

**“Funk Pop a Roll”:
The Stylistic Evolution of XTC**

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“This Is Pop”: Introduction

XTC rest at an odd juncture in the world of popular music. During their quarter-century tenure as a band (1977-2000), they proved to be indefatigably prolific, garnering constant universal praise and a rabidly devoted fan base.¹ Even today, those familiar with the group’s music cite them as one of the finest and most important bands of the 1980s.² Yet, to the mainstream, XTC remain virtually unknown. With the exception of a few scattered singles, they were a commercial failure, and literature on them is remarkably thin: there have only been two books published (the most recent from 1998), and even the majority of articles written for popular magazines during the band’s heyday tended to label the group as “quirky” and leave it at that.³ And aside from a handful of passing references in scholarly texts, there have been no serious attempts by academics to examine XTC’s music.

This is a rather glaring omission in the study of popular music. XTC, comprised of the core trio of Andy Partridge (b. 1953), Colin Moulding (b. 1955), and Dave Gregory (b. 1952), were much more than simply “quirky”; they were a creative juggernaut that created some of the most inventive and intelligent rock music of the late twentieth-century. Although the influence of groups such as the Beach Boys and the Beatles is evident throughout their career, XTC stopped far short of producing musical photocopies. Instead, they worked in touchstones, such as Brian Wilson-esque harmonies or “Eleanor Rigby”-reminiscent string lines, to an already unique and continuously evolving sound. A brief survey of the band’s discography reveals everything from jittery post-punk

¹ These dates can be slightly contested, since the band formed in their first incarnation in 1973, and eventually disintegrated, rather than solidly broke up, around 2004 or 2005. The dates I have provided here mark the period of time from the adoption of the XTC moniker (as will be discussed shortly) to the date of their final album.

² Stephen Thomas Erlewine, “XTC: Biography,” in *All Music Guide To Rock* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2002), 1250.

³ Simon Glickman, “XTC,” *Encyclopedia.com*, originally published in *Contemporary Musicians*, 1994, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3492800086.html>.

pop to elegant acoustic folk, complex orchestral arrangements, brilliantly inventive chord progressions, and sophisticated word painting for Andy Partridge's vivid, intelligent, and often witty lyrics.

This essay's purpose is to provide an overview of XTC's lengthy career, and to trace the extensive development of their style across their discography. To do so, I will focus on three specific themes: the growth of their musical and vocal arrangements, the subsequent trend towards word-painting, and an increased tendency to include specifically English themes and imagery in the lyrics. The approach that I propose is to divide the band's music into three periods: "the touring years" (1977-1980), "the transitional years" (1981-1984), and "the studio years" (1986-2000).

The early period is marked by basic rock instrumentation (two guitars, bass, drums, keyboard), the complexity of the arrangements determined by what could be reproduced in concert. The melodies and chord progressions are short and simple, the tempos almost relentlessly upbeat, and Partridge's singing sloppy and untrained. The lyrics were written quickly and with little regard, and word-painting is thus kept to a minimum.

The middle period, following the band's decision to quit touring, is defined by increased orchestration that includes pianos, extended percussion, acoustic guitars, and, in isolated cases, strings. The vocal melodies are longer and make greater use of accidentals, the chord changes are more sophisticated, the tempos are slower. In addition, the lyrics show increased craftsmanship and care, and include prominent images of English life; they are assisted in the music by increasingly complex attempts at word-painting.

Finally, the late period marks the peak of XTC's songwriting and lyrical prowess. The layered and multi-faceted arrangements reveal an attention to detail and a musical control absent from much of their earlier work. Instrumentally, the band incorporate everything from twelve-string guitars to synthesizers and a full orchestra; vocally, the multi-part harmonies are built around contrapuntal

melodies and strongly echo those of 1960s pop. Partridge's vocals are reined in, and his lyrics make constant reference to history, literature, and the English countryside.⁴

Figure 1: division of XTC albums by period

Touring Period albums	Transitional Period albums	Studio Period albums
<i>White Music</i> (1978)	<i>English Settlement</i> (1981)	<i>Skylarking</i> (1986)
<i>Go 2</i> (1978)	<i>Mummer</i> (1983)	<i>Oranges & Lemons</i> (1989)
<i>Drums & Wires</i> (1979)	<i>The Big Express</i> (1984)	<i>Nonsuch</i> (1992)
<i>Black Sea</i> (1980)		<i>Apple Venus, Vol. 1</i> (1999)
		<i>Wasp Star</i> (2000)

The fact that XTC's work can be divided so easily sets them apart from the bulk of twentieth-century popular music. It is common for musicologists to follow such a procedure with the work of eminent classical composers, Ludwig van Beethoven being perhaps the most obvious example.⁵ It is much more problematic to apply this methodology to the work of rock or pop musicians: the expectations of a fan base or record company often prevent experimentation, as do the restrictiveness of labels and genres. Creative differences within the band - or worse, an overall lack of creativity - can limit new musical directions. Finally, there is the fact that most popular music acts simply do not last long enough to evolve thoroughly, and only release a limited amount of work.

⁴ It is worth noting that, unlike the early and middle periods, which encompass four years apiece, the late period covers fifteen years. However, XTC began using a considerable amount of time to produce their records from *Skylarking* (1986) onwards, taking about three years as opposed to only one or two. They also engaged in a lengthy strike against Virgin, their record company, from 1993 to 1998. As such, while the studio era's *length* certainly dwarfs that of the other two periods, the *output* is only slightly higher (see fig. 1).

⁵ Michael Broyles, *The Emergence and Evolution of Beethoven's Heroic Style* (New York: Excelsior Publishing Co., 1987), 4-5, 269.

Despite a fair share of difficulties, XTC remained uninhibited. Ultimately, their discography included twelve studio albums, thirty-eight singles, an extensive smattering of side projects, and, above all, a marked willingness to change and evolve.

This is not intended to suggest that each separate album sounds radically different from the rest, but rather that each separate period is distinctively different. Thanks to the growing complexity of the studio production and increased sophistication of the songwriting, one would not hear an album from XTC's later years and mistake it for one from their earlier years. It is difficult to confuse *Oranges & Lemons* (1989) with *Drums & Wires* (1980), even though both albums feature upbeat tempos and electric guitars, just as it is difficult to confuse *Skylarking* (1986) with *Mummer* (1983), despite the fact that both albums incorporate strings (and similar orchestration) and a mellow, folksy feel. There is more to XTC's evolution and maturation than the simple addition or retraction of instruments. The band's early music is the frantic, frenetic music of youth; the late period is the reflective, introspective music of adulthood.

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Although this paper is not focused on detailed theoretical analyses of XTC's music, it is important to provide a brief explanation of Andy Partridge's compositional techniques. Neither Partridge nor Moulding had any background in formal music theory training.⁶ Chris Twomey, in his biography of the band, *Chalkhills and Children*, writes that Partridge's father had been an unofficial entertainer for the army, and had unsuccessfully attempted to teach his son some guitar and piano. If anything, it was the craze for The Monkees that possessed every girl in his school that finally

⁶ Although Andy Partridge was undeniably the primary songwriter for the band, Colin Moulding contributed several of his own songs to each XTC album, some of which I shall discuss later in the paper. Although Partridge tended to have more a vision for the finished versions of his songs than did Moulding, I have attempted to avoid crediting specific members of the band for musical decisions. This is due partially to insufficient evidence (with occasional exceptions), as well as the fact that many of these choices were most likely made by the band as a unit.

inspired the pre-teen Partridge to teach himself a few basic chords on the guitar - in short, less a love for the music, and more a desire to impress the opposite sex.⁷

It was well into his career with XTC before Partridge even learned the names of many of the chords he had been playing. Instead, he followed a system (probably not unfamiliar to other rock musicians) which I shall term “pictorial theory.” Unlike common-practice, Schenkerian, or serial approaches to theory - all of which require at least some knowledge of the construction of chords and their relation to both each other and the key center - pictorial theory is built around “spatial relationships.” In his extensive liner notes for *Coat of Many Cupboards*, Harrison Sherwood defines this as the specific location of the musician’s hand on his or her instrument (in Partridge’s case, on the fretboard of the guitar), and the shape formed by the fingers when playing a certain chord. Sherwood offers the explanation that, in pictorial theory, many of XTC’s most creative progressions seem to have materialized simply as “happy accidents”: instead of the more academic, “what happens if I modulate to the relative minor of the subdominant,” one thinks, “what happens if I just move this whole chord-shape up two frets?”⁸ Partridge, who describes himself as a visual learner, breaks it down even further and offers this fascinating insight:

[Guitar chords] were all pictures for me. D is a triangle, E is a lopsided triangle that’s threatening to stick in C’s back, C is a lovely, organized straight line that’s almost like a teacher stood up there. A is like a little fence. So they’re little pictures I had of where my fingers fell - they form these little patterns, and that’s how I remember them. D is a triangle led up toward your hands, and if you pick it up and flip it over - so it’s laid on its back like a little cockroach - that’s D7. That’s the underbelly of D, the

⁷ Chris Twomey, *XTC: Chalkhills and Children: The Definitive Biography* (London: Omnibus Press, 1992), 13-14.

⁸ Harrison Sherwood, “Bless My Soul, I’m Already There!” Liner notes for *Coat of Many Cupboards*, XTC, Virgin UK, CDVD2811 (1996), 15.

Blues-y inversion. That's how I remember it - it's the underbelly. I flipped it over.⁹

While some may scorn Partridge's amateurish approach (I have several peers who have greeted the music of composers such as Christopher Rouse, who plays almost no instruments, with bafflement¹⁰), the truth is that his ignorance can be more a blessing than a curse. Never bound by the rules of part-writing, or by the idea that there are "correct" and "incorrect" methods of composing music, Partridge is free to be as inventive (and "incorrect") as he desires. Part of this ingenuity arises from the songwriter's incredible dedication to never playing the same thing twice when composing on the guitar: "it always has to be a new combination of runs, or a new combination of chords," he says, or else he gets "a little disgusted" with himself.¹¹ He has expressed a love of so-called "nasty," dissonant chords; he delights in stumbling across a strange collection of notes that have only been used in passing for "some obscure jazz thing," and building an entire song around it. "A whole meal of pepper! With a side of mustard."¹² The combination of the freedom afforded by pictorial theory and Partridge's fearless approach to composition have resulted in a number of startlingly original chord progressions and melodies that are rarely found in pop music and provide fodder for serious academic study.

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In most musicological texts, one typically refers to musical examples by staff notation and measure number. While in some particular cases, I will provide transcribed copies of melodies or rhythmic patterns, I will mostly refer to larger portions of the songs, such as an entire verse or chorus. This, as Allan Moore points out in his comprehensive *Rock: The Primary Text*, is problematic,

⁹ Andy Partridge, "Andy answers fans' questions, part II," interview by Todd Bernhardt, *XTCFans*, July 11, 2010, <http://www.myspace.com/xtcfans/blog/536988837>.

¹⁰ Christopher Rouse, interview with Bruce Duffie, April 29, 1994, <http://www.bruceduffie.com/rouse.html>.

¹¹ Partridge, "Andy answers fans' questions, part II."

¹² This approach can be heard frequently throughout the band's early output. An example is the bridge of "Radios in Motion," which will be discussed shortly. (Partridge, "Andy discusses 'When You're Near Me...'" interview by Todd Bernhardt, *XTCFans*, December 20, 2009, <http://www.myspace.com/xtcfans/blog/522973816>.)

as rock music's "primary medium" is recording, rather than written notation (in fact, Moore notes, a score of rock music "is actually a transcription of what has already been performed and produced," whereas the exact opposite is true of classical music).¹³ As such, when referring to points within songs, I will do so via minute and second of the recording.

The idea of recordings being a primary medium is especially applicable to XTC. It is not uncommon for bands to edit and tinker with their songs after they have theoretically "completed" them; these changes can be often be found, for example, on recordings of live concerts. For XTC, however, who quit touring in 1982, the version contained on the album is the definitive, and often only, recording of the song. That said, there are a few exceptions. "Single versions" shorten the song and remove any sort of crossfade to and from surrounding tracks on the album, but otherwise keep the original take of the song intact ("Ten Feet Tall" [1979] and "This Is Pop" [1978] being the two notable exceptions). There are also a handful of bootlegged recordings of XTC's demos and early live shows, both on the Internet and on various compilations. So, for the sake of consistency, all references to XTC's songs contained herein correspond to the album versions.

Finally, I will be providing discussion and analysis of many of XTC's lyrics, and have included the full texts of these selected songs as an appendix. I have followed each quoted lyric in this essay with a line number; this particular number refers to the version formatted in Appendix I. All lyrics are taken from the liner notes.

¹³ Allan Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text: Developing a Musicology of Rock* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1970), 34.

