

Backward Masking, and Other Backward Thoughts About Music

An examination of fundamentalists' folk beliefs that rock music contains hidden satanic messages inspired by the Devil, and of other worries about music and mind control.

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Tom Mciver wrote "Ancient Tales and Space-Age Myths of Creationist Evangelism," in our Spring 1986 issue.

[image not archived]

Some of the literature about supposed backward masking and hidden Satanic messages in rock music.

ACCORDING TO many fundamentalists and other conservative religious believers, rock music contains hidden satanic messages.

These messages are allegedly embedded in the music by the Devil himself or by the rock performers- who may be either unwitting or deliberate satanic agents-by means of occult inspiration and electronic overdubbing. Believers maintain that listeners' brains can subconsciously decode these backward sounds. Their satanic meaning registers subliminally and is not subject to ordinary conscious appraisal and evaluation, giving the Devil a potent propaganda tool.

This strange religious folk-theory claims empirical and scientific validation. Its promoters cite studies of subliminal perception and point to advertising conspiracies and to documented forms of brainwashing and mindcontrol techniques. They also triumphantly reveal the actual hidden messages by listening to rock recordings played backward. The dangers of backward masking (also called "backmasking") are denounced in several books and fundamentalist journals, by many television and radio evangelists, and most dramatically in traveling lecture presentations illustrated with slides and musical examples.

Backward masking is a prime concern of Gary Greenwald, pastor of Eagle's Nest Ministries of Santa Ana, California. Greenwald presents seminars on it around the United States and Canada, preaches against it frequently on his weekly television show, and offers several tape cassettes for sale on the subject.

Another leading exponent is youth evangelist Jacob Aranza, author of *Backward Masking Unmasked: Backward Satanic Messages of Rock and Roll Exposed* (1983), and its sequel, *More Rock, Country and Backward Masking Unmasked* (1985). Aranza's 1983 book has an enthusiastic foreword by former Louisiana State Senator Bill Keith, president of the CreationScience Legal Defense Fund and author of the Louisiana creation-science bill that was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1987. Aranza, who was heavily involved with drugs and rock music as a youngster, now lectures at high schools and colleges, on radio and television, and overseas.

The Devil's Disciples: The Truth About Rock, by Jeff Godwin (1985), is a detailed and comprehensive indictment of the evils of rock music. Godwin, a former rock and roll junkie, exposes Satan and his demons as the force behind this music and describes the insidious technique of backward masking. Jack Chick, Godwin's publisher, is best known for his fundamentalist comic books and comic-book-style tracts, especially his savagely anti-Catholic and anti-evolution material. One of Chick's comic books is

Spellbound?-a lurid tale of Satan's use of rock music to send souls to Hell and of the witches and Druids who implant demons in rock records. In a climactic scene, the heroic pastor exhorts a crowd of teens to cast their records on a huge bonfire.

Dan and Steve Peters are full-time crusaders against the evils of rock music. The Peters Brothers (brother Jim used to be involved too) head Truth About Rock Ministries, in St. Paul, Minnesota, and have been presenting rock-music seminars around the country since 1979. They offer *Back wardsMasking: How Subliminals Affect You* (1983), *Rock's Hidden Persuader: The Truth About Backmasking* (1985a), a variety of audiotapes (e.g., 1985b) and videos, and their monthly *Truth About Rock Report*. The Peters Brothers, Greenwald, Godwin, and other backmasking enthusiasts incite their followers to frenzies of mass record-burnings. .

John O'Connor (1985), a conservative Catholic priest, joins the battle with *Hell's War Against Our Children*, in which he exposes and condemns this insidious technique with a fervor matching that of Protestant fundamentalists. Other proponents, according to John Vokey and J. Don Read (1985, pp. 1231-1232), are Michael Mills of Research Ministries (Battle Creek, Michigan), who tours the country warning about backward masking; Allan Lamothe of Quebec, Canada, who lectures to schools and church groups and has published a book on backward masking; and Hot Springs minister Don Hutchings, who lobbied successfully for the Arkansas law Oater struck down in court) requiring that tapes and records carry the message: "Warning: This record contains backward masking which may be perceptible at a subliminal level when the record is played forward."

