jako *Sgt. Pepper*, tedy porovnáním s jejich prvními alby. Zjišťujeme, že kreativní proces, který vedl tyto kapely ke tvorbě konceptuálních alb, je shodný s tím pozorovaným u the Beatles. Jejich brzká tvorba je silně ovlivněná americkým rock 'n' rollem a nabízí převážně popové melodie s tematikou lásky.

V obou případech v kapele dominuje jeden člen svými skladatelskými schopnostmi. Za kapelu the Kinks je to Ray Davies, který stojí za komponováním veškerých jejich konceptuálních alb. Davies na sebe vzal úlohu pozorovatele společnosti, kterou následně reflektuje ve své tvorbě. Jejich album *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* (1968) líčí posluchači hodnoty staré Anglie, které moderní společnost stále častěji ignoruje a zapomíná na ně. Jde o jakési nostalgické vyličení tradiční Anglie. Jejich další album *Arthur (Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire)* (1969) je opět pozorováním anglické společnosti, tentokrát z první poloviny dvacátého století. Album *Arthur* je více provázané než album předchozí. Popisuje příběh *Arthura*, jehož postava je inspirována Daviesovým švagrem.

Kapela the Who také vykazuje stejný umělecký vývoj jako the Beatles. The Who dokonce posouvají hranice konceptuálních alb ještě dál. Jejich album *Tommy* je inspirováno operou. Stejně jako v opeře, album začíná předehrou a písně zpívají jednotlivé postavy z příběhu. Jedná se tedy o pevně provázaný příběh, jehož každá píseň posouvá děj dále. Pete Townshend, hlavní skladatel kapely, označil tento žánr jako rockovou operu. Rocková opera je svým jednotným příběhem nejčistější formou konceptuálního alba.

Pátá kapitola definuje progresivní rock sedmdesátých let jako žánr, který vyčnívá nad ostatními rockovými žánry zejména pro svá výjimečná konceptuální alba. Díky hojnému výskytu konceptuálních alb se tento pojem v dnešní době nejčastěji spojuje s progresivním rockem. Kapitola popisuje další muzikální vývoj the Kinks, the Who a také nejprominentnějších progresivních kapel. The Kinks se tvorbou konceptuálních alb zabývali až do roku 1977, kdy tento žánr po negativních ohlasech navždy opustili a vrátili se k přímější hudbě. Nicméně, v letech sedmdesátých se jim podařilo vyprodukovat osm takových alb. The Who byli méně produktivní, ale na rozdíl od the Kinks se jejich tvorba setkala s naopak pozitivním ohlasem. Jejich druhá rocková opera *Quadrophenia* (1973) svou popularitou předčila tu předchozí.

V této dekádě se komplexnost kromě obalu, hudby a tématu alba přenesla až na pódium. Kapely čím dál častěji využívaly tematické aspekty alb pro vytvoření atmosféry i při koncertech. Příkladem může být kapela Pink Floyd, která při koncertu postupně postavila zeď z papírových cihel při propagování alba *The Wall* (v překladu zeď). Nicméně, alba se stávala čím dál komplikovanějšími,

sofistikovanějšími a tudíž i složitějšími na pochopení. V poslední části kapitoly je popsána agresivní reakce punku na sofistikovaný progresivní rock. Punkeři, unaveni přílišnou pompézností tehdejších alb, hlásali návrat k jednoduché a přímé hudbě pocházející z rhythm 'n' blues.

Poslední část práce ukazuje, že konceptuální album je stále naživu i přesto, že hudební trh je opět ovládán singly. Zlaté časy tohoto formátu jsou již skončeny, ale, i přes svou náročnost, se muzikanti stále rádi vrací k této formě komponování alb. Nepochybně, konceptuální album představuje důležitou etapu v historickém vývoji populární i alternativní hudby, zejména pak v rockové sféře.

## 8 Bibliography

### Books

Buckley, Peter. *The Rough Guide to Rock*. London: The Penguin Group, 2003.

Covach, John Rudolph. Flory, Andrew. *What's That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. 2006. W.W. Norton, 2012.

Covach, John Rudolph. 'Progressive Rock, Close to the Edge, and the Boundaries of Style'. In *Understanding Rock: Essays in Musical Analysis*, edited by John Rudolph Covach and Graeme M. Boone, 3-31. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Everett, Walter. *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Analogy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Galenson, David. *From 'White Christmas' to Sgt. Pepper: The Conceptual Revolution in Popular Music*. Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2007.

