Popular Music (2023) Volume 42/2. © The Author(s), 2023. Published by Cambridge University Press. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited, pp. 143–163
10.1017/S026114302300034X

'With all praise to your exalted frequencies, consider me your friend': listening, technology and musicking in the Church of Scientology

TOM WAGNER
Royal Holloway and New Bedford College, Department of Music, Egham TW20 0EX, UK
E-mail: twagner35@hotmail.com

Abstract

This article discusses musicking in the Church of Scientology, and how it can be used to understand the organisation and its relationship to society. The article begins by discussing the essential place of listening *in Scientological practice, noting that it is one of several 'technologies' that institutionalise the charisma of its founder, L. Ron Hubbard. It next demonstrates how Hubbard's hagiography influences how the church produces music today. This leads to a consideration of the 'whole track sound' of Scientology and uses the album* Hymn of Asia *(2000) to discuss how Scientological concepts are embedded sonically and lyrically into the church's recorded music outputs. The final section discusses the importance of* communication *in Scientology's musical thought, using interviews drawn from my fieldwork in Los Angeles to highlight the benefits and limits of music as a medium of (religious) communication.*

Introduction

> Men have lived to write music which has pleased the gods and lines which have made the angels sigh and the devil weep. This is the time for Man to succeed again. Here is the word, the technology, the goal. The job is cut out: and its name is Survive! (Hubbard 1951, p. 248)

The above epigraph is the conclusion to L. Ron Hubbard's, *The Science of Survival*, a foundational work in Scientology. For Hubbard, the goal of humankind is to survive, and his discovery of Dianetics (the 'science of the mind' that was the precursor to Scientology) is the technology through which that goal is achieved. *Science of Survival* is important not only because it codifies important concepts and procedures that are central to the practice of Scientology, but also because those concepts and procedures are discussed in musical terms. Indeed, much of the discussion in the book is devoted to music, arts and aesthetics. In Scientology's belief system, then, music and the arts are vital if humankind is to survive and flourish.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

This article discusses the musical practice of members of the Church of Scientology.[1] The intersections of music and religion have long been of interest to scholars in a variety of disciplines. Since the ancient Greeks, theologians and philosophers have published tracts on the relationship between theology, music and morality, musing on topics that range from the relationship of music to celestial bodies to why the Devil should have all the good music. More recently, sociologists of religion have focussed on how religious organisations use music to spread their gospels. In the marketplace of religion, they note, organisations that offer music that adherents experience as authentic thrive, often at the expense of those that do not (e.g. Roof 1999). From the perspectives of psychology and anthropology, music and religion form an intoxicating cocktail of psychological and physiological arousal while also facilitating group dynamics of inclusion, exclusion and identification (e.g. Miller and Strongman 2002). As part of this process, music is an 'authorised sensational form' through which the divine is experienced (Meyer 2011).

Music studies has tended to draw eclectically on the above. Ethnomusicology has long been interested in the religious musics of major world religions as well as of indigenous and syncretic religions (e.g. Sullivan 1997; Weiss 2019). Through sacred music, religious knowledge is embodied in practitioners and materialised in instruments. In this process, music and musicians often mediate between the world and the divine, revealing power structures that may stretch far beyond the ceremony itself (Doubleday 2008). Similarly, the soundscapes of sacred spaces provide entrée into both religious histories and the politics that govern access to those spaces (Wood 2014).

Popular Music Studies has tended to focus on the similarities and crossovers between religious behaviour and popular music fandom, for example, the 'ritual' similarities between electronic dance music concerts and religious ceremonies (e.g. St John 2006). Some scholars have noted the religious-like behaviours within music fandoms, from the conversion narratives of Bruce Springsteen fans (Cavicchi 1998) to pilgrims to Graceland (Rodman 2013), while others have discussed the relationship between musicians' faiths and their musical outputs (e.g. Calhoun 2018). On the one hand, many popular music genres, such as reggae, country and the blues, have roots in religion, while on the other hand, popular music styles from rock to metal to hip hop are now being employed by evangelists from religions across the globe (Partridge and Moberg 2017). And one cannot discuss contemporary religious musics without a consideration of the production and distribution networks of the global media industries in which they circulate (e.g. Mall 2020).

One concept that helps bring together the disparate approaches outlined above is *Musicking*. Christopher Small defines musicking as taking part:

> in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing. (Small 1998, p. 9)

[1] As Stephan Gregg observes, 'Scientologists' are not a homogenous group. There are, for example, 'Free Zone' Scientologists who practice Scientology but are not affiliated with the Church of Scientology or necessarily with each other. Within the Church of Scientology, people differ according to their advancement along the 'Bridge to Total Freedom' as well as their place in the institutional hierarchy (Robertson *et al*., 2020). This article considers Scientologists affiliated with the church and draws on interviews with Scientologists who are advanced in their studies, but not necessarily high in the institutional hierarchy.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

'Taking part' in a musical performance includes the act of listening to a recording. For Small, then, 'music' is not a thing but rather a set of meanings that emerges from the interactions between a constellation of actors and therefore the performance of music models or stands as a metaphor for:

> ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be: relationships between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world. (Small 1998, p. 9)

Musicking therefore both expresses and reinscribes a worldview, one that emerges not only in interactions between people but also in their interactions with the material culture of that group. To engage with musicking of a religion, then, is to engage with the relationships of the members of that religion to each other and to the wider societies in which they are situated.

