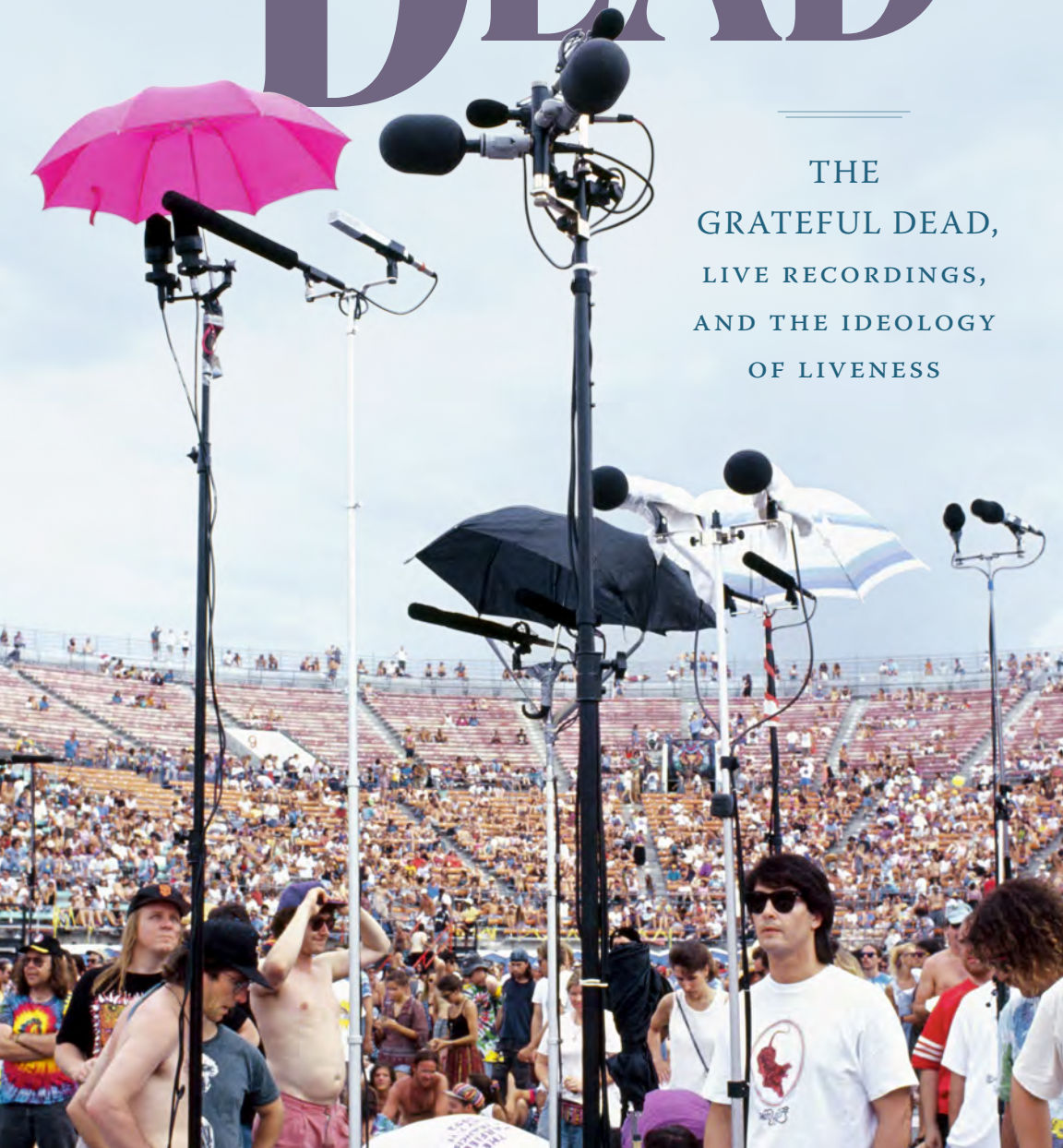
LIVE DEAD

JOHN BRACKETT

THE GRATEFUL DEAD, LIVE RECORDINGS, AND THE IDEOLOGY OF LIVENESS



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STUDIES IN THE GRATEFUL DEAD
Nicholas G. Meriwether, series editor

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John Brackett

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For Krisi, Zach, and Noah

In memory of Biggie

Dean, sandwich in hand, stood bowed and jumping before the big phonograph, listening to a wild bop record I had just bought called "The Hunt," with Dexter Gordon and Wardell Gray blowing their tops before a screaming audience that gave the record fantastic frenzied volume.
—**Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (1957)**

He listened with fascination to the Victrola and played the same record over and over, whatever it happened to be, as if to test the endurance of a duplicated event.—**E. L. Doctorow, *Ragtime* (1975)**

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recall listening to Andy Flory, Shaugn O'Donnell, and Heather Laurel talk about concerts they had attended, noteworthy live recordings, and favorite eras as we walked around the Lower East Side nearly twenty years ago. In 2011, Shaugn and Heather accompanied me to my first Dark Star Orchestra show at Irving Plaza. (It was the fortieth anniversary of the Dead's final concert at the Fillmore East, and DSO were re-creating the setlist from the Dead's performance in 1971. I remember listening to Charlie Miller's tape of the original concert on archive.org in the days leading up to the show.) More recently, while exploring the French Quarter in New Orleans in 2019, Andy Flory encouraged me to visit the Dead Archive in Santa Cruz. Having read his own recent scholarship on the Dead and liveness, I sensed that there was much more to say on the topic, and I made my first research trip to the University of California, Santa Cruz a few months later. I would also like to thank Chris Reali for reading and commenting on early drafts of many chapters. I look forward to regrouping with Chris and Allison Portnow Lathrop as we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the release of our debut album!

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Introduction

BECOMING LIVE

In 2011, a recording of a live performance by the rock band the Grateful Dead was added to the National Recording Registry, a popular catalog maintained by the Library of Congress of recordings deemed "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant."[1] The recording documents the Dead's concert at Barton Hall on the campus of Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, on May 8, 1977. The concert was recorded by Betty Cantor-Jackson, an engineer and producer who had worked on some of the band's most acclaimed commercial releases, including *Live/Dead* (a live album released in 1969) and *Workingman's Dead* (a studio recording released in 1970). Although Cantor-Jackson is not identified, the press release announcing the recording's selection to the registry noted that her "soundboard recording of this show has achieved almost mythic status among 'Deadhead' tape traders because of its excellent sound quality and early accessibility, as well as its musical performances."[2]

To be sure, members of the Grateful Dead's touring crew (like Cantor-Jackson) had been recording the band's concerts since the late 1960s. At the same time, continuing a tradition that can be traced back to the early 1970s, some fans in the audience also taped the concert on equipment that had been smuggled into Barton Hall. While some of these amateur tapers made recordings for their own use and enjoyment, others were eager to share their tapes. Within weeks, recordings of the band's concert at Cornell were being duplicated and traded among a growing community of Deadhead tape collectors throughout the country and around the world.

Cantor-Jackson's recording is one of thousands of concert recordings that were produced by the Grateful Dead and their fans—the "Deadheads"—over

the course of the band's thirty-year career. From 1965 until the death of founding member Jerry Garcia in 1995, the Grateful Dead (composed of different lineups) played more than twenty-three hundred concerts. A large percentage of those concerts were recorded by the band and/or their fans on a variety of audio and video formats. Presently, thousands of noncommercial recordings of the Grateful Dead can be accessed online at archive.org, including multiple recordings of the band's concert from May 8, 1977.[3]

Fans who wish to learn more about the concert at Cornell can also consult John Dwork's review in the second volume of the *Deadhead's Taping Compendium*, a massive three-volume set chronicling numerous live recordings of the Grateful Dead.[4] In his review, Dwork acknowledges that the band played exceptionally well on May 8, a fact that is documented by the recordings. Employing a lingo and a rhetoric that would be familiar to seasoned Deadheads, Dwork suggests, however, that "despite the lofty pinnacles reached throughout the evening, 5/8/77 simply does not compare *as a whole show* with other 'quintessential' performances such as 2/13/70."[5]

The tone of the review shifts as Dwork begins to wax philosophical about (in quick succession) the social, cerebral, spiritual, technological, erotic, narcotic, and transcendental qualities of the Dead's live recordings. He admits that "listening to the tapes of this show [5/8/77] got me thinking about the act of listening to recorded music." Specifically, Dwork recognizes how:

> For many Deadheads, tapes are much more than social lubricant [*sic*]. They are repositories of information that, because of our spiritual and intellectual link to this form, have the power to alter consciousness. As this information plays through our stereos, it acts as a moving thread upon which our emotional focus travels. When we hear the music of 5/8/77—particularly the second set—we recognize it, by comparison to other performances, as being unusually inspirational. During the exultant climax of this show's "Morning Dew," when Jerry [Garcia] strums harder and longer than on any other "Dew" in circulation, we Deadheads are often lifted to an emotional height higher, or as high, as any we have achieved while listening to recorded music. It is a remarkable synergist, a vehicle for attaining deep joy. How lucky we are to have such catalysts in our lives.[6]

In his examination of the "music, the myth, and the magnificence" of *Cornell '77*, Peter Conners observes how live recordings of May 8 contributed to an even more expansive mythology of the concert as being, perhaps, one of the

Dead's best live shows. Conners notes how "within the Deadhead community" live concert recordings were "traded, debated, celebrated, and, in the case of the Grateful Dead's show at Cornell University on May 8, 1977, consecrated." "If it wasn't for tapers and tape trading networks," Conners declares, "it is unlikely that [the Cornell concert] would have risen to the top of the twenty-three-hundred-plus shows the Grateful Dead performed [and] to be inducted, thirty-six years later, into the Library of Congress National Recording Registry."[7]

The tapes produced by fans and members of the Dead's crew constitute an enormous archive of live concert recordings, many of which are still "traded, debated, celebrated, and . . . consecrated." The band has also produced numerous commercial live concert recordings, many of which figure prominently in the history and the mythology of the Grateful Dead. Without a doubt, much of the popular, scholarly, and critical discourse devoted to the Dead has been shaped and influenced by the sounds documented on a variety of live recordings. But how did live recordings come to assume such a privileged position in the historiography of the Dead? Why do live recordings of the Grateful Dead mean so much to so many people? Why do live recordings even matter at all?

