Processes of Performance Production & Maintenance: Interactions Between Rock Bands & Sound Technicians

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PROCESSES OF PERFORMANCE
PRODUCTION AND MAINTENANCE:
INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ROCK BANDS
AND SOUND TECHNICIANS

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In Partial Fulfillment
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Linda S. Reese
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PROCESSES OF PERFORMANCE
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AND SOUND TECHNICIANS

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During the past three decades there has been growing academic interest in the sociology of popular music. Social researchers have investigated the economic impact of music consumers as well as the emerging roles of agents, managers and promoters. Other researchers have explored the sociological implications of musical performance from the perspectives of performer and audience. While we have learned much about some of the roles that people assume within the music industry, there is one important role that has received little attention: the role of the sound technician. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the social interactional processes that band members (musicians and singers) and sound technicians use to organize, produce and maintain the specific social reality of a live musical performance in a club or bar. This thesis focuses on the description of the patterns of social interaction that emerge during the performance production, the set up and sound check, and the performance maintenance of regional-level rock and roll bands and their sound technicians.

Utilizing a qualitative approach to my research, I gathered the data for my study through participant
observation. From August, 1989 through January, 1990 I observed eighteen bands during their set ups, sound checks and performances. My total sample consists of 118 band members (singers, musicians and sound/light technicians). These band members represent 110 men and eight women who ranged from nineteen to thirty-nine years of age. The seventeen sound technicians in this sample were men between the ages of twenty to thirty-six years. I combined field observations of the bands with in-depth interviews with forty-seven individuals. Analysis of the data yielded two distinct processes involved in the production of the performance (the set up and the sound check) and a plethora of subtle and not-so-subtle interactions between the band members on stage and their sound technicians which were designed to maintain the integrity of their performances.

I also identified primary and secondary role sets of the sound technician. I discussed the importance of the sound technician's roles to the regional-level rock band. The analysis of my data established evidence that the musicians and singers in such bands develop patterns of reliance upon their sound technicians, and that these patterns of reliance seem to be related to the individual and collective expertise, knowledge and goal-orientation of the band members and the bands as entities.

My analyses also suggested a group of criteria common to these band members' and sound technicians' patterns of interaction of practiced and perceived performance
production and maintenance. These criteria organized themselves on five performance continua: professionalism, expertise, goal-orientation, reliance and self-definition. These continua reflected varying degrees of competence and ability within the bands' actions and interactions that facilitate the production and maintenance of their performances.
Chapter I

Introduction

"Music is sort of an allegory of tones--a concrete expression of abstract ideas. It is the basis upon which language is formed. If we can take our music, as abstract as it is in the beginning, and form it into concrete expressions, we have forged a serious form of communication or language."

(Sam, bass player)

When a person watches any type of live performance, he or she is usually cognizant of only a few of the patterns of social interaction necessary to produce and maintain the performance. The viewer is aware of those portions of the performance that are meant to be seen by the audience. However, most people are unaware of the many different types of interactions that take place before the start of the performance, as well as the interactions that take place among the performers during the performance that serve to maintain the continuity of the performance while it is in progress. Any performance is a shared social event that consists of a series of activities that are relevant to its production and maintenance at a specific time in a "sector of space" (Schutz, 1971:176). This idea is certainly applicable to a live musical performance such as one by a rock and roll band and its sound technician on a stage in a club or a bar.

Music itself is a series of perceived tones and as such can be a pervasive form of communication (Lull, 1985). The performance of music is a specific social interactional event that takes place between individuals or groups of
individuals (De Jager, 1974; Becker, 1984). The sociology of music may be defined as the study of the processes of organized interactions between individuals or groups of individuals who perform, produce, reproduce or listen to sounds they perceive as music (De Jager, 1974). During the last three decades, there has been a growing interest in academic circles in a sociology of popular music as a branch of the sociology of music that investigates the phenomenon of popular music, including rock and roll, and its impact upon social behavior and society.

Researchers have begun to investigate many of the social aspects of popular music. Some have studied the economic impact of music consumers (e.g., Frith, 1987; Curtis, 1984). Others have explored the emerging roles of agents, managers and promoters as a result of the industrialization of rock and roll (e.g., Chappel and Garofalo, 1977). The sociological implications of musical performance have also been studied from the perspectives of performer and audience, usually at the micro-level of interactions and group structures and processes (e.g., Bennett, 1980; Mullen, 1987; Groce, 1990; Groce and Dowell, 1988; Sanders, 1974).

While much has been learned about some of the roles that people assume within the popular music industry, there is one important role that has received little sociological attention: the role of the sound technician. Bennett (1980) briefly mentioned the role of the sound mixer in relation to the band as part of the performance criteria.
Kealy (1979) discussed the different and emerging roles of the sound technician within the context of the recording studio and the music industry. A review of the literature, however, reveals no research concerning the importance of the sound technician to the rock and roll band in live performance.

The present study is a description of the patterns of social interaction that emerge from "behind the scenes" before and during the performances of eighteen regional-level rock and roll bands and their sound technicians. It is my intention to address a gap in the literature of the sociology of popular music by exploring and describing the processes of social interaction that take place between regional-level rock and roll bands and their sound technicians during performance production, the set up and sound check, and the processes of social interaction that facilitate the maintenance of the established performance criteria during performance.

When rock bands set up their equipment and complete a sound check they are, in effect, participating in ritual creation and re-creation of a specific social reality (Katz, 1981). This social reality is defined by the band and the sound technician as a live performance of either cover material (other peoples' songs) or original material for an audience. Economic considerations demand that the band and sound technician participate in an ordered social process of set up and sound check so as to produce a "good sound" and a
"good performance." Simply stated, if they do not look and sound good to their audience and to the club or bar owner, they will find it difficult to book performances on the club or bar circuit. If this happens repeatedly, the band cannot survive economically. Thus, the effective interaction between a rock and roll band and its sound technician is necessary in order to achieve a consensus that results in a satisfactory definition of a "good performance" and a "good sound." Their ability to do so will determine to a great degree the group's initial survival and ultimate success.

Regional-level rock and roll bands include those bands that subsist entirely on the income earned from playing rock music in clubs, bars, and concerts. All of these bands book their gigs (paid performances) through an agency, have a manager, play a three-to-seven state area, and are booked approximately fifty weeks per year. Regional-level rock bands play gigs that consist of four to six consecutive nights of performance during each week. Typically, each night's performance has four sets of forty-five minutes of music, each followed by a fifteen-minute break or five sets of forty minutes of music, each followed by a twenty-minute break. These rock bands play a mixture of music they described as "rock 'n' roll," "hard rock," "rock," "top 40," and "dance music." Ten of the bands in this study play a combination of "other people's material" (covers) and original material while the others perform cover material exclusively.
Some researchers have studied folk performers (e.g., Sanders, 1974), jazz musicians (e.g., Becker, 1963), public house performers (e.g., Mullen, 1987), and local level rock bands (e.g., Groce, 1990; Groce and Dowell, 1988). However, none of the literature I reviewed contained references to "regional-level rock bands." Therefore, I contacted Circle Talent, Inc. (a pseudonym), located in a midwestern metropolitan area, and arranged interviews with four of the agents in order to verify my definition of the bands in my sample:

What would you call bands that I call regional-level bands in my study?

They [the bands] are like you say; but I classify them by the way that I build them. First, I start them in one venue, or area, and build a strong following. Then I move them to the Florida venue or the east coast venue and build strong followings there. Next, I bring them back to their first venue and ask more money for the gig; and because they are in demand in several venues, I can book gigs in clubs that have larger capacities and pay more money. (manager/agent)

Bands on the club level represent the McDonald's of the music industry. They play the Midwest triangle, you know, Cincinnati to Lexington to St. Louis. They play as often as they can, as much as fifty weeks a year, because the bands as a unit may sound like they make a lot of money, but when you consider that the weeks' earnings splits between six to seven members—that's barely subsistence level. And you're right, they have to mostly play cover material because most of the bars and clubs in this region want to hear Top 40 or dance music. They wouldn't know rock and roll if it stared them in their faces. (agent, single night division)
All of the agents agreed that my statements concerning the "regional-level" bands described the bands in my sample. In fact, sixteen of the bands I observed and interviewed used Circle Talent as their booking agency. The agency labeled these bands under the category of "club division" acts. The agents also substituted the term, "venue," to describe the geographic regions of the bands' regular performance routes or tours.

The regional-level rock bands in my sample have a total of four to six musicians and singers on stage and a one to three person stage crew off stage. The on-stage personnel include a person who plays drums, one member who plays a bass guitar, and at least one member who plays guitar. Some of the bands in my sample also have a person who plays rhythm guitar and a person who plays keyboards (electronic synthesizers, pianos and organs). Three of the bands in my sample also have a person who plays horns (trumpets, trombones and saxophones). Fourteen of the bands have a person whom they designate as a lead vocalist and whose primary role on stage is to sing.

The off-stage personnel in regional-level rock bands include sound technicians, light technicians and other stage crew. All of the bands in my sample have a sound technician and all of the sound technicians are men. This is the person who manipulates the mixing board and the sound effects during the performance. Eleven of the bands in my sample also have a person who hangs, gels and operates the stage
lights. In the remaining seven bands the sound technician doubles as the light technician before and during the performance. The on-stage band members and the crew often refer to the sound technician as the "sound tech" or the "sound man."

The on-stage and off-stage personnel in the regional-level rock band work together during the set up of the equipment and the subsequent sound check as a team to achieve the best possible sound and performance. The processes of "set up" and "sound check" serve to establish the band's criteria of a "good sound." A "good sound" then becomes one criterion of the rock band's definition of a "good performance." The process of "set up" entails the unloading of the group's equipment from the van or truck, and the subsequent placement of amplifiers, speakers, monitors, drums, guitars, keyboards and synthesizers, microphones, PA equipment (the sets of speakers that are placed facing the audience and through which the processed, or mixed, sounds are heard) and mixing console (the sound board), lights and light board in the performance area. The process of group interaction indicated by "sound check" includes those interactions between the individual musicians, and between the band as a group and the sound technician. During these interactions the musical instrument's or vocal microphone's individual decibel level, equalization, compression, delay, reverb, or other effects are set at the mixing console by the sound technician.
The processes of social interaction indicated by "performance production" establish the band's and sound technician's criteria of a "good sound" and a "good performance." The processes of performance production include interactions among band members, among band members and sound technician, and among audience, band members and sound technician that insure an acceptable decibel level, a desirable blend of instruments and vocals (mix), and the elimination of unwanted feedback and distortion—the "good sound."

In order to ascertain the physical and environmental parameters of the club or bar where the performance takes place, the musicians and sound technicians participate in the process of set up and sound check. A rock and roll band and sound technician must be able to communicate to one another whether or not the sound that their instruments and equipment actually produces is the desired sound, the "good sound," they want their audience to hear. To achieve a consensus about a "good sound," the musicians and the sound technicians must have access to: 1) a certain amount and type of equipment (technology); 2) a certain level of understanding about their equipment, the environment, and how the two work together (knowledge); 3) and a certain level of physical ability and experience to manipulate the instruments or equipment (expertise).

The rock band and sound technician also participate in processes of social interaction designed to maintain the agreed-upon criteria of performance production established
during the set up and sound check. To facilitate these processes of performance maintenance, the individual musician monitors his or her own instrument's sound and each other's instruments' sound. The band members also communicate their observations about changes in the sound to the sound technician by using nonverbal and verbal forms of communication, e.g., hand signals, or directives such as "Turn that down, John!" Obviously, these communications might be either obtrusive or unobtrusive to a band's audience. The manner in which displeasure of a perceived sound is communicated to the sound technician by the band, or to the band by the sound technician, will affect audience reaction and the maintenance of the performance.

Performance production and maintenance also depend upon the band's ability to perceive and to respond to audience reaction. The musicians must be able to ascertain whether or not the audience likes the performance, the type, the volume, and the mix of the music. They must be able to perform and interact with the audience enough to "read" reactions such as foot tapping, head nodding, screaming, clapping and booing. Then, based upon the information gained from perceptions of audience reaction, the musicians must communicate decisions concerning possible problems in performance production to the sound technician.

The sound technician must also be able to read and to respond to both the band's communications concerning their performance and the audience's reactions to the performance.
The sound technician must gauge the relevance of the audience's reactions to the desired performance criteria and then must communicate those observations to the musicians during performance. If all participants recognize the situation as a potential problem, the sound technician then must make a decision to correct the possible problem during performance, wait until a break to correct the situation, or wait until the performance is over before attempting to correct the situation.

**Review of the Literature**

A review of the literature of the sociology of popular music revealed only three sources that I could apply directly to this thesis—Bennett (1980), Frith (1987), and Kealy (1979). Therefore, I devote one section of this chapter to a discussion of the theoretical perspectives I use to guide my observations and analyses. In the second section of this chapter I discuss sources whose themes apply to my observations, definitions and analyses of performance criteria.

**Theoretical Perspectives**

Most research in the area of the sociology of popular music is framed in either a conflict perspective (e.g., Frith, 1987; Curtis, 1984), a massification perspective (e.g., Blau, 1986; Blau, 1988; Koval, 1988), or a symbolic interactionist perspective (e.g., Becker, 1963; Sanders, 1974; Mullen, 1987; Groce, 1990; Groce and Dowell, 1988). I
chose the interactionist perspective as my theoretical framework.

Researchers who utilize a conflict perspective view the impact of the music industry (those who control the distribution and manufacture of music) upon the artists, the performers and their audiences (the sources and consumers of the music industry's product). Researchers who use this perspective investigate the artists' alienation from their music and the music industry's exploitation of performers and artists (e.g., Chappel and Garofalo, 1977).

Research in the sociology of popular music that reflects the massification perspective investigates the positive and negative consequences of the production of music as controlled by the music industry. Researchers who use a positive form of the massification perspective see mass culture, such as rock music, as having functional benefits (media exposure) for "high culture" (e.g., Blau, 1986). Proponents of massification in its negative form consider commercialized presentations of art forms to stifle creativity and foster mediocrity (e.g., Blau, 1988).

Those researchers who investigate popular music from a symbolic interactionist perspective focus on the processes of social interaction that occur during the performance of popular music. The theoretical perspectives of my thesis reflect an interactionist perspective. The interactionist perspective allowed me to focus on the processes of interactions and the expectations of the musicians, the sound
technicians and their audiences. I also drew upon Schutz's (1971) phenomenological approach to the study of popular music, one closely associated with the interactionist perspective, which examines the social interactions and the communication processes between musician and audience. His work emphasizes the importance of the "investigation of the social relationships among the participants in the musical process" (Schutz, 1964:159).

Within the realm of symbolic interactionism, I will use a combination of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), drama-turgy (Goffman, 1959) and frame analysis (Goffman, 1974). Garfinkel defines ethnomethodology as:

...the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life (1967:11).

An indexical expression is an utterance that is bound to the social, temporospatial context of its user and of the relation of the speaker to the object or circumstance indicated by the utterance (Garfinkel, 1967:5). Ethnomethodology implies that as sociologists we must study all social interactions within the context of the social event in which they occur and focus on the social manifestations of the norms which organize the experiences of the participants. Ethnomethodology also emphasizes the discovery of the underlying processes and rules for social behavior that are taken for granted by the social participants in specific situations. Garfinkel states:
In exactly the ways that a setting is organized, it consists of members' methods for making evident that settings' ways as clear, coherent, planful, consistent, chosen, knowable, uniform, reproducible connections, i.e., rational connections. In exactly the way that persons are members to organized affairs, they are engaged in serious and practical work of detecting, demonstrating, persuading through displays in the ordinary occasions of their interactions the appearances of consistent, coherent, clear, chosen, planful arrangements. In exactly the ways in which a setting is organized, it consists of methods whereby its members are provided with accounts of the setting as countable, storyable, proverbial, comparable, picturable, representable—i.e., accountable events (1967:34).

From the ethnomethodological perspective, the rock and roll band and the sound technician participate in interactions in order to establish a set of specific effects that culminate in the arrangement of aural and visual parameters of a shared social reality for the audience, the musicians and the sound technicians: the live musical performance. To accomplish this the musicians must communicate to the sound technician their conceptualizations of a "good performance" and a "good sound." Conversely, the sound technician must communicate to the band feasible technical possibilities based on the available equipment within the context of the physical environment of the club, bar or concert hall. The musicians and the sound technician must achieve a consensus on the criteria of good performance production, good sound production, and the maintenance of these components in order to reach a successful definition of the specific
social reality of a live rock music performance for both the audience and themselves.

