

WHY DOESN'T ANYBODY WRITE ANYTHING ABOUT GLAM ROCK?

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In discussions of post-war British youth cultures glam rock gets very little attention. For example, in their seminal work on British youth cultural forms, Hall *et al* (1976:54), make only one passing reference to this subculture. In a list of subcultural possessions and objects they refer to: '... the glitter costumes of the Bowrieites' Similarly, Brake (1980:80) in his outlines of British post-war youth cultures gives the culture half a page while skinheads get two pages and rockers one page. Hebdige, (1979) in *Subculture: the meaning of style*, does spend about two and a half pages looking at glam rock but most of this space is taken up with an analysis of the images of David Bowie.

Hebdige writes of Bowie that:

Certainly Bowie's position was devoid of any obvious political or counter-cultural significance ... (1979:61).

And Bowie's meta-message was escape — from class, from sex, from obvious commitment — into a fantasy past ... or a science-fiction future (1979:61).

What is confusing for Hebdige about glam rock soon becomes clear:

In glam-rock, at least amongst those artists placed, like Bowie and Roxy Music, at the more sophisticated end of the glitter spectrum, the subversive emphasis was shifted away from class and youth onto sexuality and gender-typing (1979:61-2).

On the one hand, Hebdige can write so much about Bowie because glam rock's presentation of image as image lends itself to Hebdige's dominant semiotic method of analyzing cultural texts. On the other hand, precisely because glam rock dealt self-consciously in images (though not necessarily self-consciously in their meanings), it is hard to incorporate it into a class-based theory in which the individual is fundamentally decentered and interpellated only as a subject. It is this theoretical orientation which organises Hebdige's analysis.

At this point it is worth referring to Stan Cohen's introduction to his republished *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1980:i-xxxiv). In this he attacks Hebdige's book for not confronting the problem of what limits, if any, may be placed on interpretation. This is an important question which must be confronted in any sociological application of semiotics. However in the case of the work of those people, such as Hebdige, allied to the Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies a locus, if not a confining one, is present. This locus is class and, in particular, the construction of a neo-E.P. Thompsonian working-class whose reality is vested in a distinctively constituted ideology. Thus all working-class youth cultures are interpreted as figures of attack or defence in relation to this class culture. A good thematic example of this is Phil Cohen and Dave Robins' assertion of the threatened working-class community in *Knuckle Sandwich* (1978), groups such as mods and skinheads may then be interpreted in relation to this understanding of working-class life.

Under the influence of the work on youth subcultures which has appeared from the C.C.S., analyses of youth cultural forms have tended to rest not only on a Marxist concept of class but within the context of an argument which views youth cultures as providing 'magical' solutions to contradictions which are considered to exist between, most importantly, the ideology of the working-class and the hegemonising ideology of the middle-class. Youth cultures, such as glam rock, which transcend class boundaries are not amenable to such a class-based analysis except as the conservative products of hegemony.

The significance of analysis in terms of class is two-fold. In the first place it constitutes the basis for a theoretical argument which sites the origin of youth cultures in class ideological struggle. This analysis is available if in the second place the youth culture is, indeed, situated in a distinctive class position. In the case of earlier post-war youth cultures, this can be argued. In the case of glam rock this argument is not sustainable. Glam rock drew its following from both the working-class and middle-class youth. It had distinctive working-class and middle-class components but these were articulated as functions of concerns which were not class based.

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In this context it is necessary to supplement an argument founded on hegemony which would view glam rock as a means of generating consensus. As will become clear, glam rock was not about generating consensus in any simple sense, nor was it in any simple sense a product of middle-class ideology. It was concerned with the recognition of a loss of consensus and an attempt at a self-consciously fantastic recuperation of that consensus whilst at the same time acting through a problematisation of the changing conditions of existence for the heterosexual male in the early 1970s.

Nevertheless, a class-based argument has been put forward for glam rock. This suggests that the trans-class constitution of glam rock represents the success of bourgeois hegemonic ideology, in real terms the fusion of skinheads and hippies. Brake, following Taylor and Wall who argue this in their article 'Beyond the skinheads: Comments on the emergence and significance of the Glamrock Cult' (1976), writes:

(The) embourgeoisement of leisure, ... led to the development of a 'classless, universal manufactured culture' (1980:80).

This argument then goes on to view the record companies as capitalist exploiters who have successfully reappropriated music as a commodity from the hippies for whom it had a value transcending the commercial. I will return to this argument below. In this article I want to argue that the meaning of glam rock cannot be discovered in such a reductionist approach; that glam rock, with its specific class-based inflections, represented a commentary on a set of cultural issues which, in the early 1970s, were perceived as problems by large numbers of middle-class and working-class youth, in particular that large group for whom embourgeoisement and the classlessness of post-war affluence had been a reality in their socialisation during the 1960s. It would be hard to see glam rock as presenting 'magical' solutions — unless one wishes to accept Hebdige's suggestions of glam rock as an escape — and I think it would be more fruitful to view it as a way of articulating and discussing cultural concerns which transcended class. From the point of view of a class-based analysis this would be understandable coming, as it does, at the end of the period of embourgeoisement when class difference had, at the lived level, diminished in importance. As a function of this, in order to appreciate the meaning of glam rock we must look, in the first place, at its relation to a set of societal issues and, only second, to specific class interpretations of those issues. From this point of view it is irrelevant to argue that glam rock was either conservative or radical, either imposed on a class or a product of it. It is more productive to view it in the context of a particular historical conjuncture of socio-cultural and economic circumstances.

One reason why glam rock is so hard to discuss from the C.C.C.S.'s position is its lack of a clear subcultural focus. Phil Cohen (1980) has suggested that there are four subsystems which give distinctiveness to a youth cultural form. These he divides into two, the 'plastic' forms, dress and music, and the 'infrastructural' forms, argot and ritual. His distinction between plastic and infrastructural lies in the former not, in the first place, being a product of the culture but rather the culture selecting, appropriating and investing with value from a range of available material options. The infrastructural forms are produced from within the culture. These distinctions clearly provide a basis for destining the validity of a youth culture. If the culture does not have infrastructural forms which enable it to set up a divide between itself and the culture articulated through bourgeois ideology and commercial practice then it should not be recognised as a youth culture.