Despite the breadth of academic interest in music and religion, there is relatively little work that focusses on the music of new religious movements.[2] This dearth is partially because of the (in)visibility some of these groups, partially because it can be difficult to secure access and partially because the musical praxis and cannons of these groups may not yet be codified (Ayella 1990; Burns 2015). Founded in the 1950s, Scientology offers a unique opportunity to observe the formation of a new religion and its musical practices in 'real time', both because there is a wealth of primary documents in the form of its founder's writings and recorded lectures and also because many 'original' Scientologists are alive to give first person accounts. In addition, it offers a unique opportunity to observe the evolution of musical practices not only within a new religious movement, but also in relation to the media and musical networks in which those practices are embedded.

The academic study of Scientology has occurred sporadically since the 1950s. However, since 2008 a flood of research on the church has emerged.[3] Although most of this research comes from sociology of religion, contributions have been made from law (Barker 2015), public relations (Spaulding and Formentin 2017) and political science (Halupka 2014), among others. The music of Scientology has received little academic attention, with the only published work by Mark Evans (Evans 2010 and 2017).[4] Evans provides useful musicological analyses of some of the recordings associated with Scientology as well as a discussion of their public reception. This article takes a different tack, combining historical, cultural and textual analysis with ethnographic research to understand musicking by Scientologists themselves. In doing so, it heeds recent calls for interdisciplinary scholarship that considers Scientology's texts and their place in the day-to-day lives of

[2] New religious movements do not share a specific set of characteristics. However, the religious historian J. Gordon Melton (2004) observes that new religious movements tend to be 'assigned to the fringe' by established religious and secular actors, existing in 'relatively contested spaces within society as a whole' (p. 75). Sociologist Eileen Barker (2004) notes that this may in some cases be a consequence simply of their newness, noting that most movements that survive past the first generation or two tend to adopt the features of the surrounding society. Scientology is a second- and third-generation movement that is well known to mainstream society because of decades of media attention but remains peripheral to it.

[3] Carol Cusack identifies 2008 as a 'hinge year' for the academic study of Scientology (Robertson *et al.* 2020, p. 90).

[4] There has been considerably more attention to the music of Scientology in the popular media, most of it critical. For a typical example, see Rabin (2014).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

people for whom Scientology is a 'lived religion' (Introvigne 2020; Westbrook 2020). It also offers a blueprint for music studies scholars who engage with minority religions, however tangentially.

Despite the post-2008 surge in academic interest in Scientology mentioned above, very little of this research is grounded in ethnography. The reasons for this dearth are multifaceted, including (but by no means limited to) the church's litigious reputation, mutual suspicion between the church and academics, negative media depictions of the church and suspicion of the independence and motives of academics who study the subject within the academy (these are related – see Robertson *et al*., 2020). More ethnographic work is beginning to emerge, however, with Donald Westbrook's monograph based on fieldwork conducted during his PhD studies the most significant recent example (Westbrook 2019). This article is based on fieldwork I conducted with Scientologists in Edinburgh, London and Los Angeles between 2014 and 2016, which included participant observation at concerts, tours of Scientology facilities and interviews with eight Scientologist musicians. All interviews were conducted with permission from the church, and my interlocutors and church officials were allowed to read and comment on my work before publication. Like Westbrook, I found church officials welcoming and my interlocutors open and eager to talk about their beliefs and musical practices. I am also aware that the church carefully guards both its reputation and its religious knowledge; therefore, my access was at least partially contingent on the topic and the questions I was asking. Finally, I did not engage in any auditing, nor did I take any Scientology courses. I therefore write the article from the *etic* perspective.

Scientology's status as a religion remains a subject of much debate (e.g. Kent 1999; Rothstein 2007). Indeed, its legal status varies widely depending on the country in which it operates. For instance, it is a recognised religion in Australia, Portugal and Spain, while in the United States, Canada and United Kingdom it is given tax-exempt charitable status but not officially considered a religion. In some countries, such as Argentina and Chile, it has been declared a cult. For the purposes of this article, I follow the lead of Westbrook (2019), who notes that while Scientology's legal status as a religion may vary, it is experienced as a lived religion by its practitioners. Therefore, my analysis, which is informed by ethnomusicology and religious studies, treats it as such.

The first section of this article introduces the core beliefs and practices of Scientology, and the place of music in it. It suggests that *listening* is an essential practice of the religion. The second section discusses the importance of 'technology' as a central and multifaceted concept in Scientology, and its role in institutionalising Hubbard's charisma in the religion. The third section demonstrates how the hagiographic depiction of Hubbard as a musical explorer influences how the church produces music today. This leads to a consideration of the 'whole track sound' of Scientology and uses the album *Hymn of Asia* (2000) to discuss how Scientological concepts are embedded sonically and lyrically into the church's recorded music outputs. The final section discusses the importance of *communication* in Scientology's musical thought, using interviews drawn from my fieldwork in Los Angeles to highlight the benefits and limits of music as a medium of (religious) communication.