Gillet, Charlie. *The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock & Roll*. 1970. London: Souvenir Press, Ltd., 1996.

Harry, Bill. *The British Invasion: How the Beatles And Other UK Bands Conquered America*. Surrey: Chrome Dreams, 2004.

Hegarty, Paul. Halliwell, Martin. *Beyond and Before: Progressive Rock since the 1960s*. London: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011.

Inglis, Ian. 'Cover story: magic, myth and music.' In *Sgt. Pepper and the Beatles: It Was Forty Years Ago Today*, edited by Olivier Julien, 91- 102. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008.

Macan, Edward. *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1997.

Martin, George. *Making Music: The Guide to Writing, Performing and Recording*. New York: Quill, 1983.



Morrison, Craig. *American Popular Music: Rock and Roll*. New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2006.

Nicholls, David. *The Cambridge History of American Music*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Osborne, Richard. *Vinyl: A History of the Analogue Record*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2012.

Perone, James E. *Mods, Rockers, and the Music of the British Invasion*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2009.

Scaruffi, Piero. *A History of Rock Music: 1951-2000*. Lincoln: iUniverse, Inc., 2003.

Sheff, David. *All We Are Saying: The Last Major Interview with John Lennon and Yoko Ono*, 2nd edn. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000.

Shuker, Roy. *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*. 1998. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003.

Shute, Gareth. *Concept Albums*. Investigations Publishing, 2013.

Starr, Larry. Waterman, Christopher. *American Popular Music: The Rock Years*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2006.

Tyler, Don. *Music of the Postwar Era*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008.

Wald, Elijah. *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2009.

Wicke, Peter. *Rock Music: Culture, aesthetics and sociology*. 1987. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

#### Internet sources

Billboard Charts Archive. 'The Hot 100.' *Billboard*. Accessed April 14, 2015.  
<https://www.billboard.com/archive/charts/1969/hot-100>.

Gabriel 38g enterprises 2013. 'The Concept Album Part Two: The 1980s until Today.' Accessed April 12, 2015. <http://mofizzy.blogspot.cz/2014/07/the-concept-album-part-two-1980s-until.html>.

Lyll, Sarah. 'Dreaming Between the Grooves.' Accessed April 4, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/24/garden/dreaming-between-the-grooves.html?pagewanted=all>.

Mason, Stewart. 'Review by Stewart Mason.' *AllMusic*. Accessed November 3, 2015. <http://www.allmusic.com/album/the-story-of-simon-simopath-mw0000084577>.

Official Charts Company. 'All the Number 1 Hits.' Accessed April 12, 2015. [http://www.officialcharts.com/chart-news/all-the-number-1-singles\\_\\_7931/#1950s](http://www.officialcharts.com/chart-news/all-the-number-1-singles__7931/#1950s)

Popular song.org. 'Albums of the Rock Era.' *Popular Song*. Accessed April 17, 2015. <http://www.popularsong.org/rock-albums.html>.

Sturges, Fiona. 'The return of concept album.' *Rolling Stone*. Accessed April 8, 2015. <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/the-return-of-concept-album-1796064.html>.

Unterberger, Richie. 'Review by Richie Unterberger.' *Allmusic*. Accessed April 9, 2015. <http://www.allmusic.com/album/kinks-mw0001983603>.

Unterberger, Richie. 'Review by Richie Unterberger.' *AllMusic*. Accessed March 11, 2015. <http://www.allmusic.com/album/sf-sorrow-mw0000308955>.

### Albums

Davies, Ray. Kinks. *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society*. London: Pye, 1968.

Townshend, Pete. Who, The. *Tommy*. London: IBC Studios, 1969.

## **9 Annotation**

**Author:** Romana Sedláčková

**Faculty:** Philosophical faculty

**Department:** Department of English and American Studies

**Title of the thesis:** The Rise of the Concept Album: Rock Turns Complex

**Supervisor:** David Livingstone, Ph.D.

**Number of pages:** 58

**Number of characters:** 79 491

**Number of annexes:** 9

**Number of works cited:** 34

**Key words:** concept album, rock, progressive rock, the Beatles, the Who, the Kinks

This thesis aims to provide the reader with an important era of musical history, which still resonates in the ears of music devotees, rock music in particular. It describes the era of the concept album ascent, dating back to the 1960s, its pinnacle in the 1970s and after all, the gradual decline. The bands closely discussed are the Beatles and their *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, the Who, the Kinks and various progressive rock bands.