“...Our History Bends”: A Brief Overview

XTC's musical output and their personal history are so deeply and inexorably linked that it is impossible to discuss one without first having knowledge of the other. Andy Partridge and Colin Moulding, both residents of Swindon, England, recruited drummer Terry Chambers in 1973 to play in a band called Star Park; they later changed their name to the Helium Kidz. In 1976, they hired keyboardist Barry Andrews, having finally settled on the name XTC. Obviously a pun on the word “ecstasy,” the name is foremost an indicator of the band's off-the-wall sense of humor. Partridge, however, commented that they chose it simply “because [they] thought it would be a marvelously easy thing to see in print.” Besides, he pointed out, the brevity of the name reflected the music of their early records: “short and sharp and hopefully with no unnecessary crap in it.”¹⁴

Andrews left the band after the release of *Go 2* and was replaced by guitarist Dave Gregory. Unlike Partridge and Moulding, Gregory had an extensive knowledge of music theory, which he applied to his melodically and rhythmically complex guitar lines. The change in instrumentation made a significant effect on the band's sound, and was reflected in the subsequent albums.

During these early years, XTC were subjected to a hellish performance schedule that saw them touring the globe on a yearly basis. The effects were twofold. On the one hand, XTC were famously “fiery” live performers who embellished their songs with an aura of sheer “recklessness.”¹⁵ In Partridge's words, the band were nothing less than a machine: a “slick-sounding, commando, trouble-shooting unit, ready to go anywhere on earth.”¹⁶ That said, the incessant performances began to take their toll on the lead singer, and he began to suffer claustrophobic, inhibiting attacks of stage fright during the tour for *Black Sea* in 1981 (he was also still recovering from his sudden

¹⁴ Partridge, “XTC: Rockers in a Dangerous Time,” interview by Brett Milano, *Fairfield County Advocate*, November 7, 1984.

¹⁵ Sherwood, 15.

¹⁶ Partridge, “Eartime, 1989,” Chalkhills, <http://chalkhills.org/product/eartime.html> (accessed February 26, 2012).

withdrawal two years earlier from Valium, which he had been addicted to since childhood). The attacks reached a peak the following year, during a March 18 concert at Le Palace, Paris. Not even a minute into the first song, and with barely any warning, Partridge doubled over his guitar and stopped playing, as though exhausted; he pulled his instrument over his shoulder, dropped it to the ground, and stumbled gracelessly offstage. The other members of the band admirably attempted to soldier on for a few more bars before looking confusedly at each other and dropping out.¹⁷ This was the final straw for Partridge, who cancelled the rest of the tour and swore never to set foot onstage again.

Although such an incident would sound a death knell for most bands, XTC retired solely from performance and instead focused their energies on recording in the studio.¹⁸ Even this, however, brought disagreement, as drummer Terry Chambers, displeased with the decision to stop touring and unhappy with the new, tamer musical direction, quit the band in 1983 during the recording sessions for *Mummer*. This personnel change was immediately evident, as *The Big Express* (1984) featured an over-reliance on drum machines and synthesizers (Harrison Sherwood describes it as its pastoral predecessor's "industrial, urban cousin").¹⁹

It was not until *Skylarking*, in 1986, that XTC finally hit their stride, releasing a string of critically acclaimed albums that are at once experimental and yet confident, disparate yet united by the band's unique style. Unfortunately, the band members were constantly hounded by difficulties along the way. The recording sessions for *Skylarking*, for example, featured a notorious feud between Partridge and producer Todd Rundgren. The latter monopolized the sessions, selecting which songs would be included on the record and molding them into something of a song cycle; it was several

¹⁷ "XTC would tour no more," March 18, 1982, video clip, accessed February 26, 2012, YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZrCL1aF_Zg.

¹⁸ Although *English Settlement* was recorded before Partridge's meltdown, I am including it in the middle period since it contains many of the themes found on the two subsequent albums.

¹⁹ Sherwood, 21.

years until Partridge, not happy playing second fiddle to anyone, acknowledged that Rundgren's involvement had been for the best.

Matters took a turn for the worse following the 1992 album *Nonsuch*. Although XTC's relationship with Virgin had been perpetually rocky since the band's retirement from touring, it finally imploded when the record label printed, released, and then, without consulting the band, inexplicably recalled the single "Wrapped In Grey," resulting in the destruction of somewhere between 2,000 and 5,000 copies. Additionally, the band learned that they had been denied earnings from the sale of their records for nearly twenty years.²⁰ At the end of their rope, XTC went on strike for four years and refused to produce any new music until they were released from their contract with Virgin. By the time that the record label relented in 1996, Partridge and Moulding had written 42 new songs between them and signed with the American label TVT. Even then, though, the events surrounding the new album, *Apple Venus*, were "long, drawn-out, and occasionally traumatic": the first recording sessions in 1997 fell through, and the band had to restart in 1998.²¹ Partridge's desire to create what he termed an "orchouistic album" - that is, a cross between orchestral and acoustic - only made things more complicated.²² In addition to the months of "sketching and planning...and editing and tweaking," Partridge's friendship with Dave Gregory had disintegrated. Gregory, unneeded for either working out orchestral arrangements or playing the guitar, finally responded to his lack of involvement by quitting the band.²³ Partridge and Moulding, in turn, soldiered on, finally releasing *Apple Venus* in 1999 and a sister album, *Wasp Star*, in 2000, before going their separate ways and retiring the XTC name.

²⁰ Partridge, "Andy discusses 'Wrapped in Grey,'" interview by Todd Bernhardt, *XTCfans*, March 18, 2007, <http://www.myspace.com/xtcfans/blog/242738928>.

²¹ Blair Jackson, "XTC's Long Road to 'Apple Venus,'" *Mix: Professional Audio and Music Production*, March 1, 1999, http://mixonline.com/ar/audio_xtcs_long_road/.

²² Partridge, interview with Chicago Radio WXRT, February 25, 1999, transcribed by Janis Van Court, <http://chalkhills.org/articles/WXRT19990225.html>

²³ Although Gregory had been one of the primary arrangers for XTC in the past, the orchestrations on *Apple Venus* were handled by Haydn Bendall and Mike Batt.

“Rocket From A Bottle”: The Touring Years (1977-1980)

“We were young and snotty, and desperate to be remembered,” says Partridge. “We tried too hard. I now see it as naked baby photographs...and I’m embarrassed about it now because I’m different now.”²⁴

XTC sprang to life in the frenzied, sweat-soaked days of late punk, and although the band’s front-and-center melodies and shamelessly anthemic choruses set them apart from their angrier, rawer peers - they even went so far as to name their third single “This Is Pop,” with only a sprinkling of irony - the influence of that musical era is omnipresent across their early recordings. With their debut album, *White Music* (1978), and, in particular, its hastily-recorded followup, *Go 2* (1978), XTC first emerged as a band not so concerned with sophisticated songwriting or leaving a unique mark on the musical landscape. Rather, they were interested in offering up the most exciting, energetic three-minute songs they could muster. And although it is perhaps a little easy to dismiss these early albums - Partridge certainly seems eager to do so - it is important to remember that XTC were not trying to paint the Sistine Chapel here. Their goals were much more modest.²⁵

There are several characteristics immediately evident about the music. The songs lack any sort of sophisticated syncopation, but are given a propulsive drive by the universally fast, almost frantic tempos. Andy Partridge’s vocals are wild, youthful, and undisciplined, punching through the song with a sense of “desperation” (Partridge now makes no secret of his disgust for his early singing, comparing his hiccupy technique to a seal’s bark).²⁶ The chord progressions are fairly basic, only making use of two or three chords, and the vocal melodies are equally simple (but also catchy

²⁴ Partridge/Massimiano Bucchi, liner notes for *A School Guide to XTC*, XTC, Stampa Alternativa/Nuovi Equilibri Italy, Sonic Book #21/Sonic.021 (1999), 45.

²⁵ Refer to figure 1 (pg. 6) for a complete list of early period albums.

²⁶ Partridge, “Andy discusses ‘Statue of Liberty,’” interview by Todd Bernhardt, *XTCfans*, February 11, 2007, <http://www.myspace.com/xtcfans/blog/228912284>; Pat Pierson, “Permanent Bliss: The Immutable Pleasures of XTC,” *Filter Magazine*, Issue 27 (September - November 2007), <http://chalkhills.org/articles/Filter0709.html>, 3-4.

and infectious). Finally, the instrumentation is entirely electric, and standard for a rock band - limited by what the band could reproduce in a live setting. There is no use of overdubbing, and the arrangements, both instrumentally and vocally, lack complexity. If anything, the instruments work against, rather than with, each other on these early songs, engaging in antagonistic competitions to see who can be more dissonant.

Few songs encapsulate these overall traits better than “Radios in Motion,” the opening track on *White Music*. It is, in Partridge’s words, a “thunderstorm of a song...a noisy kind of blast.”²⁷ Kicking the song off at a brisk pace (quarter note roughly equal to 174 beats per minute), the drums enter with a sharp, staccato snare rhythm; immediately afterwards, the bass guitar joins and begins playing in near rhythmic unison. The drums play a repeated straight pattern, with a single bass drum hit on beats one and three and a snare hit on beats two and four throughout the song; there is only occasional syncopation (0:03-0:04, for example). The bass line is similarly driving, with a rhythm composed of quarter notes and pitches that remain almost exclusively on the tonic. When the guitars arrive at 0:12, they blaze frantically away as though trying to leap out from the speakers and escape.²⁸ True to form, they only alternate between two chords during the intro and verse: F Major and F# Major.

Partridge’s vocals leap in at 0:22. In retrospect, he says that his mindset at the time was that “this is gonna be our only album. We’re only gonna get one shot at it. I’m gonna sing in such a memorable way.’ I designed my singing quite artificially to make an impression.”²⁹ And if nothing else, it does make an impression. The vowels form awkwardly in Partridge’s mouth, as though he is unsure how to pronounce them (“Well, there’s a message up in Chin-*uhh*” [0:22-0:25]). At other times, he renders some lines nearly indiscernible with an excited yelp (“Make ’em, shake ’em in

²⁷ Neville Farmer, *XTC: Song Stories: The Exclusive Authorized Story Behind The Music* (New York: Hyperion, 1998), 24.

²⁸ Todd Bernhardt, “Andy discusses ‘Radios in Motion.’”

²⁹ Pierson, “Permanent Bliss: The Immutable Pleasures of XTC.”

Siam!” [0:30-0:32]). Partridge’s pitches are consistently sloppy and inexact: he slides in and out of notes, and some of his singing is closer instead to shouting. Additionally, a prime example of the band’s early rejection of studio production can be heard at the beginning of the chorus: at the end of the line, “All the kids are complaining that the songs are too slow,” (0:38-0:41), Partridge holds the final note and slides the pitch of his voice down as far as possible, attempting to mimic the sound of a radio turning off. The reasoning was that he “didn’t want to be bothered” to digitally manipulate his voice in post-production.³⁰

The vocal melody, especially on the chorus, is short, and built around phrases constructed from only a few notes. Although the falsetto backing vocal has a longer counterline, it too is simple and moves exclusively by stepwise motion (see fig. 2).³¹ Although the harmony is slightly reminiscent of the Beach Boys, it lacks that group’s complex, multi-singer arrangements. Instead, the line here is performed by a single vocalist, and feels like a clumsy, unsure attempt at mimicking 1960s pop (“seasoning,” Partridge says).³²

The dissonant interplay between the instruments, evident throughout the song, reaches a peak during the instrumental bridge (1:47-1:58). Interviewer Todd Bernhardt appropriately dubs this section a “battle” between Partridge and keyboardist Barry Andrews. And while Partridge’s

Figure 2: “Radios in Motion,” 0:33-0:37

Vocals 1

All the kids are com plain ___ing thatthere'sno where to go ___ Ba ba oh!

Vocals 2

Oo ___

³⁰ Partridge, “Andy discusses ‘Radios in Motion.’”

³¹ This was most likely sung by Colin Moulding.