Music in the Church of Scientology

Scientology is a belief system created by the American author L. Ron Hubbard in the 1950s, one that he continuously expanded until his death in 1986. Hubbard was

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

prolific in his output, and therefore Scientological musicking is embedded in a theology and cosmology that unfolds across more than half-a-million pages of written material and 100 recorded lectures. Hubbard taught that humans comprise a mind, a body and an immortal spirit called a *Thetan*. The mind is composed of two parts: the analytic mind and the reactive mind. While the analytic mind is rational and accurate, the reactive mind is not. Scientologists believe that psychosomatic illnesses and other aberrations are caused by past traumas called engrams, which accumulate over time in the reactive mind. Engrams cause the Thetan's wavelengths to clash with those of Matter, Energy, Space and Time (MEST), which degrades both the Thetan and also MEST. The Thetan can be freed from engrams (a state called 'Clear') through the study and application of Scientology's 'religious technology'. Practitioners who do so experience many benefits, including enhanced clarity of thought, freedom from disease and heightened senses. Through further auditing, advanced Scientologists can achieve the state of 'Operating Thetan' (OT). Free from mental and physical inhibitors, OTs can control all aspects of their lives and even 'exteriorise' (leave their bodies) (Hubbard 1975, p. 151).

Music is one of the least-studied aspects of Scientology. One reason for this omission is that instrumental or vocal music is not used in Scientology's core rituals.[5] Yet, as Christopher W. Chase observes, 'the language of musicality operates and permeates almost every level of Scientology' (2008, p. 2). For example, the physics of music – amplitude and frequency – are central to Scientological practice (Chase 2008, pp. 4–5). In 'The Science of Survival Lectures', Hubbard posits that, according to the quantum theory of reality as a wavelength, human-to-human communication can create harmonics that 'enturbulate' and 'disenturbulate' Theta and MEST, and furthermore, emotions have wavelengths and therefore Thetans are capable of transmitting emotions to others (Hubbard 1978).[6] Musical elements are also present in Scientology's creation story, most notably in Hubbard's 'Space Opera' account of the history of the universe. This account, which Hubbard described as 'a cold-blooded and factual account of your last sixty-trillion years' (Hubbard 1952, p. 1), explains the history of human evolution over what he called the *whole track*. Skilled auditors can access an individual's prior lives, including on other planets, therefore establishing the 'continuum of thetan past lives' (Raine 2015, p. 78).

In addition to musical language, listening is central to the practice of Scientology: auditing, the fundamental practice of Scientology, is derived from the Latin *audire* – to listen (Chase 2008, p. 2). During auditing, the auditor asks a series of questions of the auditee, known as a 'preclear', through which the auditor – with the aid of a device called an *E-meter* – identifies the engram. Once the engram is identified, it can be discussed and, when it no longer causes emotional turmoil, 'cleared'. Scientologists believe that if the entire planet were 'cleared', human travails such as illness and conflict would cease to exist. A musical analogue that is central to auditing is the 'Emotional Tone Scale', which is a numerical scale of human emotions. Embodied Thetans exist in the range between 0.0 (Bodily Death) and 4.0 (Enthusiasm). However, disembodied Thetans can reach well beyond these

[5] Songs from the church's albums are sometimes sung at church services and events, but these are peripheral to the core ritual, which is auditing.

[6] Scientologists use an array of words that are specific to the religion; 'enturbulate' means 'to disturb', with 'disenturbulate' meaning the opposite. The enturbulation of Theta ('entheta') determines one's place on the Emotional Tone Scale.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

positions, up to 40.0 (Serenity of Beingness) and down to −40.0 (Total Failure). The Tone Scale is used extensively in auditing to track a preclear's progress, or lack thereof, in accompanying drills.

The act of *listening*, then, is central to the understanding, practice and experience of Scientology. Foucault (1988) identifies listening as a 'technology of self' – a volitional act through which the self is constituted. For Foucault, listening is not simply the passive act of decoding a message, but a dynamic part of the communication process in which the receiver of the message seeks to be transformed in specific ways. Listening practices are often cultivated as part of self-making projects in which people seek entry into and mastery over a specific body of socio-cultural knowledge, be it an art world or a religion (e.g. Becker, 2004; Plourde 2008). Scientologists work to embody the knowledge and cosmology contained in Hubbard's teachings through study and auditing. For them, the place of 'technology' in the self-making project is multidimensional, as it is both the study material and the practice. This project is discussed in the following section.