## **Anotace**

**Jméno a příjmení autora:** Romana Sedláčková

**Název fakulty:** Filozofická fakulta

**Název katedry:** Katedry anglistiky a amerikanistiky

**Název bakalářské práce:** Vznik konceptuálního alba: Rock nabývá komplexnosti

**Vedoucí práce:** David Livingstone, Ph.D.

**Počet stran:** 58

**Počet znaků:** 79 491

**Počet příloh:** 9

**Počet titulů použité literatury:** 34

**Klíčová slova:** hudba, konceptuální alba, rock, progresivní rock, the Beatles, the Who, the Kinks

Tato bakalářská práce se snaží čtenáře seznámit s nepřehlédnutelným trendem hudební minulosti – s konceptuálním albem. Doba, kdy konceptuální alba dominovala na hudebním trhu stále rezonuje v uších hudebních nadšenců, rockových zvláště. Práce hodnotí a popisuje vzestup konceptuálního alba v šedesátých letech, jeho vrcholnou fázi v letech sedmdesátých, a také objasňuje jeho postupný zánik. Práce se zejména zaobírá the Beatles a jejich albem *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, the Who, the Kinks a prominentními progresivními kapelami let sedmdesátých.

## **10 List of appendices**

**Appendix 1:** the photography of the 78 rpm shellac disc sleeve with the focus on the label

**Appendix 2:** the cover artwork of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Club Band*

**Appendix 3:** the cover artwork of the Who's *The Who Sell Out*

**Appendix 4:** the cover artwork of the King Crimson's *In the Court of the Crimson King*

**Appendix 5:** the cover artwork of the King Crimson's *Tarkus*

**Appendix 6:** the cover artwork of Jethro Tull's *Thick As a Brick*

**Appendix 7:** the cover artwork of the Yes' *Tales of Topographic Oceans*

**Appendix 8:** the cover artwork of Pink Floyd's *Animals*

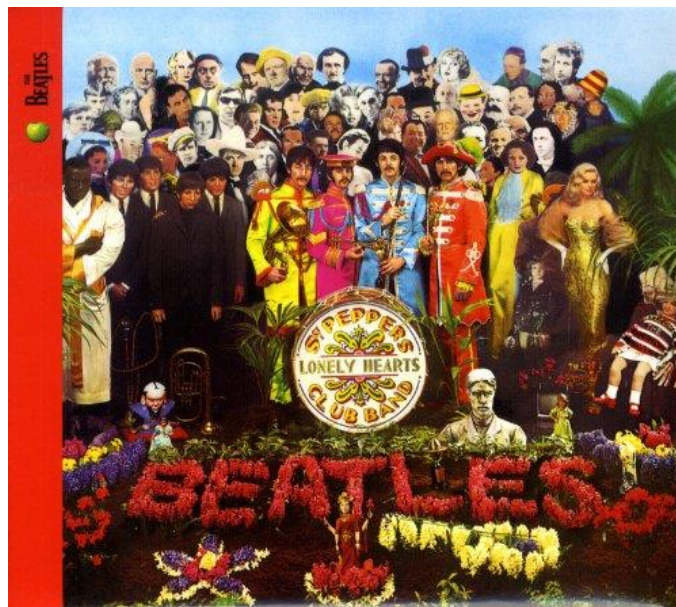
**Appendix 9:** the cover artwork of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*

## 11 Appendices

**Appendix 1:** the photography of the 78 rpm shellac disc sleeve with the focus on the label

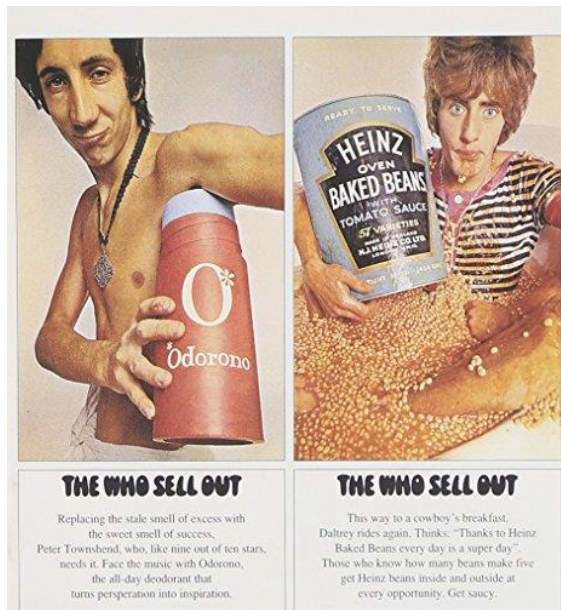


**Appendix 2:** the cover artwork of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*



Source: Blake, Peter. Haworth, Jan, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, 1967. Albumart Accessed April 18, 2016.  
<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=sgt+pepper&itempage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.