I will also rely on Erving Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical view of social events and social actors which assumes that participants in socially organized events establish and maintain roles that have "frontstage" and "backstage" regions:

Given a particular performance as a point of reference, it will sometimes be convenient to use the term "front region" to refer to the place where the performance is given...A back region or backstage may be defined as a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course (1959:107-12).

The theatrical terminology of dramaturgy forms a convenient frame of reference from which to study the live stage performance of rock music. This perspective grants "frontstage" and "backstage" areas of definition to the many social roles the musicians and the sound technician play during the production and maintenance of their performances.

Rock musicians and sound technicians carefully define the frontstage and backstage characteristics of their interactions during the production and maintenance of their performances. During the process of set up, the lights and equipment are used by the musicians and the sound technician to define physical front stage and back stage areas both on stage and in the bar or club in order to separate performance space from the audience region. In the context of live performance the band members and the sound technician
usually interact in a backstage manner with one another via subtle hand signals and head gestures in order to maintain the established criteria of a "good sound" during performance. Dramaturgy also provides a framework for the interpretation of the processes of interaction that exemplify the band members' presentation of self and means of impression management which they used during performance to establish and to maintain a rapport with the audience.

Goffman's (1974) conceptualization of frame analysis is also important for this study. In Frame Analysis Goffman provides a more structured framework for the identification and analysis of the processes that participants in social interactions utilize in order to assess their current situation and decide upon a course of action that will be proper for them to use in a given situation at any specific time. Frame analysis allows a theoretical basis for the interpretation of social interactions that take place between a rock band's members and the sound technician during a performance to facilitate the production and maintenance of the live performance:

...that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events— at least social ones—and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. That is my definition of frame. My phrase "frame analysis" is a slogan to refer to the examination in these terms of the organization of experience (Goffman, 1974:10-11).
This perspective also provides a means of interpretation for the inevitable accidents (miscues, forgotten song lyrics, fumbled musical passages, etc.), or frame breaks (the unintentional disruptions of a social actor's deliberate impression management), that might occur during performance.

**Thematic Perspectives**

A review of the literature revealed few topics that were relevant to this research. As a result, I used available research in the sociology of popular music as a source of background information. I applied pertinent themes from related sources and articles to guide my observations, definitions and analyses of performance criteria.

Howard S. Becker (1951) documented jazz musicians' expectations and relations with their audiences and their employers. Becker's description of the jazz musician's self-definition, self-imposed isolation and deliberate segregation from the audience suggested related questions for my interview schedule (see Appendix A). H. Stith Bennett's book, *On Becoming a Rock Musician* (1980), explored the social interactional processes involved in becoming a rock musician. Bennett investigated the structuring and restructuring of rock bands within the social settings common to rock musicians: the practice session, the performance, the equipment and technology, and typical transportation arrangements for the band members and their equipment. He mentioned the implications of the social interactions that occur between band members and a "sound
mixture" that serve to establish a mutual trust in each other's ability to "agree on what sounds good" in his chapter on "Performance and Playing" (1980:162). The agreement of the musicians and sound technician on what constitutes a "good sound" requires all of them to be able to experience or imagine the experience of the sound from the perspective of the audience. The musicians must learn to trust the judgement of their sound technician about the way the band sounds to the audience because the band members usually cannot be in the audience area during the course of the actual performance. The exception to this circumstance occurs when the guitar player and the bass player use a wireless power set up and the vocalist uses a wireless microphone. The wireless system enables the performers to leave the stage, walk into the audience area, and temporarily assume the role of the audience member.

Clinton R. Sanders (1974) offered a look at the interactions that take place between the professional performer and the audience from the perspective of the performer. He identified three types of techniques that performers use to establish and maintain control of audience/performer interaction: 1) building support for performance presentation; 2) defining as deviant the disruptive audience members; and 3) breaking off the performance by becoming both audience and performer (stepping out of the role of performer and harassing the disruptive audience members) or by leaving the stage. Sanders' model of the performers' techniques of
of a rock and roll venue, but the rock bands I observed used very similar types of crowd control. His model assisted my identification of patterns of interaction between band members and audiences.

A study of musicians and musical groups that perform in public bars and lounge bars in Scotland by Mullen (1987) explores the career structures within the music industry and the commercial pressure under which performers work. This study identifies two distinct occupational rhetorics: musical artist and musical entertainer. According to Mullen, the musical artist's focus is on musical skills, technique and competence, and she/he is self oriented "within the performance setting" and prefers to perform original material (1987:20). On the other hand, the musical entertainer's focus is on audience interaction and pleasure, and she/he is audience oriented and performs a "repertoire to suit the audience" (1987:28). Since I found both types of musicians in my sample, Mullen's discussion of specific components of artists' and entertainers' performance rhetoric assisted my identification of similar patterns of interaction within the bands I studied.

A comparison of the occupational rhetoric and ideology of musicians that perform copy music and original music by Groce (1990) was useful in identifying the ways that musicians define and perceive the copy music that the bar circuit "forces" them to play as intrinsically different
from the original music they write and sometimes perform. Groce's study sensitized me to the difficulties and frustrations experienced by musicians that perform copy music and original music on the bar circuit. The studies by both Mullen and Groce helped me to identify performance criteria that musicians consider to be of importance.

Simon Frith (1987) explores the impact of technological advances upon the process of recording music, its subsequent impact upon live performance, and audience perceptions of the listening experience. During a live performance, the rock band's ability to reproduce the sounds to which their audiences are accustomed is intimately connected to the band's available technology, or equipment. In order to achieve an adequate reproduction of other people's music (copy or cover music) the band must have access to specific pieces of sound reinforcement equipment of a certain quality and know how to use it. While Frith's analysis reflected a conflict perspective, I acquired an information base about the impact of technological innovations on the listeners' and performers' perceptions of rock music. I also gained insight as to the impact of the technology used by the music industry upon the band members' and audiences' expectations about what constitutes a "good sound."

Edward R. Kealy (1979) explored the occupation of the sound mixer and his or her relation to the music industry in an article based on his dissertation (1974). Kealy investigated the processes involved in the transformation of the
"sound technician" to the "artist-mixer." He identified and examined three modes of collaboration in record production: craft union, entrepreneurial and art. Kealy identified four characteristics present in each mode of collaboration: available technology, intended recording aesthetic, social organizations, and occupational ideology. He discussed the integration of functions necessary to accomplish the act of recording in each mode of collaboration. Kealy also pointed out the significance of readily available recording technology to popular musicians and the impact of this circumstance in the recording studio relative to the roles of the collaborators.

Since the members of any audience and the members in any rock band are often members of similar communities and are participants in the same society, they learn to define "good music," "rock and roll," "good sound," and "good performance" in the same ways. Most people hear or watch recorded music in some form everyday: radio, albums, tapes, compact discs, television commercials, and music videos. Through this exposure to music in everyday life, the recording industry socializes the listening public to the values and norms of the performance of an acceptable rock music sound. The sound technician who works with a regional-level rock band learns his or her system of values and norms concerning a "good sound" and a "good performance" and what technology is necessary for their production from the same, everyday examples presented to the rest of society.
by the music industry. Then, in essence, the recording engineer or "sound mixer" provides the rock band's sound technician with both a role model and goal-orientation. Kealy states:

The sound mixer is at the center of the social organization of the production of the popular music experience. His work is to mediate music through technology so that listeners can understand the mechanical sounds as a musical experience (1974:33).

Kealy described the "typical" sound mixer as a person with a good education (some formal training beyond high school), from a lower-middle to middle-middle class socioeconomic background, white, male, and with some informal experience in music or sound reinforcement (1974:82).

Kealy's study is the only study that investigates roles of the recording engineer and sound mixer. His description of the duties performed by technicians in the recording studios is comparable to the duties performed by all of the sound technicians who traveled with the bands that I observed and interviewed during the course of this study. Kealy infers that the sound technicians who constitute part of my sample form part of the pool from which the recording industry pulls its future recording engineers, technicians, and artists (1974:83).
Social scientists must decide upon a research method soon after deciding upon a topic for study and prior to beginning their research, data collection, and analysis. The decision to utilize either a quantitative methodology or a qualitative methodology provides the researcher with a research design, "a system of rules and procedures upon which research is based and against which claims for knowledge are evaluated" (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1987:15). The choice of a research method and design determines the course of a researcher's subsequent data collection and analysis.

Quantitative methods employ standardized units of analysis designed to facilitate comparison, manipulation, control, and generalization (Patton, 1987). These designs, experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, and pre-experimental, allow the researcher different degrees of control, comparison, manipulation, and randomization of the chosen units of analysis. In order to maximize the degrees of the validity, the credibility, and the generalizability of the study, the quantitative researcher converts the raw data to numerical equivalents. However, a quantitative research design proved unsuitable for the purposes of my study because there were no readily identifiable units of analysis to control, compare or manipulate in order to prove or disprove hypotheses or determine causality or correlation. I
eliminated quantitative interviews and surveys as possible research tools because they require the respondents to fit their responses into predetermined categories by limiting, eliminating, or distorting responses. These impersonal methods give an imprecise, unclear or distorted perception of the social reality under investigation.

On the other hand, qualitative research designs such as participant observation and in-depth interviews emphasize the researcher's understanding of the "socio-cultural context" of the social interactions of the human participants (Patton, 1987). The researcher who uses a qualitative research design collects non-numerical data such as interviews or observational notes on behaviors and activities that occur between and among individuals and/or groups of individuals:

Qualitative methods permit the evaluator to study selected issues, cases, or events in depth and detail; the fact that data collection is not constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth and detail of qualitative data (Patton, 1987:9).

Field techniques such as detailed descriptions, participant observation and in-depth interviews may not yield data suitable to determine causality; however, these data do help the researcher understand the social reality of the subjects who participate in the study.

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the social interactional processes that band members (musicians and singers) and sound technicians use to
organize and produce the specific social reality of a live musical performance in a club or bar. One of the goals of my study was to understand the experiences of the rock musicians and their sound technicians from their perspective within the context of their professional lives. The best way to accomplish this was to immerse myself in their environment—to become a participant in their social reality. In effect, I had to establish myself as a legitimate member of their social world:

In all research it is essential for the investigator to spend an initial period of time preparing the kinds of questions he [sic] wants to ask, developing his tools for data collection, and then venturing out and determining the extent to which his preconceived research design will fit into the actual field work situation. Gaining acceptance from informants and respondents is a crucial component of this process (Glazer, 1972:11).

I gained access to their social world in order to establish an acceptable, believable identity in the day-to-day, working context of a bar where regional-level rock and roll bands regularly set up their equipment, do a sound check, and perform music for a living.

**Setting: The Rock Steady Bar**

The Rock Steady Bar is located in River City, a mid-sized (population approximately 60,000) city in the Midwest region of the United States. River City has seventeen bars and clubs. Five of these bars and clubs offer live entertainment on a weekly basis. The other twelve establishments have a license to sell alcoholic beverages, serve meals,
and/or provide recorded music for their patrons who wish to listen to or dance to music. Of the five bars and clubs that offer live entertainment, one of the clubs brings in national level, or "headliner," acts; two of the bars provide live country music bands exclusively; one of the bars provides "top forty" recorded dance music, an occasional live rock band, and a weekly comedy show; and one bar, the Rock Steady Bar, provides a live rock band each week. Thus, the Rock Steady Bar was the only establishment in River City in which I could gather appropriate data for my study.

As with any field study, a description of the setting is very important. The physical surroundings are especially important when the event to be described is a live musical performance. The size of the stage, its width and depth, determine the placement of the band's equipment, which also determines to a degree the quality of the sound. The height of the ceiling determines the lighting plot, or design, for the show. The location of the power source, the condition of the wiring and the type of ground for the wiring must be considered by the band and technical crew. The distance of the stage from the bar, the audience and the dance floor often becomes a major factor in determining the decibel level during performance. The distance from the stage to the area where the mixing console sits may affect the sound technician's ability to perform his job (all of the sound technicians in my sample were men). The type of building materials present in the performance area will affect the
way the band sounds to the audience. Other environmental factors such as temperature, humidity, and the number of people in the audience, also affect the band's performance and sound.

Regional-level rock bands are hired by the bar owners to perform music that the assistant manager of the Rock Steady Bar classified as either "rock, hard rock, rock 'n roll or pop/dance music." The capacity of the Rock Steady Bar is 375 patrons. Its staff includes the owner, a manager, an assistant manager, five bouncers/doorpersons, seven bartenders, and six or seven waitresses. The owner, manager and assistant manager decide which bands to hire for a gig. Their decision is based on agency recommendation, a video submitted by a prospective band or observation of the band during a performance at another club. The assistant manager indicated that often the three of them would travel to other clubs to watch bands that had sent videos or that agencies had recommended to see if these band would "fit" the Rock Steady. The decision concerning the potential return of the band on a rotation schedule (every six to eight weeks) is based on business volume during the week of performance, on audience feedback and on staff recommendation.

The six-day gig at the Rock Steady Bar consists of five sets of forty minutes of music, each followed by twenty minute breaks. Taped dance music is played during the breaks. The set up and sound check are scheduled for Monday afternoons. The bands are expected to start the sets
"at the top of the hour." The night's sets end at 1:40 in the morning. The week's gig ends with the final set on Saturday night. The band is expected to "tear down," or dismantle and remove all equipment immediately following this set. When the bar is not busy there is a restriction on the decibel level. The staff will ask the band to turn down if they play too loudly. "Bands have a tendency to want to play at the same level regardless of the number of people in the audience" (Randy, assistant manager). The owner places no drinking restrictions on the bands as long as drinking doesn't interfere with their performance. The decision to drink (or not) during the performance is left up to each band's members. If a problem with alcohol consumption becomes apparent, the assistant manager will speak to the band leader and let the band leader take care of the problem.

One of the perks of the gig at the Rock Steady is that the bands have access to their equipment for rehearsal during the afternoons before the bar opens for business. This allows the bands to work up new cover songs for their set lists or to practice original material.

The stage area in the Rock Steady Bar is twenty-five feet wide, fifteen feet deep, and twenty feet from floor to ceiling. A diagram of the setting is included in Appendix C (see Figure 1). The stage faces the east on one end of a 40' x 60' room. In front of the stage is a 12' x 25' parquet dance floor that is separated from the audience area by a wooden bannister. The twenty-foot-long bar is located
fifteen feet from the stage on the north side of the room and is separated from the audience area by a six-foot wide walkway. A balcony area lines the north, west and east sides of the room. The stairs to the balcony are located on the east side in the center of the room. Another set of stairs to the balcony is located to the right above the power source beside the stage. The bands place their sound boards (mixing consoles) to the right under the stairs on the east end of the room in what all of them referred to as "the hole" (see Figure 2 in Appendix C). All of these physical features play important roles in the processes involved in the production of a set of performance criteria. The bands establish their basic criteria for their performances during the set up and sound check, but the physical limitations of the bar and the stage must be taken into account first:

Does the room you're playing in affect the sound check?

A lot, a lot. For instance, this room here, it's a good-sounding room. It's all wood, high ceilings, and has a really good, dead, almost studio sound. Almost anything you do to the EQ or effects, you do to a PA, you can hear. It actually has an effect. Some rooms you play sound more like a big gymnasium. You've got this big echo around, and you hit one note and it goes on forever and forever and it's a real pain trying to get thing to have a good tone to them before they just sound loud (Nash, guitar player).

It's the sound of the room. Every room sounds different and you play in a room that's small and you think, "Well, we're not going to need much power here." But you hear
it and find out that the room doesn't have much bass and it has suspended ceilings with those ceiling tiles and you sit there and run the PA twice as hard there as you do in a room that holds 1500. There you've got a little room that holds 250 people and you are blowing up equipment and the next week you play in a room that holds 1500 and it sounds great. And you're not running the PA that hard. The room has a lot to do with it (Jed, sound man).

The previous quotes emphasize the critical importance of the physical environment to the production and maintenance of a "good sound." The bands seem to consider the Rock Steady Bar a good place to play. I often overheard comments during the set ups and sound checks about the wood in the room being a good reflective surface, the height of the ceiling making it easier to hang the lights, and the distance of the bar from the stage area keeping the bartenders off their backs about their decibel level. When I asked the band members or the sound technicians why they thought the Rock Steady Bar was a good place to play, they inevitably talked about the physical characteristics of the room first. But they also mentioned the roles of the bartenders and waitresses as "support personnel" that helped the performers motivate crowds. The physical and social aspects of the bar were just as important to the band members and their sound technicians as the economic function of the gig.