In what follows, I consider live recordings within (what I will refer to as) an ideology of musical liveness. As the critical and historical foundation for the chapters that follow, I will begin by considering how live recordings have commonly been critiqued and evaluated by critics, fans, and scholars. Much of this introduction is devoted to excavating and uncovering the roots of an ideology of musical liveness that emerged in the United States in the late 1920s. As I will suggest, it was during this time that a rhetorical discourse was being cultivated that served to elevate the experience of music made in the presence of "living musicians" over that of recorded, or "canned," music. More specifically, I describe how this discourse of liveness was developed in response to the economic and professional hardships that confronted many musicians following the rise of recorded sound and, in particular, the introduction of synchronized sound in theaters.

Finally, I will consider how the emergence of the live record as a marketable commodity beginning in the 1950s served to reassert the primacy of live performance in the imagination of consumers. By the middle of the 1960s, commercial live recordings offered musicians and record companies the opportunity to make a real profit on the perceived value and the imagined worth of "liveness," an idea that was now being packaged and sold to a new generation of record buyers and audiences at the dawn of the rock era.

On Live Records

Although we may cringe at his undeniably insensitive metaphor, many readers will understand what acclaimed pianist and essayist Alfred Brendel intended when he referred to live recordings as a "stepchild." Making "A Case for Live Recordings," Brendel observed that "standing between the two officially canonized sources of musical experience, concert performance and studio recording, the recorded concert has had less than its due."[8] Although Brendel considers performances and recordings associated with the tradition of "classical music," his observations on the perceived status of live recordings apply to a host of other musical styles and traditions. Indeed, among critics, fans, and scholars of rock music, live records are often debated and evaluated according to two ("officially canonized") ways of experiencing music: (1) the experience of the live performance event (i.e., the concert), and (2) the experience of listening to the performer's (often more familiar) studio records. When considered in relation to either or both of these experiences, live rock records typically come up short.

In his book *Rhythm and Noise*, Theodore Gracyk examines many of the peculiar ontologies and conceptual paradoxes represented by live records. Surveying the recorded history of rock music beginning in the mid-1960s, Gracyk notes that "live recordings are the one place where recorded rock has a significant documentary function."[9] However, he explains, as material objects that purportedly serve to document prior live musical events, most commercial "live recordings do not sound much like the originating event."[10] As he acknowledges, live records create an idealized listening experience that "does not belong to any particular seat in the [original] concert space."[11] Furthermore, the idealized listening location suggested by many live recordings (a location imagined, perhaps, somewhere onstage with the musicians or alongside the mixing engineer at the soundboard) is, in most cases, the product of numerous editing decisions made in postproduction. Overdubbing, panning, equalization, and the addition of effects such as reverb and compression enable producers, engineers, and performers to create an audio image of the music that is heard "not as it sounds coming from the speakers in the concert hall or arena" but, instead, "as if one is wearing special headphones whose sound is carefully mixed for clarity and balance."[12] Given the various technological and perspectival changes that have taken place in the transformation from live concert event to reproducible live concert recording, it may not be entirely clear exactly what (if anything) is being documented on live records.

Regarding the status of live recordings in comparison to an artist's studio records, Gracyk wonders if "given a choice between any band's best studio

work and their live recordings, how often would we choose the live recording over the studio? Would anyone choose *The Beatles at the Hollywood Bowl* (1977) over any of their studio albums? Would any Led Zeppelin fan choose *The Song Remains the Same* (1976) over any of their first five studio albums?"[13] Of course, Gracyk is not *really* asking his readers (à la a sort of *Desert Island Discs* scenario) to "choose" among records. Instead, the rhetorical structure of Gracyk's thought experiment and the tone of feigned incredulity assumes that readers share his belief that studio recordings constitute rock's "primary documents." "In rock," he argues, "the musical work is less typically a song than an arrangement of recorded sounds."[14] In Gracyk's opinion, the authentic "musical work" in the rock tradition is represented by a performer's or group's studio recordings, recordings on which, as he describes, "every sound is now treated as deliberate and therefore relevant."[15] Of course, Gracyk's rock aesthetic adapts many of the well-worn ideals of the "musical artwork" as developed by nineteenth-century critics, composers, and philosophers of the German Idealist tradition.[16] It is against the background of a Romantic philosophy of art and an associated set of musical values (originally developed, it should be remembered, in relation to the "classical tradition") that Gracyk can confidently assert that, "apart from *Frampton Comes Alive!* (1976) and *Cheap Trick at Budokan* (1979), one is hard-pressed to think of a rock musician whose live recordings are better received by fans and critics than their studio confections."[17]

Gracyk notes that, because the "Grateful Dead are the exception that proves the rule," they deserve special comment, and that he will "turn to them in a moment." To be sure, I will return to what he has to say about the Dead and "record consciousness" in chapter 1. For now, however, I would argue that, far from being the "rule," Gracyk's aesthetic ideology is exceptional among the many discursive frameworks that have developed around live rock records.[18] Consider, for example, Lester Bangs's well-known review of *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out*, a live album by the Rolling Stones that was released in 1970.[19] Recognized as one of the most colorful and iconoclastic music critics of the era, Bangs concludes his review by explaining that, while "it's still too soon to tell," he is "beginning to think [that] *Ya-Ya's* just might be the best album [the Rolling Stones] ever made. I have no doubt that it's the best rock concert ever put on record."

Thumbing his nose at Gracyk's aesthetic, Bangs even prefers the live versions of songs featured on *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out* over the band's studio recordings. As Bangs explains, "I don't think there's a song on *Ya-Ya's* where the Stones didn't cut their original studio jobs." The live version of "Jumpin' Jack

Flash" has "a certain fierce precision which the studio single lacked and which makes the latter sound almost plodding by comparison." Similarly, the live version of "Sympathy for the Devil" "beats the rather cut-and-dried rendition on [the studio album] *Beggar's Banquet* all hollow." Bangs also suggests that the band's live performances of cover songs are better than the versions as performed and recorded by the original artists! Regarding the live version of "Little Queenie," for example, he admits, "I even think that this is one of those rare instances . . . where they cut Chuck Berry with one of his own songs."

Bangs certainly understands the distinction between a live recording conceived *as* a document and a live recording that stands for, or *constructs*, an experience of liveness. The live performances featured on *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out* were recorded at various concerts in late 1969 during the band's tour of the United States. Like most commercially produced live albums of the era, many of the vocal performances and instrumental tracks were overdubbed in postproduction. Still, Bangs notes that, as the representation of an *idealized* live event, the record is "[more] than just the soundtrack for a Rolling Stones concert, it's a truly inspired session, [and] as intimate an experience as sitting in while the Stones jam for sheer joy in the basement."

At the same time, Bangs inverts the documentary perspective and considers how *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out* might offer a better, perhaps even a more authentic, representation of the original concert experience. Bangs recalls what it was like to be in the audience at that time and thinking, "There they were in the flesh, the *Rolling Stones*, [the] ultimate personification of all our notions and fantasies and hopes for rock and roll, and we were enthralled." However, he continues:

> the nagging question that remained was whether the show we had seen was really that brilliant, or if we had not been to some degree set up, [P]avlov'd by years of absence and rock scribes and 45 minute delays into a kind of injection delirium in which a show which was perfectly ordinary in terms of what the Stones might have been capable of would seem like some ultimate rock apocalypse. Sure, the Stones put on what was almost undoubtedly the best show of the year, but did that say more about their own involvement or about the almost uniform lameness of the competition?

As to the last question, Bangs remarks that "some folks never did decide." Bangs, however, *did* decide, and in his opinion, *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out* authenticates and verifies the many "notions and fantasies and hopes" that were indelibly linked to his (and other people's) experiences and expectations.