Glam rock's infrastructural forms are problematic on this classification. Its argot and ritual were not independent of the general culture in the sense that they were lived as real but were generated in an obvious relationship with its music and dress and the whole was lived as ritual. The essence of glam rock was performance and the defining performance was the popular music show. It was only during performances by artists whom the youth culture chose to define as glam rock performers that the youth culture really existed. This was because the meaning of the youth culture for the kids concerned was to be found in the experience of the ritual performing of images. This, by the way, is one of the key differences between glam rock and the later youth culture of New Romanticism. New Romanticism was concerned with ritual performance as performance and, in the process, registering style as meaning.

This was most obviously to be found in the stylistic *bricolage* of Adam Ant but is also present in, for example, Spandau Ballet's nostalgic evocation of aristocratic elegance coupled with their smooth, almost un-expressive, music which, on this count, goes against the major tenet of rock music. It is music of craftsmanship, of style, as British Electric Foundation entitled their first album *Music of Quality and Distinction*. Interestingly one theme from glam rock has resurfaced in New Romanticism and this is sexuality. However Boy George's a-sexualized sexuality is the reverse of Bowie's sexualized bisexuality. Boy George's transvestism coupled with his assertions of sexual abstinence make him both shocking to an adult audience and safe to his audience of teeny-bop girls. At the same time Boy George holds the middleground between New Romanticism's emphasis on style and the new gay male bands spearheaded in the late 1970s by Tom Robinson and now including the Bronski Beat whilst Queen have shifted to a much more overt camp style than was apparent in their glam rock period (Cohen, 1980:83). Putting it simply, and somewhat cryptically, Bowie's glam rock image of androgynous bi-sexuality may be best understood as a commentary on the late sixties vogue for 'uni-sex,' a vogue which stretched from clothes to hair-dressing salons.

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In a number of ways which I shall discuss below, the early 1970s in Britain constituted a period when the society was confronting a recognition that certain ideological formulations concerned with affluence and classlessness did not correspond with the reality of life for either the working-class or for a very significant fraction of the middle-class. Glam rock was a youth culture concerned with articulating the distinction between reality and illusion. That glam rock did not have a lived continuity of infrastructural forms should not deceive us into considering it as an amorphous grouping. However it was a youth culture which was only visible in the context of the self-consciously ritualised popular music performance. Because it was so bound up in the popular music performance, it is probably the most easily dateable of post-war youth cultures. Glam rock artists start being successful — which gives more meaning to their performances as performance — in 1972 and start losing their glam rock following, which sometimes also meant their success, in 1975. Glam rock, then, may be said to have existed as a youth culture between 1972 and 1975. One material change which aided the conditions for the existence of a youth culture existing around the idea of performance was the spread of television receivers. In 1961, about 75% of families owned one, by 1971 this figure was 91%. The glam rock generation was the first to be socialised during a period when television, with its emphasis on the image, was pervasive and taken for granted. It was the first generation to be able to watch, as a mass, both working-class and middle-class, its rock performers on 'Top of the Pops' and 'The Old Grey Whistle Test.'

The most important artists of glam rock were Gary Glitter, David Bowie, Slade, Queen, Roxy Music and T. Rex. I shall touch on all of these. It must be re-emphasised that, because it was performance which was important, not any specific image, artists who may well not have considered themselves to be glam rock artists, could be appropriated and incorporated by glam rockers into glam rock. The reason for such appropriation is to be found in the artists' self-consciously spectacular style of performance. A list of such artists would include Sweet, Rod Stewart and Elton John. The artists who continued to be successful after 1975 did so because they changed their emphasis from spectacular performance or because they were successful in their own right as pop or rock artists. Perhaps the archetypal glam rock artist was Gary Glitter whose period of success spans, and only spans, the period of glam rock.

The key shift between the 'hippie' period and glam rock was not, as Taylor and Wall suggest, the commercialization of rock music — the so-called independent record companies made little impact on the majors during the late 1960s; Virgin, the most successful, started out as a retail organisation in 1969 — but the repositioning of music in the organization of the new subculture. Whereas for the hippies music was a lived adjunct to their life-style, for glam rockers music was the site of performance, the moment of interaction between image and the individual, fantasy and the reality of everyday life. In its rejection of the sincerity of the hippie subculture as a genuine alternative form the youth — both middle-class and working-class — who became glam rockers, chose the insincerity of production and image. This lack of sincerity, a rejection of those ultra-individualist positions held by the middle-class hippies, led to an espousal of the authenticity of the false. A change of position which was replicated in the acceptance of commercial marketing strategies. Performance came to be valued not as the moment of individual communion, the meeting of minds in the ecstasy of the music, but rather as the moment which gave authority to the inauthentic.

One manifestation of the expression of the inauthentic as authentic, the critical inversion of hippie and rock values, is to be found in the importance of recreation and recuperation for the subculture. I am deliberately avoiding the term repetition here because, whilst repetition was fundamental to New Romanticism's preoccupation with style as form, glam rock was concerned with the performance as performance within which images could be articulated. In this context the other meaning of recreation, something which is done during leisure, the period outside of work, is also important. Glam rock was a subculture which accepted its society's capitalist conception of work and produced itself, self-consciously, as an expression of leisure. Leisure, occupying a space rescued from work, is the site for 'non-productive' expression, for fantasy. Glam rock acknowledged this and utilised it to aid the self-conscious production of the youth culture as play (blurring the distinction between play as drama and play as relaxation). One important marker of performance as a self-conscious act in glam rock was the fact that the majority of glam rock artists had had previous careers as pop or rock artists. Moreover, this is not a case of a change of direction for a career. For many of these artists, as for the glam rockers who may or may not have known about the artists' pasts, there was a clear discontinuity between their glam rock success and any previous period of success they may have had. Most obviously this discontinuity can be measured in the length of time between their last previous hit and their first glam rock hit. The second career constructed the artist either for him/herself or for the glam rock subculture members, or both, as inauthentic.