In 1982 State Assemblyman Philip Wyman proposed a bill to the California Consumer Protection and Toxic Materials Committee requiring that same warning label; the bill died in the California Senate. Wyman's office said it was awaiting results of a U.S. congressional subcommittee investigation before pursuing the matter again (Peters 1985a, p. 8. Don Glickman of Kansas, who proposed these congressional hearings, was reportedly considering introducing a national bill.

Mix of Imagined and 'Real'

The actual examples of backward masking revealed in these seminars, books, cassettes, and sermons are almost always the same. This standard litany is a mixture of the imagined and the "real." (There are a few cases of words actually dubbed in backward.)

Some of the claims:

- A Beatles' song with the lyrics "number nine, number nine" sounds like "tum me on, dead man" when played backward. (Beatles fans were at this time titillated by rumors that Paul had died, and they found tantalizing clues confirming his secret demise on the album covers and hidden in the music.) A filler between two songs says "Paul is a dead man. Miss him, miss him" backward.

- Black Oak Arkansas has a song with the backward message "Satan, Satan, He is God, He is God."

- An Electric Light Orchestra (ELO) song contains the message "Christ, you're the nasty one you're infernal" in reverse.

- "Another one bites the dust," a song by Queen, sounds like "decide to smoke marijuana, marijuana" when played backward.

- A song by Styx about cocaine says "Satan, move in our voices" backward.

- "A Child is Coming," by Jefferson Starship, has the words "Son of Satan" backward.

- "Here's to my sweet Satan" is what the words "there's still time" resemble backward in the Led Zeppelin song "Stairway to Heaven." A song on their "Houses of the Holy" album contains the words "Satan is really Lord" in reverse.

- The lyrics "This could be heaven or hell" in an Eagles song turn out to be: "Yes, Satan, he organized his own religion . . . It was delicious. . . He puts it in a vat and fixes it for his son and gives it away" backward.

- Pat Benatar's song "Evil Genius" says, in reverse, "Oh-h, Satan, that's why I want you to hear my music. The voice that makes my money."

- "I love you, said the Devil" appears backward in a Rolling Stones song.

- Motley Crue's "Shout at the Devil" album supposedly contains the backward phrase "Backward mask where you are, oh, lost in error, Satan."

- Venom's "Welcome to Hell" album has "It's better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven" backward.

The Bee Gees, Ozzy Osbourne, Iron Maiden, AC/ DC, Hall and Oates, and a few others are also routinely accused of including backward masking on their records.

Some examples of backward messages are clearly deliberate. An ELO song contains this backward message: "The music is reversible, but time is not. Turn back, turn back,

turn back." A Pink Floyd album played backward yields this: "Congratulations! You've just discovered the secret message. Please. send your answer to Old Pink care of the funny farm. . . ."

The Devil is allegedly responsible, directly or indirectly, for these backmasked messages urging rejection of Christ and promoting satanic worship and all manner of immorality. Can there be godly messages backmasked in music as well? Believers differ on this question. A backward segment in Prince's "Purple Rain" album says: "Hello, how are you; I'm fine, cause I know the Lord is coming soon." Aranza (1985, p. 12) declares this to be sheer mockery in light of Prince's blatant sexual immorality. But the theological question remains: Is backmasking an inherently evil technique? "We've been amazed," say the Peters Brothers, "that in some recent gospel albums there is backmasking on them advocating the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (Peters and Peters 1985b). David Kotzebue, of Shatter the Darkness Ministries in Denver, reveals that backmasking has been discovered in Christian music. In *The Beat and the Beast* ("Antichrist Is Coming! Millions Are Being Conditioned for His Arrival!"), he explains that these always praise God or Jesus, not the Devil. "This just goes to substantiate my hypothesis that either the Devil or God inspires all music!" (Kotzebue 1982, p. 21). There is indeed a certain logical consistency in this discovery. Most others, however, declare that backmasking is a deceptive technique, hence purely satanic.

Subliminal Messages?