Even outside of the rock tradition, early reviews reveal how critics struggled with the various ontological and phenomenological complexities presented by recordings that were marketed and promoted as "live." Released on Columbia Records in 1950, Benny Goodman's *The Famous 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert* can arguably be considered the first critically and commercially successful live album to be released by a major label. In his glowing review in *Metronome,* Barry Ulanov, who also attended the original concert, considers Goodman's recording from a documentary perspective, noting how "one of the delightful sections of the bill, as we remember and the records confirm, was the 20-year survey of jazz," a segment of the concert that chronicled the development of jazz beginning with Dixieland up to the modern swing bands of the late 1930s.[20] Ulanov also notes that "one of the few weak moments of the evening as we remember and the records confirm, was the *Honeysuckle Rose* Jam Session, which, in spite of some fine moments by Lester Young, Johnny Hodges, and Benny, doesn't do much but rehearse some all too familiar Swing inanities."

Whereas in both of these instances the live recordings "confirm" his memories of the event, Ulanov also acknowledges the ability of *The Famous 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert* to influence his recollection of specific performances. Recalling Bangs (if only in substance and not necessarily style), the recordings convince Ulanov that the "high spot of the evening was clearly [pianist] Jess Stacy's five-chorus solo on the last scheduled number on the program, 'Sing, Sing, Sing,' though those of us who were there that night didn't realize it." "In recorded retrospect," Ulanov observes, "those delicate measures stand way out, as Jess makes his simple, developed way through as lovely a piece of construction as Swing ever offered."

Rapidly changing tastes in popular music in the years following World War II meant that, when the album was released in 1950, the sounds that appeared on *The Famous 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert* were heard as if they were emanating from another era. As the sounds of the big bands began to fade away, Ulanov considers Goodman's record to be the "most meaningful memento possible" of the swing era. He imagines that "one can return in spirit to the memorable evenings of Swing, and in such records as these, in the flesh." Writing in the *American Record Guide,* Enzo Archetti describes Goodman's record as "one of the authentic documents in American musical history, a verbatim report, in the accents of those who were present on 'The Night of January 16, 1938.'" "Columbia deserves an Oscar," Archetti continues, "for having made available this memorable history-making concert."[21]

For other contemporary reviewers—better described, perhaps, as "modernists," in contrast to the musically conservative "moldy figs"—Goodman's

live record was a document that represented both the crass commercialism and the artistic, racial, and financial inequities of the swing era.[22] In his review in *Downbeat*, Michael Levin admits that, "as a historical index, this album is a valuable possession." "But by and large," he continues, "its freneticisms [*sic*] have a valid part only in the frame of reference in which they were created: the big-money aping of the great middle-30's Negro swing bands by Goodman, [Artie] Shaw, [Glenn] Miller, and all the rest."[23]

Catherine Tackley has described how, on its release in 1950, Goodman's record and the original 1938 concert were "implicitly canonized within the interlinked dimensions of the 'jazz tradition,' a developmental lineage of jazz and the history of jazz recording."[24] Rereleases of Goodman's record reaffirm the significance of both the original concert in the historiography of jazz and the live recording as a historical document. To commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the concert, Columbia rereleased *The Famous 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert* in 1977 under a different title: *Benny Goodman Live at Carnegie Hall*. On the one hand, the new title may have reflected the opinion of some Columbia executives and most jazz aficionados that the original title was, at that point in the history of jazz, redundant. On the other hand, Tackley recognizes that the name change also serves to foreground a quality of "'liveness' as a defining feature of the recording," a feature that, in her words, "could now be understood in the context of a longer history of live recording."[25]

Tackley's reference to a quality of "liveness" is noteworthy for, as I detail in the next section, a general ideology of musical liveness already existed when Goodman's album was released in 1950. In what follows, I examine how the ideology of liveness that was promoted throughout the United States and North America beginning in the late 1920s emphasized the artistic, aesthetic, and cultural value of musical performances experienced live ("in the flesh") over recordings ("canned music"). More than just an aesthetic theory of live performance, the nascent ideology of musical liveness that emerged at the dawn of the Great Depression reflected the fears and anxieties that many professional musicians were experiencing during a time of rapid technological development, economic uncertainty, and cultural transformation.

Of Robots, Records, and Revenue: The Formation of an Ideology of Musical Liveness

In his article "Liveness and the Grateful Dead," musicologist Andrew Flory considers "liveness" as an "*attitude* toward artistic expression," as a "*lens* through which to understand the scene that the Dead helped to pioneer," and

as a "*manner* of expressing rock music during and after psychedelia that relied more on live performance practice than [on] studio-oriented approaches."[26] Variously described as an "attitude," a "lens," and a "manner" of musical expression, "liveness" functions as a malleable critical heuristic that Flory invokes while considering various facets of the music and culture of the Grateful Dead.

Flory recognizes how a vaguely defined sense of liveness has shaped the history and reputation of the band. The Dead, he explains, "have always been known as a band [to experience] in the flesh, a group to see in a live environment."[27] Having acknowledged what is, arguably, the foundational myth of the Grateful Dead, Flory's article rehearses an idea (and an ideal) that has been associated with the band for over half a century. Like much of the popular, critical, and scholarly discourse devoted to the band, Flory's article assumes that the concepts of "live" and/or "liveness" are already meaningful within the community, culture, and historiography of the Grateful Dead. But how did this happen? How and why did a body of conventional wisdom, a discourse of liveness, develop around the Grateful Dead? On a more fundamental level, why does the concept of "liveness" even matter at all?

As John Durham Peters has remarked, before the invention of the phonograph in 1877, "all sounds died."[28] One might infer, therefore, that prior to the invention of recording and reproduction technologies, all music created by performers and heard by audiences was experienced live. While such an observation is seemingly obvious, it is not trivial. It is important to remember that, even before such technologies were introduced, nobody would have used the word "live" to describe a musical performance featuring "living" musicians playing in the presence of a "living" audience. And why would they? "Live" compared to—what?

But while technologies such as Edison's phonograph provided the material conditions necessary for an ontology of "live" to form, the experience of "musical liveness" describes a critical self-awareness of one's relation to recorded sound. Clearly, recordings offered audiences a new way of experiencing music, one that was not bound by traditional performance spaces and that did not even require the presence of performers. Philip Auslander has identified three characteristics associated with an early conception of liveness (what he calls "classic" liveness): (1) the "physical co-presence of performers and audience," (2) the "temporal simultaneity of production and reception," and (3) the ability to create a shared "experience in the moment" for both performers and audience.[29] By the early decades of the twentieth century, audiences would have certainly recognized the ontological distinctions between, on the one hand, the experience of music as reproduced on

recordings and, on the other hand, the experience of music as performed live. The vague outlines of a sense of liveness would begin to take shape, therefore, as audiences became cognizant of (and adapted to) the contrasting spatiotemporal characteristics and experiential qualities offered by traditional forms of musicking (i.e., live performances) and those offered by recordings.

It was not until the 1930s, however, that the term "live" first appeared in print to refer to musical performances that were experienced "in the flesh."[30] As the term gradually entered the popular lexicon, Sarah Thornton has examined how, in an effort to counteract dwindling job opportunities for professional musicians after World War II, the Musicians' Union in Britain developed a public relations campaign to promote the cultural value and aesthetic worth of "live music."[31] As she has observed, the newly developed phrase "live music" "gave positive valuation to and became generic for performed music."[32] Thornton explains how, as part of the union's campaign to "convince the community of the essential human value of live performance," live music was promoted as the "truth of music, the seeds of genuine culture."[33] Furthermore, she considers how the term "live" was wielded to affirm that musical "performance was not obsolete or exhausted, but full of energy and potential."[34] In contrast to live music, recorded music was depicted as "dead, a decapitated 'music without musicians'" and as "false prophets of pseudoculture."[35] As described by Thornton, it was during this time that the outlines of an ideology of liveness began to emerge as the term "live" "accumulated connotations which took it beyond the denotative meaning of performance" and had, in her words, "soaked up the aesthetic and ethical connotations of life-versus-death, human-versus-mechanical, creative-versus-imitative."[36]

The seeds of the ideology of liveness that Thornton locates in Britain at midcentury were planted a few decades earlier in the United States. By the end of the 1920s, the rise of "talkies" contributed to massive job losses for the many musicians who worked in theaters throughout the country. On October 28, 1929, an alarming headline on the front page of *Film Daily* announced that approximately "7,000 of 25,000 theater musicians" were "jobless."[37] These unemployment figures were provided by Joseph N. Weber, the president of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), the largest union of professional musicians in North America. Weber acknowledged that, following the introduction of synchronized sound technologies in motion pictures, AFM musicians would continue to lose jobs as "talkies" became more popular with audiences and theater owners.[38]

But just as Weber decried the professional and personal indignities that musicians faced in the age of mechanical reproduction, he also noted that a

"great cultural calamity awaits the United States if its citizens allow one industry to force it into the acceptance of flat, savorless, mechanical music."[39] In an effort to rally support for professional musicians, Weber announced the launch of a public relations campaign that, in his words, was designed to "sell the public the value of manual music as contrasted with mechanical music."[40]