Gary Glitter is a good example of an artist who had a second popular music career within the culture of glam rock. Born in 1940, Paul Gadd spent much of the 1960s as a rather unsuccessful pop rock and roll singer called Paul Raven. In 1971 he met the producer Mike Leander with whom he subsequently worked throughout the glam rock period. It was Leander who produced his first single under his new name Gary Glitter. The song that became Glitter's hit 'Rock and Roll part 2' was actually, as its title suggests, the B side of the single. The record had been what the music industry describes as a 'sleeper', that is to say it had been released for some months before it became a hit. It was during those months that changing cultural patterns provided the conditions on which glam rock came to be constituted. Glitter's first career was as a popular music artist *per se*, as an entertainer, his second career was built on a reflexive commentary of the popular music artist, and, through this, he lived a commentary on what should be considered to be real and what should be considered illusion.

I would now like to briefly examine Gary Glitter's image as an example of the way glam rock artists were articulated within the youth culture. Whereas previously small idiosyncratic pockets of musical taste had existed, the late 1960s saw the development of a music taste which consciously set itself off from the mainstream of hit 'pop' music. In a sense it represented the High Culture/Popular Culture divide replicated within popular music. Rock music was identified as more real, less produced and more worthy therefore than pop music. Rock music overlapped in the first place, to a very large extent with the predominantly hippie middle-class underground. The record companies countenanced it because the new acceptance of popular music by the middle-class gave them a new, larger group of consumers. In the rock world as it developed through the hippie subculture, the realism of the performance was assured by the 'honesty' of the performers. One example of this was to be found in the performer's choice of clothing. This entailed wearing a 'costume' which was also one's normal, everyday clothing — or, at least, the normal everyday clothes of one's audience. In this way the performance increased in authenticity through strategies which denied it the status of an image. It also involved using one's real name rather than a stage name. Stage names had been a staple of particularly the British pop music industry since its first flowering in the late 1950s. Names like Billy Fury and Marty Wilde, unlikely to be considered real names, were utilised to help in the production of a singer's rock and roll image.

Nevertheless the names *could* have been real — as is suggested by the V on the end of Marty Wilde's name. Equally Paul Raven could have been Paul Gadd's real name whilst also conjuring up a slightly ominous and predatory image. Gary Glitter however, and Alvin Stardust also for that matter, were obviously totally unlikely and constructed. In this way, among others, glam rock separated itself off from the pop as well as the rock music traditions. Moreover the names were referential to the artists themselves, they were names which acknowledged the importance of the performer as a spectacle. In this way also, then, the authenticity of the hippie/rock tradition as well as the comfortable acceptance of illusion to be found in popular music's entertainment tradition was questioned.

The rock, as opposed to pop, stars of the late 1960s and 1970s presented their audiences with images which asserted their validity through their representation of being the same as their audience. By contrast the pop stars asserted their role as entertainers in images which produced them as different but as part of the same cultural order. One example of this simply involved looking 'better' than the audiences, wearing better clothes which were nevertheless in the same style as those of the audience. Cliff Richard and Herman's Hermits are examples here. The star becomes the fantasy image of the audience, either what the fan would like to look like and therefore be like as an iconic articulation of established sociocultural values or the person whom s/he would like to relate to for this reason.

Glam rock not only rejected the hippie rock strategies for authenticity but also rejected the authenticity of the pop star which was based in a fantastic realism legitimated by the desire for the ideologically-based ideal. Glam rock commented on both these formulations by setting artists in a context where they could be designated as nothing else but performers. Glam rock existed within its own reflexivity. Gary Glitter, in particular, had a stage act which produced him as no less, but no more, than a performer. His stage clothes could be designated as nothing other than costumes and the image which he presented was nothing else but the image of an image, the performer as star commenting on the image of the star as performer. It is interesting to compare Gary Glitter's usage of such costumes with Liberace's attempt to produce the performer as entertainer. Liberace, with his expensive, over-decorated costumes and pianos, arranges himself as the image of *nouveau riche* vulgarity. The licence that he takes in his appearance and his actions is made acceptable by his intimation of a camp homosexuality which places him doubly apart from his audience, first as rich star, second as a gay in a straight world. However Liberace's relationship with his audience was the classical performer/audience relation, the star apart from and imaging a fantasy reality. His hints of homosexuality play, simply as compared to glam rock, on the structuring of desire between himself as performer and his largely female audience. In other words, Liberace is the pop star for real whilst Gary Glitter — and glam rock artists in general — presented the performer as image.

It is worth turning to Alvin Stardust for a moment. Whereas Gary Glitter was image incarnate Alvin Stardust took a particular rock image and deconstructed it. In his previous career, he had been Shane Fenton and, with his group The Fentones had a hit in 1962 with 'I'm a moody guy.' In 1973, he teamed up with writer/producer Peter Shelley who persuaded him to change his name and his image. Stardust's new persona was that of the moody man in black who, somehow, was always happy and friendly when the expectation was that he would be sour and macho. In the first place he traded off, and by deflation commented on, a heavy metal rock image of the male as defiant and sensual. Stardust, by clearly making his clothing as costume and by never exploiting, either musically or on stage, the imagery of the cock-rock star (the early 1970s saw the rise of 'heavy metal' music) continually undermined both his persona and the masculinist sensuality which would mark him off as a performer appealing to male fantasies of sexuality. Instead, he presented himself in the ambiguous sexual state of the father-figure. Stardust had been born in 1942, which in 1972 placed him outside of the conventional age for the sensual popular music star, and this enabled the production of an image at the intersection where the assertive asexual stardom of the teeny-bopper world, a product of a further segmentation of the industry into the early and pre-teen market, met the problematizing floating sexuality of the glam rock world of images. In this way, Stardust managed to straddle both audience groups.