Charisma, technology and knowledge in Scientology

Most religions are founded by a charismatic leader who, through divine right, study or a combination thereof, discovers the esoteric knowledge that informs the belief system of that group. For Max Weber, charisma is:

> [A] certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader. (Weber [1922]1968, p. 241)

Religious leaders are, in the end, human (or at least contained in a human vessel). Therefore, when the founder dies, his or her charisma must be institutionalised if the group is to continue. The institutionalisation of L. Ron Hubbard's charisma is apparent in Scientology's material culture; from the bust of the founder that sits across from the Scientology cross in the organisation's chapels to the replica of his study in every Scientology Centre, he is a ubiquitous presence (Cowan 2009, pp. 63–64). However, it is his words, both written and spoken, that are the primary vehicle through which his charisma is institutionalised, a process of textualisation that Dorthe Refslund Christensen observes 'transform[s] Hubbard from a historical person to a mythological character identified with a set of religious ideas and practices' (Christensen 2005, p. 230; see also Wagner 2020). Scientology is an interesting case study in textualisation in that, unlike the major world religions, it developed after the advent of audio-visual recording; thus, Scientologists read not only the words Hubbard wrote but also listen to and in some cases see him deliver them through hundreds of hours of recorded lectures. The omnipresence of Hubbard's words is important because self-understanding can only be achieved by adhering to and correctly applying his instructions, what Scientologists refer to as the 'Standard Technology'. Because it is essential to understand *exactly* what Hubbard meant to communicate through his writings and lectures, Christensen goes so far as to claim that 'Hubbard *is* Standard Tech' (Christensen 2005, p. 232, original emphasis). When Scientologists engage in auditing, then, they are in a sense using Hubbard in bodily practice.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

As a product of post-World War II America, Scientology incorporates the technological utopianism of the era. 'Technology' in Scientology is understood as the key to unlocking human potential. It is also the key to enlightenment because it is essential to the religion's central ritual, auditing. For Scientologists 'the tech' is not only Hubbard's precise words, but also the way to study those words. For Hubbard, miscommunication – particularly the misunderstood word – leads to the misapplication of the tech. This misapplication has serious affects, as it blocks the adept from becoming 'Clear'. Therefore, auditors-in-training are drilled in the use of 'Study Technology' that ensures the exact comprehension and application of Scientology's teachings (Westbrook 2019, pp. 103–108). The practice of Scientology is also facilitated through a technological device called the *E-meter* (short for 'electro-psychometer'). The E-meter measures the galvanic skin response of a preclear by running a small amount of electricity through her body via two grips colloquially known as 'cans'. In Scientology, negative memories are thought to have mass, which causes resistance to the electrical flow. During auditing, negative memories are identified by a trained auditor, and then discussed (audited) until they no longer produce a negative response (Bromley 2009, p. 109). The validity of auditing has never been proven scientifically, but as Westbrook observes, 'the ultimate purpose of "the Tech" is spiritual awakening and advancement, not peer-reviewed validation' (Westbrook 2019, p. 17).

Technology is thus an important concept in Scientology because it is through 'the tech' that Scientology's religious philosophy is applied to one's life. Adherents to most religions, for example Christians, seek to live according to scripture by applying lessons from that scripture to their everyday lives. This agency is limited, however: ultimately one's life is in 'God's hands'. In contrast, Scientology's technology is designed to give its practitioners full agency over their lives; as they move up the 'Bridge to Total Freedom',[7] they have increasing control over every aspect of their day-to-day existence (Westbrook 2019). Through the tech, Scientology becomes a source of self-knowledge and a 'lived religion' for its adherents.

Hubbard's musical hagiography, the Fairlight CMI and Clearsound™

Having established the importance and multifaceted role of 'technology' in Scientological thought and practice, this section focusses on how it permeates the musical practice of the church. L. Ron Hubbard had a keen interest in music. He sang and played several instruments, including the harmonica, fluegelhorn and piano. He also composed the music to early Scientology training tapes and sketched out the music to albums such as *Space Jazz* (1982) and *Mission Earth* (1986). Hubbard's musical background, interests and activities shape the way music is understood and experienced in Scientology because they are part of his hagiography. Christensen (2005, p. 233) defines hagiographies as 'social and textual constructions produced with the particular aim of informing the recipient about specific paradigmatic events and actions connected to the founder or originator of a religion'. Hubbard's hagiography presents each event of his life as leading inexorably to the creation of the body of knowledge that is Scientology. This haigiography is perhaps best seen

[7] In Scientology, 'The Bridge' is the progression of training courses through which Scientologists attain higher states of awareness (Church of Scientology, n.d.c).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

in the 14-volume *L. Ron Hubbard* series produced by the Scientology's publishing arm, Bridge Publications. Each coffee-table volume focuses on an aspect of Hubbard's persona (e.g. *Adventurer* and *Humanitarian*) and its contribution to the discoveries that Scientology is based on. Importantly, Hubbard's musical activities are given an entire volume, titled *L. Ron Hubbard: Music Maker, Composer and Performer* (Bridge Publications, 2012). The facts of Hubbard's biography are contested (e.g. Atack 2013), but the way they are presented by the church provides an important window into how his charisma is routinised in the church and embodied by Scientologists.

Hubbard's hagiography presents him as an adventurer, hero and polymath, told with the gusto of Golden Age Hollywood films (Wagner 2020). Importantly, each event is presented as 'research' that contributed to Hubbard's diagnoses of the human condition. The accounts of Hubbard's early years read much like the adventure stories he penned as a pulp fiction author in the 1930s and 1940s.[8] For example, he is said to have been made, as a child, a Bloodbrother of the Blackfoot Indians. As a teenager, he travelled to the then far-flung corners of the world, such as Tibet, where he studied with Llamas; he later flew airplanes and dabbled in nuclear physics as a university student. He was injured as a naval Commander in World War II, and it was during his convalescence that he discovered what would become Dianetics, the 'science of the mind' that is the foundation of Scientology.