³² Partridge, “Andy discusses ‘Radios in Motion.’”

guitar playing is certainly “very frenetic and dissonant,” it is Andrews who wins this particular match: his organ line is built so heavily around major and minor seconds that it sounds, at times, as though he is leaning his elbow on the keyboard to produce tone clusters. These competitions, a trademark of XTC’s early period, especially came to the forefront during live performance, when the musicians, in an escalating war to top each other, would throw in chord changes not found anywhere on the recorded version of the song.³³

These arrangements, if they can be called such, were rough to the point of being antagonistic, and featured no care or intricate detail. Even once the parts began to fit together more (beginning with the 1979 album *Drums & Wires*), the musicians rarely sat down to work out their parts as a group, or even put a great deal of thought into them. Instead, many of the lines were conceived during jam sessions, with the desire to be heard dictating what and when the musician played. The arrangements, then, were a bizarre mixture of instinct, courtesy, and ego, described by Partridge as “the idiot’s guide to orchestration”: “if one person’s doing this, the other one stays away. If one person’s chopping on the beat, you chop on the off-beat.” The parts were also written by practical considerations: Partridge, unable to sing and play complicated guitar lines simultaneously, performed simpler and more rhythmic parts, leaving Barry Andrews and, later, Dave Gregory, free to create more ornate lines. For much of the early period, the way the pieces fit together was simply “innate.”³⁴

Few kind words, unfortunately, can be spared about the lyrics for *White Music* and *Go 2*; rather, they should be discussed mainly as a touchstone against the far more poetic lyrics of the middle and late periods. Like the music, Partridge arrived at his lyrics by a slap-dash methodology:

³³ Bernhardt/Partridge, “Andy discusses ‘Radios in Motion.’”

³⁴ Partridge, “Andy discusses ‘When You’re Near Me...’” interview by Todd Bernhardt, *XTCfans*, December 20, 2009, <http://www.myspace.com/xtcfans/blog/522973816>.

“Load up the shotgun with a lot of good, exciting words, and go, ‘blam!’”³⁵ It mattered little to the songwriter whether the words he strung together actually made any sense, or whether the rhymes seemed forced. “Radios in Motion” certainly offers its fair share of the latter, pairing “Milwaukee” (16) with “walkie talkie” (18), and “Moscow” (17) with “learning how” (19). While a slight bit of droll humor is evident (“gets you out of your red, white, and blues,” Partridge puns [14]), the lyrics are remarkable only for how inane they are. The themes are mindless (“Meccanik Dancing [Oh We Go!]” is about getting drunk and dancing “to a disco trot from Germany” [12]), and the metaphors occasionally baffling (“I’d rather be a plant than be your Mickey Mouse” [“Life is Good in the Greenhouse]” - 13)). There are no cultural references, and imagery of English life that would later become a staple is nowhere to be found. If Partridge had one consideration when writing the lyrics for these first two albums, it was a practical one. Quickly becoming familiar with the terrible sound systems the band were forced to perform with - “which prohibited even a semblance of subtlety in singing” - Partridge avoided syllables that he knew would be lost in the mix (such as “e”), and instead included words with an emphasis on “uh” and “er.”³⁶ Otherwise, the songwriter threw down the words in a matter of minutes, doing little more than sticking his finger in his proverbial lyrical throat. The result, he says, were “appallingly abysmal” lyrics: “very stupid...silly, very impressionistic, very daft.”³⁷ Fortunately, Partridge began taking more care with his lyrics after the release of *Go 2*, and the rest of the band’s catalogue remains relatively free of these sins.

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Following the replacement of keyboardist Barry Andrews by guitarist Dave Gregory in 1979, changes began to manifest themselves. Over the span of XTC’s next two albums, *Drums & Wires* (1979) and *Black Sea* (1980), the band discarded much of the boisterous energy that had previously

³⁵ Partridge, “Andy discusses ‘Radios in Motion,’” interview by Todd Bernhardt, *XTCfans*, January 24, 2009, <http://www.myspace.com/xtcfans/blog/469485795>.

³⁶ Sherwood, 10.

³⁷ Partridge, “Andy discusses ‘Radios in Motion.’”

dominated their music. While several of the songs could have fit in easily on *White Music* or *Go 2* (thanks mainly to their upbeat tempos), they were balanced by a sense of restraint elsewhere on the album. The same cannot be said for Andy Partridge's vocals, which remain wild and unstable. The instrumentation, too, remains almost exclusively electric (the sole exception being the acoustically-driven "Ten Feet Tall"), and still restricted by live performance. That said, however, the arrangements (especially on *Black Sea*) are more impressive than before, with the instruments in conversation with and occasionally doubling each other. In addition, one can hear, for the first time, rough stabs at word-painting. These attempts are hardly elegant, and often feel confined by the instrumentation; nonetheless, they are an important step forward musically. As one might imagine, then, the lyrics become of greater importance, incorporating English themes and pairing them with pointed commentary on social and political issues.

On *Drums & Wires*, these bids at growth are perhaps best evident on the second track, "Helicopter." Although the song's quick, disco-esque beat (quarter note equal to approximately 143 bpm) keeps it close to the vein of *White Music*, it is worth noting that the song follows the taut and understated opening track, "Making Plans For Nigel." With a tempo set to 75 bpm, "Nigel" remains tightly wound for its entire running time: it is built around a single repeated guitar riff, and denies the listener the climax that it keeps building towards. Instead, that release only arrives with the next song - that is, "Helicopter."

Partridge's untrained vocals are on display from the very beginning, manifested by his habit of closing his mouth on consonants ("Clutching here with a telescope in *hannd*, looking out across our lego *lannd*" [0:14-0:21]);³⁸ his pitches, too, still feel approximated. As with "Radios in Motion," the backing vocals from 0:23-0:26 are a falsetto counterline (although they leap intervallically here, rather than moving in step-wise motion). And the two guitars engage in fierce interplay, one

³⁸ Italics mine, added for emphasis.

mirroring the vocal melody and the other strumming desperately. In short, all of the characteristics of *White Music*-era XTC are still intact.

Yet the music seems intent, however crudely, on representing Partridge's lyrics (which focus on a free-spirited girl who is "up there twirling round just like a helicopter" [11-12]). Beginning in the verse (0:13), the bass guitar line follows a circular melodic pattern, mimicking the swirling blades of the titular machine. When Partridge sings, "I really think it's about time that she came down" (0:35-0:40), the guitars respond by jerking their way down the scale. And at the very close of the song, the whole band joins in with the circular melody first established by the bass before then cutting out. The only sound that remains is an electronic hi-hat, which begins at the tempo of the song and gradually undergoes an *accelerando* while simultaneously fading out and panning from side to side. The effect adequately copies the sound of a helicopter roaring to life and gradually lifting off.

Black Sea may tone down the attempts at word-painting, but makes up for that absence in many other ways. Quite easily the peak of the band's early period, *Black Sea* is a commanding heavyweight of an album that was described by Partridge as essentially "a Xerox of [the] stage show."³⁹ While the chord progressions are still based on repetition of a few chords, the melodies are longer and uniformly catchy. Better yet is that, for the first time, the music sounds like the collaborative effort of a band, rather than a group of independently-minded musicians all jostling to be heard. The guitar, bass, and drums on "Respectable Street," for example, play a jagged, heavily syncopated chorus (0:46-1:01) before transitioning into rhythmic and melodic unison on the verse. With the instruments acting as background, Partridge's vocal melody takes the forefront as rarely before, and is emphasized further when doubled by the guitar in the second half of the verse (1:12-1:23). The second track, "Generals and Majors," features a primary *motif* which is traded back and forth between the instruments. It begins in the higher register of a ringing electric guitar (0:00-0:13)

³⁹ Twomey, 113.

before being transposed down an octave and performed in unison by a second guitar and the bass (0:14-0:27). It is then returned to the primary guitar for the final chorus (2:43-3:10). Interplay and doubling like this can be heard throughout *Black Sea*, and suggests that Partridge and the other members were finally working together, rather than against each other.

Even as an early masterpiece, though, *Black Sea* is slightly problematic. The issues arise mainly in the cases of word-painting, which, despite the band's best intentions, are bound by the insistence on basic arrangements and restricting the music to what could be reproduced live. "Towers of London," the album's centerpiece, was an attempt to "squeeze out the essence of Victorian London" and create an industrial-sounding texture. On the one hand, this is evident: the mid-tempo pacing of the song (quarter note equal to about 113 bpm) and the fairly rigid, unsyncopated drum and bass parts imply the slow, incessant routine of work. Meanwhile, the sound of an anvil ("meant to be like hammers and things"), timed perfectly with the snare hits on two and four (0:08-0:17, for example), explicitly states the band's intentions.⁴⁰

Yet XTC attempt to build an entire world with only minimal tools. A prime example can be heard at the beginning of the bridge, with a quick minor third in the keyboard (2:45). In interviews, Partridge has stated that he wanted this to mimic the sound of waterdrops in the tunnels beneath London; the problem is that there is no reason for anyone who does not know this to suspect it. One could argue that the descending guitar line of the solo (2:44-2:45) represents downward movement into the sewer, but the part is so high (and remains so) that this is unlikely. Aside from Partridge's confirmation, we have no other indications within the music that this keyboard part is supposed to be representative of anything. This and others like it are little things, almost nitpicking for an album as accomplished as *Black Sea*. Yet they signal that, at this point, XTC had greater ambition and vision than anything they had produced yet.

⁴⁰ Partridge, "Andy and Dave discuss 'Towers of London,'" interview by Todd Bernhardt, *XTCfans*, December 16, 2007, <http://www.myspace.com/xtcfans/blog/336542861>.

This ambition is equally evident in Andy Partridge's lyrics. *Black Sea* marks the first point when the songwriter obviously began putting more time and care into his words, as they are placed front and center in the songs and tackle more serious topics: hypocritical neighbors who, when not at Sunday church, spend their time drinking and gossiping about abortion and "sex positions" ("Respectable Street" - 15); political concerns ("Generals and Majors," "Living Through Another Cuba"); overworked and underpaid employees ("Paper and Iron [Notes and Coins]"). English themes and images also begin playing a major role. The latter song makes reference to working "for the unicorn and lion" (5)⁴¹ and staying at work "for one more farthing" (8).⁴² The aforementioned "Towers of London" is an ode to the destitute Irish workers who built London in the Victorian era. Not only do the lyrics refer to the workers by the British slang "navvies" (9), but also make constant references to British locations: "Victoria's gem" (6), "merchants from Stepney" (12), "in the direction of Dublin" (15). "Towers of London," in fact, melds these two major themes of Englishness and socio-political concerns. Partridge intended the song to be much more than simply an historical account: he says that the lyrics were written as a "paean to the working man, the laborer, who built and is *still* building London."⁴³

In the end, the touring years are marked by a growth arc all their own. Over the span of four albums, XTC reined in all their superfluous musical flailing and replaced it with tightly wound arrangements, more restrained tempos, and increasingly mature lyrics that were reflected - however roughly - by the instrumentation. Yet some things were unchanged. Touring remained the band's *modus operandi*, a fact reflected in the lack of overdubbing or multi-layered instrumental and vocal arrangements. The instrumentation, too, stayed entirely electric, and Partridge's vocals, although

⁴¹ The symbols of Great Britain, both depicted on the Royal Coat of Arms.

⁴² A British coin worth about a quarter of a penny and retired in 1961. (farthing, Dictionary.com, *Dictionary.com Unabridged*, Random House, Inc, <http://dictionary.com/browse/farthing>.)

⁴³ Partridge, "Andy and Dave discuss "Towers of London.""

improving with each album, still had a tendency to become unreined. Although it would be a number of years yet before XTC reached their zenith, major steps toward it were about to occur.

“I Sharpened My Guitar”: The Transitional Years (1981-1984)

Although XTC’s musical maturation is usually attributed to their decision to quit touring, it’s telling that *English Settlement* (1981) - the band’s first lengthy, ambitious, and sonically complex album - was recorded and released before the band had officially sworn off live performance. The group had already made instrumental changes - Andy Partridge bought a new guitar, Colin Moulding switched to a fretless bass, and Dave Gregory changed to a 12-string guitar - but they certainly are not the sole reasons for the musical shift evident in the three albums following *Black Sea*. Instead, Partridge has hinted that he was growing tired of writing and recording songs that were so limited in scope. “Why don’t we make an album we don’t have to reproduce on stage?” he asks rhetorically. “I’d got a lot more realistic with myself about what I’d wanted to do, and that included different textures, styles, and different instruments. I was no longer afraid to let the songs develop naturally, the way they were written.”⁴⁴

This mindset is painted all across *English Settlement*, *Mummer* (1983), and *The Big Express* (1984), the trio of albums that make up XTC’s middle period. Having retired from touring, the band were free to expand their sound and to utilize the studio as never before. One result, as stated above by Partridge, is the introduction of more varied instrumentation: the arrangements are more fleshed out, with pianos, percussion, acoustic guitars, synthesizers, flutes, and strings all appearing at various points in the tableau. These obviously are the result of overdubbing, which the band had previously eschewed. Secondly, the tendency toward word-painting increases, thanks to the textures afforded

⁴⁴ Twomey, 124.

by these new arrangements. Thirdly, Partridge and Moulding's songwriting audibly improves; the former, in particular, begins writing longer melodies and chord progressions which modulate in and out of key areas. And finally, the albums become more thematically driven, less a collection of individual songs and more an entire work that function as a whole.⁴⁵ This is due in equal parts to the music and the lyrics. *Mummer*, for example, is one of XTC's quietest albums, with folksy instrumentation and an emphasis on much slower tempos. This is matched in the lyrics by themes of pastoral, rural England that run through the length of the album. The opposite is true of *The Big Express*: it is musically noisy, linked by a reliance on synthesizers and drum machines, and the lyrics are more concerned with grimy urban imagery.