Like Alvin Stardust, Gary Glitter was, by conventional standards, old to be a popular music singer. In a period when the culture as a whole was celebrating youth the appearance and mass acceptance of two thirty year-old singers in an industry which, more than most, had marketed youth as credibility, indicated yet another indictment by the generation of the early 1970s of the period of the Swinging Sixties.

There were others who capitalized on the alienation of recreation. The most well-known are Marc Bolan who moved from the sincerity of hippie rock performer in Tyrannosaurus Rex to the authenticity of image in T. Rex and David Bowie who, with an art-school training, turned from the art of a rock singer/songwriter to the artfulness of the image as reality. In his original popular music incarnation Bowie was lead singer with a band called David Jones (which was Bowie's real name) and the Lower Third. Bowie's first hit was 'Space Oddity' in 1969 but this stands on its own and there is a hiatus until 1972 — the key year for glam rock — when 'Starman' goes into the charts. Despite its thematic links with the Ziggy Stardust image 'Space Oddity' is clearly a singer/songwriter song as were all those which composed Bowie's first album *The Man who Sold the World*, produced in the pop idiom by Gus Gudgeon who went on to have a string of hit productions with that peripheral glam rock/pop figure Elton John. Whereas 'Space Oddity' achieves sincerity by being a realistic account of Major Tom's adventures in space the songs off the *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* album use space as a theme within the context of an image of the rock star as rock star mobilising the image of the spaceman and articulating through it the twin Romantic concerns of desire and death. We might say that Bowie, like Marc Bolan, Gary Glitter and Alvin Stardust, was performing and commentating on the image which previously he had acted as real. In all these cases, repetition provided the possibility for the recreation of the image to be lived as the image of the rock star as real in performance.

Glam rock was a subculture of spectacle as well as commenting on spectacle. To this extent it could be seen as a projection of bourgeois hegemonising ideology. Nowhere can this be better illustrated than in the career of David Bowie. Bowie constructed and lived a succession of images. He continued to produce images after the end of glam rock but these had a different, more general resonance. In fact in Bowie we can trace the links between spectacular subculture and performance art in Britain. In Bowie, the ex-Art School boy, we can also see well the complex links between spectacular subculture and consumerist capitalism. Tim Ferris wrote about him that:

The trick was to treat Bowie as a star even if nobody knew that he was yet. Defries (Bowie's manager) ... refers to both an artist and his music as "the product" ... (Taylor and Wall, 1976:116).

Bowie was the first rock star to be marketed as a consumer item. His images in this sense really were images. Glam rock, in its acceptance of capitalism also construed the fantasies on which post-war consumerism was based. Bowie's art of spectacle was an art of performance. At the same time the post-1975 Bowie, who had had training in mime, self-consciously positioned himself within an artistic High Culture tradition. For example, at some of his shows during his Thin White Duke period, he would screen Brunel's *Un Chien Andalou* as an opener instead of using a warm-up band. Thus in the act of the image as spectacle to be consumed, he mythically reconciled the 'real' conflict between High Art and popular Mass Culture, a conflict which, in the context of the popular music world, had been embedded in the twin middle-class and working-class strands of the glam rock subculture.

One particularly interesting career which shows how glam rock appropriated artists is that of Rod Stewart. Stewart spent the early years of his career in back-up bands behind artists like the touring Chuck Berry and as a member of British rhythm and blues bands. Later, he became lead singer in The Jeff Beck Group. In 1969, he went on to make a number of solo albums in association with The Faces which were highly acclaimed and sold very well. By 1972, however, he was starting to value performance over the authenticity of rock involvement. In his discussion of Stewart's career, Greil Marcus (1980), the American music critic, considers this the moment when Stewart's career as a rock artist starts to go downhill. However, this is also the moment when glam rockers, recognising Stewart's new emphasis on performance, take him up. Precisely what disturbs the rock critic who valorises 'authentic' expression is what glam rockers found so acceptable in Stewart. On top of his increasingly reflexive emphasis on performance, Stewart also recycled a large number of old songs. In 1971, 'Maggie May' had been backed with a version of Tim Hardin's 'Reason to Believe', among other songs which Stewart covered during this period was the Isley Brothers song 'This old Heart of Mine' and the Manfred Mann hit 'Oh No, Not My Baby' both of which were hit singles. The vast majority of his covers were drawn from the period centering on 1965 to 1967, the later period of the 'mod' era. Stewart's background lay in the mod youth culture, so much so that he had earned the enduring nickname Rod the Mod. Thus, even in his choice of material, Stewart appealed to glam rockers by performing (sic) songs which commented on the context of the early part of his career. I will return to the importance of the mod youth culture for glam rock later when I discuss Bowie's *Pinups* album.

The audience would come to glam rock shows dressed and made up in the style of the performer of that show. For the audience, the site of meaning lay in the achievement of representation, in the production of an imitation which turned the audience into performers reflecting the image which the artist was reflexively generating as an image. Hippie music was music to be appreciated at a cerebral level. It was music to be listened to and experienced. Glam rock music was dance music, the active/passive division of artist/audience was again disrupted as the audience physically contributed to the performance. Often they would contribute vocally as well, singing along with the anthem-like tunes. It is important to remember that glam rock audiences imitated images. In the hippie subculture, as I have noted, the performer attempted to replicate the audience in him/herself. In glam rock the audience found authenticity by reproducing the image of the performer, an image which had meaning metonymically as it resonated within the ideology of the cultural formation. Glam rock might be said to be archetypal British spectacular youth culture. It has been easy for many to criticise it by suggesting that it was simply about form. It was a youth culture bound up in spectacle. What this argument misunderstands is that glam rock existed not only in form but in the culture which gave meaning to that form. To argue that glam rock was a commercialised and conservative youth culture is to ignore that range of questions about why it took on that form and not other forms. Glam rock problematised the reality of the image mythically by articulating a disjunction between lived social reality and the ideology of individual essence which produced that reality.