Most exposes of backmasking begin with a discussion of social psychologist James Vicary and his Subliminal Projection Company. Vicary flashed messages on the screen between the frames of a movie. Each exposure was far too brief to be consciously perceived. This was first tried commercially in 1956 in a Fort Lee, New Jersey, movie theater, flashing the phrases "Eat popcorn" and "Drink Coca-Cola." Reportedly, popcorn and Coke sales went up dramatically, though there seems to have been no scientific testing of these results. Vance Packard's book *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957), about motivational research- mainly advertising-refers often to Vicary, though not to this experiment. Packard's later book, *The People Shapers* (1977, pp. 135- 138), however, does include it and other examples of attempted use of subliminal advertising. Most of the backmasking books cite Packard's examples almost verbatim, along with cases reported by Wilson Bryan Key, who Packard cites as an authority. Key and his claims were the subject of a recent article in *SI* (Creed 1987). The examples in the next three paragraphs may be found in either Packard or Key, or both, and are repeated in most backmasking books.

In 1957 another company, Precon Process and Equipment, began using subliminal messages in movies and billboards, receiving a patent for their technique in 1962 (which is not proof that the technique is effective). Also in 1957, WTWO-TV in Bangor, Maine, experimented with subliminals. They could not detect any effect, but this did not stop other television and radio stations from trying. Warner Brothers was sued in 1979 by an Indiana teenager who fainted and injured himself during the movie *The Exorcist*, which used subliminal images to enhance its effect, as did other movies.

The Federal Communications Commission expressed "deep concern" over the use of subliminals in the broadcast media, but did not attempt any regulations, claiming subliminals would fall under the jurisdiction of the Federal Trade Commission. In 1973, the FCC itself allowed the message "Give yourself up" to be flashed during an announcement about a murder. (The murderer didn't.) The same year, "Get it" was flashed subliminally during a television ad for Husker Du, a children's game. This prompted the FCC to denounce such advertising techniques as deceptive-whether or not they were effective. A Canadian broadcaster reportedly discovered subliminals in both Voice of America and Radio Moscow broadcasts, both sides apparently fearing a "subliminal gap." Broadcasting of subliminals was banned in Belgium and Great Britain. In 1974 a United Nations Human Rights Commission task force recommended a similar prohibition (E/ CN.4/ 1 142/ Add 2) and denounced subliminal indoctrination as potentially destructive of traditional cultures.

Hal Becker, an engineer who has been experimenting with visual subliminal techniques since the 1950s, introduced a device in 1978 that inserted audio subliminals in music tapes. *Time* magazine reported (1979) that Becker's "little black box" had been installed in 50 department stores to discourage shoplifting. Messages like "I am honest; I will not steal" are repeated rapidly and mixed into the background music at very low volume. They "apparently influence behavior": stores involved reported significant reductions in theft. There are now many companies selling motivational cassette tapes using subliminal suggestion. Becker and others have worked with sports teams to increase motivation and performance.

Packard wrote about a wide range of manipulative and behavioral-modification techniques. Wilson Bryan Key focuses on insidious subliminal visual techniques used by advertisers. His three books (the first with an introduction by Marshall McLuhan) have provided much of the justification for the effectiveness of backward masking. He began to discover subliminal messages in print advertising; he looked more closely, and now sees them everywhere. These subliminals are pictures or words referring to sex or death. The most prevalent is the word *sex* itself, which Key sees cleverly disguised in most magazine ads, added by retouch artists or by transparent overlays. The common nonverbal images he detects are male and female genitalia, faces and bodies, beasts, skulls, and devils. These words and symbols, says Key, are perceived subliminally and cause us to remember and be attracted to the product. See Creed (1987) for further details.

Although Key's main concern has been visual media, he has considered cases of subliminal influence in sound and music. In his first book (1973, pp. 31-32), he says that "subaudibles" are inserted into rock records, influencing listeners to turn the volume way up in order to perceive them. Key says *The Exorcist*, which he analyzes in detail, used subliminals in its Oscar-winning soundtrack as well as on the screen; sounds of buzzing bees and squealing pigs were cleverly mixed at different frequencies and sound levels. Key also points out that the Lord's Prayer is embedded in a record by Cheap Trick at eight times normal speed.

Key asserts that visually embedded words can be subliminally perceived even if upside down or backward. He also uses the term "backward masking" in its original psychological meaning (not the distorted meaning attributed to it by fundamentalists). Key refers to a song by Blue Swede to illustrate "backward masking": It includes a background chant that sounds like nonsense syllables, but later changes imperceptibly, to the conscious mind to a distinctly enunciated "Who got sucked off!" (Key 1976, p. 118). Elsewhere Key (1973, p. 34) states that "backward masking" has commonly been used in television commercials (notably Coca-Cola) and programs ("Laugh In"): Brief, emotion-laden bits (jokes, e.g.) are spliced into longer sequences; the mood of the later sequences is flavored by the emotion engendered and carried over by the short bits, whose fleeting existence is "masked."