If *Black Sea* marked the first true induction of Englishness into XTC's lyrics, the albums of the transitional period bring that theme to the fore. As mentioned above, *Mummer* relies heavily on themes of nature and rural life, always linking the images back specifically to England (this is a trend which manifests itself throughout XTC's later work). *The Big Express*, however, presents the opposite side of that coin: an England that is dirty, industrial, and driven by progress. In both cases, the lyrics are marked by constant use of metaphor and vivid imagery, puns and droll observations, and references to occasionally obscure British customs.⁴⁶

As hinted at earlier, this concept of a transitional period is imperfect. While the band inarguably had a middle period, it is debatable which albums it actually encompasses. *English Settlement*, for example, was technically recorded while the band were still a touring entity; in spite of this, it shares hardly any of the characteristics of the first four albums. *The Big Express*, by comparison, can be seen as the beginning of the late period, since the word-painting is as prevalent and the songwriting as strong. In terms of arrangements, though, it is unique within XTC's catalogue

⁴⁵ *Black Sea* can also be included in this point.

⁴⁶ Even the titles of the albums indicate the increased trend toward Englishness: all three names derive from English culture, as will be shown.

for its consistent use of synthesized sounds. These three albums, then, are placed together by a sort of default. Although they are all defined by the sound of a band attempting to familiarize itself with now permanent surroundings in the studio - and not always succeeding - they fall together because they do not fit with the traits of either the early or the late periods.

Figure 3

<i>Transitional Period albums</i>
<i>English Settlement (1981)</i>
<i>Mummer (1983)</i>
<i>The Big Express (1984)</i>

There are two songs from this middle period which showcase XTC's growing versatility with word-painting. The first is "Jason and the Argonauts," a dense six-minute epic from *English Settlement*. Partridge's lyrical narrator spends the song detailing an incredible trip he has just returned from, drawing implied parallels between the perils faced by the Greek hero of the title - Sirens, Harpies, and giants, to name a few - and the evils that Partridge's narrator witnesses, "acts of every shade of terrible...from man-like creatures" (13). The song then goes to great lengths to portray the impression of a long voyage. First, there is the length, which certainly conveys a feeling of never-ending spatiality (at 6:07, "Jason" remains one of the longest songs XTC has ever recorded). Secondly is a central *motif*, a circular repetition of a Lydian scale that repeats throughout the song and mirrors the rise and fall of waves on the ocean.

Following the chorus, the song transitions into a lengthy middle section in which the recurring stepwise riff is the primary *motif* (2:40-4:22). As with “Towers of London,” Partridge has stated that the band had explicit intentions of word-painting: this section in particular was supposed to convey a “hypnotic suggestion as to the expanse of the sea...repetition, slight variation, big, broad, blue.”⁴⁷ Unlike “Towers,” though, the band succeeds here: the constant climb and descent of the guitar riff appropriately represents the swells of waves, and easily elicits images of ships riding atop them. A backing vocal, sung in unison with the *motif*, fades in and fades out again, like the horizon disappearing behind waves before reappearing (2:45-2:53, for example). Due to the incessant rise and fall of the melody, this section feels vast and circular. Changes, for example, only occur in small

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increments. Wooden-sounding toms ring out the distance occasionally (2:55, for example), a strummed guitar in the higher octave *crescendos* slowly and gradually overpowers the primary *motif* (beginning at 3:13), the vocal melody of the pre-chorus echoes faintly in the background (beginning at 3:54). Although the section is only two-and-a-half minutes, it is remarkably effective. By the time we reach the chorus again, it feels as though we have been swirling around for eons.

Better yet is “Train Running Low on Soul Coal,” the closing track from *The Big Express*. Due to the heavy reliance on synthesizers and a LinnDrum, the band’s 1984 album is divisive among fans and critics, and often unfairly dismissed; even Chris Twomey, the band’s biographer, complains that it is confined by “heavy-handed production and cumbersome arrangements.”⁴⁸ And while the songs do occasionally feel bogged down and dated, the band managed to twist the popular trend to their advantage by mirroring the artificial-sounding instrumentation with lyrics that were frequently critical of industrial progress.

“Train Running Low” perfectly encapsulates this theme. Partridge’s lyric consists of an extended metaphor in which he compares a personal crisis about aging and losing direction in his life (“I’m a thirty-year-old puppy doing what I’m told” [12]) to a train lurching out of control (“My rails went straight into the wall; it’s the wall on which they dash the older engines” [19-20]). The song appropriately begins, then, with the replicated noise of a train awakening and pulling away from the station: the first sound is a low, metallic thud, followed by a heavy rhythmic wheezing. Contrary to popular speculation, the noises were not created by Partridge “pushing a wire brush over the rim of a snare drum,” and are certainly not sounds captured by a live train. Instead, they are simply a skillful manipulation of the LinnDrum. Aiming to create a commotion like “escaping steam and grinding metal,” the band turned the LinnDrum’s tuning controls down as far as possible; the result

⁴⁸ Twomey, 138; the Linn Drum was the drum machine used in the recording of the album.

rendered the hits of the bass drum and snare drum virtually unrecognizable.⁴⁹ A train whistle heard immediately before the verse was created in a similar way by Dave Gregory, who played a four-note diminished seventh chord and manipulated various settings of his guitar.⁵⁰ It goes without saying that such effects would be impossible to create with acoustic instruments or in live performance.

Gregory has noted that the song was “supposed to sound like metal gone mad, 150 tons of metal hurling down a track at 90 miles an hour.”⁵¹ To say that they succeeded is something of an understatement. Beginning at a restrained 48 bpm, the grunts and thumps of the LinnDrum gradually undergo an *accelerando* for the first thirty seconds, eventually reaching 120 bpm. At the transition into the verse, two guitars enter: one plays a frantic repetitive riff locked into the tempo established by a pounding bass drum, and the other, masked by heavy distortion, plays prominently dissonant chords that grow increasingly syncopated. Partridge’s vocal melody does nothing to calm the mood. Singing a lightning-quick pattern that makes some of his earlier songs seem tame by comparison, he spits out the lyrics at an unbelievable rate. Although the chorus (1:02-1:27) slows into something more accessible and tonal, it is only a brief respite before leaping back into the apocalyptically industrial verse.

Things only grow more hellish as the song progresses. A middle instrumental section (2:56-3:25) returns to the structure of the verse but substitutes a grindingly dissonant and almost ametric guitar solo for Partridge’s vocals. And the song truly careens out of control for the coda (3:48-5:06), which provides an exact mirror of the beginning: instead of wheezing and grunting to a start, the song wheezes and grunts to a halt. Amidst Partridge’s desperate vocal imitations of a train whistle, the band execute a massive *decelerando*, beginning at 120 bpm and gradually slowing back down to 48

⁴⁹ Partridge, “Andy discusses ‘Train Running Low On Soul Coal,’” interview by Todd Bernhardt, *XTCFans*, June 14, 2009, <http://www.myspace.com/xtcfans/blog/494823915>.

⁵⁰ Dave Gregory, “Dave remembers ‘Train Running Low...’” interview by Todd Bernhardt, June 28, 2009, <http://www.myspace.com/xtcfans/blog/497450997>.

⁵¹ Dave Gregory, Colin Moulding, Andy Partridge, “Recording *The Big Express*,” interview in *One Two Testing*, Issue 16, November 1984, <http://chalkhills.org/articles/OneTwoTesting8411.html>.

bpm. It may be a tremendously nihilistic song, but it's difficult to imagine Partridge's lyrics being conveyed as powerfully in any other setting. Many other bands used this technology throughout the 1980s, but few did so as creatively.

The Big Express may have pointed in one musical direction for the band, but it was actually that album's predecessor, *Mummer*, which proved to be prophetic. Aside from the quieter, pastoral feel of the record, *Mummer* marked three important developments: an elongation of Andy Partridge's vocal lines, chord progressions that modulated into other keys, and, most notably, the use of strings.

"Great Fire," the album's first single, encapsulates all three of these threads. Take, for instance, Partridge's melody on the verse:

Figure 5: "Great Fire," 0:12-0:31

The figure shows two staves of musical notation for the vocal melody of "Great Fire." The first staff is labeled "Vocals" and the second staff is labeled "6". Both staves are in 3/4 time. The melody is written in treble clef. The first staff contains the following notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The second staff contains the following notes: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The lyrics are: "Great fire burn ing, you sup plied the spark, fire's burn ing, spread ing through the ark, a ni mals are pan ick ing I'm _____ an i mal and pan ick ing Oh _____ your glare's a".

Although there is certainly repetition present, the phrases are longer than before and make greater use of intervallic leaps. Partridge also employs accidentals frequently throughout the song: the F# above in measures 5 and 9 is a prime example, as is as the G \sharp to G# in measure 8. Secondly, the key center is subject to a number of fascinating changes. Beginning in A minor, the song shifts into the relative major (C Major) for the pre-chorus; it then modulates again into A Major, the parallel major of the original key. This specific change is particularly notable, since Partridge's vocal part moves from a C \sharp to a C#, rather than modulating through a shared note (the shift back into A minor after

the chorus is equally startling, as the vocal line reverses its earlier motion). Even more unusual is the modulation into a G minor bridge; the closest relation to the original key of A minor is the parallel minor of the VII chord. Most astounding of all - and truly representative of his reliance on pictorial theory - is the fact that Partridge indicated no awareness of these massively strange and complicated tonal shifts during his interview about the song with Todd Bernhardt.⁵²

Finally, “Great Fire” marks the first use of strings in XTC’s discography. The arrangement is hardly complex, and takes few risks: often in unison, the strings mainly either double the vocal line (1:02-1:20) or fill in for it (2:20-2:38). They do, however, occasionally provide counterpoint. Leading into the pre-chorus, for example, Partridge sings an ascending chromatic melody, then a descending stepwise melody (0:22-0:30). Although the strings double his ascending melody, they then repeat that line for his descending melody, creating contrary motion. Other examples include a brief melodic hook during the chorus (0:52-0:53) and a *motif* leading back into the verse (0:57-1:02). While these parts are largely supporting, they are an important step forward towards later, more complicated arrangements. In a sense, one can compare the simplistic orchestrations on “Great Fire” (and *Mummer* as a whole) to the basic rock arrangements on *White Music*. Although the songwriting on *Mummer* is obviously more sophisticated than on the earlier album, both present XTC as a band slowly making their way forward into new territory.

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Although *Black Sea* was preoccupied with the country’s politics, and *English Settlement* featured a print of the famous Wiltshire chalk horse on its cover, it was not until *Mummer* and *The Big Express* that explicitly English themes began prominently appearing in XTC’s lyrics. *Mummer*, in

⁵² Firstly, “Great Fire” changes time signatures nearly as quickly as it does key centers: the verse is in 3/4, the pre-chorus and chorus are in 4/4, and the bridge also begins in 4/4 before cycling through 3/4 and 5/4 as well. That said, I have only mentioned this in an aside because metric shifts are rarely found in XTC’s discography, and are not a characteristic of either the middle or late periods. Secondly, the interview with Bernhardt can be found here: Partridge, “Andy discusses ‘Great Fire,’ interview by Todd Bernhardt, *XTCfans*, October 14, 2007, <http://www.myspace.com/xtcfans/blog/319065580>.

particular, is a signpost for the band, as it focuses on the rural aspect of England, and marries occasionally obscure references to British life with images of nature and the countryside.⁵³ Even the title of the album (not to be confused with REM's landmark 1981 debut *Murmur*) is the name of an ancient tradition of plays that still occur in the English countryside around Christmas. These performances place an important emphasis on disguise (particularly "suits of rags and tatters"), and "follow a basic script having to do with cycles of life and rebirth."⁵⁴

"Love on a Farmboy's Wages" tells the story of a British farmhand who spends his days dreaming of marrying his sweetheart and riding off in "[her] father's carriage" (4), only to have his hopes dampened by his scarce earnings. While the sentiment may be universal, Partridge paints the scene in British terms: "Shilling for the fellow who brings the sheep in, shilling for the fellow who milks the herd" (7-8). Later on the album, "Ladybird" is an exquisite ode to the tiny insect known as the *ladybug* in the United States, and brings the nature imagery to the fore: "I have heard you wish to walk me through your meadow; you'll spread no wings to fly in fright if I'm beside you, ladybird" (6-8). And Colin Moulding's "In Loving Memory of a Name" melds the two themes; the scene finds him wandering through a mossy graveyard (7), contemplating all those buried there who "have died for...England" (8-9). Indeed, it is only a small jump to thematically compare Andy Partridge and Colin Moulding's lyrics to the poetry of the English Romantics. Amy Britton, for one, agrees, and has commented on their mutual optimism, introspective musings, and emphasis on nature as "a rebellion against industrial development."⁵⁵

XTC addressed that development differently on *The Big Express*: namely, by staring at it dead in the eye. Although no less English than its predecessor - nearly every song on the album references

⁵³ As mentioned above, *Mummer* also features folkier, more pastoral instrumentation. Especially when viewed in the context of *The Big Express*, the instrumentation on the former feels extremely representative of rural England.