The Sample

During the course of this study, I observed eighteen bands during their set ups, sound checks and performances. I kept field notes based on fifty-six separate observations
that ranged from two to six hours in length. I interviewed members of thirteen of the eighteen bands that formed the body of my collected performance observations. Of the forty-seven taped interviews, sixteen were with sound technicians, nine were with guitar players, nine were with keyboard players, eight were with bass players, and five were with drummers. Three of my interviews were with women. The other forty-four taped interviews were with men. A copy of the interview schedule is in Appendix A and a coded list of band members and sound technicians is in Appendix B.

My total sample consists of 118 band members (singers, musicians and sound/light technicians), 110 men and eight women, who range from nineteen to thirty-nine years of age. The age range of the men in my sample is from nineteen to thirty-nine years, and the age range of the women in my sample is from twenty-two to twenty-eight years. Of the musicians and vocalists in my sample, forty-eight indicated some formal training in music and/or voice, thirty-six had no formal training in either music or voice, and seventeen members of the sample did not give this information.

The seventeen sound technicians in the sample were men between the ages of twenty and thirty-six years. Sixteen of the sound technicians were white, one was African-American. Both the age range and the racial and gender disparities are similar to Kealy's (1979) sample of recording engineers.

Of the seventeen sound technicians, ten indicated that they had some type of formal training in a related field
(electronics, electronic engineering, or mass communications). The other seven sound technicians had no formal training in the field, but indicated that they learned by on the job training. All of the sound technicians had at least one year of formal education beyond high school. Fourteen of the sound men in the sample were, or had been, musicians. Again, there was a great similarity in levels and types of training or education between the sound technicians in my sample and Kealy's (1979) sample of recording engineers.

The Pre-Field Study: Gaining Access

In order to create a legitimate identity at the Rock Steady Bar, I conducted a pre-field study from May of 1989 through August of 1989. During this time I observed rock bands and their tech crews complete seventeen set ups and sound checks, averaging five hours of observation per set up and sound check. I also observed fifty-three performances, averaging three hours of observation per performance. I talked with members of twelve bands and crews to discover what, in their opinion, was important about their processes and patterns of interactions that took place during the set up, sound check and performance and result in a "good sound" and a "good performance." The pre-field study allowed me to gather enough information to construct relevant open-ended questions for my interview schedule that were designed to elicit descriptions from the band members and sound technicians about their processes of performance production and performance maintenance. I employed pre-field observations
to identify and focus pertinent concepts for description and analysis.

During the time of my pre-field observations, I developed social skills necessary for the maintenance of my own performance as a "regular" at the Rock Steady Bar. I learned how to interact with the staff that worked at the bar—I learned what my rules and restrictions were regarding physical and temporal access to the bar and the bands. As a sociological researcher, I developed necessary "norms of conduct" to facilitate the scientific study of popular music in a naturalistic setting (Garfinkel, 1967:279).

I also learned how to present myself to the patrons who frequent the bar. I established the identity of a "regular customer" to the staff, the patrons and the bands. However, I discovered an interesting form of resentment directed toward me by the women who came to the bar to "meet the band." Band members, sound technicians, bar personnel, and some patrons characterized these women in their conversations as "bimbos" or "groupies." Since my role as a researcher granted me frequent (and friendly) access to the bands, the "groupies" perceived my interactions with the bands as threats to personal and social territory. Initially, they greeted my presence with suspicious glances or openly hostile stares. After several weeks of observation four of the women accosted me in the ladies' room and demanded to "know what I was up to" because I was "too old to be picking up band guys." I countered with, "I sleep with a
band guy every night--my husband is a bass player." My tongue-in-cheek attitude got their attention, then I told them about the research project. They decided that I was "cool" and offered to give me "intimate details" about the "band guys" in my sample. This exchange is typical of Goffman's "primary frameworking" (Goffman, 1974). The women sought a reason for my continued presence at the bar and my repeated associations with the band members. By inquiring about my intentions, they established a relevant frame of reference for my presence and actions.

To further ease my personal acceptance by the bands, their "women," the bar's staff and the bar's clientele, I adopted styles of clothing such as a black leather jacket or a denim jacket, leather boots or tennis shoes, tight jeans and tee-shirts or sweaters. Since many college students frequent the bar as regular customers and five staff members were college students and this wardrobe is that of a "typical college student," my clothes would not differentiate me as an outsider. In fact, the assistant manager was a former sociology classmate of mine. He provided my initial contact with the bar owner and helped me to gain access to the bar and the bands.

Despite an inside contact to facilitate access to the research site, my integration into the day-to-day social lives of the bands, the bar personnel, and the bar's regular clientele presented me with certain problems. In order to comply with the rules of the bar, I was required to make my
first two performance observations of the bands from the ground floor audience area (see Figure 1 in Appendix C), because the balcony was not opened to the public until all of the first floor tables were occupied. This was not the best place to observe both the band and the sound technician during a performance. The optimum observation point proved to be in the balcony above the stage-right side of the stage. From this vantage point I could observe the band from their perspective of the audience and still see the sound technician at the mixing console. This position permitted me to "catch them in the act" of the nonverbal communications that took place between stage members and the tech crew. These nonverbal interactions were a necessary part of the group's methods of performance maintenance. To remedy this dilemma, I either stood in the back by the sound board, or I sat at a table on the aisle in the middle of the audience area. Either of these positions allowed me to view the stage and the sound board in an unobtrusive manner.

Since I made no effort to conceal my note taking, my presence as a "working" sociologist in the midst of people who wanted to be entertained caused several incidents that were disruptive to the research process. One man accused me of being a narcotics agent—the bouncers removed him after he threatened me with a concealed weapon. Another man accosted me, and asked if I were a private investigator—he sighed in relief at my statement of purpose, and told me he was "fooling around on his wife." My friends provided one
of the most interesting obstacles to my observations—they would watch me make note of a situation, walk over, and remove my pen from my hand, saying, "Oh, quit being a sociologist and party with us." Obviously, I quit taking notes when other people could see me. I developed an apparent "bladder problem," and like many good field researchers, started running to the restroom to write up my observations while they were fresh in my mind. I quickly developed a preference for my Friday night observations, because I could take field notes from the best observation point (the balcony) as the incidents occurred—there was a ledge for drinks that concealed my notebook and actions.

Data Collection

With a firmly established persona, I began my five month study. I gathered the information for my study through the use of participant observation. I combined field observations with in-depth interviews to maximize my understanding of the experiences of regional-level rock bands in their day-to-day social environment. Other researchers (e.g., Becker, 1963; Bennett, 1980; Groce, 1990; Groce and Dowell, 1988) in the area of the sociology of popular music have used participant observation to gather information for their studies; however, they actually participated, or were recognized, as musicians with the bands they investigated. Since my goals are to identify and investigate the patterns and processes of social interaction that may be observed among regional-level rock bands and
sound technicians during the set up and sound check (the production of their performance criteria) and during the stage performances (the maintenance of their performance criteria), I arranged to observe many different bands in one location. This strategy allowed me to gather enough information to identify and describe the patterns and processes that regional-level rock bands and their sound technicians use in the production and maintenance of the specific social reality of a live musical performance.

As a researcher, my past contact with sound reinforcement equipment, sound technicians and rock bands helped me to understand the terminology and equipment that rock bands and sound technicians use during live performances. During the 1970's, I dated and later married a bass player/sound technician. My involvement with him and the bands with which he was associated exposed me to the technology used by musicians and sound technicians. My past contacts with bands also served as a vehicle for quicker acceptance by the members of the bands I planned to interview and to observe—the "band guys" perceived me as a "band person." However, my involvement with rock bands was prior to 1980, and the innovations in technology precluded an over-reliance on past knowledge and experience. I had to pay close attention to the sound techs and band members in order to understand the contexts of their interactions. If I observed an ambiguous situation during set up, sound check or performance, I made note of the incident and asked a member of the group about
it as soon as possible. I was concerned about my ability to maintain an awareness of the possibility of bias and assumed knowledge during my observations of and interviews with the bands; however, I found that the bands maintained a self-imposed social distance that facilitated my self-definition as a sociological researcher and their self-definitions as touring bands. They associated with me in a professional manner, they answered questions, discussed problems during a set in front of me, and often extended to me a temporary "membership" in their group. As Goffman has noted:

The performer who is to be dramaturgically prudent will have to adapt his performance to the information conditions under which it must be staged....In addition to reckoning with what can be seen, the performer will also have to take into considerations the information the audience already possesses about him....we may expect individuals to relax the strict maintenance of front when they are with those they have known for a long time, and to tighten their front when among persons who are new to them. With those whom one does not know, careful performances are required (1959:222).

Since I introduced myself as a sociologist who had a background in sound reinforcement for rock bands, the band members and sound technicians on the one hand chose to perceive me as a sociologist and former "band person." On the other hand, they wanted me to perceive them as professional musicians and technicians who possessed information that was valuable to my study. The idea that a social scientist viewed their day-to-day lives as important enough to study
seemed to promote an increased solidarity of image, both for the individuals and the bands as entities.

With an insider's assistance (Randy, the assistant manager) I arranged to help the regular staff sweep and clean the balcony area of the band side of the bar during the bands' set ups and sound checks. The bar owner schedules all of the bands that play at the bar to set up their equipment and do their sound check on Mondays until the beginning of regular business hours at 4:00 in the afternoon. I made my initial observations of the eighteen bands (see Appendix B) included in this study while cleaning the balcony area above the stage where the bands set up their equipment. During the unloading and setting up of the equipment the bands were unaware of my identity and intentions. However, I introduced myself to all of the band members and sound technicians by the time they had completed their sound checks and before they left the bar to get ready for the first performance of the week. I felt that I would get a more accurate picture of the processes of the set up and sound check if the band members and sound technicians were unaware of my observations.

My introduction and explanations of my observations to the bands elicited several types of responses. The most common were disbelief, cynicism, amazement, and interest. The band members who were either cynical or disbelieving of my motives usually responded with comments such as: "Sure, babe. That's the most original pick-up line I've ever
heard." (Lawrence, keyboard player); or "Yeah, right! Nobody in their right mind would study rock bands or sound techs." (Nigel, drummer). Other responses included: "Really? I didn't know anybody studied rock music seriously. I thought you were joking." (Suzanne, keyboard player); and "Really? That's great! I've often said that bands like us were really some sort of subculture and should be studied." (Rod, drummer). After talking with the bands and demonstrating enough knowledge to establish my legitimacy as a sociological researcher and a former "band person," I told the band members and sound technicians that I planned to observe three of their performances. After I got their permission to take notes during these observations, I asked if I might tape interviews with several of them. Most of the musicians and sound technicians agreed immediately, some of them seemed hesitant about a taped interview, and three of them refused to be interviewed (taped or not). All of my field notes and taped interviews were coded for analysis. (See Lofland and Lofland, 1984, for a complete discussion of qualitative coding strategies.)

I observed each band during three performances of their week-long gig. My first performance observation of each band took place on Monday nights. This observation was designed to give me an idea of what processes of interaction the bands used to communicate possible problems to each other and their sound man (all of the sound technicians in my sample were male) in order to maintain the performance
criteria (the "good performance" and the "good sound") that they established during their set up and sound check. The opening night observation also gave me the opportunity to observe the bands' techniques of interaction with the audience.

My second performance observation was scheduled to take place on Wednesday nights. By this time the bands have performed at least twice in the bar. They have had time to adjust their equipment to the specific dynamics of the room and to familiarize themselves with the local taste in preferred songs (adjust their set lists). The Wednesday night crowd at the Rock Steady Bar is larger than the Monday night crowd, but is rarely a packed house. Since the bands had also become accustomed to my presence by Wednesday, I attempted to schedule interviews with them. It is interesting to note that nine of the bands completed their interviews with me during my first week of contact; however, the other ten bands required at least one other gig before they agreed to be interviewed, and a few of the bands required as many as seven.

The third performance observation took place on either a Friday or Saturday night. By the weekend the Rock Steady Bar is usually filled to its capacity. Fridays and Saturdays are the "party nights" in River City. The bands have experienced enough performances to know what type of responses to expect from the audiences and just how to get them. By making the three performance observations, I
became familiar with the nonverbal signals and patterns of communication—conferences during breaks, sound techs running to the stage during a song, etc.—that the bands and their sound technicians used to maintain their preferred performance level:

Teams work out ways of conveying extended verbal messages to one another in such a way as to protect a projected impression that might be disrupted were the audience to appreciate that information of this kind was being conveyed (Goffman, 1959:184).

The presence of such methods of inconspicuous communication during performance is important to the bands' perceived stage performance. The three observations also allowed a comparison of the effect of audience response upon the musicians' and sound technicians' performances.

In addition to the field notes from the set up, sound check and performance observations, I also taped a series of semi-structured interviews with the musicians and sound technicians. I interviewed at least two members of twelve of the eighteen bands—the sound technician and at least one other member of the band. The interviews were taped at their convenience and with my assurance of the confidentiality of their comments. In order to maintain confidentiality, I interviewed each person in private, unless she/he requested the presence of another band member at the interview. Everyone was assured that any quotes or information that might be used in the study would be identified by a pseudonym followed by the instrument they played or their
role in the band. The multiple observations of each of the bands provided a large data set with enough detail to identify step-by-step patterns of interaction that serve to produce a live musical performance, e.g., the set up and the sound check. The information gained in the semi-structured interviews clarified sections of my field notes that concerned the processes of interactions among band members, sound technicians and audiences during the maintenance of their performances.

Limits of the Study

Any field research that uses participant observation as its primary source of data has definite limitations. The researcher risks over-involvement in the situation or with his/her subjects. Since I enjoy listening to rock music, I had to maintain an awareness of my sociological purpose at the Rock Steady Bar--the participant observer. I developed a series of cues to remind myself of my purpose--pen in hand means watch and take notes; drink "doctored water" (water with lemons and limes with cherries on the side), after all, I was not there to party; and watch from different angles so my presence would not intimidate any one band member. I was also careful to speak with each band member sometime during each observation so as to alleviate perceived "favoritism" for one band member over another.

I became aware that the artifact of my presence could (and sometimes would) change a band's stage performance. On slow nights the band would watch for my arrival, then they
would "play to me." They would talk to me from the stage, make faces when they made a mistake (something they would never do under normal circumstances), or they would get tense and self-conscious and not look at the section of the audience where I was seated. Some of the band members watched me with the same intensity that I watched them, noting whenever I made a notation and asking me on their next break what I had written. As a result, my field notes at the bar consisted only of unadorned observations that I made available to the band members--I made inferences and coding choices later. I was aware of the potential flaws in data collection involving only field notes from observations of set ups, sound checks and performances, so I combined field observations with in-depth interviews:

There are strengths and weaknesses to any single data collection strategy. Using more than one data collection approach permits the evaluator to combine strengths and correct some of the deficiencies of any one source of data. Building checks and balances into a design through multiple data collection strategies is called triangulation....and triangulated evaluation designs are aimed at increasing the strength and rigor of an evaluation (Patton, 1987:60).

Since respondents may give subjectively biased information or may have a distorted view of the situation, I compared information from my field notes to information gained from the interviews. Triangulation of data collection methods seemed to be the best way to deal with my possible bias as well as my respondents' possible biases.
Chapter III

Performance Production

During my observations of the eighteen bands and their tech crews, I discovered that the social interactional process of performance production actually consisted of two interconnected processes: the set up and the sound check. These two processes must be completed in a certain patterned order: 1) set up, followed by, 2) sound check, because, logically, if they did not set up their equipment first, they certainly could not sound check it. It is during these two processes that the bands and their tech crews "set the stage" for their upcoming performances:

The term "production" can refer to the effort of a particular cast on the occasion of any one run of the play, here defining "run" as the full series of playings presented by one cast on the basis of one continuous period of preparation. A run may involve but one playing, but the economics of production dictate otherwise. For the iron laws of stagecraft apply: the audience can only be asked for their attention, considerateness, and a fee, and the actors have a right to stage the whole thing again before the next night's audience (Goffman, 1974:127-28).

It is during the all-important processes of set up and sound check that the rock bands and their sound technicians define the parameters (performance criteria) of their upcoming gig.

The Set Up

All of the bands seem to follow a step-by-step process during the set up and sound check. During the process of set up all of the band members and the tech crew unload all
of the necessary equipment from the truck and bring it into the bar. The largest and heaviest pieces of equipment, the PA stacks (low-end speakers -- horn-loaded bass bins, mid-range speakers, and high-end horns and bullet tweeters), are placed in front of the stage on the edge of the dance floor. All of the bands separated their "staging area," or performance space, from the "audience regions" in this manner (see Goffman, 1974:125). Since the Rock Steady Bar provided no true "backstage" area for the band members such as a break room or a dressing room, the bands found it necessary to establish some of these parameters themselves. They then take the lights and cables to the stage, and put the tool boxes and gray duct tape in the center of the work area.