The same day that Weber was quoted in *Film Daily*, an advertisement titled "The Robot as an Entertainer" appeared in newspapers throughout the United States (figure I.1). Featuring a vivid illustration of a mechanical man struggling to play a harp, the ad details the methodical "dehumanizing of the theatre." Echoing Weber's remarks, the ad warns of an impending "cultural calamity" as audiences who had ever known and experienced "Real Music" created by living performers grew accustomed to the "monotony of Mechanical Music." Despite the remarkable technological and economic advantages offered by synchronized sound, and "however perfect reproduced music may be made," the text asserts that "canned music" would "always fall short of establishing a spiritual contact between performer and listener."[41]

Any sympathy that the advertisement may have elicited among the general public was probably forgotten by the next day as news of yet another major loss on Wall Street spread across the nation. Despite being upstaged by the events of "Black Tuesday," Weber and the AFM remained committed to their campaign, and over the next year and a half, the federation spent over a million dollars for advertising space in more than eight hundred newspapers and many popular magazines.[42] Between 1929 and 1931, the AFM produced numerous ads that implored readers to support "Real Music" performed by "flesh and blood artists" while warning of the myriad deleterious effects of canned music on the aesthetic sensibilities of American audiences and the emerging cultural prestige of the nation. Alongside the dramatic texts and the dynamic graphic illustrations by the Mexican American artist Leon Helguera, the AFM's ads extolled readers to join the "Music Defense League." By clipping out a portion of the ad and mailing it to the AFM's offices in New York City, audiences were encouraged to express their opposition "to the elimination of Living Music from the Theatre."

Although it is doubtful that any jobs were saved, the AFM's ad campaign did succeed in promoting and popularizing many modern ideas regarding the inherent value and intrinsic worth of live musical performance. Moreover, the symbolic associations and discursive meanings that Thornton identifies with the "aesthetic and ethical" connotations of liveness were promoted as part of the AFM's campaign to "sell the public the value of manual music." In what follows, I consider how the distinctive images and (melo)dramatic

FIGURE I.1. AFM advertisement, "The Robot as an Entertainer" (*Daily Boston Globe*, October 28, 1929, 5)

texts of the AFM's ads promoted an idealized understanding of live musical performance according to the set of oppositions identified by Thornton, beginning with "human-versus-mechanical."

Contemporary audiences were almost certainly familiar with phrases such as "mechanical music" or "canned music" as pejorative descriptions of musical recordings. In 1906, John Philip Sousa, the renowned composer and conduc-

tor, helped to popularize the phrases in his essay "The Menace of Mechanical Music," a spirited defense of composers' rights and a vigorous critique of contemporary copyright laws.[43] The image of the robot was of a more recent vintage, having been introduced to theater audiences by the Czechoslovakian playwright Karel Čapek in 1921 in his play, *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots). R.U.R.* recounts how an army of mechanical laborers (the titular "robots," a neologism coined by Čapek and his brother) assume control over their masters and, after wiping out most of humankind, take over the world. Garnering widespread media attention following successful runs of *R.U.R.* in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles in 1923, the nefarious image of the robot quickly entered the popular imagination.

Between 1929 and 1931, the robot, once a familiar foe from the theater, now represented a threat to a vital element of the theatrical experience: the music. As represented in Helguera's illustrations for the AFM's ads, the robot came to symbolize both the artistic limitations of recorded music and the threat to labor posed by the introduction of synchronized sound in theaters. Throughout the ad campaign, musical recordings are variously derided as "canned music," a mechanical form of music that is reflected in the figure of the robot as a type of "mechanical man." As part of the "human-versus-mechanical" dualism that was promoted by the ads, audiences were learning to appreciate the essential humanity of performances made by "living musicians" over the lifeless, mechanized reproductions of canned music. By linking recorded music with robots, the ads encouraged readers to consider recordings as inherently inferior to "real music" made by "flesh-and-blood" musicians.

In an ad titled "The Serenade Mechanistic," an illustration of a troubadour singing and playing a guitar is counterpointed against the image of a robot (also wearing a cowboy hat and poncho) emitting strained vocal tones and beating a spoon against a frying pan (the phrase "Canned Music in Theatres" appears on the pan). The superiority of "living music" is made clear in the text, where readers are told that the "troubadour had a great advantage over the Robot, for the Robot can't be gay any more than he could be sad or sentimental." "And where there is no feeling, no emotional capacity," the text continues, "there can be no music."[44] Similarly, the ad "The Robot Sings of Love" (reproduced in figure I.2) asserts that music "is an emotional art" by which "*feeling* may be translated into all tongues." "The Robot," the ad continues, "having no capacity for feeling cannot produce music in a true sense."[45]

The connotations that were accruing around the concepts of the "human" and the "mechanical" were intertwined with another dichotomy that Sarah Thornton has identified with the ideology of liveness, that of the "creative"

FIGURE I.2. AFM advertisement, "The Robot Sings of Love" (*Atlanta Constitution*, August 19, 1930, 3)

versus the "imitative." Many of the symbolic meanings that were developing around these notions are represented in the text and imagery of the ad titled "My Next Imita-a-ashun" (figure I.3).[46] The stylized spelling of the title suggests the sound of a record skipping, a negative assessment of the manufacturing quality of contemporary recordings and a reminder of the mechanical limitations of canned music. In Helguera's accompanying illustration, the specter of "Canned Music in Theatres" is once again represented by a robot, now attempting to play a violin. The robot is controlled by the figure of the theater owner, who acts as a ventriloquist. (The caption "Very Good, Eddy!" is most likely a reference to the well-known ventriloquist Edgar Bergen.) While controlling canned music with one hand, the theater owner uses the other to

FIGURE 1.3. AFM advertisement, "My Next Imita-a-ashun" (*Austin Statesman*, October 13, 1930, 3)

push aside the figure of the Muse.[47] The implication is clear: the "Living Art of Music" (as represented by the Muse) is in peril as theater owners continue to replace performing musicians with cheap, inferior imitations offered by canned music.

Of course, the image of the theater owner—with his "healthy" physique, tailored suit (including a vest emblazoned with dollar signs), and impeccable grooming (note the "English" handlebar mustache and heavily greased hair parted down the middle)—was understood then, as now, as a graphic caricature associated with the figure of the "greedy boss," the "businessman," or, more generally, "management." The many textual and symbolic associations in the ad serve as powerful reminders that the ideology of musical liveness promoted by the AFM was motivated by massive unemployment and the very real labor concerns facing tens of thousands of musicians. As part of

the creative-versus-imitative binary that was being developed around live and canned music, the AFM's ad campaign stressed the forms of labor (i.e., the *work*) that was required in the creation and performance of music in the age of synchronized sound. In an ad titled "Is Art to Have a Tyrant?," for instance, readers are reminded that, although the "Robot can make no music of himself, he can and does arrest the efforts of those who can. Manners mean nothing to this monstrous offspring of modern industrialism, as IT crowds Living Music out of the theatre spotlight."[48]

Alongside the pervasive antimodernist rhetoric of the ads, the ideology of musical liveness that was being promoted by the AFM's campaign emphasized the "aesthetic and ethical connotations of life-versus-death" as described by Thornton. Beginning with "The Robot as an Entertainer," the ads stress that "Real Music" (also characterized as "Good Music") is a form of "living music" created by "flesh and blood" artists. As described in the text of "The Robot as an Entertainer" (see figure I.1), machines were not artists and, while they were useful in saving "Men and Women from ignoble and soulless labor," were unable to perform "tasks that are only well done by the hands and hearts of gifted humans." By its very nature, therefore, mechanical music "must always fall short of establishing a spiritual contact between performer and listener."[49]

As with most of the AFM's ads, the text to "The Robot as an Entertainer" sentimentalizes the manner by which audiences experienced music before the invention of the phonograph. The text accompanying the ad "Music? A Picture No *Robot* Can Paint!" proclaims that the "intelligent theatre goer enjoys the thrill of the artist's presence, and the feeling that his presence, too, is felt."[50] In the presence of living performers, the audience is a "participant in the event—a critic of the performance, empowered to reward excellence and reprove fault." In contrast to the mindless repetition offered by mechanical music, "Living Music" manifests a sense of "drama in the artist's struggle to please and in the emotional response of the audience." According to the ideology that was being promoted in the ads, it is the shared emotional (and physical) experience among musicians and audiences that distinguishes "Living Music" from its mechanical imposter. "Life-glamour-excitement are fundamental requirements of the theatre," the ad states. Formerly, "music supplied this life, this human contact for the motion picture theatre until the coming of canned music."