⁵⁴ Karen Schlosberg, "XTC: Love and Disguise on a Farmboy's Wages," *Musician*, June 1984, <http://chalkhills.org/articles/Musician198406.html>.

⁵⁵ Amy Britton, *Revolution Rock: The Albums Which Defined Two Ages* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2011), 107.

British life, either explicitly or subtly - it paints a far different picture of the country than the pretty, pastoral scenes of *Mummer*. The title once again is an explicit nod to English life, referring to the Great Western Railway, a web of train tracks that work their way across Great Britain; in its prime, Swindon, the band's hometown, was a primary junction on the GWR, and became famous as a factory town responsible for constructing the locomotives and rolling stock.⁵⁶ The band's dubiousness toward this reliance on industry is reflected by the album's cover, which is dominated by an enormous train wheel. At first glance, nothing seems amiss, but a closer inspection of the lower right-hand corner of the wheel reveals a tiny cricket, about to be crushed by the tremendous weight of the train. The symbolism is obvious: nature is fragile, and stands no chance against the force of urban progress.

"The Everyday Story of Smalltown" presents a nostalgic and yet unflattering portrait of a small English hamlet, "crouching in the valley" (15) for "a thousand years or maybe more" (29). As the Salvation Army marches through town and the milkman completes his morning rounds, the population drink up their Oxo and head off to the factory, where they stand in lines like poplar trees and make alarm clocks "that will wake [their] wives up" (12).⁵⁷ The opening track, "Wake Up," presents a more detailed (and bleak) view of those workers. Deadened by a routine in which they put on their "cleanest dirty shirt[s] and stagger down to meet the dawn" (1-2), they fall out of touch with reality and are unable to feel empathy even when a man lies bleeding and "close to dead" (27) in the gutter: "Somebody better go and get a blanket" (32). Even the songs that utilize nature imagery are darker: "Seagulls Screaming Kiss Her, Kiss Her," for example, unfolds on a dreary, rainy beach where the sea is "warship grey" (5) and "life belts gape like minstrel mouths" (14). The band's sense of humor hasn't evaporated entirely, though. Lead single "All You Pretty Girls" imagines life as a

⁵⁶ Farmer, 164; E.T. MacDermot, *History of the Great Western Railway, Vol. 1: 1833-1863*, revised by C.R. Clinker (London: Ian Allen, 1964), 406, 407, 422.

⁵⁷ Oxo is a uniquely British brand of stock cubes.

sailor who spends his days - and particularly his nights - dreaming of girls of every type (“village and city girls...quiet and witty girls” [6, 8]) waiting at the harbor for his return. Delivering each metaphor with a sly nudge, Partridge compares the “salt sea rolling” (19) to the girls’ tears the day he pulled out to sea. Even more hysterically, he then sings about the “rocking roller-coaster ocean” (15) before howling the punchline: “And in my dreams, we are rocking in a similar motion!” (17-18).

In conclusion, Partridge and Moulding may have reached new levels of lyrical sophistication, but that was only one result of a strange and occasionally difficult trio of albums. Those lyrics were matched by equally strong word-painting, which in turn was available thanks to new, expanded instrumentation. And the songwriting became progressively bolder and more complex, with chord progressions that implied (if not outright modulated to) new key areas. The albums within the transitional period remain controversial, largely because of the production, but they were ultimately invaluable in the band’s development. They were “the first of the multi-coloured records.”⁵⁸

“Garden of Earthly Delights”: The Studio Years (1986-2000)

On the surface, XTC’s late period is almost as difficult to define as their middle period. Although each record retains a strong sense of thematic consistency, the five albums separately include pastoral folk-pop, psychedelia-inspired rock, and a collection of songs written entirely for live orchestra. One could almost argue that this diversity in and of itself is a characteristic of the era. Yet this variance is created by a common link: a reliance on, and mastery of, the recording studio. The arrangements, change as they might from album to album, all reveal a palpable attention to detail, a desire to create massively complex music. The move towards greater instrumentation that began during the transitional years reaches a peak here, and the backing vocals utilize both

⁵⁸ Partridge, “Andy Partridge on 11 XTC Albums,” interview by Michael Dwyer, *Rolling Stone*, June 1999, <http://chalkhills.org/rsguide.html>

counterpoint and layered harmonies. Partridge’s vocals are finally restrained and confident, if occasionally pinched and nasally. And finally, the songwriting remains strong and continually modulates, and Partridge and Moulding’s lyrics are both witty and intellectual, returning to the established themes of nature and the English countryside while also incorporating historical and literary references. All these sundry themes combine to form a series of tremendous aural tapestries with beautiful melodies and effortless word-painting.

Figure 6

Studio Period albums
<i>Skylarking</i> (1986)
<i>Oranges & Lemons</i> (1989)
<i>Nonsuch</i> (1992)
<i>Apple Venus, Vol. 1</i> (1999)
<i>Wasp Star</i> (<i>Apple Venus, Vol. 2</i>) (2000)

XTC’s studio years are also marked by nearly universal critical acclaim. Although critics had greeted the band’s earlier music favorably, they were most consistently positive with these five albums. For example, the band’s most well-known album, *Skylarking* (1986), is commonly cited as a masterpiece by critics, and makes consistent appearances on best-of-the-decade lists and books with titles such as *1000 Recordings To Hear Before You Die*. The author of one of those books, Tom Moon, writes that the album is a work of “chamber pop brilliance,” and Stephen Thomas Erlewine’s *All Music* review awards it 5 out of 5 stars and dubs it “a pop masterpiece - an album that has great

ambitions and fills them with ease.”⁵⁹ When *Apple Venus* finally surfaced in 1999, it too received similarly rhapsodic reviews. *The Chicago Daily Herald* called the album “gorgeous” and raved that the “breathtaking” opening track “had more thought put into it than most bands flex over entire careers”; the *Sunday Times (London)* wrote that XTC made “the English countryside as magical and mystical as the pyramids”; and Amazon.com lists it as an “essential recording” and one of the “best [albums] of 1999.”⁶⁰

Both of these records are excellent representations of album-oriented consistency: they each feel more like entire works (not unlike symphonies, perhaps) than a simple collection of songs.⁶¹ *Apple Venus*, for example, was written almost exclusively for a full orchestra; the ensemble thus appears on nearly every track. But if *Apple Venus* is the most instrumentally consistent album of XTC’s studio years, *Skylarking* is the most thematically consistent. Producer Todd Rundgren envisioned the album as “express[ing] all life in a single day,” and thus selected and ordered specific songs to fit this “continuity concept.”⁶² Linked by a series of lyrical themes about nature and major life events (such as marriage and death), the songs were given an additional sense of unity by the arrangements, which took a number of cues from the pop music of the 1960s and 1970s.⁶³

Although XTC had flirted with the music of that era throughout the transitional years, it was not until *Skylarking* that they fearlessly assimilated it into their songs. This is evident in both the instrumentation and in the lush and impressively complex vocal harmonies. Examples for the

⁵⁹ Tom Moon, *1000 Albums To Hear Before You Die* (New York: Workman Publishing Company, 2008), 878-879; Stephen Thomas Erlewine, review of *Skylarking*, by XTC, in *All Music Guide To Rock* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2002), 1251.

⁶⁰ Mark Guarino, review of *Apple Venus, Vol. 1*, by XTC, *Chicago Daily Herald*, December 31, 1999; Stewart Lee, review of *Apple Venus, Vol. 1*, by XTC, *Sunday Times (London)*, December 12, 1999; “Amazon.com: Apple Venus Volume 1: Xtc: Music,” Amazon, accessed March 20, 2012, <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/product-description/B00000I4JT#productDescription>.

⁶¹ This, as well as the musical diversity present, means that it is incredibly difficult to discuss the characteristics of the late period in terms of only one or two songs. Much of the next several pages will be in broader strokes.

⁶² Farmer, 179; the “continuity concept” is attributed to Rundgren in the liner notes.

⁶³ It is worth noting that *Skylarking*, along with the rest of XTC’s catalogue, lacks the lyrical use of recurring characters or overarching storylines usually attributed to “concept albums.” A good comparison, perhaps unsurprisingly, is the Beatles’ *Abbey Road* or *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

former include “Grass,” which begins with a synthesized string part that, in its chromatic melody and slid pitches, is reminiscent of psychedelic music; elsewhere, “Earn Enough For Us” is a terrific piece of electric guitar-driven power pop. When it comes to the latter, the band borrow evenly from The Beatles and the Beach Boys (the liner notes jokingly credit the imaginary “Beech Avenue Boys” for the backing vocals). These background voices are often in falsetto, and are frequently given prominent counterpoint melodies. In “Season Cycle,” for example, they can be easily heard during the second verse and subsequent chorus (0:32-1:18) (see fig. 7).

Figure 7: “Season Cycle,” 0:33-0:49

The figure displays a musical score for the song "Season Cycle" from 0:33 to 0:49. It consists of two systems of staves, each with three vocal parts. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 4/4.

System 1:

- Vocals 1:** Treble clef. Notes: whole rest, whole rest, whole rest, quarter rest, eighth note G, eighth note A, quarter note B. Lyrics: "Sea son cy cle go from".
- Vocals 2:** Treble clef. Notes: quarter note G, quarter note A, quarter note B, quarter note C, quarter note D, quarter note E, quarter note F, quarter note G. Lyrics: "Sum mer chased by aut umn ___ Aut umn chased by win ter ___".
- Vocals 3:** Treble clef. Notes: whole rest, whole rest, whole rest, whole rest.

System 2:

- Vox. 1:** Treble clef. Notes: quarter note G, quarter note A, quarter note B, quarter note C, quarter note D, quarter note E, quarter note F, quarter note G. Lyrics: "death to life ___ Bring a har vest or a man his wife".
- Vox. 2:** Treble clef. Notes: quarter note G, quarter note A, quarter note B, quarter note C, quarter note D, quarter note E, quarter note F, quarter note G. Lyrics: "Win ter chased by spring time ___ Spring time's turn".
- Vox. 3:** Treble clef. Notes: quarter note G, quarter note A, quarter note B, quarter note C, quarter note D, quarter note E, quarter note F, quarter note G. Lyrics: "It's grow ing green ___".

In a certain respect, these parts are similar to the style of the touring years; after all, many of the melodies are sung only by a single vocalist. However, these harmonies are not only longer and

more frequent, but are also weighted equally with the main melody; in addition, they are also given their own text, as opposed to simple “oohs.” Other songs (as well as “Season Cycle”) showcase multi-part vocal harmonies; these include “That’s Really Super, Supergirl” (1:37-1:58) and the climax of “Grass” (2:05-2:24). Compared to “Radios in Motion,” for example, it is apparent that these parts have been carefully worked through and treated with great respect. They are absolutely essential to the texture of the song.

Although the influence of artists such as The Beatles and the Beach Boys on XTC is plain, it is important to note that Partridge and his bandmates are neither ripping off those bands, nor attempting to pay homage to them. In his article on *Skylarking*, Tom Moon agrees, writing, “In the crowded pantheon of post-Beatles pop, XTC looms as one of the few bands to not simply learn from the Fab Four, but to take the inspiration into significant new realms.”⁶⁴ Partridge has compared his songwriting process to something like a mincing machine, chopping up artists as diverse as The Kinks, Captain Beefheart, Jimi Hendrix, and Burt Bacharach, and mangling them up with each other and his personality.⁶⁵

Throughout the studio period, the band’s arrangements remain remarkably creative and manifest themselves in various ways. In addition to the counterpoint and layered harmonies on *Skylarking*, songs such as “Ballet For a Rainy Day” and “Another Satellite” feature an echo in the vocal melody that is highly reminiscent of a canon. On *Apple Venus*, the orchestral color and function changes depending on the song. “River of Orchids,” for example, is a dense loop of *pizzicato* strings whose slow build, repeated patterns, and static harmonic motion are similar to the works of minimalist composers. The more traditional-sounding “Easter Theatre,” by contrast, uses a combination of strings and woodwinds in the verse, moving in an upwards motion that mimics the

⁶⁴ Moon, 879.