Hubbard's musical research, recounted in *Music Maker*, follows a similar arc. The introduction to the book tells readers that Hubbard's story is 'a trail of musical discovery spanning many forms, many cultures and many decades. Indeed, L. Ron Hubbard's musical journey very nearly parallels his greater life's journey' (Bridge Publications 2012, p. 2). Born in 1911, Hubbard's childhood was spent in Montana, where he was exposed to 'the actual roots of the country sound', which included cowboy bands, country hoedowns and the melodies of Irish railroad workers (Bridge Publications 2012, p. 7). He studied classical piano and taught himself saxophone, banjo and mouth organ (Bridge Publications 2012, p. 7). During his father's posting at the United States Naval Station in Guam in 1927:

> the sixteen-year-old Ron encountered what was to be the first of many remote musical traditions – in this case that curious blend of native Chamorro Spanish and what passed for swing in dance halls catering to Americans. (Bridge Publications 2012, p. 9)

Following a brief return to Montana:

> Ron again set out across the South Pacific to a then still-mysterious Asia. There, he studied unique instrumentation that would surface in several later compositions, including the tribal war drums of Mongolian horsemen, the gamelan gongs of the Javanese temple orchestras, the Japanese koto, the Indian sitar and the Chinese zither. (Bridge Publications 2012, p. 10)

Hubbard's hagiography presents him not only as an explorer of primitive and exotic peoples and musics, but also as a trailblazer who pushed the boundaries of human potential through music. Musicologist Mark Evans (2017) observes that, in contrast to

[8] Although Hubbard is best known for his science fiction writing, he was a prolific author of more than 100 stories in several genres, including adventure, crime and romance. See Widder 1994 for his full bibliography.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

his pulp fiction writing, which appealed to genre formulas, Hubbard's musical output often pushed the boundaries of genre convention (p. 335). For example, the 1982 album *Space Jazz* not only utilises genres as diverse as honky-tonk, jazz and rock, but is, as the companion to his science fiction novel *Battlefield Earth*, also one of the first soundtracks to a book.[9] Hubbard also sought to push the boundaries of music with new technology, most noteably through his embrace of the first sampler, the Fairlight Computer Musical Instrument (CMI). The liner notes of *Space Jazz* invite the reader to:

> Consider the magnitude of the challenge Hubbard set himself. Conventional musical instruments and even huge symphony orchestras have their limitations. He turned to the technology of the future – computers.
>
> Recent breakthroughs in computer musical instruments offered the needed versatility to match his new musical concepts.

Scientology offers researchers a rare chance to observe the development of a new religion in real time. Here, *Space Jazz* offers a glimpse of how contemporary hagiographies are constructed across a range of textual, sonic and visual media, including music technologies. The above passage presents Hubbard as a visionary to whom both musical thinking and technology, in the form of the CMI, were playing catch up.

Synthesisers and the Fairlight CMI offer a further glimpse into the conceptual role technology plays in Scientology. The instruments held a special fascination for Hubbard; in his lifetime, he owned several electric organs, which he used to score Scientology training films in the late 1970s, as well as several synthesisers and a CMI. Hubbard was particularly taken with the CMI; not only is it used extensively on the albums *Space Jazz* and *Mission Earth* (a second 'literary soundtrack' to his 10-volume book series by the same name, performed by Edgar Winters), but Hubbard also penned a short letter to the instrument itself:

> Dear Sir Fairlight: Please have the engineer store on your floppy disc that we have now been properly introduced. I am very glad to make your acquaintance. You have very charming circuits and I am certain that we can co-vibrate to the astonishment and ecstasy of a vast audience. With all praise to your exalted frequencies, consider me your friend. (Quoted in Bridge Publications 2012, p. 61)

Invented in 1979 by high school friends Peter Vogel and Kim Ryrie, the Fairlight CMI was the first commercially available synthesiser with a digital sampling function. The instrument came with a library of pre-recorded instrumental sounds and external sounds could be sampled using a microphone or line input. It also came equipped with a 'light pen', which was a stylus that could be used to draw wave forms on the screen. Perhaps ironically, given the place of harmonics in Scientology's theology, critics pointed to the 'very odd and bad harmonics' that this process produced. However, it was enthusiastically embraced by musicians such as Peter Gabriel and Herbie Hancock (Harkins 2020, p. 20).[10] It is not publicly recorded what Hubbard thought of this feature, but what is recorded is his enthusiasm for the instrument's ability to record natural sounds for later use:

[9] Although the liner notes of *Space Jazz* claim that the album is the first soundtrack to a book, Michael Nesmith (formerly of the Monkees) released *The Prison – A Book with a Soundtrack* in 1974.