This problematization did not stop at the artist but extended to the songs and, most importantly, to the form of production which was given those songs when they were recorded. I will have more to say about the songs themselves later, here I want to emphasise the importance of a particular kind of production. All the key 'pop' glam rock performers consistently used the same producers — Gary Glitter used Mike Leander, Alvin Stardust used Peter Shelley, T. Rex used Tony Visconti, and Bowie produced himself in association first with Ken Scott and later with Tony Visconti. Indeed, to put the relationship in this way is misleading. Unlike hippie/rock records where the guiding idea was to demonstrate the sincerity and therefore the authenticity of the artist, in glam rock — particularly in its working-class aspect — the reverse was true. The object was to produce a record where the individuality of the artist was submerged in an atmosphere that was experienced by the knowledgeable listener as self-consciously 'pop'. This did not mean that it would be obviously, or critically pop, but that it would carry certain signatures which would designate it as pop. It should have a catchy tune which the production would emphasise, an easily danceable beat, a lack of any idiosyncrasy which would force a listener consciously to reflect on the song. From the point of view of the glam rock culture, a record was best if it appeared to exist in a vacuum, a pure object.

Records also, like artists, could be given a new career. Perhaps the best example was Jeff Beck's 'Hi-Ho Silver Lining.' Originally going to number 14 in the British charts in 1967, it was re-issued and climbed to number 17 in 1972, four years after Beck's last top 30 entry. There are two points to be made about the song itself, the first is that it was produced by Mickie Most. Most's style of production is the construction of a record which has as many elements of pop as possible and as few of rock as possible. That is to say, it is a style which effaces the individual and emphasises instead a catchy tune. It is a form of production which can generate either background music or dance music, in which the finished entity should exist as little tied to artist, time or place as possible. Mickie Most has produced for artists as seemingly diverse as Herman's Hermits, Donovan, Lulu and Suzi Quatro. The reappearance of 'Hi-Ho Silver Lining' in the charts not only recognised his success in this form of production but commented on it by recuperating a pop hit from the era of flower power into the period of glam rock, the project of which was, as I have said, to celebrate the authenticity of what was conventionally understood as inauthentic. Thus, the new status of 'Hi-Ho Silver Lining' was a part of a comment on the commercialism of the late 1960s flower power era. The second point to be made about the song is concerned with its tune. It has a chorus which is so easy to learn that it operates as one gigantic hook — which is to say that the entire chorus has a sing-a-long quality. The effect of this is that the song has an anthem-like feeling which slots it easily into that working-class inflection of glam rock, one aspect of which is manifested in anthem songs developed by Rod Stewart and Gary Glitter and which, in turn, is a part of an older working-class community singing tradition which is to be found in areas as apparently distinct as Methodism, the music hall and the football terraces.

As I have already remarked, glam rock was not a class-based youth subculture, as was that of mods and rockers or hippies and skinheads. This is not to say that there were not class-based inflections with it, there clearly were and I have noted some of them already. Glam rock represented a commentary on the image — more specifically it articulated a criticism — of the post-war British dream which had been lived as reality. This dream was two-pronged, it consisted of egalitarianism and consumerism. As Goldthorpe and Lockwood *et al* so clearly demonstrated in *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, researched through the early 1960s and published in 1969, the increase in the material standard of living provided the illusion that not only equality of opportunity but also equality of material satisfaction were being gained. From 1964 to 1970, Britain had a Labour government, most of that time under Harold Wilson. One of the major reasons for Wilson's success was his appeal to an ideology of classlessness. The very experience of embourgeoisement which had previously worked against the Labour Party started to work for them when they articulated classlessness as real and undertook to promote a cohesive, managerialist approach to British society.

The youth subculture of glam rock operated as a commentary on the illusion of general affluence, classlessness and embourgeoisement which had been lived as a spectacular image produced and reproduced throughout the latter half of the 1960s in the mass media. By 1971, the new hard-nosed, mercantilist, middle-class in the shape of Edward Heath was not only running the Conservative Party but the country as well. Carnaby Street — not just the place but the name as a key site of resonating connotations, the nexus of British counterculture, commercial affluence and the new visible popular (as opposed to working-class) culture — Carnaby Street had lost its glamour, its spectacle, as the image came to be recognised as precisely that, an image.

Of course it is not this simple. Glam rock, in its period from 1972 to 1975, spanned a time of major socio-cultural confusion in Britain. Politically, Britain was in a state of turmoil. As the illusory consensus based on classlessness collapsed, the Conservatives gained power in 1970. They lost it again in 1974. When Wilson returned to office, it was with a new, overt consensus institutionalised in the form of the Social Contract between Labour and the Trade Union Congress. Within the economy itself, the period 1970 to 1975 is the period when unemployment hovers at a level where, from the point of view of the society at the time, it is uncertain whether it will increase or not. From 2.6% in 1970 it rose to 3.8% in 1971 and 1972 only to decrease to 2.6% in 1974. It is only from 1975 when it increases to 4.1% that the figure starts rising inexorably. Experientially, whilst the recognition that there was no longer full employment would have been obvious, the awareness of unemployment as a real personal problem amongst, particularly, the working-class would not have become apparent until the figure reached 5.7% in 1976. Whilst the possibility of unemployment was the most obvious sign of the gap between the image and the new reality which once more made class difference apparent, there were others. The two major miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974 highlighted the increasing industrial unrest as there was an attempt to preserve the lived image of affluence. In 1973, Britain underwent a petrol crisis and supplies of oil were restricted. Consumption as a way of life became problematic for the first time since the end of rationing. At the same time, and partly as a consequence of the oil crisis, inflation started to rise rapidly. From 9.2% in 1972-73 it rose to 16% between 1973 and 1974 and to 24.1% the following year. This was the backdrop to glam rock. Glam rock combined within itself a nostalgia for sixties' affluence and consensus with a recognition of these as an illusion increasingly lost. As punk gathered momentum in 1976, it was focussed through Malcolm McLaren's shop in the Kings Road where, previously, he had sold glam rock fashions. Along with Carnaby Street the Kings Road had also been the major site for British hippie consumerism.