As with "life," the image of "death" assumed a variety of symbolic meanings in the AFM's campaign. Of course, all the ads underscore the threat that recorded music posed to the livelihoods of professional musicians. At the same

FIGURE I.4. AFM advertisement, "O Fairest Flower! No Sooner Blown but Blasted!" (*New York Times*, November 10, 1930, 16)

time, the campaign also suggested that the rise of recorded sound in theaters would lead to the death of musical culture in the United States. The ad "O Fairest Flower! No Sooner Blown but Blasted!" vividly details the uncertain future of "living music" in the United States (figure I.4).[51] Appearing almost a year after the collapse of the national economy, the ad appeals to the financial concerns faced by many Americans. "Which do *you* prefer for the money you pay at the theatre box office?" the text asks. "The stirring performance of *Living* Music played and felt by flesh-and-blood musicians, or a strident din from the throat of a heartless piece of machinery?" As emphasized in the text

and the accompanying illustration, "canned music in theatres" (represented by a ruralized robot wearing overalls and a straw hat) threatens the survival of "American Musical Culture." "Good music in our country has grown to a glorious blossoming," the text boasts. In fact, "American orchestras" and "American musicians now rank with the finest in the world. Shall we *continue* to nurture and cherish this beautiful flower, or shall we let it dwindle and die under blighting *Canned* Music poured out by mechanical Robots?"[52]

Along with saving "American Musical Culture," the AFM was committed to preserving a modicum of the prestige that performing musicians had enjoyed within what Richard Middleton has described as the "bourgeois concert form." The introduction of canned music in theaters threatened to overturn the power dynamics of the traditional concert experience, an experience that, as Middleton has explained, had evolved to "act as a means of *limiting* music, in time and space" and of "*framing* sound stimuli in a clear producer-consumer spatial hierarchy and an equally clear transmitter-receiver communicative chain."[53] To be sure, the text and images of the AFM's advertisements emphasize the familiar "transmitter-receiver" relationship that had previously existed among musicians and an audience, a relationship, the ads argued, that established a "communicative chain" which, in turn, enabled a form of "spiritual contact." Following the rise of canned music, however, the role of performing musicians within this "producer-consumer spatial hierarchy" was upended as recordings freed audiences from the temporal and spatial boundaries that had traditionally been associated with the (live) experience of music.

According to the ideology of musical liveness that was being promoted by the AFM's campaign, "living music" was imagined as a fundamentally human form of artistic communication whereby emotions and feelings could be shared among performers and an audience. In the absence of living performers, "canned music," it was argued, was unable to facilitate this type of "spiritual contact" and was depicted as an inferior musical experience that threatened the professional livelihoods of living musicians, the future of American musical culture, and the bourgeois conventions of the concert hall.

In an effort to elevate the status of "living music" (and ultimately preserve jobs for performing musicians), the AFM's ad campaign posited a metaphysical element of the live performance experience that resembles what Walter Benjamin would later describe as the "aura" of a work of art. Much like Benjamin's formulation of the aura, the notion of "spiritual contact" serves to authenticate "living music" as "True Music" and, therefore, as a form of "true art"; "spiritual contact" accords value and meaning to the "uniqueness"—the authenticity—of a live musical performance. As part of the AFM's campaign,

"living music" was imagined as the authentic manner of experiencing music; recordings, by contrast, offered an ersatz musical experience and were only capable, as Benjamin recognized, of extracting "sameness even from what is unique."[54]

Just as the invention of sound recording and reproduction technologies laid the foundation for an ideology of liveness to develop, those same technologies also precipitated new ways of conceiving of the "work of art." Jonathan Sterne has reminded us that, much like the formulation of "spiritual contact," the "very construct of [Benjamin's] aura is, by and large, retroactive, something that is an artifact of reproducibility, rather than a side effect or an inherent quality of self-presence." "Aura," Sterne notes, "is the object of a nostalgia that accompanies reproduction."[55] Similarly, "spiritual contact" evinces a sense of nostalgia for a traditional, more "authentic," manner of experiencing music prior to the invention of recorded sound. To be certain, though, appeals to vague concepts such as "spiritual contact" and/or "aura" tell us less about contemporary theories of art and more about the collective anxieties that performers and audiences were experiencing when confronted with the dramatic and far-reaching effects of technological change and innovation.

As the AFM's advertising campaign was beginning to wind down, Weber made a final dramatic plea on behalf of performing musicians. In an essay published in 1930 with the provocative title "Canned Music—Is It Taking the Romance from Our Lives?," Weber explained that "people are becoming satiated with mechanics" and that "they want surcease from it." He observed that "romance has almost passed out of existence along with living music" and that "romance must have a background, a setting." "If living music is to be also gone," he explained, "a mechanical substitute cannot take its place."[56] "Unless music is restored to life," Weber warned, "romance will to a great extent perish."[57]

Weber's remarks on the effects of mechanical music on the "mood" of the nation appear alongside familiar talking points regarding the plight of performing musicians following the rise of "talkies" and the uncertain future of music in the United States. In contrast to the repetition and monotony offered by canned music, Weber dramatizes the "uniqueness" of the theater experience and the palpable sense of energy that often accompanies music making "in the flesh." Weber notes that "when one listens to a living artist sing or play an instrument, anything might happen." Weber imagines how:

> A singer, on one certain night, might sing an aria in an altogether unforgettable way. An obscure artist might, in one evening, achieve the heights. Or a pianist or violinist might, unexpectedly, one day play as

> he had never before, play in such a glorious fashion that he would bring the whole house to its feet with excited cries of "Bravo! Bravo!" Thus every concert, every opera or operetta, every theater performance, every musical entertainment of any kind in which living music has a place, may prove to be an epoch-making occasion. A music lover, holding a ticket of admission, thrills with the anticipation as he enters the place of entertainment.[58]

Despite the many assaults on what he calls a "cherished" tradition of "live music," Weber sees a "few bright rays on the dark horizon of our culture." He continues, "I have observed recently that people are tiring of dead music in the theater. They are weary of the soul-less quality of the machine."[59] Drawing on the "live/dead" duality that was being promoted in the AFM's advertisements at the time, Weber is "not surprised that millions of Americans have put themselves on record as demanding the revival of living music, the kind that will vitalize us, and quicken our stagnant blood, which now runs cold to the mechanical kind."[60]

Becoming "Live" and Selling Liveness

By the time the AFM's ad campaign ended in 1931, approximately three million people had pledged their support for living music by joining the "Music Defense League." Despite the best efforts of the AFM and its supporters, broadcasting technologies continued to displace thousands of performing musicians. Throughout the 1930s, the expanding use of recorded music on radio and the increased reliance on jukeboxes in hotels and nightclubs contributed to the professional and psychological hardships facing many Depression-era musicians. Even as the country began to emerge from the Depression by the late 1930s, the spread of "wired music" in hotels (best represented by the Muzak Corporation) and the rising popularity of television meant even fewer job prospects for union musicians.

As employment opportunities continued to shrink throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s, AFM leaders recognized that the fight to preserve jobs would require more than a public relations campaign. Following the election of James Petrillo as union president in 1940, the AFM adopted a more aggressive strategy by initiating numerous strikes against radio stations and theaters throughout the country. In a move that was designed to impact almost every aspect of the entertainment industry, Petrillo announced a "recording ban" prohibiting union musicians from performing on all commercial records and

transcription discs. The ban went into effect in August 1942 and would remain in place for approximately two years.[61]

Even as the country's involvement in the war came to dominate headlines in the early 1940s, people throughout North America were becoming familiar with the AFM, James Petrillo, and the ideological debates and economic issues involving the recording ban. It was also at this time that, in the United States, the term "live" was starting to be used in its modern sense to refer to a performance that was experienced "in the flesh." In October 1942, a short piece titled "Mr. Petrillo's Hopeless War" appeared in *The Nation.* The author, Charles Williams, was no fan of Petrillo, describing the AFM president as a "cocky Chicago labor politician with a great disdain for public opinion."[62] While Williams was sympathetic to the plight of performing musicians, he described the strike as a "desperate but probably futile effort to stave off the effects of technological advance."[63] Moreover, Williams predicted that the public "will continue to choose first-rate recordings in preference to second or third-rate 'live' music."[64]

Later that year, Bernard B. Smith acknowledged that, throughout the entertainment industry, "the trend has been increasingly away from 'live' music" in favor of recordings.[65] In Smith's opinion, the "problem of canned music vs. 'live' music is one in which the public interest is profoundly involved" as it forces audiences to consider some difficult questions.[66] "First," Smith wonders, "do the American people like canned music so well that they are willing it should replace the 'live' variety? And second, if so, does a democracy have any obligation to those workers who are displaced by technological improvements?"[67] Throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s, the term "live" was used more frequently (and increasingly without the quotation marks) to refer to musical performances and television broadcasts that were not recorded.[68] Even the AFM acknowledged the term's more modern meaning in *The National Crisis for Live Music and Musicians*, a report from 1955 on a crisis that promised to worsen as audiences grew more accustomed to experiencing music in a recorded form.[69]

For any number of reasons, most listeners of the era never experienced their favorite musical performers in a live setting. Instead, the musical tastes of audiences were increasingly shaped by the sounds that were etched on recordings and heard over and over again through speakers connected to turntables, jukeboxes, and radios. By the middle of the twentieth century, a variety of technological developments, cultural conditions, and economic factors had contributed to a growing preference among audiences for recorded music. Following the adoption of magnetic tape-recording technologies after

the war, for example, the sound of recordings changed dramatically. Furthermore, the new vinyl records that had appeared by the end of the 1940s (notably the twelve-inch long-playing record introduced by Columbia in 1948 and the seven-inch single introduced by RCA in 1949) promised a more faithful representation of the original tape recording, especially when played on the latest "hi-fi" stereo systems. At the same time, the technical and artistic possibilities offered by "overdubbing" meant that the sounds that audiences were hearing on their favorite recordings did not necessarily represent, or "capture," a unique live performance from the past.