[10] The feature was discontinued when the Fairlight CMI Series III launched in 1986 (Harkins 2020, p. 20).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

> Computer music can incorporate natural sound into musical scales. A bear can growl two thirteen-note octaves. In synthesiser it is NOT a bear growl – it is a synthesiser growl. There is a difference. Natural sound can then be combined with real (not synthesiser) instruments. Add to that the zing of real space opera music and you have a new era of music. (Bridge Publications 2012, p. 62)

This language is strikingly similar to the marketing of the early CMI instruments. For example, an advertisement from 1983 claims:

> This is the story about a new concept in music production. It goes well beyond the ideas of musical instruments as we know them. It is a concept inspired by the wish to create literally ANY type of music, no matter how complex or difficult to express. To incorporate literally ANY type of sound – not only classical and modern instruments but sounds of the world. (Quoted in Harkins 2020, p. 26, original emphasis)

Electronic music was the avant-garde, as well as the purview of psychedelic and counterculture, in the 1960s and 1970s (Gopinath 2019), a time in which Hubbard was continually updating Scientology and the religion was enjoying a period of rapid expansion. When *Space Jazz* and *Mission Earth* were released in the early 1980s, synthesised sounds were going mainstream in jazz, pop and rock acts. I suggest that, in this context, electric organs, synthesisers and especially the Fairlight CMI held symbolic value for Hubbard because they sonically indexed the cutting edge of music and popular culture – where through albums such as *Space Jazz* he sought to position himself – and in doing so reinscribed the utopian promise of 'technology' in the religion he created.

The antecedents of the CMI, MIDI synthesisers and digital audio workstations, are the primary tools with which music is created for Scientology training films and promotional videos today. Indeed, musicians who work for the church enjoy access to an array of advanced recording technology. When I asked Ryan, one of two musicians who compose music for Scientology's promotional videos, about the symbolic place of technology in Scientology, he immediately connected it back to Hubbard's research:

> There are pictures of him messing around with synthesisers and stuff like that when they first came out. He always had the latest thing because he was interested in it, and he loved the technology and making music out of this new stuff. And it led to him discovering so many things about audio, the technology of audio, the equipment and the sound. (Interview with Ryan, 6 June 2016)

One of the discoveries that Ryan refers to above is what Hubbard called 'proportionate sound'. As he discusses in *Music Maker*, proportionate sound solves the problem of 'separation':

> The problem of separation of instruments so they can be separately heard has been largely unsolved by bands and recording. Study of the subject has brought up certain natural laws apparently not before known . . . the truth is that sound waves *can* cancel sound waves. And this is the basic fact behind proportionate sound. (Bridge Publications 2012, p. 49)

Hubbard then goes on to list seven laws that, if 'applied with full understanding will, with experience, produce clarity of instrument separation never before heard in a musical group' (Bridge Publications 2012, p. 50). For example, law #5 states 'Separation is done by: a. Changing the range of the scale between two or more

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

instruments, and b. Changing the timbre of the instruments' (Bridge Publications 2012, 50). Many music historians will be likely to take issue with the assertion that music produced before Hubbard's 'discovery' lacks clarity, but the dubiousness of the assertion is not the point: like Hubbard's instructions for using the E-meter in auditing, the significance of his musical instructions are not their peer-reviewed accuracy but the blueprint for practice they offer within the totality of Scientology. As Ryan told me:

> With these little technologies in mind ... we're able to score and create music in a way that's clear. That's another thing that you hear about the Scientology music that makes it special: it's not like something you hear on a normal radio, or something that you hear coming out of YouTube or whatever, because even on those mediums, it's actually higher in quality. (Interview with Ryan, 6 June 2016)

According to Ryan, music created using Hubbard's rules make Scientology's music clearer than other musics. For Ryan, 'clear' is more than simply the clarity of the recorded audio: it is the quality of communication that the recording makes possible. It is no coincidence that those who have achieved the status of 'Clear' in Scientology are also believed to have heightened powers of communication. Here, then, the intersection of musical and religious terminologies reveals the concomitance of musical and religious thought in Scientology.

In addition to rules for achieving clarity in music through orchestration, Hubbard also specified how to achieve it through recording and playback equipment. These instructions are the basis for Scientology's trademarked Clearsound technology, which is used by its media production company Golden Era Productions. According to the church, Clearsound is a set of standards developed by Hubbard that reduces excess mechanical noise so that the 'pure voice' of the speaker or singer can be heard. Hubbard's exact specifications are not publicly available,[11] but the Church of Spiritual Technology, which manages all of Scientology's intellectual property, holds two patents for technology for reducing distortion in, and during recording on, a tape recorder[12] and has trademarked the Clearsound name for 'cinematographic films, pre-recorded audio and video tapes, and audio cassettes, all pertaining to philosophy, religion and education'.[13]

Because Clearsound is a set of standards as opposed to a specific technology, it can be applied to changing recording technology. The church claims that Clearsound technology provides 'an excellence in recording and reproduction that surpasses virtually all industry standards' (Church of Scientology n.d.b). However, its critics counter that it does not and is instead an excuse for the church to overcharge

[11] Former Scientology audio engineer Bruce Plotz, writing on prominent Scientology critic Mike Rinder's blog, describes Clearsound in this way:

> To be qualified as adhering to 'Clearsound' standards, a production line has to be flat +/− 1 dB from 20 Hz to 20 kHz, have decent transient response as compared to other similar production lines, and have low distortion as compared to other similar production lines. Also, it has to pass an 'A–B' listening test.

An AB test is a cassette recording where certain sound samples (mostly from the Road To Freedom album and selected lectures by Hubbard) are recorded, three seconds of the original followed by three seconds of the product of the sound system'. (Rinder 2020)

[12] https://patents.justia.com/search?q=Church+of+Spiritual+Technology, accessed 5 April 2022.