⁶⁵ Will Hodgkinson, *Song Man: A Melodic Adventure, or, My Single-Minded Approach to Songwriting* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2007), 99.

theme of spring in Partridge's lyrics. When this progression repeats in the second verse, Partridge's vocal melody is put into conversation with a sequential counterpoint line played by the trumpet (1:15-1:43). Finally, *Oranges & Lemons* marks a return to the louder, guitar-heavy instrumentation of the touring years, but fleshes it out with prominent, occasionally dissonant bursts of trumpet ("Here Comes President Kill Again"), skittish xylophone ("Poor Skeleton Steps Out"), and hoe-down-influenced fiddle ("Scarecrow People"). Even the guitars in themselves form something of a tableau, as the band drape them in effects: backmasked (backwards) guitars wail like nervous sirens during the coda of "Garden of Earthly Delights," while elsewhere a slightly detuned acoustic guitar lends an Americana feel to "Scarecrow People."

On paper, such arrangements sound like an overstuffed mess, and it's to XTC's credit that their recordings don't simply collapse under their own weight.⁶⁶ Firstly, the songwriting remains strong, with lengthy melodies and strange modulations. Secondly, while the production may be busy at times, the band twist it to their advantage, much as they did with *The Big Express*; throughout these latter albums, the word-painting is vivid and often extremely imaginative.

One of the most intriguing examples is "Chalkhills and Children," the closing track to *Oranges & Lemons*. The song, which is in a loose F Major, begins on the dominant; the melody tonicizes C Major. Over the course of the verse and chorus, though, the key center moves from C into F Major, F minor, A \flat minor, and finally back to F Major. Even more fascinating is the subtle word-painting at play, evident not necessarily through a tonal arrangement, but rather through the use of rhythmic friction.

To understand this, it is important to briefly provide some background on the lyrics themselves. "Chalkhills and Children" is but one in a long list of songs that Andy Partridge has

⁶⁶ During the *Oranges & Lemons* sessions, for example, Partridge recalls that the band would record "maybe three different hi-hat patterns for a song." Then, instead of only picking one, they would throw in all three. (Farmer, 237.)

written expressing dissatisfaction with the lifestyle of a popular musician. Both in the song and in interviews, he presents himself as a man who, while tempted by fame and fortune, is unable and unwilling to leave his normal life behind him. Upon the release of *Oranges & Lemons*, Partridge confessed: “I’m mundane. I like to gravitate toward the kids, privateness...when I get a slightly swelled head, it’s nice to be punctured and drift down to earth and become stable again. Show business is really a dream and not what life’s about. Life’s about the glorious everyday.” The lyrics of “Chalkhills,” then, reflect this struggle. The verses find the songwriter swept away into a “showbiz” world (2), alluring and oddly dreamlike (“I’m floating over strange land, and what’s stranger still, there’s no balloon” [3-4]). As he reaches the pre-chorus, he floats higher and higher, “wafted up by fame’s fickle fire” (6). But with the chorus comes the reversal, as the normal, everyday aspects of his life finally tie him down: a white chalk horse drawn in the hills outside of Swindon, his son and daughter, an old Roman road near his childhood home. “Chalkhills and children anchor my feet...bringing me back to Earth eternally and ever Ermine Street” (7-9).

The song begins with a short introduction, in which a quiet ride cymbal taps a straight eighth rhythm in time with a chordal keyboard melody. Once we reach the verse, however, an unexpected shift occurs: the vocals, keyboards, and drums all enter, playing a *swung* rhythm. This dotted rhythm dominates the majority of the song, and gives the music an appropriately dream-like feel that mirrors Partridge’s lyrical flights of fancy. The swing is complicated, however, by a recurring, rhythmically *straight* pattern. This is evident first in the ride cymbal originally heard in the beginning; although this cymbal is pushed into the background by the rest of the instrumentation, it continues playing resiliently underneath. Such a persistent resistance to the swung rhythm obviously represents Partridge’s daily activities in Swindon - a normal, unexciting rhythm for a normal, unexciting life. Just as Partridge remains anchored to his “glorious everyday,” so does the song remain anchored to a steady, unchanging rhythm.

The tension between the swung and straight rhythms only grows more pronounced as the song progresses. The former is almost completely interrupted during the chorus by the chordal keyboard progression first heard in the introduction (0:40-0:42), before the drums kick back in and the dotted rhythm resumes. During the bridge (1:55-2:16), the tambourine taps out a straight rhythm, while the bass guitar alternates back and forth between straight and swung. And finally, the song descends into near-rhythmic chaos during its lengthy coda: the drums begin a series of fills which are nearly arhythmic, while the tambourine, the keyboard, the bass, and the ride cymbal play a pattern of straight repeated eighth notes. The vocals and background harmonies only complicate matters by switching back and forth: the main melody is in four, but utilizes a triplet feel; the second vocal begins swung but changes to straight; the third vocal fades in and out, beginning with straight eighth notes before switching into triplets; the fourth vocal sings a straight series of quarter notes (see figs. 8-11). Gradually, the song fades out rather than coming to a resolution. The implications

Figures 8 - 11: “Chalkhills and Children,” vocal lines

Chalk hills and chil dren

Ev en I nev er know where I go when my eyes are clos ed

Chalk hills chalk hills (etc)

Here I go a gain

are clear: this conflict will never be resolved, but will continue to wrestle within Partridge - and the song - forever.

The only thing more impressive in “Chalkhills and Children” than its word-painting are its actual lyrics. One of Partridge’s most poetic offerings, the words are spun full of lush, soft alliteration, placing emphasis on sounds such as “s” (“I’m floating over strange land, it’s a soulless, sequined, showbiz moon” [1-2]), “f” (“wafted up by fame’s fickle fire” [6]), “ch” (“chalkhills and children anchor my feet” [7]), and “e” (“bringing me back to Earth eternally and ever Ermine Street” [9]). He also utilizes archaic forms of syntax, such as altering the expected order of words (“I’m skating over thin ice, upon blunted blades of *metal soft*” [11]), or intentionally poetic spellings of words (“aloft” [14]; “tyres” [24]).

“Chalkhills” is but one example of the studio period’s fabulous lyrics. The words on all five albums are immensely creative and occasionally hilarious, filled with references to intellectual subjects and strange topics. *Oranges & Lemons* is arguably Partridge’s finest hour. “Garden of Earthly Delights,” for example, references Anton Chekov (3), Vincent van Gogh (5-6), and *Arabian Nights* (8), all within the first two stanzas; it also takes its title from the famous triptych by the fifteenth-century artist Hieronymus Bosch. Its followup on the album, “The Mayor of Simpleton,” imagines life as a brainless man who “know[s] one thing, and that’s I love you” (8). An exemplar of Partridge’s wry sense of humor, nearly every line is packed with some form of gag or pun: the song begins: “Never been near a university...and some of your friends think that’s stupid of me” (1-3). Later, the narrator quips, “Well, I don’t know how many pounds make up a ton of all of the Nobel Prizes that I’ve never won” (35). Ironically, the seemingly “anti-intellectual” song managed to become one of XTC’s most successful singles, a fact that must have driven the ever-brainy band mad.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 199.

The band also continued their running theme of Romanticism, placing a strong emphasis on nature imagery. *Skylarking*, for example, is particularly pastoral, with nine of the fourteen songs featuring at least some variation of the theme. Opening track “Summer’s Cauldron” presents a portrait of an August day: “drowning here in summer’s cauldron, under mats of flower lava” (2); “fruit of sweating golden inca” (5); “trees are dancing drunk with nectar” (13). Later on the album, “Grass” and “The Meeting Place” both equate nature with sexual desire (“over and over, we flattened the clover” [13]), and “Season Cycle,” a veritable worship of the natural world, goes so far as to dismiss the concept of Heaven: “Why, bless my soul, I’m already there!” (22-23).

Englishness also makes constant appearances. The aforementioned “Summer’s Cauldron” personifies the sun into a knight (“Sir Sun...raises his regal head” [19]) and uses words that have a strong connotation with the Middle Ages (“a bug in brandy” [10] “cauldron” [1]). “Sacrificial Bonfire” sets the scene for a nighttime pagan ceremony: “Men pull back hoods and smile; the scapegoat blood spilled, spittled and grilled...sacrificial bonfire must burn” (4-10). On *Apple Venus*, “River of Orchids” refers to English locations such as London and Piccadilly Circus; “I’d Like That” name-drops historical Britons such as Queen Victoria, Prince Albert (6), Lord Nelson, and Lady Hamilton (30); and “Greenman” continues the Pagan theme by focusing on the title figure (who represents fertility and rebirth).

These are but a few offerings in an expansive and very rich repertoire. And as with the middle period, the lyrics - wonderful though they may be - are only one characteristic of this later period. Indeed, they form but one small part of a sprawling tapestry of complex arrangements, beautiful melodies and strange chord progressions, and distinctive, well-constructed albums. It is almost impossible to believe, when *Apple Venus* is placed next to *White Music*, that they are the work of the same musicians. The sophistication found in the studio years is impressive on its own, and even more so when compared with the rest of XTC’s career.

Although this paper has but skimmed the surface of an incredibly unique and musically diverse discography, this is a necessary initial step to studying XTC's music. By dividing their output into three periods, we can see the steady trajectory of their maturation and thus better understand the context of each of their albums (after all, one would not likely attempt a serious analysis of a Beethoven work without first knowing where it fits within the composer's catalogue as a whole). Such a clear progression, as mentioned earlier, is a trend rarely found in the work of twentieth-century rock musicians, and in itself marks XTC as a noteworthy band. This, of course, is not even to mention the complex musical and lyrical elements that Andy Partridge, Colin Moulding, and Dave Gregory increasingly applied to their songs, elements that are just as uncommon as the band's lengthy evolution - word-painting, constant and unordinary modulation, poetic insights and metaphoric imagery. The music that XTC produced over the span of nearly twenty-five years deserves far greater attention and academic discourse than has been afforded so far. For all of their personal struggles and internal difficulties, XTC were never a train running low on soul coal. The work they have left behind is proof enough of that.

Appendix I: Selected Lyrics

Radios in Motion (Partridge) (*White Music* - 1979)

There's a message up in China
That they getting in Japan
It's bouncing off an ocean liner
Make 'em, shake 'em in Siam

And all the kids are complaining (5)
That there's nowhere to go
All the kids are complaining
That the songs are too slow
All I'm saying is you're deaf
To the fact that there's (10)
Radios in motion
Atmosphere to ocean
Radios in motion
Gets you out of your red white and blues
When we move, then so do you'se (15)

There's a message in Milwaukee
That they getting in Moscow
Everybody walkie talkie
And everybody learning how

And all the kids are complaining (20)
That there's nowhere to go
All the kids are complaining
That the songs are too slow
All I'm saying is you're deaf
To the fact that there's (25)
Radios in motion
Atmosphere to ocean
Radios in motion
Gets you out of your red white and blues
When we move, then so do you'se (30)

Meccanik Dancing (Oh We Go!) (Partridge) (*Go 2* - 1979)

Woolworth beauty
Factory beau
Arm in arm
They must go
To the church of dance with the light on low (5)

Meccanic dancing, oh we go
Can't wait until the weekend comes
I want to be with all my chums

Alcohol is an easy key
Helps you unwind (10)
And dance with me

To a disco trot from Germany

I'm standing in front of this girl
I'm under a fluorescent light
I've had a few beers inside me
I feel like a giant tonight (15)

Life is Good in the Greenhouse (Partridge) (*Go 2* - 1979)

Everybody lives somewhere
Mud hut or igloo
But what I got is the hottest spot
And it's away from you
Everybody says something (5)
Truth, lies, or both
But dear, all your hot air
Don't encourage my growth

Do you wonder why I look so fresh?
Do you wonder why I look so tall? (10)
Do you wonder why you'll never ever move me?
Life is good in the greenhouse
Rather be a plant than be your Mickey Mouse
Life is good in the greenhouse

Everybody eats something (15)
But you won't eat me
You won't get me on your plate
Or have me over for tea
Everybody lives somewhere
Mud hut or igloo (20)
But what I got is the hottest spot
And it's away from you

Helicopter (Partridge) (*Drums & Wires* - 1979)

Oh heli! Oh heli!
I'm crouching here with a telescope in hand
Looking out our lego land
I really think it's about time that she came down
She's a laughing, giggly whirlybird (5)
She's got to be obscene to be obheard
I really think it's about time that she came down

And I object to all the air male that she pick up
the air male that she pick up
the air male that she pick up (10)

When she's up there twirling round
Just like a helicopter - copter
She's landing on the town

It's about time that I stopped her - stopped her
When she's up there twirling round (15)
Just like a helicopter - copter
Oh heli! Oh heli!