I make specific mention of the duct tape because all of the bands use large quantities of it during the set up. The tape is used to mark staging cues on the stage floor, to secure cables out of the audience's way, to provide temporary stability for unstable equipment, and to group light cables to the trusses and balcony. The tape is inexpensive, easy to use and easy to remove at the end of the gig. During the set up the whereabouts of the duct tape is a source of humor for the bands and tech crews. I asked several of the band members about the tape:

Well, there's rock tape and lounge tape. Rock tape is the good quality stuff that will last the whole week. Lounge tape is the light weight, cheap stuff that doesn't stick worth a damn (DJ, keyboard player).
One of the sound men wore "his roll" of duct tape on his arm like a bracelet. When I asked him why, he responded:

Every time I buy a roll of good tape one of these assholes steals it. Then when I need it for something really important, it's gone and nobody will admit to taking it and nobody knows where any is. This stuff's great for quick repairs (Slick, sound man).

His band laughed when they heard his answer to my question. They told me that he always wore a duct tape roll bracelet during the set up because he thought that the opening performance would be "jinxed" if he didn't.

The next piece of equipment to be placed and hooked up is the sound board. At the Rock Steady Bar the sound board is positioned in "the hole" under the steps leading to the balcony (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). The snake, a multipin connector cable that links the sound board to the equipment on stage and to the PA mains (amplifier rack and crossovers), is secured out of the audience's way with duct tape. The PA stacks (speakers) and the sound board can be placed and hooked up before the band's equipment is set up on the stage because it is out of the way of the tech crew or band members who are working on the lights. Before anything else can go on stage, the band hangs, focuses and gels the lights. When I asked them why they did things in this order, the response was always, "It just works better this way, you know." This comment is typical of Garfinkel's (1967) examination of the "et cetera" practices participants in social interactions utilize when asked to explain the
rationale that supports the logic of some action to a participant with ambiguous intentions or knowledge. Cicourel (1974) suggested that some elements of language (such as "you know") allowed members to communicate within a socially shared body of common knowledge that provides a frame of reference for the organization of social reality.

During the process of set up, the band members exhibit varying degrees of organization or disorganization. The band members and tech crews of all of the bands also performed other specific tasks during the set up that were not connected to "their equipment" (Bennett, 1980). This observation provides a basis for the identification of the role structure in the bands. Three of the bands in this study had all of their equipment set up for them by a technical crew that consisted of the sound man, the light man and one or two stage hands. Two of these bands had been together an average of nine years (the other band had only been together six weeks, but the individual members each had an average of eight years experience. The majority of the bands, however, used all of their members during the set up process. Ten of the bands performed their set up under the primary direction of the sound man and/or the acknowledged leader of the band in a very organized manner. These bands had been together from three to six years, and their members all had at least two years of previous "road experience." The other five bands completed their set up in a very haphazard way, often with a great deal of wasted time and effort. These
five bands had been together from three weeks to thirty months, and had band members with as little as two months prior experience. The three levels of organization present during the set up appears to be connected to the level of professionalism of the group and the individual and to the length of time the group has been together as a unit. Of the eighteen bands in the study there was only one exception to this circumstance, and in this instance the collective experience of the band's individual members matched or exceeded the other bands in the "most professional category."

After the tech crew, which consists of the sound man and as many band members as possible, hang the lights, the band members place their personal vocal monitors on stage, connect the monitors to the power amps and connect the amps to the sound board. The monitors allow the musicians and the singers to hear themselves so they can stay in key and on cue. Bennett (1980) points out that the monitors provide a special mix, or sound, to the people on stage that is usually different from the sound that the audience hears through the main PA system. All of the bands that I observed ran a separate monitor mix that specialized the mixed sound to the needs of each performer on stage. By having each monitor put out only the sounds from specific channels, the sound man can arrange for each performer to hear what he or she needs to hear in order to effectively maintain the established performance criteria of the "good sound." Next, the individual band members set up their
personal gear on the stage. The drum kit is always set up first because "it takes up the most room, and everything else has to be set up around it" (Bob, sound man). After the drums are in place, the rest of the musicians set up their equipment and return the empty packing cases to the equipment truck.

All of the bands used humor to alleviate the tensions and tempers that seem to be typical of the process of set up. The musicians made fun of each other and their tech crew:

**The Who Cares:**
Nigel: Bob told Randy that the bass player just stayed in the background and played what he was supposed to play. [Bass player is on stage practicing jumps, spins and mic stand twirls]
Nigel: What'd he say about me?
Randy: Everybody messes up but God. [They shake hands, God is Nigel's nickname]
Leo: What do you want, Bob? [Requesting instructions about the equipment]
Bob: I want you, Babe.

**The Crystal Hearts:**
Ed: You ever thought of investing in an inflatable drum set?
Dev: If you can find one, I'll get it.
Ed: But I was going to ask if you had enough hot air to blow it up.
Dev: Well, you do. You've blown me often enough.

These examples are typical of "band set up humor," loaded with derogatory comments and sexual allusions. The bands must complete the set up and sound check by the time the bar opens for business. A strict deadline and their inevitable fatigue due to their arrival from another six-night gig in another city contributes to frayed tempers. The band
members and tech crew use humor to diffuse the built-up tension to prevent the carry-over of negative attitudes to the opening performance (see for example, Apte, 1985). Other researchers commented on similar patterns of social interactions which occur before or after a performance that serve to re-establish the solidarity of the group in new or different surroundings (see for example, Bennett, 1980; Groce and Dowell, 1988). When band members joke with each other about their equipment, expertise, or sexual adventures, they reaffirm their roles as men/women, musicians, and members of the band. Their humor also serves to set the stage for the up-coming performance, i.e., with their banter, the band members remove built-up tension that is disruptive to the production and maintenance of their "good sound" and their "good performance" while they commiserate with each other about the hard work and drudgery:

What the individual spends most of his spoken moments doing is providing evidence for the fairness or unfairness of his current situation and other grounds for sympathy, approval, exoneration, understanding, or amusement. And what his listeners are primarily obliged to do is to show some kind of audience appreciation. They are to be stirred not to take action but to exhibit signs that they have been stirred (Goffman, 1974:503).

The physical environment and the physical properties of the equipment are the deciding criteria that determine the steps in each band's process of the set up. The size of the stage and the bar and the amount and size of the band's equipment and the number of musicians and singers on stage
determine the placement of all equipment. Each piece of equipment prompts questions that must be answered during the process of the set up: the PA mains (how many speaker cabinets?), the monitors (how many are needed so everyone can hear?), the sound board (where can it be placed? where's the power source?), the lights (where can they be hung? how many are needed?), the drum kit (is it on risers? is it large or small?), the keyboards (how many are used? are they racked separately, or grouped together?), the guitars and bass guitar (how many guitar or bass amps on stage? is anyone run direct through the mains and submixed through the monitors?), and the microphones (how many are needed?) Once these decisions are made, the set up can be completed and the sound check can begin.

The Sound Check

The sound check, like the set up, is a set of social interactions that help establish the rock band's criteria for performance production. The musicians and the sound technician use a sound check to provide a basic mix (blend) of the instruments, vocals and effects in order to achieve a "good sound" for their performances and for their audiences. In effect, the band members and sound technicians act as a team, or "the organized community or social group" and take the role of "the generalized other" in a complex and elaborate series of steps that they feel allows them to hear, and subsequently imagine, what their audiences hear (Mead, 1962:154). Or, as Ashley and Orenstein state:
In order to judge imagined and prospective goal-oriented actions, however, one needs to project oneself into the future. That is, in order to decide which actions to take, one must imagine the outcomes of various possible actions and choose the plan of action with the most desirable results. Therefore, Mead asserted that we act in the present, with knowledge of the past, but in reference to some future goals. In this sense, the future exists as something imagined in the present—a human mental construct (1985:425).

The process of the sound check, then, consists of physical and mental activities on the part of the band and tech crew that construct the social reality of the musical and visual parameters of the audience's perceptions of the rock band.

Before "sound checking" any of the individual instruments, the sound man runs a test signal through the PA and monitor speakers to determine whether or not the gear is plugged into the correct channels on the sound board. The test signal may be a pink noise generator (a full spectrum audio signal that sounds like loud static) that is processed with a real time analyzer (RTA) to establish a "flat line equalization," or balanced signal response, on the sound board's signal processing. The test signal may also be a taped song that has a wide range of signal responses that is played through the PA and monitors to determine the correctness of the equipment set up and the characteristics of the room's equalization. These two methods represent the decision by the band's sound technician to either rely on technology to check the room, to "do it by ear," or to do both.
Do you run pink noise and a RTA?

Yeah. What that does, it gives you a starting point. Pink noise, I really don't know what it is. It's a full-range sound, from the lowest notes to the highest notes running through the PA system. You set your equalizer so that from the lowest note to the highest note, and everything in between, is coming out equally as far as the volume-wise goes. Without doing that, a real good sound man or somebody experienced, can just hear and listen to the band and think, "well, on this frequency there's more and we need to cut it." What that does though, it's not a bible. I'm not that stuck to it. But I set it up like that and that gives me a nice place to start, with a flat, equalized system (Nash, band leader/guitar player).

Is your mixing done by ear, or do you run pink noise?

I used to run pink noise, but now I do everything by ear.

Why?

Ah, if you go into an empty room and you pink noise, and the room stayed empty all week — pink noising is just for an empty room. When a room fills up halfway, it's totally different, so pink noise is really ... For the first song the first night, it might be an advantage, if there's nobody in there. Bodies make a total difference in room EQ.

Why do you mix then?

I really don't know why. I open the room, the air has plenty of room to move. You can put bodies in it and it's just not that clear for the air to move and it makes a difference (Bob, sound man).

Bob makes a very pertinent point about relation between the sound of the mix and the movement of air. Since sound is movement, or vibrations, in the air, a certain magnitude of air (approximately twenty thousand cubic feet) is necessary in a room before it will sound "good" to the rock musician (Bennett, 1980:169). Another sound man discusses his reasons for using both methods of sound checking a room:
Does this band mix by ear, or do you run pink noise and a real time analyser?

Both. As far as tuning PA? Pink noise will tune the system to the room. You shouldn't have to tune your system, your system should already be flat. You're tuning to your acoustical environment but, at the same time, with certain components in a system and certain acoustical properties and certain human hearing fatigueness that you want to avoid. There are certain frequencies you want to take out and certain frequencies you want to boost (Mick, sound man/bass player).

Following the system check, all of the bands in this study performed the sound check on the drum kit first. I asked all of the drummers and most of the sound men why this was the instrument that started the sound check. I usually received one of three responses: "They take the longest to EQ because of all of the mics" (Andy, drummer); "They are the only acoustic equipment on stage, so they are harder to EQ" (Darby, band leader); and:

The drums are the foundation of the rock band. They form the base around which the rest of the equipment is EQ'd and mixed. They're the heartbeat of the band, the footrest" (Rod, drummer).

The lack of musical/technical specificity in these responses reflect a reluctance or an inability to articulate the social organizational reasoning behind the ordering of the sound check. And yet, the responses imply the values of the band members and sound technicians that relate to their perceptions of the reality of their professions, the "common sense knowledge of the facts of social life for the members of the society" (Garfinkel, 1967:53).
The second instrument that most of the sound men in this study checked was the bass guitar. The reasons that were cited for this pattern in the sound check usually related to the frequency range of the tones generated by the instrument. Chick, one of the bass players, pointed out that the bass was both a rhythm instrument (like the drums) and a musical tone-producing instrument (like the guitars and keyboards). Again, the physical properties of the instruments, as well as the equipment, determined the organization of the sound check within the environmental context of the room.

According to the sound technicians, the order of the rest of the instruments in the sound check usually depended upon the availability of the musicians and the vocalists. Sometimes the process of sound checking the drums and bass took up so much time that a complete sound check was impossible within the time limitations set by the bar. However, the sound men were always pleased to get a "good sound" on the drums and bass, because "you can generally tweak out the rest of the system to the room during the first couple of songs" (Baron, sound man). "Tweaking out the system to the room" indicated the process of equalizing the system to the room during the first set of the band's performance.

Each of the musicians and vocalists in all of the bands associated a "structural function" to their instrument or role in the band within the framework of the "team efforts" of the band as a unit (Goffman, 1959). These statements
imply a set of social norms for interactions that evolve within the bands: "The drums are the foundation of the band" (Rod, Tom, Andy, drummers); "The bass is the balls of the band, (Leo, bass player); "The bass player is the glue keeping the foundation together" (Mick, bass player):

The guitar is the energy of the band; the drums are the primal aspect of the band; the bass is the drive of the band; and the keyboard is the texture of the band (Ted, keyboard/guitar player).

[The vocalist] is the story teller and sings the melody. You know, you've got to have a line over the top to make it a song (Bernard, vocalist).

As far as being the backbone and soul of the band, I really feel it's all bass and drums. I feel everybody else is a filler part for that song. If you've got a good foundation, you put some blocks on top and build something nice (Kord, keyboard player).

The association of an abstract structural name to an instrument's role in the band represents the solid presence of the group's identity in the individual band member's attitude toward the group. This naming process is also related to the band member's self-perceived function of the instrument within the group during the performance. The identification of the members to the group through their instruments' roles in the process of the performance of their music also serves to establish some group autonomy from the audience and bar owner (Mullen, 1987).

Observations of bands during set up and sound check provide an interesting contrast between the "backstage" and "frontstage" behaviors of the individuals and of the bands
as entities (Goffman, 1959). When not in front of an audience, the band members can "be themselves." They wear comfortable, old jeans or sweat pants, tee shirts and tennis shoes. They do not have to worry about whether or not their hair is combed or styled. They do not wear makeup. They belch, scratch themselves in socially unacceptable places, and argue and tease like tired children. The type and amount of teasing, and arguing and humor can serve as an indicator of the group's dynamics and structure. These interactions revealed the statuses and roles of the individual band members in relation to the group as an entity:

Are the relationships that form within the band important?

Well, they're unavoidable. They're not necessarily important. You don't really have to be friends to work together, but it helps. Because you live together, eat together, sleep together, you know. When one guy's down, the others try to pull him up, so friendships are important, but not really necessary. There are probably one or two guys that hang out together more than the others. It's like a family-type of thing after a while. Your money comes from the same place, so you are all working for a common goal. It kind of develops more into a family-type of thing (Nash, guitar player).

Is getting along important?

It's essential. Unless you're an extremely good actor and you just don't like somebody on stage, you're going to be able to tell. It really shows. If you don't get along, you know, you don't really have to love each other and be really good buddies or anything like that, but you do have to have a certain amount of respect and get along. If you don't get along, you're just not going to last. If someone ends up getting up to play and screws up, the band just kind of fizzles.
It's true what they say, one bad apple will spoil the whole bunch (Timmy, guitar player).

Every band in my sample implied an underlying organizational structure for their bands with an acknowledged business orientation for the group. Members quit the band, members join the band and friendships may form in the band; but the band, as an entity, stands as a type of institution with its own value system and norms for behavior. I observed seven different bands throughout the processes of member changes. In each case the group concentrated on the integration of the new member into the team. The band clued the "new guy" in on the "way we do things." In other words, they formally, through serious instructions, and informally, through teasing and joking, socialized the new member in the values, norms for performance and impression management, and correct/expected behaviors of a member of this band. Goffman stated:

It is apparent that if members of a team must cooperate to maintain a given definition of the situation before their audience, they will hardly be in a position to maintain that particular impression before one another.... Among teammates the privilege of familiarity—which may constitute a kind of intimacy without warmth—need not be something of an organic kind, slowly developing with the passage of time spent together, but rather a formal relationship that is automatically extended and received as soon as the individual takes a place on the team (1959:82).

All of the bands consider the set up and the sound check to be a sort of "necessary evil." They arrive at the bar and complete a ritualized set of activities designed to
establish, or produce, what they consider to be the basis for their performance. The band members and tech crews followed step-by-step procedures during the processes of performance production that have the manifest function of establishing a "good sound." However, the ritual nature of these two activities also served the latent functions of increasing efficiency, permitting autonomy of action to the participants, and re-affirming the group solidarity and goal-orientation through social interaction (Katz, 1981:336):

Are the routines, the steps, you use to get things done necessary?

Oh, yes. You have to follow a rigid routine or you will fall apart, the show will fall apart. You have to do certain things at certain times, or nothing will get done. The show is supposed to look easy, but if you don't follow some sort of schedule, nothing will ever get done (Andy, drummer).

Can I interview you after supper, before the show?

Well, that's "shower time," then it's "nap time." I don't mind talking to you, but if I break my routine, it will screw up my head before the show (Taz, bass player).