Key also demonstrates the existence of the ubiquitous subliminals in the same fashion as the exponents of backmasking in music. "Relax," Key repeatedly advises; breathe

deeply and concentrate intently on the picture. In this suggestible state, Key then tells us specifically what it is we are supposed to see emerging out of the picture. The photo illustrations he includes are accompanied by explicit overdrawings of the secret words and images. Greenwald, Aranza, and the Peters Brothers likewise urge us to listen intently as they tell us exactly what it is we are supposed to be hearing.

Though Key denies this, most of his evidence, like most backmasking evidence, is simply projection by the viewer/ listener upon the photo or the music; the precise equivalent of Rorschach inkblot interpretations. Thus in most cases the alleged subliminal messages indicate not the secret intent of a music or advertising conspiracy, but the concerns and obsessions of the interpreter: sex, death, media conspiracy, and corporate greed for Key; sex, drugs, immorality, rejection of Christ, and Satan worship for the prophets of backmasking. (Thorne and Himelstein (1984)) discuss the role of suggestion in the perception of backmasked messages.)

I am not claiming that subliminal perception does not exist. Some scientific evidence indicates that sensory inputs not consciously perceived may still be registered by the brain; however, the whole field of subliminal perception and influence is highly controversial. There is much misunderstanding about the concept of "subliminal." It has no connotation of our perception being "unconscious" or mysterious (Bourbon 1987-88). Furthermore, the scientific studies confirming subliminal influences so eagerly cited by the backmasking prophets are contradicted by other studies in which no influence is detected.

People see many different images in clouds. Gary Greenwald (1981; 1982) sees wonderful things in the Orion nebula, just as he hears disgusting things in backward rock music. He believes the Orion nebula is the Great Hole in the North leading to Heaven, and that astronomical observations prove that Heaven itself is descending toward Earth.

Catholics so disposed see apparitions of Mary and Jesus in bushes, garage doors, and tortillas. The continuing apparitions of Veronica Leuken of Bayside, New York, resulted in the establishment of the Our Lady of the Roses Shrine (now relocated in the Vatican Pavilion on the grounds of the 1965 World's Fair on Long Island, though not approved by the Catholic hierarchy). Many of the faithful who flock to the shrine to hear Mary and Jesus (via Leuken) and to see the miraculous visions take snapshots that appear to be supernaturally altered, becoming further proof of Jesus and Mary's presence. These photos look remarkably like double exposures, odd reflections, and even some outright fakes; also involved is the marvelous capacity to read expected images into vague shapes and entities. (See Our Lady of the Roses Shrine 1986.)

Music and DNA?

A SCIENTIST with impressive credentials has proposed that music is programmed into our very genes. Susumu Ohno, who holds a chair as Distinguished Scientist in Reproductive Genetics at the Beckman Research Institute of the City of Hope Medical Center in Duarte, California, believes he has discovered a "primordial secret": a direct relationship between music and DNA sequences. He has devised a simple system to transcribe the four DNA bases (which code for all the amino acid sequences of which proteins are constructed) into the eight notes of the musical scale. The DNA bases of heavier molecular weight are assigned the lower notes; the lighter bases correspond to the higher notes. Each base can be either of two consecutive notes. (Needless to say, there is a great deal of leeway in this transcription system; duration of each note is unspecified, and there is a choice of notes for each base.)

To Ohno, this is not just a game. He is convinced that the resultant melodies correspond to the genetic information. Repeating base sequences explain repeating patterns in music. Oncogenes (cancer-causing genes) sound somber and slightly out of control. A synthetic antibody that detoxifies phenol sounds lively and light-hearted. As reported in the *Los Angeles Times*:

An enzyme that breaks down lactose—simple milk sugar—sounds like a lullaby. The tune, recorded by a violinist, has been played in several kindergartens in Tokyo and always helps put the children to sleep at nap time, Ohno said. [Ricks 1986, p. I]

It works in reverse, too. Chopin's "Funeral March" transcribed into a genetic sequence "resembles a cancer-causing gene." Chopin's Opus 55, No. I Nocturne, resembles the last exon of the largest subunit of mouse RNA polymerase

II. Ohno devised a melody from the first 106 codons of this gene section, which most listeners identified as Chopin (though not the Nocturne). It has a lively dance cadence; RNA polymerase is not nocturnal—it has to engage in transcriptional activity night and day (Ohno and Ohno 1986). Ohno thinks that specific functions of genes can be discerned by simply listening to the DNA melodies of transcribed frequencies.