As documents of past live performances, recordings would continue to serve an authenticating function among select audiences (refer to the earlier discussion of *The Famous 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert*, for example). For many pop fans of the era, however, the notion of the "authentic" musical performance increasingly came to be associated with the formal properties of the recording itself and not a particular live performance. Recalling Benjamin, Albin Zak has described how, by the middle of the twentieth century, recorded music had acquired an "aura of the 'genuine.'" Recorded music, Zak explains, was no longer considered a "substitute for the real thing [i.e., live performance]; it *was* the real thing—not a replacement for live music, or a stand-in, but something different altogether." It had become, Zak notes, a "piece of shellac with a soul of its own."[70]

As described in the previous section, the AFM's public relations campaign sought to locate the authentic musical experience in live performance. In an effort to convince audiences of the value of "living music" in the theater, the AFM emphasized the *work* (i.e., the labor) that was required in establishing a form of "spiritual contact" between performers and an audience. By the 1950s, however, an "aura of the genuine" had come to be associated with the many musical performances that were readily accessible on mass-produced recordings. Reconceived as the "real thing" with a "soul of its own," the mechanical reproduction (i.e., "canned music") had been reimagined as a *work of art*.

As the listening habits of audiences continued to be conditioned by the sounds reproduced on recordings, one might be tempted to speak of the triumph of the recorded over the real, a shift in preference for the record over the live performance, or an "ideology of phonography" as eclipsing an "ideology of liveness."[71] The reality of the phonographic situation at midcentury reveals that, in addition to their status as objects worthy of disinterested interest, records were also used to (re)affirm the imagined authenticity of the live musical experience and many of the fundamental claims of the ideology

of liveness. This can be seen most clearly in the increased marketing and promotion of live concert recordings beginning in the mid-1950s.

After introducing fans and critics to the modern live recording with *The Famous 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert* in 1950, Columbia was successful again in 1956 with the release of *Ellington at Newport*. Reading the liner notes on the back cover, potential record buyers may have been intrigued by George Avakian's recollections regarding the "girl who launched 7,000 cheers" during saxophonist Paul Gonsalves's solo on the song "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue."[72] Avakian provides a prosaic, almost cinematic, depiction of the events that unfolded over the twenty-seven choruses of Gonsalves's famed solo. In particular, Avakian notes that at "about his seventh chorus, the tension, which had been building both onstage and in the audience since Duke kicked off the piece, suddenly broke." At this point, Avakian continues, a "platinum-blonde girl in a black dress began dancing in one of the boxes (the last place you would expect that in Newport!) and a moment later somebody else started in another part of the audience. Large sections of the crowd had already been on their feet; now their cheering was doubled and re-doubled as the inter-reacting stimulus of a rocking performance and crowd response heightened the excitement."

With Avakian's notes serving as a guide, audiences are encouraged to attend to the musical performances captured on record while imagining the events of the day as they listen to "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue." Beginning around the seventh chorus, for example, some listeners might focus a bit more intently as they try to identify the moment when actress Elaine Anderson (the "platinum-blonde girl") begins to dance. As Gonsalves continues to improvise, listeners may almost sense the energy and excitement that was sweeping through the audience at Newport. Finally, Cat Anderson closes out the performance with a series of dramatic high notes. As *Ellington at Newport* fades out, the last thing that record listeners hear is the ecstatic reaction of the crowd.

In the standard historiography of jazz, the performance of "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue" transformed what had been a rather lackluster concert into what is now considered a legendary event and a concert that gave Duke Ellington's career a much-needed boost. But while it could be argued that *Ellington at Newport* "captured" a dynamic and historic musical occasion, it could also be argued that the presumed historicity of the concert has been shaped by the exhilarating stories that have been (and continue to be) told about the live record.[73] Attending to the sounds and marketing materials of *Ellington at Newport*, generations of listeners may continue to imagine

how Ellington, his music, and his legacy were historicized on that summer day in Newport.

Along with *Ellington at Newport*, critically and commercially successful live albums such as *Ray Charles at Newport* (1958) and Muddy Waters's *At Newport 1960* (1960) point to the growing realization on the part of record companies that live recordings could be financially lucrative (including those, presumably, that were not recorded at Newport). These and many other live recordings of the era reflect a common titling convention that advertised a form of recorded liveness by aurally emplacing listeners "at" a particular venue or location. By the 1960s, the word "live" had started to appear on album titles, especially among independent labels specializing in jazz, soul, and rhythm and blues. John Coltrane's *Coltrane "Live" at the Village Vanguard* (1962) and B. B. King's *Live at the Regal* (1965) show how the term was gradually introduced into titles of the era (both with and without quotation marks).

In the early 1960s, James Brown's *"Live" at the Apollo* captured the attention of fans, critics, and people throughout the music industry. Shortly after its release in May 1963, the album (identified as *The James Brown Show*) was included as a "Pop Spotlight" in *Billboard* magazine, a collection of reviews reserved for "albums with sufficient sales potential."[74] At the time of the record's release, Brown had a song on the charts ("Prisoner of Love") and was widely recognized as a dynamic live performer with a committed and loyal fan base. The short review opens by noting, "Here's a wild album that should appeal to the many James Brown fans around the country." Words (and syntax) appear to elude the reviewer, who proceeds to describe the record in exceedingly vivid (and slightly suggestive) terms, noting that the "exciting set was recorded during an actual performance at the Apollo Theater, and the shouts of the crowd, the electric of the music bursting on the audience and their reaction for a dynamic 40 minutes or so." At the time, *Billboard* noted how distributors in some cities "report business at an unprecedented summer peak because of James Brown's 'Alive at the Apollo' which they say is selling like a single."[75] *The James Brown Show* rose as high as number 2 on the *Billboard* "Top LP's" chart (it could never overtake Andy Williams's *Days of Wine and Roses*). The success of Brown's album is even more remarkable when one considers that it does not feature new songs. Instead of new material, fans were being encouraged to buy live versions of songs that were already familiar to them from Brown's studio recordings.

Fans were not being encouraged to buy just the record; they were also being sold an experience. In his liner notes to the original LP release, pro-

ducer Hal Neely acknowledges those fans "who have been fortunate to see [Brown] perform in person, I'm sure it was a thrill and I'm sure you agree that he is all talent . . . all showman . . . all entertainment."[76] After establishing the image of Brown and his live shows in the minds of potential record buyers, Neely turns his attention to everyone else, assuring "those of you who have never seen him work [that] this album will be a new, and exciting experience." For those fans who might know the songs but have never been to a concert, Neely promises that the album features the "actual recording of the midnight show and includes the actual 40 minutes of James Brown on stage."[77] In Neely's opinion, the album is "without a doubt one of the most exciting albums ever recorded at a live performance." Even more remarkable is the fact that "the producers and engineers have completely captured the James Brown personality, the James Brown sound, the James Brown feel." For audiophiles and fans who might have been justifiably skeptical of such bold claims, Neely admits that the "technical problems of recording a live performance in a packed house were almost insurmountable." However, Neely confidently asserts that by "using [an] AMPEX 350–2 tape machine with eight mikes" and mixed in "Stereophonic sound," the amount of "effort and time" devoted to producing the recording was "justified by the result."

Throughout Neely's liner notes, the recorded sounds, the concert experience, and the mythology surrounding James Brown's concerts become indistinguishable from one another. The recording acts as a sort of sonic portal that is capable of providing direct contact to the personality of the performer and the sound and feel of the original live experience. The tone and tenor of Neely's notes are not unique among live album releases of the era. Indeed, by the early 1960s, live recordings were commonly promoted for their purported ability to convey a sense of musical liveness. As Philip Auslander has pointed out, however, the experience of liveness provided by live recordings is "primarily affective." As a mediated experience of liveness, live recordings encourage in the "listener a sense of participating in a specific performance and a vicarious relationship to the audience for that performance not accessible through studio productions."[78]

It is important to keep in mind, however, that audiences and record buyers were being convinced of this affective experience of recorded liveness. From the "girl who launched 7,000 cheers" at Newport to the "electric of the music bursting" all over Brown's audience at the Apollo, record companies routinely promoted the affective capabilities of live recordings to consumers who demanded more and more recorded material. At the same time, the remarkable claims regarding the sonic and experiential qualities of contemporary

live records served to reinforce the idea that a live performance offered a more authentic manner of experiencing music. This (re)affirmation of the ideology of liveness was being promoted, of course, through the production, promotion, and sale of recorded objects: the commercial live recording. As media scholar Keir Keightley has observed, for a generation of listeners whose experience of music had been shaped by records, the modern live recording offered a "perceived sense of spontaneous performance, emotional directness and audience interaction," qualities that were more commonly associated with the live concert experience.[79] By the middle of the 1960s, therefore, record companies were aggressively selling the ideology of liveness to audiences in the form of live records.[80]

The Grateful Dead, Live Recordings, and the Ideology of Liveness

In 1965, the Grateful Dead (then known as the Warlocks) played their earliest live shows in venues throughout San Francisco and the Bay Area. As a dance band that played multiple sets night after night, it might be tempting to assert that the Dead were somehow ineluctably interpellated within a prevailing ideology of liveness.[81] To do so, however, would serve to simply "read," or interpret, aspects of the Dead phenomenon against the expansive backdrop ("through the lens") of some hazy, inchoate conception of liveness.[82] Instead, *Live Dead* traces a critical history of the idea of liveness by considering how and why live recordings came to dominate the discourse of the Grateful Dead.