Many of the band members expressed the "need" to maintain their established routines of behavior, whether during set up and sound check or during their after-set up/pre-performance time sectors in order to maximize their efforts at performance production and performance maintenance. The group members felt that they must go through each step to
identify possible problems and then solve them in order to prepare for their front stage performance.

All of the bands performed the same steps during the set up and sound check in virtually the same order. The only exceptions to this pattern ordering might occur in the decision to reverse the sequence of the sound check for the keyboards or the guitar. In all cases the drums were equalized first, the bass was equalized second, either the keyboards or guitars were equalized third or fourth, and the vocals and harmonies were equalized last. Following the equalization process, if time allowed, the bands "run through" from one to three songs in order to establish a working mix level for the opening number of the first set of the performance. These patterns of interactions among the group members were punctuated by moans and groans about time, waits and delays. Everyone always wanted to get out of the bar as quickly as possible so as to have enough time to rest, eat and clean up for the evening's performance. Even though the members of the bands voiced negative comments about the set up and sound check, all of them expressed an awareness of the importance of these processes of performance production:

Well, I don't care how tired you are, you know that we have to do this or we'll sound and look like shit! (Bob, sound man)

Quit griping! You're the one who bitches the most if your monitor mix isn't just like you want it (Jed, sound man).
Look, just shut up, get your asses in gear, and let's get this show on the road! I want to take a shit, eat, shower and shave before the show (Marv, keyboard player).

None of the band members ever seemed to want to skip the necessary drudgery, because leaving their impression management to chance was considered too much of a risk to take. A band's ability to effectively produce and maintain acceptable performance criteria will determine the band's economic survival and success.

Getting the "Good Sound"

Throughout this study I used the phrase, "the good sound," as though it has special meaning. It does. The phrase, "the good sound," represents one of the goals of the combined efforts of regional-level rock bands and their sound technicians. In order to achieve a "good sound," bands on the regional level (i.e., the bar circuit venue) purchase and maintain equipment designed to reproduce studio recorded music in a live situation. These touring rock bands hire special crew members who are trained on, or have knowledge of and experience with, sound reinforcement equipment that is roadable. With the help of these sound technicians as support personnel, the regional-level rock bands endeavor to reproduce other people's material (cover songs) or create and play their own rock music (originals) during a live performance at a club or bar. In order to replicate someone else's material for an audience that acquires its musical consciousness by listening to studio recordings of rock music via the radio and music videos and/or cassette
tapes and CD's (Frith, 1987), the regional-level rock band participates in a set of processes that are designed to maximize their performance production (the set up and sound check). In other words, these bands have to "get the good sound" before they can maintain the "good sound" during a performance.

To get the "good sound" the rock bands and their sound technicians must attain a consensus about what sounds good. All of the musicians, singers and sound technicians that I observed and interviewed expressed an individual opinion of what constituted a "good sound" for the type of music they performed. However, all of the band members and sound technicians that I interviewed experienced difficulty when asked to describe a "good sound." I received descriptions that alluded the experience of the "good sound" to colors, geometric shapes, temperatures, and emotions:

Would you describe for me a "good sound"?

That's hard to say. 'Cause, you know, sound is good at different times and that certain point in time it sounds good. As far as me describing a good sound, I don't really know it until I hear it. You know, to me a good sound should be tight, and as far as in rock-thumpin', or even in country--movin'. With a lot of depth as far as in the sound--a big span with bass, mids and highs. So, you know, a good sound is just a good sound. Like a rainbow of sounds (Chip, lead guitarist).

A nice warm sound. Not shrill. Not so much high end that it's aggravating and not so much low end that it's nauseating. You know. And if you can get a nice happy medium where the bass drum is hitting everybody right here
in the chest, but it's not making your heart go into arrhythmia (Tank, guitarist).

A good sound has a lot of balls, a lot of low end. Overall it's hard to describe. For the sound to surround you, is a good sound (Leo, bass player).

A good sound means clean, articulate, and to have nothing overcrowding anything else. Everything must stand out within itself and not crowd another. It's kind of hard to explain. It's hard to explain sound, anyway. But a good sound is one that is clearly audible, you know, and has a complete dynamic range that can be understood from any place in the hall. To me that's a good sound (Mick, bass player/sound man).

Gosh, that's kind of a hard question. Loud and clear. Clean with a harsh accent. It's like folk music shot out of a 12-guage. That's the kind of stuff I like to do, and write (Bernard, vocalist).

These professional musicians and sound technicians searched for the right words to describe the basis for their good performances--the good sound. One band member simply stated: "It's hard to describe with words something you hear with your ears" (Nash, guitarist). The band members and sound techs resorted to other sensory experiences to try to describe a "good sound."

The difficulty and confusion experienced by the band members and sound techs when I asked them to describe a basic facet of their everyday social reality was a normal response to an abnormal situation. In other words, I questioned the actual fabric of their familiar, known-in-common environment and their shared social and cultural sets of background expectancies concerning performance production.
that form the parameters of their bands' means of economic gain:

This stock of experiences refers indirectly to all of his past and present fellow men whose acts or thoughts have contributed to the building of his knowledge. This includes what he has learned from his teachers, and his teachers from their teachers; what he has taken in from other players' execution; and what he has appropriated from the manifestations of the musical thought of the composer. Thus, the bulk of musical knowledge - as of knowledge in general - is socially derived. ...Musical knowledge transmitted by authorities is not only socially derived; it is also socially approved being regarded as authentic and therefore more qualified to become a pattern for others than knowledge originating elsewhere. (Schutz, 1971:168-69; see also Garfinkel, 1967)

The band members and sound technicians shared similar socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Thus, they also shared similar values and norms concerning the implied definition of a "good sound," even though they could not articulate a technical definition without making allusions to other sensory stimuli.

The fact that people have the same culture in common, including a particular kind of music, enhances their feeling of belonging together, of constituting a society or a social group. Sharing a style of life produces and maintains a feeling of solidarity among the members of a society or group (De Jager, 1974:166).
The musicians and singers in the bands provide the sound technician with their advice and comments during the sound check. The sound tech takes that information and combines it with his knowledge of the band's available sound reinforcement technology, the present environment, and his expertise in the art of his everyday practice of sound reinforcement. The band members rely on the sound tech to mediate the consensus necessary to produce the minimal criteria for their performance.

The social organization of the regional-level rock band depends upon musicians' individual and collective abilities to communicate to each other during the sound check their needs and requirements that will result in the desired "good sound":

I'm still not getting the sound that I want because I don't know how to tell the guys what I need to make me sound right (Jack, vocalist).

We want to try to get that studio sound live. Sometimes we get close, but usually we have to compromise with the rooms, the owners, our equipment, and our own attitudes (Forrest, guitarist).

We have experience. We have youth. We have experience and youth mixed together with people who know what they want. And we all agree upon the same style of music originally. So, it kind of makes a perfect blend. And you have to have the chemistry or it will never work (Richard, bass player).

These quotes emphasize the deliberate consideration that members of regional-level rock bands give to the issue of communication. Without a mutual acceptance of the
underlying assumptions of the social interactional processes involved in the playing of rock music, regional-level rock bands would not be able to achieve a consensus, or at least a compromise, on a working mix upon which to base their opening performance.

Getting the "good sound" is a critical factor in the rock band's performance as it is perceived by the audience and the band members themselves. This is one of the reasons regional-level rock bands spend so much time and effort on the processes involved in the production of their performances. Simply stated, the way they sound affects the way they perform:

Does the way that you think you sound affects your performance?

Oh, a lot. Hugely. Hugely. If you feel that you're not, you know, sounding good, then it just, uh, to me music is like a really...it's ... I'm a highly emotional person anyway, and music is just emotion. You know, if you're just concentrating instead of on, like, "Oh, wow, this doesn't sound the way it should," instead of on really just getting into it with your heart, and all. You can't play very well then (Harris, lead guitar).

It affects it greatly. If you don't sound good, you know, and you know it, it just depresses you, you know. You won't play your best. You won't concentrate. Concentration has a lot to do with what you're doing on stage. And when you lose concentration sometimes, that's when you don't play your best, or you might make a mistake, you know. Playing music for a night, the way we do, we go up there and we play. You know, when we're done for the night, it is kind of exhausting mentally to you. If you are not feeling good and you know you don't have a good sound, you're not going to play good. You are not
going to play your best, and you're not going to be inspired to play your best (Ward, bass player).

Undoubtedly, it does. It's kind of cyclical, actually. You know, if you don't sound good, you don't perform well. Or even if you think you don't sound good, you won't perform as well. If you don't perform as well, you're not going to as good. That sound that moves people, that whole blend we were talking about makes a good sound. The good sound enables you to produce more good sounds. Its like, if you do things individually and/or collectively that are "good" that motivates you to produce more stuff that's good (Lawrence, keyboards).

The band members expressed a need to be confident in the "goodness" of their collective and individual sounds. Since the sound tech and his equipment are rarely on stage with the band members, the on-stage band members must develop a positive rapport, or trust, in their sound technician's abilities to get a "good sound" (see Bennett, 1980). The sound tech has to agree with the musicians' definitions of a "good sound," be able to get the best sound possible based on current environmental and technological parameters, because, to quote a band member, "ultimately, the performance relies on the sound man" (Bird, light tech). Not only do regional-level rock bands develop patterns of behavior that produce the best possible sound, they also develop patterns of interaction that help maintain their performance standards during their performances.
Chapter IV

Performance Maintenance

The function of the processes of performance production, the set up and the sound check, is to provide a set of baseline criteria upon which the band members and the sound technician build and maintain their upcoming performances. Through repeated set ups and sound checks at many different gigs in many different types of rooms, the band members and their sound technician evolve a series of "it works best this way" routines that reflect the group's values and norms concerning their professions. The observable interactions that take place during performance production are somewhat different from the interactions that take place during their performances due, in part, to the "backstage" nature of the process, i.e., lack of an audience and lack of constraints about maintaining "frontstage" behavior (Goffman, 1959). On the other hand, regional-level rock bands go to great lengths to present a specific image to their public and to persevere that image during their performances.

The bands arrive as a group at the Rock Steady Bar for each of the performances. This presents the band to the audience as an entity. They dress to fit the crowd's expectations. They are there to sell an image, fantasy and sex, in addition to music. In effect, they are there to sell themselves. Their ability to do this will determine the degree of their success. These bands arrive at the bar usually
fifteen to twenty minutes before the first set starts. This gives them time to fraternize with the employees and members of the audience who may have arrived early and allows the band members to "get the feel of the audience and room" (Sanders, 1974:271). Interactions among band members, sound technicians and the audience present a balanced set of processes which indicate the rights and obligations of the participants (Becker, 1984). However, according to Goffman, the conceptual issue for analysis is not necessarily the interaction. Rather, it is the social context of the interactions that is important to the organization and interpretation of the situation:

The first issue is not interaction but frame. In a conversation, the content of one speaker's statement can call forth a direct replying response from another participant, both responses being part of the same plane of being. During a performance it is only fellow performers who respond to each other in this direct way as inhabitants of the same realm; the audience responds indirectly, glancingly, following along side, as it were, cheering on but not intercepting (1974:127).

The act of mingling with the crowd serves to establish a positive rapport that is a key factor in the maintenance of the performance criteria, because a positive rapport with the audience generates increased audience response. This, in turn, facilitates the bands' performance:

Does audience response affect your performance?

Well, definitely. If the crowd's getting into it, I'll give them every ounce of energy I have. If there is maybe three people in, I wish I could say that I give 100%, but it's
hard to do. I try to save all of my energy for a good crowd (Leo, bass player).

Well, I feed off the audience, you know? If they are just setting there, scratching their heads or something, or folding their arms and falling asleep, this is not good, you know. I feed off the people. That's why I'm doing it, for them and for myself, of course, but if they're roaring and you've got them right in the palm of your hand, it feels good (Bernard, lead vocals).

Like, if the crowd is dead or there's nobody there, I mean, we've played to tables and ashtrays before, and I just concentrate on the band and having a good time. When there's a good crowd and they're into it, I'll get crazier, you know, and I'll have a better time when there's more people there. It's what you make of it, you know? (Nash, guitarist)

At some time during the course of my observations and interviews, every member of each band spoke of "feeding" off of the energy level of the audience. The bands exhibit evidence of this phenomenon with their facial expressions and their body language. When crowds are small or low-key, the bands exhibit a self-produced energy pulled from "the professionalism inside" (Nash, guitarist; Ted, keyboard player). When this happens, the band members concentrate on each other or their sound and light crew by actually turning their backs to the audience, thus rejecting their performance's rejection by the audience. They will finish one song and immediately begin another so that silence or sparse response will not be heard. If this continues for any length of time, someone in the band will heckle the audience until they get a response, just as though they were trying to shame the crowd into a response. This type of "crowd
control" was identified by Sanders (1974) as one of the techniques that are most commonly used by performers to maintain control in the audience/performer interaction.

The process of performance maintenance occurs in a cyclical pattern between the audience and the band members. The band "feeds" off of the energy from the audience, and the audience "feeds" off of the energy produced by the band:

**How do you react to audience response?**

The thing about the audience is, they say an audience can feed you. The audience is like your energy. It helps. What you have to try to master is, if you're fighting a tough crowd--there've been times when I look at a crowd and you wonder, what is wrong, because the people don't seem to be responding. The thing you have to overcome is, you can't let the crowd control your performance on stage. You've got to master what you do on stage. The crowd enhances it even more because you get an energy flow going there. You feel like when you're getting attention, it makes you that much more--the adrenalin flows more (Ted, keyboard player).

Well, you feed off it. The better response you get, the more you're likely to give, at the same time, I don't give a fuck whether they like it or if they don't. That's just how it is. If you play a song and you end the song, and everyone just sits there and looks at you and you go, "aw, they didn't like that?" What am I supposed to do, now? Just have a bad night? You just go on with the next song, and, if they like it, then fine, and if they don't, then that's just how it is. You've got to keep your own flow and your own adrenalin going and not have to really rely on bouncing it off the crowd (Mick, bass player/sound man).

One of the sound technicians (Baron) indicated that if the "crowd was still with us by the time the last set rolls around, I'll hammer them." In effect, if the audience stays
and expresses pleasure and enjoyment at the performance, the audience reaction has a positive effect on his response. However, these quotes indicate that the regional-level rock bands and sound technicians value self-control over their reaction to audience response. These statements in the context of the processes of performance maintenance suggest that possession of the locus of control that was established by the performers during the processes of performance production reduces the risks of interference from outside sources. Thus, self-control and professionalism reinforce the patterns of production maintenance.

The band and their tech crew constantly monitor the audience's reaction to facilitate the maintenance of the performance criteria. They "read" the audience to determine whether or not the volume is too soft or loud. If the db (decibel level) is too soft, the sound technician can hear conversations over the music. On the other hand, if the db is too loud, some of the audience members will put their fingers in their ears, make faces, or even leave the room. As the performance progresses, the band and their tech crew will make whatever adjustments they deem necessary to maximize the performance. They will adjust their db, change the mix (equalization, effects, etc.), or drop their set list and play to the mood of the crowd (Groce, 1990).

During their breaks, the band members mingle with the audience and gather feedback about their performance from conversations and comments with audience members:
I've found out, you don't get into mind games with the audience. I used to think, Oh God, I know what they're thinking, and I was totally wrong. I would come off stage and a lot of times people who I thought didn't like us would come up and say, "You guys are good," and I was thinking that their facial expressions was making me think they hated us. So, I've learned, you don't try to guess the audience. You go out and perform and you smile even though they don't smile back, look at them straight in the face, and they'll think, "these guys are so confident, they know what they're doing" (Ted, keyboard player).

It's that vocal, loud, rowdy feedback you get from the audience. It's like you feed off that in a repeating cycle that grows throughout the night. The audience affects everything that you do tremendously. There's that set of dynamics, that rapport that gets created, that audience/entertainer interaction is so important to all musicians. So, on the breaks, when I go out into the game room, I listen to what the people say about the band. If it's good, great. If not, there's another set, another night (Lawrence, keyboard player).

These interactions reflect another form of "taking the role of the other" (Mead, 1962; Ashley and Orenstein, 1985). The band members try to determine whether or not the audience shares the band's assumptions of what constitutes a "good sound" and a "good performance." Based on the information that they receive in the form of body language, facial expressions and comments from audience members during the breaks, the band members and tech crews may change their presentation, drop their set lists (lists of songs), or open up their "bag of tricks" in order to motivate the audience. "In the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy," the group seeks to acquire the audience's "motivated compliance" with
the band's deliberately constructed "background expectancies" of a good sound and a good performance (Garfinkel, 1967:53).