-Tom Mciver

The Real Questions

There are two major questions concerning the examples of alleged subliminal images and messages, as Vokey and Read (1985) emphasize in their study of the backward masking issue. (Their findings are nicely summarized in Tisdall 1983.) The first is: Do these alleged images and messages actually exist? In most cases they do not. However, this is slightly complicated by the presence of undoubtedly real messages and images, embedded either to tease the fundamentalists, as a gimmick to arouse interest and increase sales, or perhaps even because the artists or technicians actually believe in their efficacy-or at least want to give it a try. Except for this small percentage of deliberate subliminals, most examples seem to be simply constructions or projections by the more imaginative (paranoid?) listeners and viewers, who then coach and exhort their followers to see and hear the same messages and images.

The second major question is: Could such subliminals-whether they actually exist or not-have the effect that the anti-backmasking crusaders ascribe to them'? Can they in fact be perceived subliminally and do they affect attitudes and behavior? Vokey and Read, cognitive psychologists, properly recognize that this is the more significant question, and they have examined the professional literature and tested this proposition using controlled scientific tests. Their study shows that visual subliminals like those Key warns about and the backward-masking messages that Greenwald lectures on are not perceived either consciously or unconsciously.

The profound and seemingly magical effects of music have been wondered about and analyzed since ancient times. The various theories proposed through the ages to account for these psychological, physiological, and spiritual effects fall into two major groups: theories that ascribe the effects to the music itself (rhythm, melody, harmony, instruments), and theories holding that the lyrics-the words sung to the music-are the causative factor.

Plato and Aristotle both held the music itself responsible, though they differed as to which aspects were causative. A generation before Plato, the Athenian musician Damon had stressed the great moral and thus political effects of different kinds of music. Both Plato and Aristotle concurred in this and sought to explain these different effects and suggest ways to control them. (Their views regarding the effects of music, and especially concerning the different modes, were controversial even in their own day, but have had considerable influence.)

Plato, like many since, thought that music held great power over people's minds and sought to control it politically. Plato considered music education (*musike*: that which is inspired by the Muses-e.g., the arts and literature; also *harmonia*: harmony-acoustical

relations of pitch-e.g., mathematics and science) necessary to complement the fiercer, more warlike training of the ruling class, to prevent them from becoming tyrannical and unjust. But in other passages he seeks to ban music that is "weak" and "effeminate" as a dangerous and unhealthy influence, such as music in certain modes, and the orgiastic influence of certain instruments. Rigid censorship was necessary. (Rouget 1985 includes a fascinating and provocative analysis of Plato's and Aristotle's theories of music in relation to possession trance.)

In view of the alarming social conditions today, and the glorification of drugs, rebellion, anarchy, and violence in much of today's rock music, many feel a sympathy for Plato's concern over the influence of music and the need to control and even censor it. In our real world, though, such rigidly authoritarian views can lead to totalitarianism. Plato sought above all to restore order and felt that respect for traditional morality and law was essential. He despised the incompetence of the untrained mob and argued for control of society by experts; his ideal military aristocracy was actually a kind of managerial meritocracy with rigorous state-controlled education and carefully managed selective breeding. Plato's views on the effects of music, and the necessity of state control over music, are much admired today in some quarters.

A modern theory of the effect of music-in this case rhythm-was put forth by Andrew Neher, a neurophysiologist. Neher (1962) proposed that ritual drumming induced possession trance by "driving" the brain's alpha waves. The reaction to this theory was curious and sociologically interesting. Many anthropologists and others embraced it quite uncritically, assuming that Neher had "proved" that drumming can cause trance and citing his study as definitive. Neher's experimental evidence and theory, however, is seriously flawed (Mciver 1983; Rouget 1985).