[13] https://trademark.trademarkia.com/clearsound-74145953.html, accessed 5 April, 2022.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

consumers (e.g. Rinder 2020). For the present article, the point is not to assess the validity of these claims but to understand how Clearsound functions in Scientology at the nexus of musical and religious practice: Clearsound is a set of specifications realised in the materiality of recording equipment as well as corporally in a set of listening practices. Through those specifications, then, Hubbard's charisma acts as a technology of self, shaping the material, aural and experiential sonic universe of Scientologists.

This section has discussed the conceptual, symbolic and practical role of 'technology' in Scientological musicking. Building on this, the next section discusses how the 'sound' of Scientology is related to its 'whole track' theology.

Scientology's 'whole track sound'

Sociologist Hugh Urban (2012) describes Scientology as a spiritual *bricolage*:

> An eclectic and ingenious cultural entrepreneur, Hubbard assembled a wide array of philosophical, occult, spiritual and science fiction elements, cobbling them together into a unique, new and surprisingly successful synthesis. (p. 93)

On the one hand, Scientology draws from centuries-old teachings of the Ancient Greeks and Buddhist Llamas. On the other hand, it approaches spirituality through the modern language of research, science and (futuristic) technology. In doing so, it seeks to create unified body of knowledge that accounts for the past, present and future (Wagner 2020). Having discussed how Hubbard's charisma provides the foundation for Scientological musicking through a multi-faceted understanding of 'technology', this section discusses to the 'whole track sound' of Scientology. 'Whole Track' is an important concept in Scientology: it forms the basis of the Church's 'creation myth' – an important aspect of many religions – and accounts for Scientologists' past lives (see Hubbard 1952).

Most long-established religions have a recognisable sonic signature and repertoire. For example, mainline Protestantism is sonically marked by organs and choirs and has a codified repertoire of hymns. Similarly, contemporary evangelical Christian worship music has a recognisable rock-based 'sound' and a repertoire of 'standards' that are known throughout its global community. Scientology differs from older religions in that it does not have a codified repertoire of 'religious' music, nor does it use music ritually. Furthermore, a survey of Hubbard's musical interests and outputs reveals him to be musically omnivorous. As a 'sound', then, the Whole Track is a useful concept because it not only accounts for Hubbard's charisma in Scientology's theology and musicking, but also provides conceptual coherence to the vast array of musical styles and music making associated with the church.

In scene studies, a 'sound' is a discursive construction about the music of a group of people or place (Bennett 2002). Although that 'sound' usually has the recognisable sonic elements of specific instruments, styles and artists, what gives it discursive power is not its waveform or timbre but how it is 'listened' to within a mythology that is constructed among its stakeholders (Bennett 2002, p. 89). I suggest that the core of Scientology's 'sound' is Hubbard's hagiography, which presents him as an explorer of the primitive/mystic past as well as a futurist thinker: it is the sound of a religion that explores the 'whole track' of existence.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Scientology's 'whole track sound' manifests itself clearly in several of the recordings produced while Hubbard was alive, including *The Power of Source* (1974), *Space Jazz* (1982) and *Mission Earth* (1986). It can also be heard on posthumous albums, perhaps most notably on *Hymn of Asia* (2000). Hubbard drew from a variety of spiritual and philosophical traditions, and particularly Eastern traditions, in his development of Scientology. This bricolage is perhaps unsurprising given the central role of exploration in his hagiography; Hubbard's musical hagiography presents him not only as a musical explorer and inventor, but also as a quasi-(ethno) musicologist. For example, *Music Maker* reveals that during his Asian travels Hubbard:

> first explored the possibility of what he described as the 'unpositive note' or that strangely apologetic quality so characteristic of Asian music. That is, as he later explained, the traditionally low-caste Asian musicians could not arrogantly strike a note. Thus notes are periodically approached from below and the musician slides up to it slowly, i.e. 'One apologetically slides up to it or down to it'. (Bridge Publications 2012, pp. 10–11)

Contemporary music scholars will note the lack of critical engagement in the above passage; written as a diary entry in the late 1920s, it reads as an excerpt from a dated anthropology text or travel log. Here, it serves to illustrate how Hubbard's Asian adventures lay the hagiographic groundwork for the incorporation of Eastern religious elements into Scientology (Flinn 2009; see also Kent 1996) and its music.

Noting that Scientologists recognise Buddhism as part of the church's 'antecedents and background', Flinn (2009) describes Scientology as 'technological Buddhism' (p. 212). For Flinn, the concept of 'Clear' in Scientology, in which the Theatan is free of entanglements with engrams, is roughly equivalent to the Buddhist concept of *bhodi*, which describes someone who has disentangled the threads of existence and illusion (Flinn 2009). The techno-Bhuddist elements of Scientology are clearly audible in the *Hymn of Asia* album, which sets to music a poem Hubbard wrote for a Buddhist convention during the 1955–1956 celebrations of 2,500 years of Buddhism. According to the album's liner notes, '[t]he poem's 1,062 lines concern the fulfilment of Buddha's prophecy', and the poem and the liner notes suggest that Scientology is that fulfilment.