Keeping the "Good Sound"

Once the band members and the sound tech achieve a consensus on a "good sound," they work together as a team during their performances to keep it. The ideal, perceived quality of the sound (i.e., the "good sound") becomes an intrinsic value shared by all members of the group. As a result of the presence of this value, the group creates a standard for an acceptable sound against which it compares the sounds it produces during the set up and sound check as well as during the performance. The band members and the sound technician develop unobtrusive means to communicate the ongoing social reality of their performance to each other:

The instinctive individual cannot break up his objects and reconstruct his conduct through the adjustment to a new field of stimulation, because its organized reactions cannot be separated to come together again in new combinations. The mechanical problem of mind, then, is in securing a type of conduct coming on top of that of the biological individual that will dissociate the elements of our organized responses. Such a dismemberment of organized habits will bring into the field of perception all the objects that answer to the different impulses that made up the fixed habits (Mead, 1934:368).

In order to deal with the minor and major difficulties that arise during a performance that might threaten the integrity of the performance, the members of these groups find
symbolic ways to communicate this information to each other. They acquire a "vocabulary of gestures" unknown to their audiences that facilitates the successful presentation of their performance (Goffman, 1959:177).

The band members who are on stage and the sound technician at the mixing board develop or evolve unobtrusive signals, what Mead (1962) might call a "conversation of gestures," that are designed to facilitate the process of performance maintenance:

It is common to find that teammates use an explicitly learned vocabulary through which information crucial to the show can be secretly conveyed...[and] that teammates everywhere employ an informally and often unconsciously learned vocabulary of gestures and looks by which collusive staging cues can be conveyed (Goffman, 1959:180-81).

Band members communicate to the sound technician with almost imperceptible head movements, body language, gestures, and "looks," changes in song cues or problems that occur during the performance, and which might threaten the perceived integrity of their performance by the audience. Usually, the more performance experience that the band members and sound technicians possess, the more adept they are at shielding their ongoing symbolic conversations of gestures and looks from their audiences in the face of minor difficulties:

**What do you do when you have problems during a performance?**

When the singer's hoarse, you know you're going to have to play your ass off to keep the tension off him. You've got to put on more of a show to keep the tension away from him. 'Cause if you're standing out there and your
singer is out front sucking and you're standing back there looking at him...the worst thing that I think you can do when a singer blows a note is for the whole band to turn around and look at him. 'Cause a lot of times you can play a whole song in the wrong key, and nobody will notice, because they aren't looking for it. You can spot a green band, they'll do it (Tank, guitarist).

I can make a mistake a lot of times and you won't know it. The band will know it, but a lot of times people in the audience won't know unless it's a real boner.

When you pull a real boner, what do you do? I usually do it again and make it look like I meant to do it. If you hit a sour note, you do something and then hit it again, and then you kind of do it again, like, "I mean to do that" (Nash, guitarist).

What do you do when you make a mistake singing?

Laugh and smile for the rest of the song. Nobody in the audience knows any difference. They're happy to see me smiling. They say, "Hey, he's having a good time" (Bernard, vocalist).

When band members are smiling, we're laughing at our own mistakes. That's what me and Taz do all the time. Nobody in the audience knows why we're standing up there ha-ha-ing. I was doing it last night and you caught me right off (Kord, keyboard player, who walked in and responded to the same question).

These responses were from band members who averaged four years on the road in the bar venue. They covered their mistakes during a performance by either assisting their teammate or with collusive laughter. During one observed performance, I noticed a fluttering hand motion made by the vocalist. I asked the keyboard player (Smythe) if it was a signal to the sound technician to raise or lower the sound level. He responded, "No, Gil was just telling me to
control my vibrato. I have a tendency to lose control of it, and he can hear it better than I can."

When I asked sound technicians who had at least four years on-the-road experience how they handled mistakes and problems during the performance, they responded with comments similar to other band member with the same amount of experience:

[The lead guitarist has a very audible short in his guitar cord. He's on his knees beating on the effects pedals, looking at the sound tech, smiling.]
Hey, Linda! Watch the board, while I replace shithead's cord. [later] At least he made a joke out of it. When I worked with him several years ago, he would have been so pissed off that he wouldn't have played worth a shit the rest of the night (Slick, sound man).

Baron, what were you up to that last set?
Hey, if something can go wrong, it will. That's my job. Fix it on the spot. A channel went out in the mixing board. So, I gave Sven a high sign, and he cut the song short. Chick started talking to the audience, even BJ told a joke. That gave me time to switch the in's to my spare channel. In four minutes I had everything working, and the audience didn't even suspect that we were sweating bullets. I need a beer! (Baron, sound man).

The most common response the sound technicians and band members gave to the question of how they handle problems was, "fix it." While observing one sound technician during a Wednesday night performance, I saw him flash a focused beam of light onto the keyboard player's mic stand. When questioned, he told me that for three years they had used a short hand version of Morse code to let each other know when
and how much to adjust the monitor mix and when there might be a problem in the main (PA) mix. The band members of these groups expressed complete confidence in their sound technicians' ability to do their job and maintain their performance.

However, some bands did not handle even minor mistakes and/or problems with a similar level of expertise. They experienced disruptions in their performance that their audience noticed:

Given that the frame applied to an activity is expected to enable us to come to terms with all events in that activity (informing and regulating many of them), it is understandable that the unmanageable might occur, an occurrence which cannot be effectively ignored and to which the frame cannot be applied, with resulting bewilderment and chagrin on the part of the participants. In brief, a break can occur in the applicability of the frame, a break in its governance (Goffman, 1974:347).

Frame breaks may occur in any social interaction, including the performance of music. However, the professionalism and expertise with which the bands handle such situations can indicate to the observer different levels of experience in performance maintenance. Those bands whose members lack individual experience, or time on the road, and bands who lack the collective experience of time together as a group often exhibit more difficulty with performance maintenance:

When I make a mistake, I try not to let it show. That's what you're supposed to do, not let it show. But I still get nervous when we start a gig. The other guys tell me that I'll get over it, ha, or quit (Bill, guitarist/keyboard player).
[Second song of first set. Vocalist is singing in one key and band playing in another. Drummer signals band members, and they stop playing.]

We'll try that one again! OK, Paula, from the top, and try to sing it in the same key we're in (Al, drummer).

I don't believe you just did that! [to audience] Do you believe he said that? Me either! OK, make up my mind. Give me a key, and I'll sing the damn song (Paula, vocalist).

These examples emphasize a lack of individual and collective experience in performance maintenance. Either the band member becomes flustered in front of the audience when a mistake is made, or the band has yet to develop the necessary rapport and trust in its teammate to facilitate an unblemished performance:

Some scenes occur when teammates can no longer countenance each other's inept performance and blurt out immediate public criticism of the very individuals with whom they ought to be in dramaturgical co-operation. Such misconduct is often devastating to the performance which the disputants ought to be presenting (Goffman, 1959:211).

Occasionally, scenes such as the confrontation between Paula and Al (members of the group less than two years) occur between members of a group with a well-established rapport, but with different reactions and results:

Time: 9:25pm Date: Monday, Jan. 8

I am seated with a friend in the back of the bar beside the sound board. The regular Monday night crowd is not here tonight, and the people in the audience are not giving the band their accustomed response from a Rock Steady crowd. The band members begin to interact with each other by making faces and
obscene gestures. Andy (drummer), usually straight-faced with a no-nonsense attitude, suddenly grimaces, sticks out his tongue, and crosses his sticks under his chin in a parody of a skull-and-crossed-bones just as Taz (bass player) steps to the mic to sing lead on the next song. After seeing "even Andy" act silly on stage, Bach (sound tech) decides to get in on the fun. He mocks all of Taz's facial expressions with great exaggeration, and begins to dance, wiggle and gesture to the lyrics of the song. Taz notices the activity, glances back to the sound board, does a double take, and laughs in the middle of the song. Taz regains his composure and continues the song. He looks anywhere but at Bach, who continues his mime, and finally stares at the stage right balcony area. The drummer, the keyboard player (Kord), my friend and myself are the only people aware of Bach's actions and Taz's reactions. Nash (guitarist) notices Taz staring at the balcony above his head, so he steps to the front of the stage and looks up to see what is in the balcony, shrugs his shoulders and steps back in place. This causes Andy, Kord, Bach, my friend and myself to laugh even harder. At the end of the song, two comments were made from the stage: "Bach, you are dead meat" (Taz); and "What are you guys laughing at?" (Nash) These comments only served to make us laugh more.

This excerpt from my field notes demonstrates the difference between bands who have a well-established rapport based on shared experiences and bands who do not share this rapport. In the first instance, Al's comment to Paula about her performance destroyed the band's credibility with their audience. The audience was made painfully aware of a flaw in the performance. In the second, Taz's comment to the sound man and Nash's comment to the band, both of which were audible to the audience, did not destroy the integrity of the band's performance. Since I asked several members of the audience what they thought of the song, I surmised that the
audience remained oblivious to the underlying activity of the band members and the sound technician, and perceived the band as enjoying themselves.

Some of the band members and sound technicians in my sample expressed a lack of confidence in themselves or in other members of their groups. Those group members who expressed this lack of confidence also related it to a lack of experience (their's or the other person's) in performance or on the road. Many of the band members and sound technicians expressed complete confidence in each other's abilities to perform their jobs to the best of their individual and collective abilities which allowed them to produce and to maintain the best possible performance. They also related their confidence in themselves and each other to the amount of experience they had as touring, regional-level rock bands.

During the time of my observations I witnessed many instances of subtle (and not so subtle) communication of minor performance difficulties. However, occasionally I was lucky enough to be at the Rock Steady Bar when a major problem occurred. One Friday night I observed what had been described to me many times as "a band's nightmare," a power failure:

Time: 12:30am   Date: Friday, Oct. 27

Who Cares just started playing "Radar Love." It is the last song of the third set, the bar is packed to capacity, and the dance floor is crowded. I was standing near the stairs at stage right. Annie started the second verse and the fuse box under the stairs by the stage lit up like a Christmas tree. Sparks flew. The stage power blinked and died. Annie looked back to Bob (sound man) and saw
him running to the fuse box with his satchel. Annie motioned to John (drummer) to start a cymbal ride to the beat of the song. She nodded to the other band members to start clapping their hands over their heads. Randy and Leo slung guitar and bass, respectively, over their shoulders, and moved to the edge of the stage. Suzanne stepped from behind the keyboard and did the same. All of the mobile band members were on the edge of the stage clapping their hands over their heads while John kept time with the cymbals. Annie (to the audience): We can't stop now! You all know the words, don't you? [A resounding 'yeah' came from the audience and the dancers.] OK, the let's hear you sing it! We'll sing with you. Meanwhile, Bob, Snake (light tech), and Randy (assistant manager) were busy at the fuse box replacing fuses and breakers. In less than three minutes all of the blown fuses were replaced and power was restored. Bob and Snake ran back to the sound and light boards, cued the levels, and gave Annie a signal (a wave and a victory sign). The band members got their instruments into position and, with a nod from Annie, the lights came up and the sound was restored on the first beat of the last chorus. The crowd whistled, shouted, cheered and sang along with the music until the end of the song.

Annie: You guys were fantastic! Stick around. We'll be back for the last set of the night. Let's rock this joint!

This incident demonstrates the necessity of good communication between the band members and their tech crew. The members of Who Cares often expressed complete confidence in their sound and light technicians' abilities to perform their jobs. They relied on their tech crew to maintain their performance under any circumstances. The members of the band trusted their tech crew's expertise and knowledge to such a degree that they felt free to concentrate on their stage performance. As a result of this shared confidence, they were able to maintain control of the crowd response in
a situation that might have destroyed the perceived reality of their performance (Goffman, 1959; Goffman, 1974).

I observed another incident of this magnitude that epitomized a basic concept of this thesis. During a live performance of any sort of music, including rock and roll, there must be someone at a sound board somewhere in the room. If not, the only instruments you can hear are the drums—the only (at least the loudest) acoustic instrument on stage.

I have returned to the stage left balcony after talking to Spud (bass player) and Smythe (keyboard player) of Auntie Em. They are getting ready to start the last set of the night. Gil (lead vocalist) has his mic in his hand, turns and nods to each of the band members to see if they are ready, then signals Randy (assistant manager) to turn off the break music and introduce the band. Randy: Alright! Let's put our hands together and welcome back on stage for the last set of the night, Auntie Em!

Ally (drummer) taps his sticks together to give the beat to the band, and with a nod to Spud, starts the song. Gil opens his mouth and sings; Spud plucks the strings of his bass; Sal strokes downward on the strings of his guitar; and Smythe puts both hands on his keyboards—and nothing, only drums. With a quick slicing gesture, eyes never leaving the audience, Gil stops the band. In that same instant Sal, Spud and Smythe quickly check their onstage amps and instrument settings. Ally glances at each band member and gives the beat again. They try it again. Same thing happens. I leaned over the rail of the balcony to look at the sound man—He was nowhere to be seen! Gil realized that, too, and signaled to Randy to turn on the break music. Ally threw both hands up in the air and shrugged his shoulders. Spud turned his back to the audience and moved to the keyboards to talk to Smythe. Sal lowered his
head and "tuned" his guitar. Gil spun on his heel and stepped back to the drum kit. I glanced to the back of the room and spotted a blond blur racing to the sound board. Brit (the tardy sound/light technician) blinked the lights to signal his return. Gil signaled Randy. Break music fades.

Gil: Test. OK! Now I have real power. Hit it.

This band had been together for three years. The band members and the sound/light tech had a good working relationship and an excellent group rapport. It never occurred to them to look to the back of the bar to see if their sound tech was at his station. They trusted him, his abilities, and his dependability. Gil, Spud, Smythe and Ally expressed to me their complete confidence in Brit. To hide their confusion from the audience, they "withdrew" into the closed group while on stage:

When, for whatever reason, the individual breaks frame and perceives that he [sic] has done so, the nature of his engrossment and belief suddenly changes. Such reservations as he had about the ongoing activity are suddenly disrupted, and, momentarily at least, he is likely to become intensively involved with his predicament; he becomes unreservedly engrossed both in his failure to sustain appropriate behavior and in the cause of this failure (Goffman, 1974:378).

They looked at each other, at their instruments, but never at the audience. With one exception: they looked up at me. Their frame of reality was temporarily disrupted, so they sought the comfort of familiar, trusted individuals. This incident literally portrays the extent to which the members of the band who are on stage rely on the competence of the sound technician.
The Sound Technician's Roles

In the two previous chapters I explored the general aspects of the processes involved in performance production and performance maintenance. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the various roles played by the sound technicians during set up, sound check and performance. In the set up and sound check the sound technicians and the band members work together to establish a basic, or minimal, set of criteria for their performances:

One overall objective of any team is to sustain the definition of the situation that its performance fosters. This will involve the over-communication of some facts and the under-communication of others. Given the fragility and the required expressive coherence of the reality that is dramatized by a performance, there are usually facts which, if attention is drawn to them during the performance, would discredit, disrupt, or make useless the impression that the performance fosters (Goffman, 1959:141).

The tech crews and the band members carefully construct the foundation of the social reality of the live rock music performance during the set up and sound check. They prepare in advance for as many possible contingencies which might be counterproductive to their expected performances. During the set up and sound check, the sound person assumes the roles of tech director, group leader, stage manager, club liaison, equipment maintenance and repairer, information manager, gofer, and general miracle worker. To facilitate
description, I divided the roles of the sound tech into two groups, primary roles (tech director, equipment maintenance and repairer, group leader, and information manager) and secondary roles (liaison/mediator, stage manager, gofer, and general miracle worker).

**Primary Roles**

First and foremost, the sound tech is the technical director during the set up and sound check. It is his responsibility to maximize the band's performance by determining the best placement of the equipment and the amount of equipment to be used given the physical limitations of the stage and club areas. Almost playing a subordinate role to "tech director," the sound tech also assumes the role of group leader at the same time. Each of the band members, whether he or she is the "acknowledged leader" of the band or not, follows the sound tech's directions during the equipment set up:

**The Crystal Hearts**

Ed: Hey, Slick! Where do you want me to put these cabinets?
Slick: On the dance floor at the ends of the stage, where else?
[Next, Slick has Ed, Dave, Lily and Dev running the snake for the sound system while he directs Marv who is focusing the lights]
[Slick informs the band members which connector to plug into their individual amps]
Slick: Ed, you're on channel 2. Dave, you're on channel 4--you got that plugged in yet?
Dave: I'm working on it! Don't beat me no more, master.
Slick: Dev, what do you have plugged into channel 1?
Dev: My brain for the kick drum. I didn't want to lose it, and I didn't want to plug in until we set up.
Slick: Well, everyone has to pull stage power out of that empty box over there. [As Slick walks back to "the hole"]
Slick: Yuk! Shit! Dammit! Dammit! Dammit! This is where the sound board is set up? Fuck! That won't work either.