Fundamentalist objections to rock music have variously emphasized either the music itself-especially the rhythm-or the lyrics as most to blame for its ability to pervert and corrupt. Until the discovery of backward masking, and the current concern over pornographic lyrics, it was the "beat" that got most of the blame. Fundamentalists never really devised a plausible theory to explain how the beat affected listeners, beyond linking it vaguely to hypnotism and pointing to its "savage," jungle origins. Recently the emphasis has shifted back to the words.

What About Christian Rock?

A basic division in fundamentalist views on music concerns the status of "Christian rock." Can there be such a thing, or is all rock music inherently evil? So-called Christian rock mimics secular rock music. Only the words indicate that it is "Christian." This has engendered fierce debate among fundamentalists and evangelicals.

Bob Larson, a youth-oriented Denver evangelist formerly in the music business, cautiously approves of Christian rock as a way to wean kids from the secular rock world of occultism, drugs, and sex. His primary message, though, still concerns the dangers of rock. All music, whether of Christ or Satan, has spiritual power. Even if kids don't really pay attention to the lyrics of occult rock songs, the words affect their subconscious. It is the music's beat that captures their attention, making them susceptible to the message. An "incessantly driving, pulsated beat," though not inherently evil, can, like Eastern meditative techniques, leave the mind open to invasion by "evil spirits that readily operate through such entrancing music" (Larson 1980, p. 66).

Larry Tomczak, editor of the evangelical magazine *People of Destiny*, used to be a drummer for a rock group called "The Lost Souls." He does not believe that Scripture decrees any particular rhythm to be inherently evil, but he condemns the overall immorality of secular rock. Though Christian rock can be godly, prayerful judgment is required to expose "Satan's musical conspiracy to counterfeit what God creates" (Tomczak 1986, p. 12). Tomczak has a better perspective on music history than most fundamentalist commentators. Articles in his magazine note that most musical innovations were resisted by church authorities. Martin Luther was among those who used popular folk tunes for his hymns, and many popular Christmas carols are set to what was once secular music.

Probably the best spokesman for the opposing view is televangelist Jimmy Swaggart. Swaggart considers rock and roll quite literally the Devil's music including "Christian rock" and contemporary music. He rejects the argument that Christian rockers are "missionaries-trying to learn the language of the people they're trying to reach" (1985a, p. 5). In "copying the ways of the world" they have "vacated the premise of the Holy Spirit and succumbed to the methods used by demon spirits" (1985b, p. 50). "So-called Christian rock" is a "diabolical force undermining Christianity from within"; it is leading kids to the Devil, not to God. Swaggart—who has since been shown to have his own moral lapses—continues:

I turn on my television set. I see a young lady who goes under the guise of being a Christian, known all over the nation', dressed in skin-tight leather pants, shaking and wiggling her hips to the beat and rhythm of the music as the strobe lights beat

their patterns across the stage and the band plays the contemporary rock sound which cannot be differentiated from songs by the Grateful Dead, the Beatles, or anyone else. And you may try to tell me this is of God and that it is leading people to Christ, but I know better.

Jeff Godwin first heard about backward masking from a 1982 Dan Rather telecast. He was hooked. It is obvious to him that the backward messages could not possibly have been sung in reverse by the performers and come out so clearly. The only alternative is that the musicians deliberately recorded satanic messages and dubbed these into the music backward or that demons intervened directly. Godwin declares that, for some of the music at least, "no overdubs have been added." In other words, "the voices we hear on these songs in reverse are actually the sounds of the demons themselves!"

He offers proof of this: the testimony of Elaine, a former witch and Satan-worshiper. Elaine was herself involved in the process of planting Satan's destructive influences.

Satan is *real!* Demons are *real!* . . . Like so many other things, the whole movement of Rock music was carefully planned and carried out by Satan and his servants from its very beginning. Rock music didn't "just happen," it was a carefully masterminded plan by none other than Satan himself. . . .