Now she's away from convent, she's gone wild
Grown from a nice young lady to a child
I really think it's about time that she came down (20)
She's a laughing, giggly whirlybird
She got to be obscene to be obheard
I really think it's about time that she came down

Respectable Street (Partridge) (*Black Sea* - 1980)

It's in the order of their hedgerows
It's in the way their curtains open and close
It's in the look they give you down their nose
All part of decency's jigsaw, I suppose

Heard the neighbor slam his car door (5)
Don't he realize this is respectable street?
What d'you think he bought that car for,
'cos he realize this is respectable street

Now they talk about abortion
In cosmopolitan proportions to their daughters (10)
As they speak of contraception
And immaculate receptions on their portable
Sony entertainment centres.

Now she speaks about diseases
And which sex position pleases best her old man (15)
Avon lady fills the creases
When she manages to squeeze in past the caravans
That never move from their front gardens

It's in the order of their hedgerows
It's in the way their curtains open and close (20)
It's in the look they give you down their nose
All part of decency's jigsaw I suppose
Sunday church and they look fetching
Saturday night saw him retching over our fence
Bang the wall for me to turn down (25)
I can see them with their stern frown
As they dispense the kind of look that says
They're perfect.

Generals and Majors (Moulding) (*Black Sea* - 1980)

Generals and majors (ah ah)
They're never too far
From battlefields so glorious
Out in a word of their own,
They'll never come down (5)
'till once again victorious

Generals and Majors always

seem so unhappy 'less they got a war

Generals and Majors (ah ah),
like never before, are tired of being actionless (10)

Calling Generals and Majors
Generals and Majors everywhere
Calling Generals and Majors
your World War III is drawing near

Generals and Majors (ah ah) (15)
They're never too far
away from men who made the grade
Out in a world of their own,
They'll never come down
until the battle's lost or made (20)

Generals and Majors (ah ah),
Like never before, are tired of being in the shade

Towers of London (Partridge) (*Black Sea* - 1980)

Towers of London,
when they had built you,
did you watch over the men who fell?
Towers of London,
when they had built you, (5)
Victoria's gem found in somebody's hell

Pavements of gold leading to the underground
Grenadier Guardsmen walking pretty ladies around
Fog is the sweat of the never never navvies who
pound, pound, pound
Spikes in the rails to their very own heaven (10)

Bridges of muscles spanning so long and high
Merchants from Stepney walking pretty ladies by
Rain is the tears of the never never navvies who cry,
cry, cry, cry
for the bridge that doesn't go
in the direction of Dublin (15)

And I've seen it in a painting,
and I've seen it in engraving,
and I've seen it in their faces,
clear as children's chalk lines on the paving

Towers of London (20)
la la Londinium

Paper and Iron (Notes and Coins) (Partridge) (*Black Sea* - 1980)

(Paper, iron, won't buy Eden)
Working for paper and for iron
Work for the right to keep my tie on
Working for paper and iron

Work for the unicorn and lion (5)

I pray the kids aren't starving
No chicken for the Sunday carving
I'll stay for one more farthing

I take home my notes and coins every week
I'm told I'm worth much more, (10)
but the Church says turn the other cheek,
the other cheek
(Paper, iron, won't buy Eden)

I know the family needs me
Can't moan, the factory feeds me (15)
Won't bide the hand that bleeds me

I take home my notes and coins every week
I'll inherit the earth, I'm told
but the Church says to remain this meek,
remain this meek (20)

I'm still a proud man,
won't show anybody else my wage
A blend in the crowd, man
Is this anybody's golden age
Is this anybody's golden age (25)
Is this anybody's golden age
Or am I dreaming of a golden cage?

La la lo it's paper
La la lo it's iron
La la lo just paper (30)
La la lo just iron

Jason and the Argonauts (Partridge) (*English Settlement* - 1982)

There may be no golden fleece, but human riches I'll release

Oh, my head is spinning like the world and it's filled
with beasts I've seen,
Let me put my bag down and I'll tell you it all right
from the start.
Like the scarlet woman who would pick on the boys
she thought were green,
And the two-faced man who made a hobby of breaking
his wife's heart. (5)

Seems the more I travel,
From the foam to gravel,
As the nets unravel,
All exotic fish I find, like Jason and the Argonauts
There may be no golden fleece, but human riches I'll release (10)

I was in a land where men force women to hide their
facial features,
And here in the West it's just the same but they're
using make-up veils.
I've seen acts of every shade of terrible come from
man-like creatures,
And I've had the breath of liars blowing me off course
in my sails.

Seems the more I travel, (15)
From the foam to gravel,
As the nets unravel,
All exotic fish I find, like Jason and the Argonauts
There may be no golden fleece, but human riches I'll release

I have watched the manimals go buy [sic] - (20)
Buying shoes, buying sweets, buying knives.
I have watched the manimals and cried -
Buying time, buying ends to other people's lives.

Jason and the Argonauts
There may be no golden fleece, but human riches I'll release (25)

Love on a Farmboy's Wages (Partridge) (*Mummer* - 1983)

High climbs the summer sun
High stands the corn
And tonight, when my work is done,
We will borrow your father's carriage
We will drink and prepare for marriage (5)
Soon, my darling; soon, my darling

Shilling for the fellow who brings the sheep in
Shilling for the fellow who milks the herd
Shilling for the fellow with a wife for keeping
How can we feed love on a farmboy's wages? (10)

Deep under winter snow
Deep lay the labs
And tonight, by the full moon's glow,
Flash of wine on my feather bedding
We will drink and prepare for wedding (15)
Soon, my darling; soon, my darling

People think that I'm no good
Painting pictures, carving wood
Be a rich man if I could,
But the only job I do well is here on the farm, (20)
on the farm,
And it's breaking my back

We will borrow your father's carriage
We will drink and prepare for marriage
Soon, my darling; soon, my darling (25)

Ladybird (Partridge) (*Mummer* - 1983)

O, ladybird
I have heard you wish to walk me through your garden
I crave your pardon if I woke you with my thinking
Ladybird

O, ladybird (5)
I have heard you wish to walk me through your
meadow
You'll spread no wings to fly in fright if I'm beside you
Ladybird

All through the winter time
When wood was worm and splintered (10)
Time seemed longer than a goods train
Now that spring is back again
I'll ask your name, your name

O, ladybird
I have heard you wish to walk across my pillow (15)
No weeping willow was ever as beautiful, sad as you are
Ladybird

And as you're walking past
I'm laying on the grass and making chains of thought
To snare you with my wit (20)
But bit by bit you fade to gone
Gone

All through the iron season
Love was hanged and treason became
Something of a parlour game (25)
Now sun is back in power
I'll ask your name, your name

O, ladybird
I have heard you have to run to tend your children
No flood can drown, nor fire blacken purest longing
(30)
For ladybird
Ladybird

In Loving Memory of a Name (Moulding) (*Mummer* - 1983)

Boom goes my heart,
dancing around your daisies
Church bells will start,
sat on you reading your ages
I drift away (5)
in loving memory of a name
Covered in moss,
you may have died for your country
Forgotten, not lost,
you're laid to rest where you're wanted (10)

I stare awhile
in loving memory of a name

England can never repay you
You gave your life to be buried alongside
the place you loved. (15)
The sermons attended when you were young
still echo round these churchyard walls.

Heroes and rogues,
together surrounded by nature
Lump in my throat, (20)
sat in the land of your maker
I drift away
in loving memory of a name.

All You Pretty Girls (Partridge) (*The Big Express* - 1984)

Do something for me, boys
If I should die at sea, boys
Write a little note, boys
Set it off afloat, saying:

Bless you, bless you, all of you pretty girls (5)
Village or city girls by the quayside
Bless you, bless you, all of you pretty girls
Watching and waiting by the sea

Bless you, bless you, all of you pretty girls
Quiet or witty girls by the quayside (10)
Bless you, bless you, all of you pretty girls
Watching and waiting there for me

I think about your pale arms waving
when I see the caps upon the green
and the rocking roller-coaster ocean. (15)
Think about you every night when I'm fathoms asleep,
and in my dreams
we are rocking in a similar motion.

I think about the salt sea rolling
down in pearly tears upon your cheeks, (20)
just like the day the harbour pulled away.
I think about your warm white sheets unfolding.
The more I have to drink,
the more that I can think to say.

Seagulls Screaming Kiss Her, Kiss Her (Partridge) (*The Big Express* - 1983)

It's raining on the beach
She's inches close but out of reach
The waves look painted on
Seagulls screaming

The sea is warship grey (5)
It whispers, "Fool!" then slides away

Black coastline slumbers on
Seagulls screaming kiss her, kiss her

And all the flags that flap on the pier
spell, why on earth do you wait (10)
The fog hides much but one thing is clear:
she's nearer

Dead deck chairs under shrouds
And life belts gape like minstrel mouths
Her hair still smells of salt (15)
Seagulls screaming kiss her, kiss her
Kiss her, kiss her, kiss her, kiss her
He who hesitates is lost

If you want her, you should tell her
Take her by the hand (if you hesitate) (20)
If you wait, November wins her (November will win
her)
She returns to sand (so get ahold of the girl)

I say, I like your coat
Her thank-you tugs my heart afloat
I nearly didn't hear for (25)
Seagulls screaming kiss her, kiss her

He who hesitates is lost

The Everyday Story of Smalltown (Partridge) (*The Big
Express* - 1983)

Smalltown, snoring under blankets,
woken by the clank,
it's just the milkman's dawn round.
Smalltown, hiding under covers.
The lodgers and the lovers (5)
are asleep 'round Smalltown

Shiny grey-black snake of bike
He slithers
Bearing up the men and boys
to work. (10)
We're standing in poplar lines
Making alarm clocks that'll wake our wives up
Don't ask us, we haven't the time
We're racing the hooter that'll signal life's up

Smalltown, crouching in the valley (15)
Woken by the Sally Army,
Sunday marchround.
Smalltown, coughing in the toilet
Who on earth would spoil it,
Would they pull down Smalltown? (20)

If it's all the same to you,
Mrs. Progress,
think I'll drink my Oxo up

and get away.
It's not that you're repulsive to see (25)
in your brand new catalogue nylon nightie.
You're too fast for little old me,
next you'll be telling me it's 1990.

I have lived here for a thousand years or maybe more
And I've sheltered all the children who have fought the
wars, (30)
and as payment they make love in me,
in squeaky beds,
in bicycle sheds,
inside of their heads,
as singles as weds, (35)
as Tories and Reds,
and that's how I'm fed,
and that's how I'm fed.

Train Running Low on Soul Coal (Partridge) (*The Big
Express* - 1984)

Me train running low on soul coal
They push+pull tactics are driving me loco
and they shouldn't do that, no no no
They shouldn't do that
Train running low on dream steam (5)
They pull me whistle too hard, me bound to scream
and they shouldn't do that, no no no
They shouldn't do that

Think I'm going south for the winter
Think I'm going mad in this hinterland (10)
between young and old
I'm a thirty-year-old puppy doing what I'm told
And I'm told there's no more coal
for the older engines
Me train running low on soul coal (15)

Think I'm going south for the winter
Think I'm going west and my sprinter's speed
is reduced to a crawl
My rails went straight, straight into the wall
It's the wall on which they dash the older engines (20)

And all my servants are leaving
Imagination got packing
Can't find the wound from where I'm bleeding
He's just a nut and he's cracking

Hammer comes down (25)
Brakes all scream
Me and a couple of empty carriages
Slide downhill still
Next stop: bad dreamsville

Think I'm going south for the winter (30)
Me train running low on soul coal

Summer's Cauldron (Partridge) (*Skylarking* - 1986)

Drowning here in Summer's Cauldron
Under mats of flower lava
Please don't pull me out, this is how I would want to
go
Breathing in the boiling butter
Fruit of sweating golden inca (5)
Please don't heed my shout, I'm relax [sic] in the
undertow

When Miss Moon lays down
And Sir Sun stands up
Me, I'm found floating round and round
Like a bug in brandy (10)
In this big bronze cup
Drowning here in Summer's Cauldron

Trees are dancing drunk with nectar
Grass is waving underwater
Please don't pull me out, this is how I would want to
go (15)
Insect bomber Buddhist droning
Copper chord of August's organ
Please don't heed my shout, I'm relax in the undertow

When Miss Moon lays down (in her hilltop bed)
And Sir Sun stands up (raise his regal head) (20)
Me, I'm found floating round and round
Like a bug in brandy
In this big bronze cup
Drowning here in Summer's Cauldron

Grass (Moulding) (*Skylarking* - 1986)

Laying on the grass, my heart it flares like fire
The way you slap my face just fills me with desire
You play hard to get
'Cause you're teacher's pet
But when the boats have gone (5)
We'll take a tumble, excuse for a fumble
Show me to the things we used to do on grass
If you fancy, we can buy an ice cream cone
Your mate has gone, she didn't want to be alone
I will pounce on you (10)
Just us and the cuckoos
You are helpless now
Over and over, we flatten the clover
Shocked me too, the things we used to do on grass
It would shock you too, the things we used to do on
grass (15)
Grass, grass
Things we did on grass

Season Cycle (Partridge) (*Skylarking* - 1986)

Season cycle moving round and round
Pushing life up from a cold, dead ground
It's growing green
It's growing green, well
Darling, don't you ever stop to wonder (5)
About the clouds, about the hail and thunder
'bout the baby and its umbilical
Who's pushing the pedals on the season cycle?