In chapter 1, I describe how, by the middle of the 1960s, the Grateful Dead were already being heralded as the premier live band of the San Francisco scene. Despite the musical and lyrical eclecticism, innovative formal designs, and unconventional recording and production techniques associated with the band's earliest studio albums, many fans and critics were skeptical that the Dead were capable of capturing the energy and intensity of their live concerts on record. The Dead were finally able to produce a distinctive form of recorded liveness with the release of *Live/Dead* in 1969, an artistic achievement and a critical success made possible by advances in multitrack recording and mixing technologies. Subsequent live recordings (including *Skull and Roses* and *Europe '72*) reveal how, by the early 1970s, the Grateful Dead were content to produce live albums as a way of satisfying the material demands of the record industry. As purported documents of "liveness," however, the band's official releases owe more to the production techniques commonly associated with studio recordings. Consequently, by the early 1970s, a

growing number of fans and critics were beginning to question the perceived authenticity of the form of recorded liveness that the Dead were promoting on their major label releases.

Alongside the Grateful Dead's earliest commercially released live albums, fans also had access to a growing body of "unofficial" live concert recordings. Chapter 2 considers the community of tapers and the culture and economics of tape trading that had emerged by the early 1970s. More specifically, this chapter examines how, in the era of unauthorized "bootlegs," these amateur recordings—commonly known as "tapes"—offered fans an alternate version of recorded liveness, a version that was substantially different from what was packaged and sold on the Dead's official live albums. Drawing on the work of literary critic Susan Stewart, I examine how the tapes became meaningful through a variety of personal and historical narratives that served to connect fans to the original concert experience(s) via (what was imagined as) a more authentic version of recorded liveness. As the demand for live recordings continued to grow among fans, I also describe how, beginning in the mid-1970s, members of the Dead organization prepared to produce, market, and distribute recordings from the band's personal "vault" of unreleased material.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine how idea(l)s of recorded liveness continued to influence the Grateful Dead's creative and commercial endeavors throughout the 1980s. Chapter 3 considers the band's run of concerts at the Warfield Theatre in San Francisco and Radio City Music Hall in New York City in September and October 1980. Whereas the distinctive quality of liveness heard on the band's earliest commercial live releases owed much to the production techniques associated with the recording studio, *Reckoning* and *Dead Set*, two live double albums released in 1981, were recorded and mixed so as to suggest the sounds and textures of fan-produced recordings. Furthermore, advances in video technology, the introduction of home video systems, and the growing market for videocassettes and videodiscs suggested new approaches to experiencing and marketing liveness at the dawn of the new decade.

In chapter 4, I describe how, throughout the 1980s, members of the Dead's touring crew continued to document the band's live performances on a variety of recording mediums and formats while designated tape archivists worked to store, catalog, and maintain the Dead's growing library of concert recordings. At the same time, people throughout the Dead organization continued to explore the practical and logistical details of producing, marketing, and distributing live concert recordings from the vault.

In 1987, the song "Touch of Grey" introduced the Grateful Dead to a new (younger) generation of fans, many of whom were just learning about the era

of the "hippies" and the associated (and increasingly romanticized) ideals of the San Francisco countercultural movement of the 1960s. Even as the band's recent studio records and concerts introduced newer fans to the history of the Dead (not to mention the Dead's legacy of liveness), an enormous trove of previously unavailable live concert recordings, known among traders and collectors as the "Betty Boards," began to circulate in the spring of 1987. As I describe in chapter 4, the remarkable history of this batch of tapes—their production, provenance, rediscovery, and resurrection—reaffirmed the significance of live recordings within an established discourse of liveness among Deadheads.

Following the critical and commercial success of "Touch of Grey" and the album *In the Dark*, the Grateful Dead renegotiated their contract with Arista Records in 1988. Among the many favorable terms of the new contract, the Dead were finally granted the right to sell and distribute materials from their personal vault of archival recordings. Chapter 5 examines the distinctive "languages of liveness" that were used to advertise and aestheticize the earliest official releases from the Grateful Dead's legendary vault. As I describe, the releases that appeared on the *From the Vault* series were evaluated, produced, and promoted according to a rationalized discourse that emphasized the superior sonic qualities and technical features of the multitrack recordings. In 1993, the band and tape archivist Dick Latvala introduced a series of compact disc releases called *Dick's Picks* that featured live performances that had been recorded using 2-track technologies. Whereas the recordings featured on the *From the Vault* series more closely resemble the sound and aesthetic of the band's professionally produced, major-label live releases, the compact discs included as part of the *Dick's Picks* series were shaped by the discourse of liveness that had come to be associated with fan-produced tapes.

Live recordings became the primary method by which the Grateful Dead would continue to promote the band's legacy of liveness following the death of Jerry Garcia in 1995. By the turn of the millennium, a vast (and growing) digital library of live concert recordings featuring the sounds of the Dead was readily accessible on the World Wide Web. But even as fans all over the world gained access to thousands of live recordings online, the Grateful Dead and their business partners continued to market and promote an "official" version of recorded liveness by producing a multitude of physical releases in a variety of (increasingly obsolete) formats. In chapter 6, I consider how, within the community and the culture of the Grateful Dead, live recordings have been valued not just for the sounds and stories that they transmit but also for their materiality.

For more than fifty years, live recordings have shaped and influenced the general history and popular mythology of the Grateful Dead. Many of the stories recounted in the following chapters may be familiar to some fans of the band. In narrating these stories, I have relied on numerous sources, including popular and scholarly writings, reviews and interviews, fanzines, blogs, and a host of audio and video recordings. At the same time, however, the versions of the stories told in *Live Dead* reflect details and information drawn from a variety of primary documents housed within the Grateful Dead Archive at the University of California at Santa Cruz, including business meeting minutes, internal memos, planning and promotional materials, contracts, recording logs, concert files, correspondence, and a host of other sources. Weaving together these various resources, *Live Dead* considers how live recordings of the Grateful Dead became meaningful, both for the band and their fans, as material expressions of various idea(l)s, including liveness, authenticity and historical meaning, the use and value of cultural objects, and the phantasmagoric power of recorded sound.

The Grateful Dead (1969) (*Left to right*: Bob Weir, Bill Kreutzmann, Tom Constanten, Phil Lesh, Jerry Garcia, Mickey Hart, Ron "Pigpen" McKernan)

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1 From the description of the National Recording Registry on the Library of Congress site: "Frequently Asked Questions," Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/recording-registry/frequently-asked-questions/#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20National%20Recording,by%20the%20Library%20of%20Congress (accessed March 31, 2023).

2 From the original press release dated 2011. A revised and updated version is available: "Recordings by Donna Summer, Prince and Dolly Parton Named to the National Recording Registry: Additions Mark 10th Anniversary of Registry," Library of Congress, May 24, 2012, https://www.loc.gov/item/prn-12-107/.

3 See the many recordings of this concert on the Internet Archive site: https://archive.org/search.php?query=date:1977-05-08&and[]=mediatype%3A%22etree%22&and[]=collection%3A%22etree%22&and[]=collection%3A%22GratefulDead%22 (accessed March 31, 2023).

4 Getz and Dwork, *Deadhead's Taping Compendium*, 2:153–56.

5 Getz and Dwork, *Deadhead's Taping Compendium*, 2:153 (emphasis in original). Dwork refers to another celebrated live recording of the Dead ("2/13/70"), a concert at the Fillmore East in New York City.

6 Getz and Dwork, *Deadhead's Taping Compendium*, 2:153. Dwork refers to "Morning Dew," a song that had been a regular part of the band's live shows since 1967.

Information concerning the band's setlists, performance and recording history, and a host of other historical details and reviews can be found in *Deadbase*, a reference manual/encyclopedia that was first published in 1987 and has been updated multiple times. See Scott, Nixon, and Dolgushkin, *Deadbase 50*.