During this "strip of activity" (Goffman, 1974), or series of interconnected interactions, the sound technician (Slick) gave explicit instructions as to the placement of the stage gear (monitor board, stage effects racks, and monitor speakers), the lights (fixtures and board) and the PA gear (main speaker stacks, the sound board, the main effects rack, and the snake):

It is hardly possible to talk about the anchoring of doings in the world without seeming to support the notion that a person's acts are in part an expression and outcome of his perduring self, and that this self will be present behind the particular roles he plays at any given moment....If every strip of activity is enmeshed and anchored in its environing world so that it necessarily bears the marks of what produced it, then surely it is reasonable to say that each utterance or physical doing that the individual contributes to a current situation will be rooted in his biographical, personal identity (Goffman, 1974:293-94).

In order to follow his directions, the band members subsumed their formal roles in the band (i.e., lead singer, lead guitarist, drummer, keyboard player, bass player, leader, and business manager) and assumed, instead, the roles of laborers and followers. The band members' willingness to do this reveals their perceived importance of the processes of set up and sound check. This exchange also indicates some
of the band members' patterns of reliance upon the sound technician as an integral part of their performance production.

Another one of the sound technician's primary duties is that of equipment maintenance and repair. Regional-level rock bands travel extensively, and as a result, their equipment sustains a lot of use and abuse. Much of current sound reinforcement equipment was originally designed for use in a recording studio—a stationary set up. Thus, "roading" such equipment necessarily leads to frequent break downs and repairs:

Hard Luck:

[The sound man is sitting on the stage floor in a corner in back of the on-stage effects rack.]

Hi, Baron. What are you doing back there?

Baron: Hey, Linda! Oh, hell. I'm fixing this damned pin connector again. Sometimes I think these guys are a bunch of gorillas. This stuff isn't meant to be jerked and slung around. You won't see them treating their guitars like that.

What happened?

Baron: They were in a hurry when we were tearing down last Saturday. I still haven't found all of my tools. They're probably still in Lexington.

The Harleys:

[I arrived at the band house to pick up the lead singer for an interview. He was not there, but the keyboard player asked me to wait and talked with me. He told me that Sly (lead singer) and Buzz (sound man) were trying to get one of their dimmer packs fixed.]
Lyle: This has been a hell of a week for us equipment-wise. Every time we get one thing fixed, something else breaks down.

[Sly and Buzz arrive. Sly storms through the TV room to the kitchen, swearing loudly. He doesn't even see me sitting in the chair. Lyle and I look at each other. I hear mumbling in the kitchen. Sly comes to the door]

Sly: Oh, God! I'm sorry! I didn't even see you. Well, I saw your car out front, and I should have remembered that you were coming here today. I shouldn't have stomped in here cussing like that. But, I swear, every time we get something fixed with this damned light board another thing goes wrong! We fix that, and something else goes wrong!

The sound technician is the band's traveling repair person. It is his or her job to see that the equipment stays in top condition for the performances. In order to do this, he or she must be able to weld and to solder. The sound tech needs to be able to read the schematics for the band's electronic and electrical equipment. In other words, the sound technician must have a working knowledge of electronics and electrical engineering and be able to apply that knowledge in the specific realm of live sound reinforcement.

When I asked the sound techs to describe their jobs, the usual responses were:

Hell, I'm a jack-of-all-trades. I'm a carpenter, an electrician, a welder, a light gaffer, an electronics expert, an ass-licker, and the resident counselor (Jed, sound man).

Well, I do a little bit of everything. I keep the books, set up some gigs, service the equipment, repair the drums and guitars, and help the guys with wardrobe changes; oh, just everything (Shades, sound man).
All of the sound men in my sample listed multiple duties as their "job," or they exhibited difficulty articulating their roles or duties: "Hell, don't ask me. I just do it" (Bach, sound man); "I don't really know how to explain what I do, unless I make a list--and that won't explain everything" (Hersh, sound man). One of the sound techs (Clyde) I spoke to during a set up simply waved his arms in a large circle and said, "This!" The difficulty these sound technicians had when they tried to articulate their job descriptions exemplifies individuals' usages of "indexical expressions" (Garfinkel, 1967):

...the member "in the midst" of witnessed actual settings recognizes that witnessed settings have an accomplished sense, an accomplished facticity, an accomplished objectivity, an accomplished familiarity, an accomplished accountability, for the member the organizational hows of these accomplishments are unproblematic, are known vaguely, and are known only in the doing which is done skillfully, reliably, uniformly, with enormous standardization and as unaccountable matter (Garfinkel, 1967:10).

The other primary role of the sound technician is that of information manager. Remember, he knows where the duct tape is. The band members rely on their sound tech to know the location of all of the tools, cables, and equipment, as well as the placement of everything during the set up and sound check. The band also expects the sound technician to know, or discover, the location of the local music stores. If the band and the sound tech have never played a gig in a particular town before, it is the sound tech's job to get
this information from the bar owner or the bar's staff. Knowledge of the location of "good" local music stores is a must for a regional-level rock band. They labeled some of their equipment as "perishables," i.e., drum sticks, guitar strings, connectors, cables, guitar/bass cords and straps, cymbals, drum heads, etc. The band members destroy so many of these items in their many performances that they can not carry enough replacements with them to cover a six-week run of gigs. Five of the eighteen bands I observed had never played a gig at the Rock Steady Bar, and the first thing their sound men did was to ask a staff member the location of the bar's power source. Their next question was always the whereabouts of the local music store.

Secondary Roles

It is the sound technician's primary function during the band's performance to facilitate the maintenance of that performance. As a result, the band members expect the sound person to interface with the bar personnel concerning such things as the power source and the music stores. This function paves the way for the sound tech's secondary roles: club liaison, gofer, stage manager, and general miracle worker. Since the sound tech is backstage, the audience members and the bar staff have easier access to this person during the performance than they do to the band members. Thus, if the bar manager or someone in the audience thinks that the band is too loud or that the band is not playing "the right kind of music," they complain to the sound tech.
As a result, the sound tech often assumes the role of mediator/liaison between the band and the consumers of their product (the audience), as well as the purchasers of their product (the bar owner or manager):

Have you ever had to adjust your sound level or mix at a suggestion from a club owner?

Always. Here, they pretty much let us do what we want. They've learned, "leave the Wolves alone, let them run the show. We pay them X amount of dollars," and we're a package product, we know what we can do that works right and what doesn't. Some club owners hire you as a package and then they try to tell you what to do. I've had club owners try to write our song list for us. You know, there are club owners who think that they have some sort of music ability and they think, "I'm in this club six nights a week, and I know what works, and I want you to do this." I try to explain to them that I'm doing the show six nights a week and I know what we do well. Usually, we end up on common ground somewhere. We usually end up turning it down, or getting fired (Nash, guitar player).

Well, when I first started out in this, I learned right off the bat because there are so many people that affect the sound man. There are so many people that think they know this and they know that. People, a lot of times, working at the club, think they know more than the bands do, and I pretty much learned over the past three and a half years that if the manager of the club is going to tell me something, then I'm going to listen (Bob, sound man).

Last night, every once in a while you get to the point where club owners are going to tell you to come down. OK. That really happens a lot with us because our PA is made to be loud. It was made to be loud. So if it's not loud enough, then it doesn't sound right, so we've got to keep it loud and sometimes the bar owners tell me to turn it down and, naturally, I have to. I mean, too many more times of him coming to tell me to turn it
down, it's going to be turn it off and load it in the truck. And we don't want that to happen (Joe, sound man).

These quotes emphasize the layered roles of the sound technician in the context of the regional-level bar band venue. To people untrained in sound reinforcement technology, the sound man has complete control over the "loudness," or decibel level. From the sound technician's perspective, these people are unaware of the environmental factors affecting the perceived loudness of the music (humidity, number of people in the bar, signal to noise ratio of the equipment, type of crossover system, effects used on a song, etc.). To compensate for this "uneducated" reaction, the sound technician learns to juggle the maintenance of a positive relationships with the bar owner and the bar patrons with the continued maintenance of the performance criteria established by the band during the processes of performance production.

The sound technician's roles of gofer and stage manager also aid the band's maintenance of established performance criteria during their performances. The band expects the sound-tech-as-gofer to cross the "frontstage and backstage region boundaries" to bring them forgotten articles of clothing, extra guitar strings, updated set lists, drinks, water, etc. (Goffman, 1959). By requiring an off-stage crew member to run these errands, the band members maintain their carefully established stage identities. Thus, the band members use the sound-tech-as-gofer in order to maintain the
reality of their performance for themselves, to maintain the reality of the presentation of the performance for the audience, and to facilitate the reality of the performance's perception by the audience.

The sound-tech-as-stage-manager takes care of the band members and equipment during the breaks between the sets. The sound tech's first action is to power down the main sound board and the monitor mixer. This prevents the music provided by the bar for the band's breaks between sets from "bleeding through" the band's on-stage and off-stage equipment. Next, the sound tech moves to the stage to check the equipment (cables and microphones--especially the drum kit mics which might vibrate loose during the course of a set). While on stage, the sound tech takes this opportunity to correct any problem with the equipment that might have occurred during the preceding set:

What happened, Bach?

Oh, hell! Nash's pedal effects had a bad connection and I couldn't fix it until the first break (Bach, sound man).

What's going on, Jed?

Jeff [the bass player] blew his hi-mid speaker during the last set. Now I have to re-route the send from the crossover.

What will that do?

Well, that takes the signal that was going from that particular speaker and puts it in another speaker in a different frequency range, the mids (Jed, sound man).
The sound techs use every spare minute during a break to troubleshoot problems on stage. The band members rely on their sound techs to correct problems with the equipment or the mix on the breaks in order to maintain the integrity of the performance for the bands and the band members.

During the break before leaving the sound equipment, the sound tech powers down all peripheral equipment and then covers it with drop cloths or flight case lids. This alleviates the view of an attractive nuisance from the audience (the light emitting diodes/LED's, knobs and sliders on the sound and light boards). Since the sound board and light board are operated in near darkness, the sliders, pots, and/or buttons often have color coded LED's for easier operation:

**Hey, Moe. Who spelled 'fuck off' on the light board? Is that a new preset?**

Hell, no! Some asshole thought he was being cute. Sometimes I'll come back from break and there'll be names or, huh, messages like this on the board. I don't guess they realize that the little lights under the cloth might actually be there for a reason. I guess I'm going to have to get a regular cover for this thing (Moe, light man).

**Clyde, what's wrong? I've never heard you cuss like that!**

God Dammit, Linda. Some mother fucker got to the sound board when I went to piss and fucked with all of my settings. The jerk was still standing here with his buddy—drunk as a skunk. I grabbed his beer just before he dumped it on the board. Then the jerk took a swing at me, yelling at the top of his lungs! I threw his beer in his face and yelled for the bouncer. They 'escorted' the two assholes out the door. I just got finished
telling Randy to extend the break about ten
minutes while I reset the board and make sure
they didn't fuck with the effects, too
(Clyde, a very angry sound tech).

The sound technician considers the uninitiated (to sound re-
ingforcement) bar patron, or layperson, to be a definite
threat to the equipment and the performance maintenance.
The integrity of the entire mix or light show will be com-
promised if anyone tampers with even one of the settings on
the mixing console or the light board. Such actions by ine-
 briated bar patrons can destroy the specific reality of the
band's performance that was so carefully produced during the
set up and sound check.

The sound technician must also verify the upcoming set
list in order to make necessary changes to the mix (EQ, ef-
fects, etc.) or the lights for the first song in the next
set. In other words, the sound tech checks the next set
list and returns to the main board to "do a preset." This
allows the sound tech to stay one song ahead of the band and
eliminates unnecessary activity at the board in the begin-
ing of each song. This permits the sound tech to watch the
band members for cues to changes in their performance (i.e.,
an additional lead, an added chorus, interactions with the
audience). I asked one of the sound techs what he did after
this, he responded:

Now, I get to go pee! I scrounge around the
bar, watch the women, and get something to
drink. I'm also the official time keeper for
the guys. I wait until five minutes before
the next set starts and then I contact each
band member and let them know that it's five
minutes to show time. You know, I babysit.
Then at two minutes til show time, make sure all of the guys are headed to the stage. Then I head to the sound board (Rip, sound man).

**What do you do on breaks?**

Well, I check all the shit on stage. Fix anything that needs fixing. Get the set list from Timmy. Go to the bathroom—or out the side door if the line's too long. Check out the women. Check out the women again. Get a beer. See if I can get lucky. Check out the women. Check the time. Round the guys up, and herd them toward the stage—you know, peel the groupies off of Ted, Timmy, and Louie (Slick, sound man).

The band members rely on the sound technician to keep track of the time, as well as their equipment, for them. While on a break, the band members concentrate on the management of their image—as-the-band in their interactions with audience members. This helps the band members to establish a positive rapport with the audience, which, in turn, facilitates their performance.

Another secondary role of the sound technician is that of general miracle worker. This is not a facetious title for a set of job functions which are difficult to describe. On the contrary, the band members often referred to the sound tech as "our wizard," "the resident magician," and "our miracle worker." The band members rely on the sound technician to instantly correct problems that occur during a performance which can and would destroy the integrity of their performance:

One such technique is for the team to choose members who are loyal and disciplined, and a second one is for the team to acquire a clear idea as to how much loyalty and discipline it
can rely on from the membership as a whole. For the degree to which these attributes are possessed will markedly affect the likelihood of carrying off a performance and hence the safety of investing the performance with seriousness, weight, and dignity (Goffman, 1959:218).

In order to facilitate performance maintenance, the sound-tech-as-miracle-worker keeps a "bag of tricks" loaded and ready to go for instant repairs. Remember Bob's satchel? This quick-repair miracle bag usually contains extra fuses, new cords for instruments, batteries for wireless sends, connectors, and, of course, duct tape.

The onstage band members (singers, guitarists, bass players, keyboard players, etc.) have to rely on their sound technician to maintain the performance criteria they established in their set up and sound check. In many cases to secure the best performance possible the sound tech must be qualified and able to make immediate, on-the-spot repairs or changes to the equipment. The band members usually do not possess the same technical knowledge and skills (expertise) as their sound technician:

Is it important to know how the equipment works together?

For a sound technician it definitely is. I think everybody in the band should have a basic idea. There's still a lot of things I'm learning about it. Definitely for the sound technician and the road crew it's important to know how things work.

Why?

Because if something goes down, they need to know how to locate it and fix it. Usually the sound guy knows when something is happen-
ing, he usually knows what it is and will take care of it (Timmy, guitarist).

How about the engineer? Is it important to know how the equipment works together?

He has to. He has to know everything. Because if something goes wrong, you have to know how to find it, how to trace it. He has to understand the most basic things and you have to have a grasp of everything going on around you, or you are not in control. You cannot let an audio system run you, you've got to go in and take control of it yourself, be in command at all times. That's on stage and off stage (Mick, bass player/sound tech).

These quotes typify responses of band members who possess either a rudimentary (Timmy) or an extensive (Mick) knowledge of sound reinforcement and the related equipment. These two men, like many others, expressed a need to know about the actual workings of the technology. They indicated that this knowledge enhanced, or at least improved, their performances and increased their trust in their sound technicians.

However, other band members expressed a different type of reliance on their sound technicians, and other patterns of reliance on the sound tech emerged in the band members' discussions of knowledge and expertise with the equipment:

Is it important to know how the equipment works together?

I don't care. It don't matter to me. That falls on other members. Last night a cord just started popping, started shorting out. Kord says, "here" and handed me a cord. Taz ripped out one end and I put the other end in and we were ready to go, without a word to say. No time lost (Bernard, vocalist).
Is it important to know how the equipment works together?

Not for me. I have cultivated an acquired stupidity when it comes to the equipment end of the show.

Why?

I'm an artist. I think that knowing just exactly where the signal goes and what it's doing would spoil the magic of the music for me. I would lose that feeling of creating. That's why a good sound tech is essential to the band (Flash, bass player).

These responses appear to be on opposite ends of a reliance continuum. Those band members with some technical background or knowledge apply that knowledge to verify the self-perceived "rightness" of their ongoing performances and the perceived correctness of the sound technicians actions. In other words, they use their knowledge of the technology for continual "reality checks" during a performance -- relying on themselves as much as the sound technician to maintain a good sound and a good performance. On the other hand, the band members with little or no knowledge of the requisite technology rely completely on the sound tech's knowledge and expertise to help them maintain a good sound and a good performance.