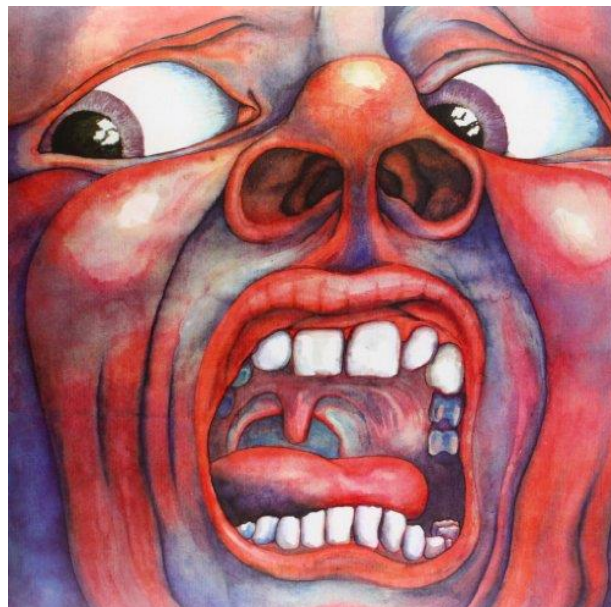
**Appendix 3:** the cover artwork of the Who's *The Who Sell Out*



Source: Montgomery, David. The Who. *The Who Sell Out*, 1967. Accessed April 18, 2015.

<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=the+who+sell+out&itpage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.

**Appendix 4:** the cover artwork of the King Crimson's *In the Court of the Crimson King*

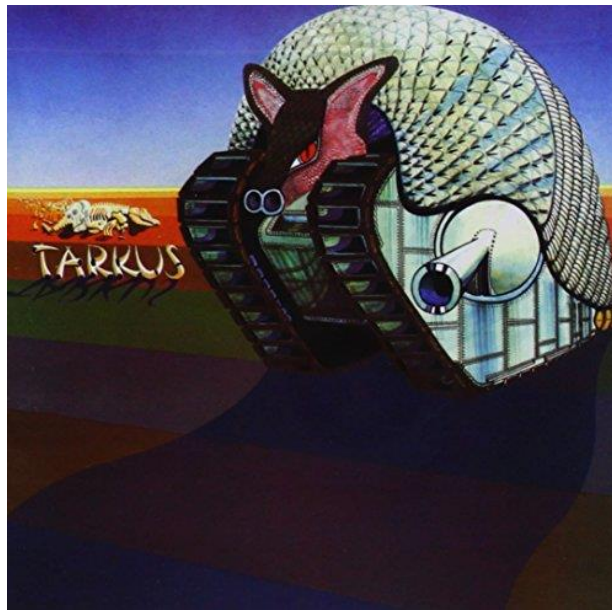


Source: Gober, Barry. *In the Court of the Crimson King*, 1969. Accessed April 18, 2015.

<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=in+the+court+of+king+crimson&itpage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.



**Appendix 5:** the cover artwork of the King Crimson's *Tarkus*



Source: Neal, William. *Tarkus*, 1971. Accessed April 18, 2015.

<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=tarkus&itempage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.