I attended special ceremonies at various recording studios throughout the U.S. for the specific purpose of placing satanic blessings on the Rock music recorded. We did incantations which placed demons on *every* record and tape of rock music that was sold. At times we also called up special demons who spoke on the recordings—the various backmasked messages. *Also*, in many of the recordings, we were ourselves recorded in the background (masked by the overall noise of the music) doing chants and incantations to summon up more demons every time one of the records or tapes is played. As the music is played, these demons are summoned into the room to afflict the person playing the music and anyone else who is listening. The purpose of all of this? *Mind control!* (Godwin 1985, p. 343-344)

In this view, rock musicians truly believe the satanic lyrics they sing—their performances have the "stamp of conviction." And they are literally possessed by demons on stage. Charles Manson really did hear secret voices on the Beatles' White Album—there really were hidden messages. And Lennon's murderer really was acting on demonic orders: John Lennon's last album contains a Yoko Ono song with reversed voices saying "Satan is coming . . . six six six. . . . We shot John Lennon!" (Godwin 1985, p. 154).

For these reasons, Godwin is grateful that some Christians at least are now aware of all this and are diligently trying to call attention to it.

At this point, no one really knows for sure just how widespread such satanic manipulation has been in the past, and how extensive the infestation is today. We can only hope that someone has the courage to begin listening to and identifying Rock recordings so that parents can at least recognize the danger before them: the damnation of their precious children's souls. . . .

More and more backmasked Rock abominations are being discovered every week by dedicated Christian groups and outreach ministries throughout the country. . . . What

a backlog of Devil-Rock songs and albums there must be out there just waiting to be discovered! [Godwin, 1985, pp. 131, 152)

David Tame takes a somewhat different approach in *The Secret Power of Music: The Transformation of Self and Society Through Musical Energy* (1984). Tame is an esotericist, New Age spiritualist, conspiracy researcher, and Theosophist. All energy in the universe is derived from music, the fundamental mystical power, according to Tame. The ancients were fully aware of the cosmic significance of music-and of the importance of controlling it politically- but this wisdom is largely ignored now. "In fact," observes Tame (1984, p. 14), "the further back in time we look, the more people are found to have been aware of the inherent powers locked within the heart of all music and all sound." Tame yearns for the primitive and mythic vision of the entire cosmos unified by symbolic correspondences, the magical, prescientific unity sought by alchemists and astrologers.

Many fundamentalists, and others, worry about attempts to control our minds through music. Fundamentalist crusaders against the evils of rock music often use a quote they attribute to Stalin (the quote is never documented; I suspect it is apocryphal):

If we can enslave just *one generation* in any country, that country will fall to Soviet Communism. The way to enslave that generation is by means of immorality, music, and drugs. (For instance, in Swaggart 1984, p. 6)

Mind-Control by External Agents

Fundamentalists, esotericists, paranormalists, UFOlogists, and conspiracy theorists are all worrying about mind-control by external agents-whether supernatural, extraterrestrial, or whatever. They warn of insidious attempts to change our entire value system, beliefs, and thought patterns. Jacques Vallee (1979) suggests in *Messengers of Deception: UFO Contacts and Cults* that flying saucer phenomena are manipulations of a gigantic social-conditioning conspiracy by unknown agents to prepare us for worldwide totalitarianism. Steven Jacobson (1985), in *Mind Control in the United States* includes the evils of backward masking in his section on subliminal influences of music.

The anti-backmasking crusaders and other fundamentalists take very seriously claims by rock musicians that their music is spirit- or demon-inspired. They point out that rock 'n' rollers often claim that their most spellbinding songs come to them when they are possessed- as if dictated directly by the Devil. Of course, when the same thing happens to a Christian singer-and they report that it does, that many of their best songs come to them as if dictated by a possessing spirit-then this is possession by the Holy Ghost. Likewise for possession during performances. Rock musicians become demon-possessed on stage; Christian musicians become Spirit-filled.

The ironic thing about the anti-backmasking crusade is that much of the music accused of harboring these demonic messages truly is an unhealthy influence on kids. Many of the rock musicians really are degenerate, greedy, contemptuous of authority, spoiled, and selfish, and their music may indeed reflect and encourage these attitudes. But whatever bad influence this music may have, it is the result of the words and behavior of real people, not supernatural demons.

Notes

1. Phil Tolstead is another born-again former rock musician who now preaches about the evils of rock music. Phil had a punk-rock band called "The Huns" at the University of Texas and got involved with satanism. Some of his songs were literally inspired by the Devil. He is now an evangelist with Maranatha at UCLA, witnessing to foreign students (Scimone 1986).

2. Swaggart may be referring here to four-time Grammy winner Amy Grant, whose videos are now seen on MTV as well as Ch ristian TV shows.

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