Summer chased by Autumn
Autumn chased by Winter (10)
Season cycle go from death to life (Winter chased by
Springtime)
Bring a harvest or a man his wife (It's growing green)
It's growing green, well
Darling, don't you ever sit and ponder (darling, did you
ever think)
About the building of the hills a yonder (all this life
stuff's closely linked) (15)
Where we're going in this verdant spiral
Who's pushing the pedals on the season cycle?
(Round and round and round and round)

I really get confused on who would make all this
(is there a God in Heaven?) (20)
Everybody says, "Join our religion, get to Heaven."
I say, "No thanks, why, bless my soul,
I'm already there!"

Autumn is Royal
As Spring is clown (25)
But to repaint Summer
They're closing Winter down

Sacrificial Bonfire (Moulding) (*Skylarking* - 1986)

Fire they cried
So evil must die
And yields are good
So men pull back hoods and smile
The scapegoat blood spilled (5)
Spittled and grilled
It crackled and spat
And children grew fat on the meat
Change must be earnt
Sacrificial bonfire must burn (10)
Burn up the old
Ring in the new
Assembled on high
Silhouette against the sky
The smoke prayed and pranced (15)
And sparks did their dance in the wind
Shadows wore thin
With less and less skin
And the clothes that were draped
Was all that told man from ape (20)
Change must be earnt

Sacrificial bonfire must burn
Burn up the old
Ring in the new

Garden of Earthly Delights (Partridge) (*Oranges & Lemons* - 1989)

Kid, stay and snip your cord off,
talk and let your mind loose,
can't all think like Chekov, but you'll be okay.
Kid, is this your first time here?
Some can't stand the beauty (5)
so they cut off one ear, but you'll be okay.

Welcome to the garden of earthly delights.
Welcome to a billion Arabian nights.
This is your life and you do what you want to do,
this is your life and you spent it all. (10)
This is your life and you do what you want to,
just don't hurt nobody, and the big reward's here
in the garden of earthly delights.

Kid, pick up with another,
some will even drop you (15)
but hearts are built like rubber, so you'll be alright.
Kid, swallow but believe us,
you won't die of boredom,
should you have to leave us, it'll be alright.

The Mayor of Simpleton (Partridge) (*Oranges & Lemons* - 1989)

Never been near a university,
never took a paper or a learned degree,
and some of your friends think that's stupid of me,
but it's nothing that I care about.

Well I don't know how to tell the weight of the sun, (5)
and of mathematics, well, I want none,
and I may be the Mayor of Simpleton,
but I know one thing, and that's I love you.
When their logic grows cold and all thinking gets done,
you'll be warm in the arms of the Mayor of Simpleton.
(10)

I can't have been there when brains were handed round
(please be upstanding for the Mayor of Simpleton),
or get past the cover of your books profound
(please be upstanding for the Mayor of Simpleton),
and some of your friends think it's really unsound (15)
that you're even seen talking to me.

Well, I don't know how to write a big hit song,
and all crossword puzzles, well, I just shun,
and I may be the Mayor of Simpleton,
but I know one thing, and that's I love. (20)

I'm not proud of the fact that I never learned much,
just feel I should say,
what you get is all real, I can't put on an act,
it takes brains to do that anyway.

And I can't unravel riddles, problems, and puns, (25)
how the home computer has me on the run,
and I may be the Mayor of Simpleton,
but I know one thing, and that's I love you.

If depth of feeling is a currency
(please be upstanding for the Mayor of Simpleton), (30)
then I'm the man who grew the money tree
(no change of office and no hope of getting one),
some of your friends are too brainy to see
that they're paupers, and that's how they'll stay.

Well, I don't know how many pounds make up a ton
(35)
of all the Nobel prizes that I've never won,
and I may be the Mayor of Simpleton,
but I know one thing and that's I love.
When all logic grows cold and all thinking gets done,
you'll be warm in the arms of the Mayor of Simpleton.
(40)
You'll be warm in the arms of the Mayor of Simpleton.
You'll be warm in the arms of the Mayor.
(Please be upstanding for the Mayor of Simpleton.)

Chalkhills and Children (Partridge) (*Oranges & Lemons* - 1989)

I'm floating over strange land,
it's a soulless, sequined, showbiz moon.
I'm floating over strange land,
and what's stranger still, there's no balloon.
But I'm getting higher, (5)
wafted up by fame's fickle fire 'til the...

Chalkhills and children anchor my feet.
Chalkhills and children, bringing me back to earth
eternally and ever Ermine Street.
(Even I never know where I go when my eyes are
closed.) (10)

I'm skating over thin ice,
upon blunted blades of metal soft.
I'm skating over thin ice,
while some nonesuch net holds me aloft.
But I'm getting higher, lifted up on luck's circus wire
'til the... (15)

Chalkhills and children anchor my feet.
Chalkhills and children, bringing me back to earth
eternally and ever Ermine Street.
Even I never know where I go when my eyes are
closed,

even I never spied that the scenes were posed. (20)
Even I never knew this is what I'd be,
even eyes never mean that you're sure to see.
Still I'm getting higher,
rolling up on three empty tires, 'til the...

I'm soaring over hushed crowds, (25)
the reluctant cannonball, it seems.
I'm soaring over hushed crowds,
I'm propelled up here by long dead dreams.
Still I'm getting higher,
Icarus regrets and retires puzzled. (3)

Chalkhills and children anchor my feet.
Chalkhills and children, oddly complete.
(Even I never know where I go when my eyes are all
closed.)
Here I go again!

River of Orchids (Partridge) (*Apple Venus* - 1999)

I heard the dandelions roar in Piccadilly Circus
I heard the dandelions roar in Piccadilly Circus
Take a packet of seeds, take yourself out to play,
I want to see a river of orchids where we had a
motorway

Push your car from the road (5)
Push your car from the road
Just like a mad dog, you're chasing your tail in a circle
Just like a mad dog, you're chasing your tail in a circle

It's all in your back yard,
you've the whole world at your feet. (10)
Said the grass is always greener when it bursts up
through concrete.
Push your car from the road
Push your car from the road

River of orchids winding our way
Want to walk into London on my hands one day (15)
River of orchid, the road overgrows
Want to walk in London smelling like a Peckham rose

Just like a mad dog, you're chasing your tail in a circle
Just like a mad dog, you're chasing your tail in a circle
You know you can do it (20)

I had a dream where the car is reduced to a fossil
I had a dream where the car is reduced to a fossil
Take a packet of seeds, take yourself out to play
I want to see a river of orchids where we had a
motorway

I'd Like That (Partridge) (*Apple Venus* - 1999)

I'd like that

if we could cycle down some lane
I'd like that
if we could cycle into the rain
No macs, getting wet (5)
I'd be your Albert if you'd be Victoria, ha ha
We'd laugh because each drop would make me grow up
really high, really high like a really high thing
say, a sunflower.

I'd like that (10)

I'd like that (what would you like?)
if we could lay before my fire
I'd like that (what would you like?)
if you could slide me from this wire
Toasting fork, I'll be done (15)
I wouldn't Hector if you'd be Helen of Troy, oh boy
We'd laugh because each flame would make me grow
up
really high, really high like a really high thing,
say, a sunflower.

I'd like that. (20)

I'd smile so much, my face would crack in two
Then you could fix it with your kissing glue
I'd like that,
Yes, I'd like that.

I'd like that (what would you like?) (25)
if we could float away in bed
I'd like that (what would you like?)
if I could row your heart and head
with you laid on one arm.
I'd be your Nelson if you'd be my Hamilton, what fun,
(30)
we'd laugh because each stroke would make me grow
up
really high, really high like a really high thing,
say, a sunflower.

Let me hear you say it!
Say a sunflower I became, (35)
I'd be growing in your rain.
Say it again,
Sunflower.

Easter Theatre (Partridge) (*Apple Venus* - 1999)

Gold sun rolls around
Chocolate nipple brown
Tumble from your arms
Like the ground, your breasts swell
and awake from sleep (5)
Hares will kick and leap
Flowers climb erect,
smiling from the moist kiss of her rainbow mouth

(Stage left) Enter Easter and she's dressed in yellow
yolk
(Stage right) Now the son has died, the father can be
born (10)
(Stand up) If we'd all breathe in and blow away the
smoke,
New life, we'd applaud her new life

Odin mounts the tree,
Bleeds for you and me
Splashing on the lamb, (15)
Gamboling with spring step
Buds will laugh and burst,
racing to be first
Turning all the soil
as the prompter's fingers through her spinning script
(20)

Easter...in her bonnet
Easter...in her hair
Easter...are the ribbons
She ties everywhere

Greenman (Partridge) (*Apple Venus* - 1999)

Please do bend down for the one called the Greenman
He wants to make you his bride
Please do bend down for the one called the Greenman
Forever to him you're tied

And you know for a million years, he has been your
lover (5)

He'll be a million more
And you know for a million years, he has been your
lover
Down through the skin to the core
Heed the Greenman
Heed the Greenman (10)

Please do dance round for the one called the
Greenman
He wants to make you his child
Please do dance round for the one called the
Greenman
Dressed in the fruits of the wild

And you know for a million years, he has been your
father (15)
He'll be a million more
And you know, for a million years he has been your
father
Run to his arms at the door

Lay your head, lay your head, lay your head, lay your
head on the Greenman
Lay your head, lay your head with mine (20)
Lay your head, lay your head, lay your head, lay your
head on the Greenman
Build a bed out of oak and pine

See the Greenman blow his kiss from high church wall
An unknowing church will amplify his call

Please do bend down for the one called the Greenman
(25)

Appendix II: An Explanation of Sources

I have provided a great number of citations for this paper from two specific websites: *Chalkhills.org* and the MySpace XTC page, entitled *XTCfans*. While neither of these websites are “official” - meaning that they are not managed or run by the band or their label - both are invaluable sources of information and held in high regard by fans of the band; a Google search for “XTC,” for example, provides *Chalkhills* as the second hit, and *XTCfans* as the fourth hit (the XTC Wikipedia article, and Idea Records website [Andy Partridge’s record label], are the first and third, respectively).

Chalkhills is managed by John Relph, and offers this explanation on its website: “Chalkhills is...both the longest extant XTC mailing list, created in April 1989...and the longest extant XTC web site, first hacked together in May 1994.” The website is a staggeringly comprehensive online library which includes not only information about the band’s history, lyrics and chords to every single XTC song, transcribed copies of the albums’ liner notes, and a sizable gallery of pictures, video, and music, but also a sprawling, chronological list of hundreds of articles, interviews, and any sort of press about the band or its members; the list reaches back to 1977. For many of the articles, Relph (or the contributor) has provided either a PDF or a link to the online article; however, for many of the earlier submissions, the article has been transcribed onto the Chalkhills website. I have done my best to track down the majority of these original sources, although some seem to be preserved solely through *Chalkhills*. A 1989 source called “Eartime,” for example, was transcribed from an insert included in a limited number of the band’s album *Nonsuch* and which, despite extensive research, seems to have physically disappeared from the face of the earth. It is only thanks to *Chalkhills* that we still have access to it, and others like it.

Andy Partridge has been the subject of countless interviews over the years, but few are as extensive or detailed as the “Song of the Week” series on *XTCfans*. The series, which is comprised

of some 111 interviews (consider that the combined number of songs on XTC's studio albums and compilations is slightly over 200, not including Andy Partridge's solo demos), ran from October 30, 2006 until September 12, 2010 and was conducted by Todd Bernhardt, who earlier had interviewed Partridge for in Rikky Rooksby's book *Lyrics: Writing Better Words for Your Songs*. Although Colin Moulding and Dave Gregory occasionally functioned as the subjects of the interviews, the vast majority were phone conversations with Partridge that were then transcribed directly onto the *XTCfans* webpage.

Appendix III: References

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⁶⁸ Interviews are ordered alphabetically by interviewee, then chronologically.

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