7 Conners, *Cornell '77*, 38.
8 The essay is reprinted in Brendel, *Music Sounded Out*, 200.
9 Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 81.
10 Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 88.
11 Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 88.
12 Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 88. On the technologically enhanced representations and experiences produced by commercial live recordings, see Wurtzler, "She Sang Live, But The Microphone Was Turned Off," 94–95.
13 Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 81.
14 Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 1.
15 Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 79.
16 Lydia Goehr offers a nuanced examination of this aesthetic tradition in *Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*.
17 Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise*, 81.
18 Stephen Davies, for instance, develops a generalized ontology of "studio" and "live" recordings in his *Musical Works and Performances*; see especially chapter 7. Lee B. Brown also offers a critique of Gracyk in his "Phonography, Rock Records, and the Ontology of Recorded Music."
19 Bangs, "[Review] *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out*, the Rolling Stones, London (NPS-5)." All subsequent citations are to this source.
20 Ulanov, "[Review] BG: 1938," 29. All subsequent citations are to this source.
21 Archetti, "In the Popular Vein," 254.
22 On the midcentury quarrel between the "ancients and the moderns" (as represented in the transformation from swing to bebop), see Gendron, "Moldy Figs and Modernists."
23 Levin, "Mix Reviews the Goodman Carnegie LP," 14.
24 Tackley, *Benny Goodman's Famous 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert*, 174.
25 Tackley, *Benny Goodman's Famous 1938 Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert*, 186.
26 Flory, "Liveness and the Grateful Dead," 124 (emphasis added).
27 Flory, "Liveness and the Grateful Dead," 123.
28 Peters, "Helmholtz, Edison, and Sound History," 177.
29 Auslander, *Liveness*, 61. As part of a generalized theory of liveness, Paul Sanden has referred to this as a "traditional" form of liveness. See Sanden, *Liveness in Modern Music*, 20.
30 Elsewhere, Philip Auslander ("Live from Cyberspace") notes that, in Britain, the earliest uses of the word "live" to refer to a nonrecorded musical performance date from 1934. Auslander locates the emergence of a contemporary understanding of liveness, therefore, as a response to the rise of recorded music heard on radio. In particular, he asserts that the "possibility of identifying certain performances as live came into being with the advent of recording technologies; the need to make that identification arose as an affective response specifically to radio, a communications technology that put the clear opposition of the live and the recorded into a state of crisis" (Auslander, "Live from Cyberspace," 17). Contra Auslander, I argue that the "need to make that identification" first developed in the United States in the 1920s as musi-

cians were forced to confront the professional crisis posed by the introduction of synchronized sound in theaters.

31 Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 34ff.

32 Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 42.

33 Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 42.

34 Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 42.

35 Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 42.

36 Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 42.

37 "7,000 of 25,000 Theater Musicians Held Jobless," 1.

38 Just a year earlier Weber was a bit more optimistic, remarking that, as "to canned music ever substituting adequately for the real performance, we are not alarmed" ("Interview with Joseph N. Weber," 228).

39 "7,000 of 25,000 Theater Musicians Held Jobless," 3.

40 "7,000 of 25,000 Theater Musicians Held Jobless," 1.

41 "Robot as an Entertainer," 5.

42 For a more comprehensive account of the AFM's response to the rise of synchronized sound in theaters, see Kraft, *Stage to Studio*, 33–58. See also Kelley, "Without a Song."

43 See Sousa, "Menace of Mechanical Music," 113–22. Patrick Warfield examines the personal, professional, and political motivations that underlie Sousa's celebrated essay in his "John Philip Sousa and 'The Menace of Mechanical Music.'"

44 "Serenade Mechanistic," 11.

45 "Robot Sings of Love," 3 (emphasis in original).

46 "My Next Imita-a-ashun," 3.

47 The image of the Muse appears in many of Helguera's illustrations as a generic representation of "True Music," a symbol of "True Art," and a guardian of "Musical Culture."

48 "Is Art to Have a Tyrant?," 3.

49 "Robot as an Entertainer," 5.

50 "Music? A Picture No *Robot* Can Paint!," 18.

51 "O Fairest Flower!," 16.

52 Some advertisements also evince a degree of "Europe-envy" that is reflective, perhaps, of underlying feelings of cultural inferiority and artistic inadequacy on the part of the AFM. In an ad titled "Is the Robot Fooling You," for instance, readers are told how "The *music-wise* Continentals object violently to mechanical music (in the theatre)." "What, then, if Europeans thus prove their 'music-wisdom,' are we North Americans supposed to be, that we are asked to accept mechanical music—and mechanical music only—in the theatre? *Music-stupid*, perhaps?" ("Is the Robot Fooling You?," 2 [emphasis in original]).

53 Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, 94 (emphasis in original).

54 Benjamin, *Work of Art*, 24.

55 Sterne, *Audible Past*, 220.

56 Weber, "Canned Music," 124.

57 Weber, "Canned Music," 123.

58 Weber, "Canned Music," 126.

59 Weber, "Canned Music," 125.
60 Weber, "Canned Music," 126.
61 See Kraft, *Stage to Studio*, 107ff. On the impact and legacy of the recording bans initiated by Petrillo, see Anderson, "'Buried under the Fecundity of His Own Creations.'"
62 Williams, "Mr. Petrillo's Hopeless War," 291.
63 Williams, "Mr. Petrillo's Hopeless War," 291.
64 Williams, "Mr. Petrillo's Hopeless War," 292.
65 Smith, "What's Petrillo Up To?," 92.
66 Smith, "What's Petrillo Up To?," 93.
67 Smith, "What's Petrillo Up To?," 95.
68 On the tensions and complexities of an ideology of liveness involving television, see Feuer, "Concept of Live Television," 12–22.
69 Research Company of America, *National Crisis for Live Music and Musicians*.
70 Zak, *I Don't Sound Like Nobody*, 31. See also Zak's remarks on authenticity and recordings in *Poetics of Rock*, 17ff.
71 On the emergence of a phonographic sensibility, see Eisenberg, *Recording Angel*.
72 From George Avakian's liner notes to Duke Ellington, *Ellington at Newport*. All subsequent citations are to this source.
73 For more on the history and legacy of Ellington's concert, see Morton, *Backstory in Blue*. Morton considers how the historical significance of the concert was aided by the commercial success and critical reception of the live recording (Morton, *Backstory in Blue*, 201ff.).
74 "Pop Spotlight," 25.
75 Dewar, "Music as Written: Boston," 18.
76 From Hal Neely's liner notes to James Brown, *The James Brown Show*. All subsequent citations are to this source.
77 Recall that Neely's reference to "the actual 40 minutes" is repeated ("or so") in *Billboard*'s "Pop Spotlight." The entire album is just over thirty minutes in duration.
78 Auslander, *Liveness*, 60.
79 Keightley, "Live Album," 620. Similarly, Landon Palmer has observed how live recordings "display the power of live performance as the originating source of a recorded object, offering an encapsulation of the immediacy and presence associated with the live experience through the capacities of recording technologies" (Palmer, "Portable Recording Studio," 54–55).
80 It should come as no surprise, perhaps, that many of the enduring myths involving popular music (especially rock), live performance, and live recordings were developed and refined during the heyday of the American advertising industry. Jon Stratton briefly considers the commercial and ideological contradictions inherent in live records in "Capitalism and Romantic Ideology in the Record Business," 153–54.
81 I am referring to Louis Althusser's well-known essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," reproduced in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 85–126.

82 My views on ideology have been shaped by the work of Barbara J. Fields. See especially her essay "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America," in Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*, 111–48. Conceiving of ideology as a "language of consciousness" by which systems of belief and social formations are consistently re-created and reinscribed, Fields stresses that ideology is not any sort of "material entity, [or] a thing of any sort, that you can hand down like an old garment, pass on like a germ, spread like a rumor, or impose like a code of dress or etiquette. Nor is it a collection of disassociated beliefs—'attitudes' is the favored jargon among American social scientists and the historians they have mesmerized—that you can extract from their context and measure by current or retrospective survey research. . . . Nor is it a Frankenstein's monster that takes on a life of its own."

Instead, Fields continues, "people deduce and verify their ideology in daily life" (Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America," 135).

CHAPTER 1

1 Goldstein, "Flourishing Underground," 5.
2 Goldstein, "Flourishing Underground," 5.
3 Goldstein, "Flourishing Underground," 34.
4 Goldstein, "Flourishing Underground," 34.
5 Goldstein, "Flourishing Underground," 34.
6 Goldstein, "Flourishing Underground," 34.
7 Goldstein, "Flourishing Underground," 34.
8 Gleason, "Dead Like Live Thunder," 31. See also Gleason's discussion of the contemporary dance scene in his book *The Jefferson Airplane and the San Francisco Sound*, 3ff.
9 Gleason, "Dead Like Live Thunder," 31.
10 Journalist Tom Wolfe provided some of the earliest accounts of the band performing as part of the Acid Tests in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968). Representative excerpts from Wolfe's book are reproduced in Dodd and Spaulding, *Grateful Dead Reader*, 5–7.
11 Gleason, "Dead Like Live Thunder," 31.
12 For more on the band's improvisational practices, see Kaler, "How the Grateful Dead Learned to Jam"; Malvinni, *Grateful Dead and the Art of Rock Improvisation*. See also Olsson, *Listening for the Secret*, along with many of the essays in Tuedio and Spector, *Grateful Dead in Concert*.
13 From an interview with Garcia from 1967 originally published in Gleason, *The Jefferson Airplane and the San Francisco Sound*, 308–309.
14 Sculatti, "San Francisco Bay Rock," 25.
15 Sculatti, "San Francisco Bay Rock," 25. Along with "In the Midnight Hour," "Everybody Needs Somebody to Love" was another popular record for Pickett.
16 Sculatti, "San Francisco Bay Rock," 25.
17 Butler, "Clash of the Timbres," 279.