In any case, the band members and their sound technicians cooperate within a shared, specific social reality of their own construction that they work together to maintain:

Common sense knowledge of the facts of social life for the members of the society is institutionalized knowledge of the real world. Not only does common sense knowledge portray a real society for members, but in the manner
of a self-fulfilling prophecy, the features of the real society are produced by persons' motivated compliance with these background expectancies (Garfinkel, 1967:53).

In order to maintain the feasibility of their definition of self as a viable regional-level rock band, the band members and the sound technician establish patterns of reliance that serve the functions of production and maintenance of their performances. Operating as a distinct, closed group, the regional-level rock band develops an interconnected set of mutually supportive roles. The decisions and compromises that the sound tech and the band members make based on their roles and patterns of interaction concerning what constitutes a "good sound" and a "good performance" determine the parameters of the shared social reality of a live rock music performance.
Chapter VI

Performance Continua

The interactions that I observed during set up, sound check and performance, as well as comments made to me during informal conversations and taped interviews, organized themselves on a series of continua. The bands and the individual band members and sound technicians appear to be on a series of performance continua that consist of at least five different criteria: professionalism, expertise, goal-orientation, reliance and self-definition. These performance criteria apply to both the individual band members and the bands as entities.

Professionalism may be defined as an attitude toward the processes, methods and standards by which band members conduct themselves during performance production and maintenance. This might be exemplified by the degree of organization/disorganization that manifests itself during the production and maintenance of the performance:

Do you think a lot of bands are like that, more or less an organization?

No, most bands are mostly a disorganization. Most bands I've seen at this level are people that are unrealistic about reality and what the real music scene is about and what business is about. They're unrealistic about their own self-worth, performance value as a musician, and they really don't have a firm grip on what it takes to get to achieve what they're really looking at (Mick, bass player).

This band has had more members than I can remember; but, as you can see, it's still going strong. I see this band as an institution, a
business whose goals are to make money and entertain people (Sven, guitar player).

With these quotes the people expressed views of their bands as a formal organization or an institution. Other band members often referred to their bands as families. These methods of accounting for the structure and organization of the bands indicates a recognized, but rarely acknowledged, awareness of the rationality of the group members' participation in the bands (see for example, Garfinkel, 1967:3). This circumstance implies that the members' acceptance of a "band identity," or group identity, facilitates the evolution of a system of norms and values which frame their ideas concerning the production and maintenance of a "good sound" and a "good performance." The band-as-institution survives due to its members' ability to satisfy those agreed-upon criteria of performance production and performance maintenance.

The expertise process continuum exhibited by the bands and their members can be determined by the amount of technical ability and experience with their equipment or instruments. All of the members of the bands in my sample mentioned the importance and value of expertise, of knowing what your equipment was (and was not) capable of doing in different situations under different sets of circumstances. The band members and tech crews emphasized the importance of knowledge and effective use of the equipment and instruments:
Why do you think you are as good as you appear to be, especially in this short time?

The experience and the professionalism. Everybody has been in bands before, road bands, and they're experienced. They are talented beyond belief. Louie's voice is phenomenal. Timmy's playing and writing ability, too, is real good. Stick is a music graduate from Louisville. So, we have talented, experienced people. That makes them. Plus, their attitude is right. That makes them work together better, it really does (Joe, sound/light tech).

Your band is good. Why do you think that is so?

We've been together for a long time. Each one of us is a professional studio musician in our own right. We stay on the road for the fun of it, because you get something playing in front of an audience that you can never get playing in a studio (Jason, guitarist).

These bands have been together from six weeks to seven years. Within each band the individual members might range in years of professional experience from nine months at a minimum to twenty years at a maximum. However, the perceived differences in levels of expertise between the bands seem to depend upon the quality and variety of the combined experience of the individual band members. Some of the bands have members that have played only the bar and club circuit. Three bands have at least one member that has released an album. Most of the bands have some members who have studio time to their credit. Two of the bands have members who have written and performed original material for albums that have been released and have received regional or national air play.
The goal-orientation continuum might be defined as the ways in which the bands define success and their collective ability to attain it. The observer must remain aware of the difference between a band's goal-orientation as compared to an individual's goal-orientation. Another factor that plays an important role in a band's goal-orientation is whether or not they perform original material (Groce and Dowell, 1988):

**How do you measure success for this band?**

I don't. I just don't think the band has it. I mean, I think the band could have potential, but we don't work on any original material (Leo, bass player).

I think we continually get a little more and more successful. It actually has been slow, it moves slow, but things keep getting better. We keep getting a little better recognition and now our personnel is lined up better than it was, and we work. I think that's really good in comparison. Success is a comparative thing, plus a personal thing. I'm thrilled to death to be making money at something I've wanted to do since I was a kid. I won't be able to keep on doing this at this level for another ten years, because when you turn 40, you start getting fat and your hair falls out, and you can't get up here in spandex pants and shake your butt for a living (Nash, guitar player).

Success right now is we've got to achieve one level of success and then use that to get to the next level of success, and just keep going. As long as the band is wanting to strive for what we want to do and that is get on a higher level. Every musician wants to get out of playing just to bars, to be famous, making good money -- not bar/club money, have nice accommodations, be able to pretty much make music your living and have something to retire on (Ted, keyboard player).
As these quotes might indicate, another factor on the goal-orientation continuum appears to be the immediacy of the band's goals. In other words, does the band plan for just the next couple of weeks, or does the band plan for the next several years? Those bands whose members elaborated on an extended, long-range, group-oriented goal of success, or of "making it big," demonstrated higher levels of organization and well-internalized group norms. Bands which expressed this type of goal orientation had performed together longer than the bands whose members talked about immediate and/or individual goals. Those bands whose members exhibited an immediate, individually-oriented goal orientation also displayed lower levels of group cohesion and organization and had performed together for shorter periods of time.

The reliance continuum describes the degree to which the band members rely upon their sound technicians' perceived competence (see Garfinkel, 1967). In other words, this continuum seems to be a "yardstick of trust" that measures the group's cohesiveness:

Perceived adherence to the rules, practices or policies on the part of someone, implies the fulfillment of membership in the collectivity. Hence, every interaction scene makes every actor's membership status in the collectivity potentially problematic; actual conduct presumably is evaluated against the contextual relevance of some system of normative rules...The evaluation of performance is critical for attributing competence to members, yet it should be clear that more than simple references to the existence of normative rules are necessary if one's theory of society is not to remain static and ignorant
of the contingencies of everyday interaction (Cicourel, 1974:80).

Some of the bands in my sample exhibited and professed complete confidence in their sound man's competence at his job. The musicians and singers in these bands left all decisions concerning the set up and sound check to the discretion of the sound man. They followed his directions with little or no controversy if they were even present at the set up and sound check. Observations of such bands were like watching a well-organized, almost choreographed, team performance. On the other hand, members of some bands questioned many of the sound technician's decisions and frequently offered contradictory alternatives of their own. I would characterize the interactions of these bands more like watching a three-ring circus.

A self-definition continuum also emerged during my analyses. This performance continuum reflected the individual band members' definition of themselves as artists, musicians, performers, and/or technicians. The band members' and sound technicians' self-definitions corresponded somewhat with the findings of Groce (1990) and Mullen (1987) in that the members of those bands that played only cover material viewed themselves primarily as performers, entertainers or technicians. On the other hand, the bands that played a combination of cover and original material had some members who viewed themselves primarily as artists and musicians who were also performers. The self-definition continuum interfaced with the professionalism and
goal-orientation continua and gave a multifaceted perspective of the bands' group dynamics.

The band members and sound techs who viewed themselves as performers or technicians first and foremost tended to be clustered on one end of the professionalism/goal-orientation continua. On the other hand, the band members and sound technicians who viewed themselves first as artists, then as musicians, then as performers and technicians tended to be clustered on the opposite end of the more professional, more long-range, goal-oriented bands' continua.

An interesting pattern emerged during the analysis of the interviews: the band members and sound men who viewed themselves as artists also viewed their instruments or equipment as extensions of their personalities. When asked what was the most important piece of equipment (to the individual or the band), the "artist-musicians" always indicated their instruments:

What is your guitar to you?

It IS me. Like another arm, and extension of myself (Timmy, guitar player).

It's part of me. When I'm on stage, I feel really awkward when I have to get up and front, like the AC-DC. It really feels awkward (Leo, bass player).

However, when asked the same question, the "performer-musician-technicians" gave a different set of responses that were usually self-oriented (hands, brains, the people in the band, attitude, etc). The "performers" insisted that they
were in control of the expression of their music and that their instruments were just "tools":

How do you view your instrument?

As an outlet, a tool, an instrument that allows me to express all kinds of things. Sometimes I express aggression on it and sometimes my emotion. A lot of people look at their guitar as a work of art and treat it nice. I look at mine as a bitch (Nash, guitar player).

It's a tool, that's what it is. I express MY feelings on it. It's just wire and wood. My attitude is what's important to my performance (Spud, bass player).

All of the bands possessed some combination of the artist-musician and the performer-musician and technicians. The band members and sound technicians indicated that to "be good at what we do," you have to have elements of each within the bands. It was interesting to note that everyone agreed that too many artists (and their artistic temperaments) caused problems for any band. All of the bands also had a "good business man" who may or may not be the acknowledged leader of the band. The bands seem to agree that it is important to the group dynamics to have at least one member who has the "final say so." The band members perceived these factors as positive contributions to the harmony of the band as a group, and as a result, to the proper maintenance of their performances.

However, despite the band's or the band member's location on any one of the performance continua, everyone agreed that the "good sound" that the audience hears is ultimately
CORRECTION

PRECEDING IMAGE HAS BEEN REFILMED TO ASSURE LEGIBILITY OR TO CORRECT A POSSIBLE ERROR
in the hands of the sound technician. Although varied, comments by band members about the importance of the sound technician contained a common theme: "The sound man can make or break a band" (Jeff, bass player); "The sound man is the man behind the scenes, a necessary ingredient. He takes all of the responsibility" (Sam, bass player); "The performance relies on the sound tech" (Bird, light tech).
Chapter VII

Summary and Conclusion

The primary goal of my thesis was to identify and describe the processes and patterns of social interaction involved in the production and maintenance of a live rock music performance by regional-level rock bands. Another purpose of this study was to investigate the often overlooked role of the sound technician and his/her importance to the production and maintenance of the social interactional event of a musical performance. In order to accomplish these goals, I used a combination of participant observation supplemented with semi-structured interviews to collect the data for this study. I completed a pre-field study in order to recognize and to establish a contextual framework for this paper that was pertinent and meaningful to members of these rock bands, their sound technicians, and social scientists.

Using the symbolic interactionist theories of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), dramaturgy (Goffman, 1959) and frame analysis (Goffman, 1974), I identified and explored the processes of performance production (the set up and sound check) and performance maintenance of regional-level rock bands and their sound technicians. The eighteen bands that formed my sample performed at the Rock Steady Bar in a midwestern city from September, 1989 through January, 1990.
I have demonstrated that through their deliberate and specific social interactions during the set up and sound check (performance production), band members and their sound technicians define minimal, acceptable criteria of their upcoming performances. The processes of performance production, in effect, establish the visual and aural parameters of the shared social reality of a musical performance for their audience as well as for themselves. I have also shown that regional-level rock bands and sound technicians develop their own symbolic language of gestures and signals which facilitate the maintenance of their established performance criteria. I have demonstrated that in order to produce and maintain successful performances, regional-level rock bands and their sound technicians evolve patterns of behavior (norms) designed to enhance their individual and collective image.

I also identified and described the primary and secondary role sets of the sound technician. I discussed the importance of the sound technician's roles to the regional-level rock band. The analyses of my data established evidence that the musicians and vocalists who play and perform in regional-level rock bands develop patterns of reliance upon their sound technicians, and that these patterns of reliance seem to be related to the individual and collective expertise, knowledge and goal-orientation of the band members and the bands as entities.
My analyses of the data I collected in the form of field notes, informal conversations and semi-structured interviews, suggested a group of criteria common to these band members' and sound technicians' patterns of interaction of practiced and perceived performance production and maintenance. These criteria organized themselves on five performance continua: professionalism, expertise, goal-orientation, reliance and self-definition. These continua reflected varying degrees of competence and ability within the bands' actions and interactions that facilitate the production and maintenance of their performances. The individual member's and overall group's ability and competence determined their placement within the framework of each continuum.

In conclusion, this project explored an area of the sociology of popular music in which little research had been published. I hope that the results of this project shed some light on the importance of the person "behind the scenes," the sound technician, to the perceived social reality of a live musical performance. On the other hand, this study leaves many questions unanswered: How do the dynamics of a band change when a member is replaced? How does the process of socializing a new band member or sound technician affect the processes of performance production and performance maintenance? Does the talent agency affect the chances of economic survival of regional-level rock bands? Are similar processes of performance production and
performance maintenance present in bands which occupy different venues or play types of music, such as jazz, country or rap? This thesis suggests a broader application of the same or similar methodology to a comparison of performance production and performance maintenance between local, regional and national level bands in order to ascertain possible differences in performance criteria and the means to establish and maintain those criteria. A study of this magnitude would have the potential to validate the findings of this thesis while adding important knowledge to the sociology of popular music.
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Interview Schedule

General

How long have you been involved with music?

Do you see yourself as a performer, a musician or as an artist (engineer or technician or artist)? Why?

Do you have any formal music training?

How long have you been playing in bands? ...with this band?

How did you start as a sound technician?

Do you feel that training (or lack of training) has affected your performance?

How did you make the commitment to play in a rock band full time (or: How did you make the commitment to do sound for a rock band full time)?

As a (bass, lead guitar, keyboard, drummer, lead singer, sound/light technician) how much input do you have in the equipment setup and sound check?

Who has the most say so about the setup and sound check? Why?

Can you describe for me what you mean by "good sound"?

How do you decide that you have a "good sound" in a club or a bar?

What are the criteria for this decision? (loudness, clean, separation, emphasis on any particular instrument[s])

Does the band cooperate with (listen to) your suggestions? Can you give me an example?

Does your sound affect your performance? How? Why?

Do the lights and staging affect your performance? How? Why?

Does audience response to your sound affect your performance? How much? Why?
Have you ever adjusted your sound level or mix at a suggestion from the audience or a club owner?

If so: How did this affect your performance?

Do you think your band/sound/light technician does a good job? Why?

How do you measure success for this band?

What are your personal goals as a musician or sound technician?

What are your goals for the band?

Do you perform original material? Who writes?

Do you notice any differences in your performance as a musician (or sound technician) when you do original material? Can you give me an example?

Is there an acknowledged leader of the band? Who? Why?

Who (in the band) "takes care of business"?

Does this cause stress for this individual? If yes, how?

Does a percentage of the band's earnings go toward purchasing new/better equipment?

Are the individual members expected to contribute toward purchases?

What does your band gross per year? (the question is given with the understanding that a response is not required)

Are you on a salary basis?

Do you book with an agency? ...have a manager? ...do you own bookings?

Would you describe a typical gig?

Does frequent (or non-frequent) set up and/or tear down affect your performance? How? Why?

Does this also affect group relations? Can you give me an example?

Does your band have any rules about alcohol or drug use? Can you give me an example?
Technical

Does the band have an established supplier for equipment? Who supplied the contact?
What do you do when you have equipment problems while you are on the road?
How do you achieve your mix? ...by ear?
Do you run pink noise and a real time analyzer? Why?
How do you attain the mix clarity and separation?
What steps do you go through to achieve a "working mix?"
Do you think the mix affects the band's performance? How? Why?
Do you think the mix affects the audience's reaction? How? Why?
What do you feel is your most important piece of equipment? Why?
What things do you worry about going wrong during a performance?
What do you do when you have trouble with the equipment during a performance? Can you give me an example?
Do you try to fix problems inconspicuously?
Do you worry about whether the audience notices you when you have to take care of a problem during a performance?

Technology, Knowledge and Expertise

Do you think the type of equipment the band has is important? Why? (Technology)
Is it important to know how the equipment works together? Why? (Knowledge)
Do you need to be familiar with the band's equipment in order to use it effectively? Why? (Expertise)
If I label those questions as technology, knowledge and expertise, would you consider any of those factors more important than the others? How? Why?
Appendix B

List of Bands and Band Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Wolf Pack</th>
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**Perversion**

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**Steve's Band**

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**Hard Luck**

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### Alloy

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*This is the same Slick who is listed with Perversion*

### Hot Licks

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Appendix C
Figure 1.

Floor plan of the band-side bar
Figure 2.

The "Hole"
Bibliography


B3, F7