**Appendix 6:** the cover artwork of Jethro Tull's *Thick As a Brick*

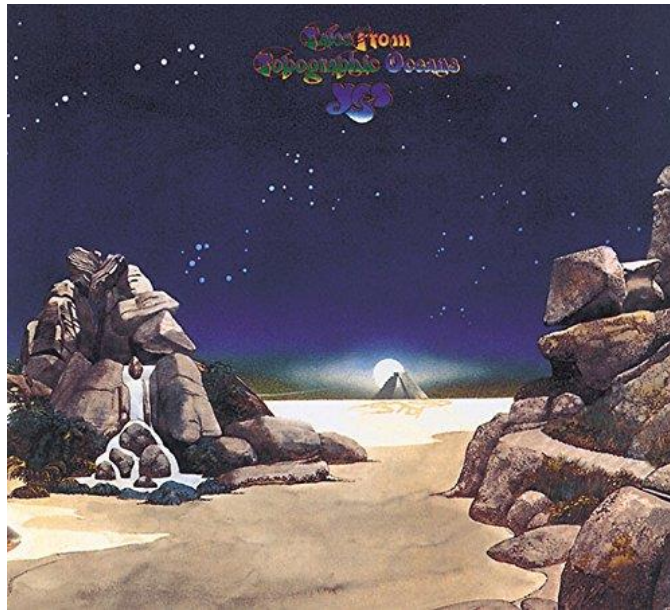


Source: Elridge, Roy. Jethro Tull. *Thick as a Brick*, 1972. Accessed April 18, 2015.

<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=thick+as+a+brick&itempage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.



**Appendix 7:** the cover artwork of the Yes' *Tales of Topographic Oceans*

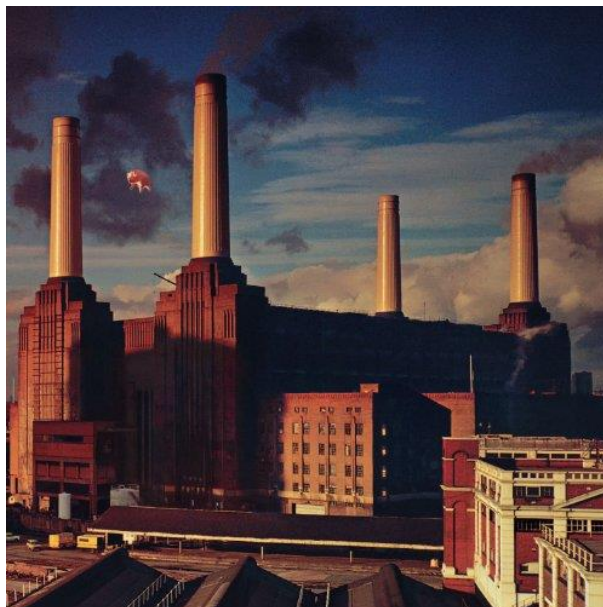


Appendix 7

Source: Dean, Roger. *Tales of Topographic Oceans*, 1973. Accessed April 19, 2015.

<http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51MB9HamciL.jpg>.

**Appendix 8:** the cover artwork of Pink Floyd's *Animals*

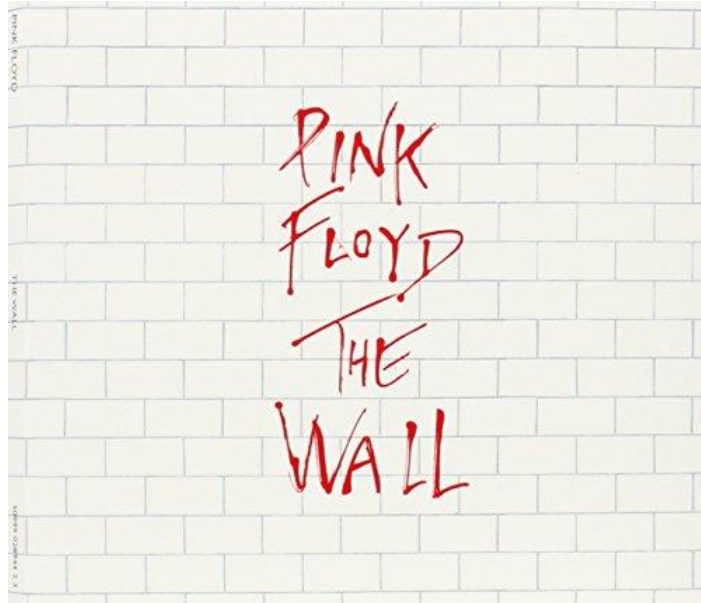


Appendix 8

Source: HIpgnosis. *Animals*, 1977. Accessed April 19, 2015.

<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=animals&itempage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.

**Appendix 9:** the cover artwork of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*



Appendix 9

Source: Hipgnosis. *The Wall*, 1979. Accessed April 19, 2015.

<http://www.albumart.org/index.php?searchk=the+wall&itempage=1&newsearch=1&searchindex=Music>.