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Glam rock, as a subculture, spectacularly articulated the new generation's recognition that the image of the sixties was precisely that, an image. The glam of glam rock was not only a self-conscious real parodic recognition of the structure of performer/audience interaction in the world of popular music but it was also a commentary on the gloss of consumerism. Not necessarily a critical commentary, the fantasies of glam rock were also fantasies to be lived, there was still a hope that the affluence of the late 1960s would return. However, it was a commentary that even lived images were, nevertheless, still images and it was a commentary which mobilised the cultural concerns born of a generalised acceptance of consensus rather than segmented class-based positions. Of course this does not alter the possibility that glam rock could be viewed as an attempt to recuperate the most successful moment of bourgeois hegemony in post-war Britain. However, it is a step away from Taylor and Wall's argument that the class transcendence of glam rock was founded in the music industry's reappropriation of rock music in the late 1960s post-hippie period. The conventional argument takes off from the perception of glam rock as image and argues that this represents commercial exploitation. That an isomorphism did exist between the companies' perception of music as consumer product and the subculture's understanding of it as an alienated, disembodied artifact is indisputable. In this sense, then, glam rock could be said to have been of positive value to the record companies. In 1971, The Who, that band which had been formed in the mod era and achieved the mod fantasy of success through their incorporation into the middle-class hippie spectacular consumerism of the late 1960s, had a hit with a song entitled 'Won't get fooled again.' A song which started out as a hippie rock song eulogising revolution could also be read as a criticism of accepting appearance as reality. It provided a fitting commentary on the end of a period. The age of the illusion of classlessness and affluence had given way to a youth subculture concerned, in the first place, with the problem of image.

Frith (1978) has noted the void which existed in the singles charts in the early 1970s. This was as a result of the concentration of record companies on albums for the more lucrative middle-class audience. This gap was filled by glam rock and teeny bop. I have already argued that, in a very important sense, glam rock was built around the performer as image and the music as production. In glam rock the lack of a coherently formulated and positive value system enabled a vagueness to develop in the problem of defining limits to the subculture. We need to acknowledge that spectacular subcultures do not operate in the same way as gangs, the spectacle takes to itself that which is meaningful within the context. Thus, for example, it is irrelevant to ask whether or not Elton John was glam rock, as a performer his obviously camp enjoyment of style coupled with his often catchy dance tunes enabled him to be incorporated. Similarly Slade, whom Chas Chandler took from their hippie period and turned into a skinhead band, were also incorporated into the glam rock culture. Partly this was because of their catchy, danceable songs, partly it related to their unintelligible (to skinheads) usage of skinhead fashions on stage. Skinhead style was about action not performance and skinheads on stage represented for them a peculiar disruption in their subculture. The demise in popularity of the skinhead subculture in the early 1970s as it made way for glam rock provided a moment when Slade could become credible as glam rock. It provided an audience for their image. It should by this time also be redundant to have to point out that Slade were a producer-managed group with a nebulous, but nevertheless existing, previous career. Slade had originally started out as a 'hippie' band and, throughout much of their early career would, seemingly anomalously, play 'Nights in White Satin' which was originally by The Moody Blues. Their fashions (re)presented another commentary, this time on a sincere working-class youth subculture. In this sense Slade provided the mirror for T. Rex. Whilst T. Rex were commenting on the 'sincerity' of the hippies, which had been founded in a mistaken acceptance of the image for the reality of late 1960s Britain, so Slade were articulating a similar commentary on the skinheads. Skinheads did not form bands, they did not perform. They drew their music from the repressed British West Indian black population repressing them again in the process. One effect of placing skinheads on stage as performers, then, was to rearticulate the real as the image it in fact was. Skinheads, too, in their late 1960s rebellion had mistaken the real for an illusion and, as I shall discuss below, misunderstood the conservatism of their own rebellion.

Dance also had a two-fold significance. In the first place the rediscovery of popular dance tunes represented a simple, functional awareness of the needs of working-class youth. In the second place, however, the return to dance could be seen as yet another attempt to differentiate working-class glam rock from middle-class hippie music. At the same time though much of the middle-class wing of glam rock artists such as Genesis and Emerson, Lake and Palmer moved towards an overblown pseudo-classical style, other bands such as Roxy Music attempted to produce 'complex' music which was, nonetheless, danceable. Active participation replaced passive consumption. The danceability of glam rock has another tie-in. I have explained how pop glam rock music was produced to be experienced simply as an artifact, the music as music where the superficial becomes the real. This form of production, which de-emphasised all extraneous or ideosyncratic features in the music, aided the move to experience the music through dance rather than analyse it through dope. Simultaneously it brought the music closer to the black American disco tradition, that is to say a tradition honed at Tamla Motown in which the object of the production was to round out the music and give it a sleek quality. Thus, deceptively, glam rock music fitted into an entirely alien musical tradition which had for ten years provided working-class British kids with dance music. In the early 1970s, working-class glam rock dance music overlapped with the popularity of the 'Philly sound,' disco revival associated with the O'Jays, the Stylistics and others of the Philadelphia sound. It was this tie-in which was to give Bowie his strategy for post-glam rock success, his move into disco on 'Young Americans.'

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At the most general level, then, glam rock, as a spectacular youth culture, played out in image the recognition by white British youth of the early 1970s that what had been lived as a cultural and political reality had, in fact, been a fantasy. Glam rock was structured around the image as image and, for this purpose, popular music provided an ideal core. Within this context the content of the images invoked had greater or less force depending on the resonance which they achieved with the subcultural audience. It could be argued, then, that Gary Glitter represented the epitome of glam rock because his image was the image of the performer as star. The image as a commentary on its own content. That the power of the image as representation formed the basis of glam rock and that the subcultural significance of this started waning in 1975 is born out again by the career of Alvin Stardust which also lasted from 1972 to 1975. By 1975 his highly specific and single-pointed articulation of the Gene Vincent/heavy metal artist had also lost its resonance. The recognition of illusion was no longer sufficient to support such a slight image.

I now want to turn briefly to David Bowie. It is because he successfully transcended the subcultural segmentation of glam rock by capturing both a working-class following and a middle-class following, as shown in his success both in the singles and the albums markets, that he is the artist most commonly associated with glam rock.

1975 marks a hiatus in David Bowie's career. 1974 saw the release of a live album, *David Live*, which produced a selection of old material and images. However, the subculture was not concerned with internally referential images, they did not hold meaning in the same way because the subculture was externally referential in its textual articulations. Thus, the Bowie image of this period, the 'Cracked Actor', was also not successful. As a consequence *David Live* was not a successful album and its release acknowledged that Bowie was marking time. As I have noted, in the same way that glam rock performers turned their own repetition into art so songs from previous periods could be appropriated and reconstituted within glam rock. Bowie's 1973 album *Pin-Ups* is a compilation of such songs. The hit single 'Sorrow' off that album was originally a hit for The Merseys in 1966. Other songs on the album include 'Friday on my Mind' (originally by the Easybeats), 'Shapes of Things' (originally by the Yardbirds) and 'Here Comes the Night' (originally by Them). Interestingly, as Bowie writes in the album notes, these songs all come from the 1964-67 period. They are, in fact, from the mod period like those recuperated by Rod Stewart. It is not by chance that both singers should choose this period. Not only was this the period of their youth but it was also the most successful period for Britain's post-war image of classlessness. The mods, working-class kids in 'sharp' — stylish and expensive — clothes appropriating a life-style previously considered to be the preserve of the middle-class were, so it was believed, an example of the blurring of the class boundaries. In fact, mods were perceived not as upwardly mobile working-class but as the youth vanguard of the new classless, unlike the rockers who seemed to represent a rejection of the new classless society, a retreat into conservative working-class values, something which, on its own, might help to account for their stigmatisation. That Rod Stewart and David Bowie should have drawn so much on the mod period increased the irony of the recognition of the 1960s as a manufactured illusion based in a historical conjuncture of the completion of the post-war economic recovery and left-wing managerialist rhetoric. The working-class side of glam rock could be seen as a disillusioned re-run of mod beliefs: in mod, style was considered to be real; in glam rock style was all there was. The reworking of songs from the mod period commented on this linkage. The very ambiguity of glam rock, a unified subculture with two distinctive class-based strands, was itself an ironic commentary on mod.

1975 saw the release of David Bowie's *Young Americans*, an album produced by T. Rex's producer Tony Visconti. At this, moment of crisis when glam rock as a subculture was losing its power Bowie, recognising the close connection between glam rock and American black soul and disco, made an album which contained dance music but which could also be recognised by a rock audience — in Britain his middle-class as opposed to his working-class audience — as a musical progression. The Bowie of *Young Americans* is not only the commentator on disco and on America, he is moving beyond the importance of the present as spectacle to become a musical archivist and craftsman and, subsequently, a musical experimenter working with Brian Eno who had originally been with Roxy Music. In this way Bowie consolidated a middle-class rock audience as he lost his more general glam rock audience. It is surprising then that, whilst his albums continued to put him into the charts, he did not reach the singles chart at all during 1976.

There is one more facet of the preoccupation with image and performance which needs to be examined. This is sexuality, a concern which exists at the level of performer/audience interaction but also at the level of content. Earlier, I have touched on the conventional performer/audience sexual relation. In glam rock this 'conventional' structure was called into question twice over. First at the level of structure where the constitution of the performer as an image continually undercut the classical sexual structuration. In this way, the importance of the performer as a sexual object was always secondary to the question of the sensuality produced as part of the image. Second was the fact that glam rock images tended to articulate sexuality in problematic

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forms. Fashion, as Angela McRobbie (1980:37-49) has noted, is a concern of female culture which has been appropriated into British white, male-dominated spectacular youth subcultures; in glam rock fashion became important in its own right. As a consequence, when male youth starts recognising and using fashion as fashion, an ambiguity is set up between gender and culture.

Western society rationalises the relationships between male and female role expectations as being biologically determined by gender. That is to say, the common sense knowledge is not that a person behaves in a male way because s/he is socialised as a male but because biologically that person is male. Physiology becomes social destiny. In glam rock this assumption was questioned and, as it was questioned, so a range of other problems were posed about what kinds of sexual relationships were acceptable. This latter development was most obviously taken up by Bowie, again, who with his wife Angie, claimed to be bi-sexual. In the main, however, the questioning was very much from a male perspective and was vested in problems of the relationship between the praxis of power and heterosexuality. For this reason many of the sexual concerns of glam rock were located through reference to male homosexuality.

The early '70s were the first time in post-war Britain that women became a visible part of the culture. This was manifest in a range of areas from the rise of feminism to the passing of the Equal Pay Act. Women were gaining a new status which placed them on a more

equal footing with men. In glam rock we can see being acted out the male awareness of this change as a problematising of the male role and its connection with the sexual. By 1971 then, the assumed determination of the social and the sexual by gender was being called into question for males in a number of different ways. Roles were increasingly being recognised as socially constituted images and the male image and its associated sexuality were reciprocally being called into question. Glam rock condensed the problem of reality as image with the problem of sexual identity as image. It enabled to be acted out, as I have remarked before, a set of problems which were not class-based but were embodied in a more general cultural context. Glam rock was the first British subculture to be concerned principally with the problem of sexuality.

The changing status of women presented particularly, but not only, working-class males with a set of problems grounded in the threat for the values inherent in male dominance. The overt use of fashion as dressing up, of makeup and hair dye by boys was part of their testing of the male presentation of the social and sexual roles. In the imagery of glam rock, the campness of Gary Glitter and Elton John formed a piece with the visual androgyny of David Bowie and his claim to be bisexual. Glam rock was a site on which the question of what it might mean to be male could be considered. It must also be said that one other effect of considering sexuality an area which transcended class was that the subculture was able to preserve the myth of inter-class unity promoted by bourgeois hegemonic ideology.

Taylor and Wall argued that glam rock represented the bourgeois commercial appropriation of the working-class subcultural arena being vacated by the demise of the skinheads. Certainly this argument has a lot to be said for it. In the context of it we can understand how there could be a synthesis of two such inherently contradictory subcultures as the radical, middle-class underground and the conservative, working-class skinheads. We should not, however, think of the skinheads as being too oppositional. It is clear, for example, that many of the so-called working-class values which they sought to preserve were, in fact, middle-class illusions about working-class life and culture. Nick Knight argues cogently that the values the skinheads were attempting to preserve were those which developed in the late 1800s:

... when Britian Empire was its most powerful, when imperialism, nationalism and Toryism were beginning to figure prominently in the language of the pubs and the music halls (1982:30).

The skinheads were harking back to a working-class culture which had already been suffused with bourgeois ideological positions. With this in mind, it is much easier to understand how the skinhead rejection of middle-class, 'classless' aspirations could have developed out of the mod style and, by 1971, how one strand of the skinhead subculture could have changed its style to merge, increasingly, with the fashion of the well-dressed working-class youth. The skinhead subculture offered bourgeois ideology its own construction of the working-class. What this particular construction of the tradition recognises is the denaturing and appropriation of working-class cultural forms which were turned into a stylistic and Utopian celebration by glam rock. Rod Stewart, for example, got the kids to wave football scarves and Gary Glitter asked 'Do you want to be in my gang?' The idea of community, so central to working-class ideology and so defended by the skinheads, not least in their territoriality on the football terraces, was turned into a community of subcultural spectacle. But even the idea of working-class community can be shown, as I argued at the beginning in a different context, to be a fantasy

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of the middle-class. Elizabeth Wilson (1980:60-69) has shown how, for example, the sociological community studies of the late 1950s and 1960s distorted the role of women in working-class households as a function of the attempt to impose on the working-class family and its neighbours an assumption of community. Women were allowed into skinhead subculture, but only as passive real or ideological consumers. It was a male community, as was the working-class community to the extent that it existed. Glam rock may be said to have appropriated the fantasy of working-class community and rearticulated the image as a part of its own image-based reality.

Glam rock might be seen as the last attempt, in Britain specifically, at a politics of affluence. However, above all, and running through all Bowie's images, was the celebration of a questing sexuality. Glam rock was representing what was experienced as, in the first place, a classless problem. This consisted not only in what were experienced by many young males as questions concerning sexuality, which had been produced by the changing position of women, but also in the increasing recognition of the existence of female homosexuality. Male homosexual activity between consenting adults had been legalised in the 1967 Sexual Offences Act. In glam rock, perhaps, the band who best articulated the gay side of the sexual questioning most was Queen with their not-so-subtle name. However, the sexuality itself was still left to be structured by the audience/performer relation of the subculture. Sexuality, then, was constructed by the subculture as a problem in the most general sense.

Glam rock was not, in the first place, a class-based phenomenon. One reason for this may have been that it arose out of a period which had believed in classlessness. This may be viewed as a successful hegemonic strategy but the mid-1960s were also a period of greater generalised affluence than any other post-war period. It was a youth culture which attempted to come to terms with the realisation that classlessness was a fantasy whilst, at the same time, trying to assert this fantasy as a way of preserving the quality of life which had grounded the ideology of classlessness. Glam rock had two strands — a middle-class one and a working-class one, both articulated within the same dramatic rhetoric. The differences between the two strands lay in the cultural mediations through which members of each class filtered the style of the youth culture. Thus, for example, the music of the more middle-class strand played by Queen and Roxy Music tended towards the pseudo-classical preoccupations which were allied to a concern with High Culture. By contrast the music of the more working-class strand tended to emphasise the importance of dance, a reflection of the working-class youth tradition of meeting the opposite sex at dance halls. One function of the dramatic rhetoric of glam rock was to highlight problems, such as sexuality, which were common to both classes. The ability of the youth culture to take up such common themes depended on the recognition from within the culture that it was founded in representation rather than a belief in its own absolute lived reality. In this context music played a more important role than that ascribed to it in other youth cultures. If we think back to Phil Cohen's list of four subsystems it is clear that music, with its special performer/audience relationship, was the pivotal moment in the dramatic, representational constitution of the youth culture. Glam rock looked two ways, backwards towards classlessness and unity and forewards towards a recognition of class difference to be found in punk. Skinheads and hippies had, in common, a preoccupation with bourgeois understandings of society, something recognised by both groups' assimilation into glam rock. The end of glam rock was replicated in the Conservative Party's acknowledgement of the end of post-war consensus politics and the beginning of a new era of confrontation politics, first under Heath but more successfully under Thatcher's leadership. The period of glam rock marks the end of the innocence of the 1960s in British youth cultures.

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Notes

1. One more point about Stan Cohen's new introduction needs to be mentioned here though it reflects a problem which needs much lengthier treatment. This is Cohen's confusion, if not conflation, of youth subculture, deviance and delinquency. In his argument for a return to a study of why some kids join youth cultures he assumes that such cultures are deviant if not delinquent. The problem here, which is one that has dogged all social contract-based sociology, is ascertaining what precisely is meant by deviance or delinquency. It can be argued that members of post-war British youth subcultures have little in common with those labelled as juvenile delinquents, after all whilst in rare moments delinquency may be stylistic it has, overall, little to do with style.
2. On New Romanticism see Dick Hebdige and Jon Stratton, an interview to be found in *Art and Text*, No. 8, Summer, 1982, pp.21-30.
3. Bernice Martin (1981) *A Sociology of Contemporary Cultural Change*, Oxford, has constructed an argument based on notions of structure and anti-structure. In this argument rock, as an anti-structural device, always moves towards a new form of liminality. It is in this way that Martin accounts for Bowie's imagery (p.182). Whilst this is an interesting argument Martin's position seems to suggest a stable cultural context which is disrupted by anti-structural forces. It seems to me more useful to examine how those anti-structural elements are constituted within a changing culture of which they are a part. Thus Boy George and Marilyn are not simply repeating Bowie's deconstruction of sexual roles but are meaningful as a part of a cultural shift in the understanding of sexuality.

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