Available only in CD format, the disc comes housed in a deluxe, hard-backed case. Sewn into the case is 34-page booklet that contains liner notes and the words to Hubbard's poem. The liner notes begin by telling the story of the life of Buddha and the Prophecy of Metteyya, which tells of a new incarnation of the Bodhisattva who will appear, 'the earliest [date] being 2,500 years after Buddha'. The notes, which claim to quote 'Tibetan Buddhist scriptures' leave little doubt that Hubbard is that incarnation:

> When he shall be seen in the West, seated in the Western fashion, his hair like flames about his noble head,[14] discoursing, then shall the inhabitants of the Three Worlds rejoice, knowing that the emancipation of all sentient beings is imminent. Then it shall be called the age of the blessed because it will become commonplace to achieve emancipation in one lifetime.

The music of *Hymn of Asia* is arranged and performed by top-flight Hollywood musicians such as Mark Isham and Misha Segal. Its techno-Buddhist sound is apparent

[14] Hubbard had red hair.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

from the first notes: lush instrumentation makes ample use of 'eastern'-signifying instruments such as shakuhachies, tablas and sitars, while futuristic synthesised brass hits triumphantly announce the narrator (Hubbard, voiced by LA studio musician Sherwood Ball), who immediately (and somewhat rhetorically) asks 'Am I Metteyya'? On the following track, the narrator tells listeners that:

With arduous study
With interest and love
You will all
In very few years
Some in months
Become Bodhi

To the uninitiated listener, the references to Scientology in the text are lost. However, to someone with the requisite knowledge, the lyrics promise that the correct, intense study of Hubbard's tech will lead to Clear.

The final pages of the liner notes give an abbreviated version of Hubbard's musical hagiography, situating his early Asian adventures (including delving into the 'dread mysteries of India') as a precursor to his studies in engineering, mathematics and nuclear physics. By applying scientific methodology to 'the study of intrinsically spiritual questions', Hubbard discovered Dianetics and then Scientology, confirming that:

> Dianetics and Scientology have fulfilled the 2,500-year-old-dream of Buddha – and in the space of a single lifetime is a fact to which men and women across all continents can now attest. (Liner notes to *Hymn of Asia* 2000)

Hymn of Asia is an interesting document of musicking in the Church of Scientology for three reasons. First, its fusion of 'primitive'- or 'exotic'-signifying instruments with modern synthesisers is a sonic exemplar of the fusion of ancient spirituality with futuristic 'tech' that is central to the practice of the religion. Second, its use of highly regarded musicians points to the importance of celebrity within the religion (more on this later). Third, the fact that the album sets to music a previously written Hubbard text and is accompanied with liner notes that replicate his musical hagiography is a reminder of the importance of intertextuality to religious musicking in general and Scientological musicking in particular.

Hymn of Asia highlights not only the importance of intertextuality to the experience of religious music, but also some of the limits of that music as a tool of dissemination and evangelism. As noted above, someone steeped in Scientology's teachings will understand the lyrics in a different way than someone who is not. Yet, as the insert in the CD that invites non-Scientologists to begin their studies (and Scientologists to continue them) attests, the album is meant in some respects to be a recruitment tool. The final section, then, discusses the role of communication, evangelism and activism in Scientological musicking.

ART as communication, evangelism and activism

When I asked Scientologist musicians which courses affected their understanding of music, most pointed first to the discussion of aesthetics that appears in *The Science of Survival* (Hubbard 1951) and *ART* (Hubbard 1991), the latter of which collects 17

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

articles on art (a category that includes visual and performing arts, including music) that were published in technical bulletins between 1965 and 1984. They also all spoke about Scientology's communication courses. 'ART', Hubbard wrote in a 1965 bulletin, 'is a word which summarises THE QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION' (Hubbard 1976, p. 83, original emphasis). For Hubbard, communication is the intention and act of sending a message to a receiver with the intention of that person fully comprehending that message. If the receiver acknowledges that message, then a 'communication cycle' is established. As described above, auditing is the central ritual practice in Scientology. At its most basic level, as Harley and Kieffer (2009) point out, auditing is a 'regimen of communication cycles between auditor and preclear' (p. 194).

Communication is important because it is part of the architecture of *understanding*. As defined in the *Dianetics and Scientology Technical Dictionary*, understanding is 'knowing in action' that is composed of Affinity, Reality and Communication, the three points of the ARC triangle. Affinity is 'the degree of liking or affection' one has towards something or someone (Hubbard 1975, p. 11) and Reality is what we agree to be true (Hubbard 1975, p. 216). Importantly, the three components of the ARC triangle increase or decrease in proportion to one another. Perfect communication leads to an increase in Affinity and Reality, which leads to an increase in understanding. Perfect communication therefore is essential if Scientology's tech is to 'clear the planet'.

The musicians I spoke to uniformly pointed to music as two-way communication between the performer and the audience. For Ryan, who composes music for Scientology's promotional videos, this idea was central to his maturing as a musician:

> When I started doing music . . . I didn't really have a concept of what my mission was, of what I was doing as an artist. I was just creating music and people were liking it sometimes. But the way I found that I was an artist . . . was when I did a basic art course in Scientology, and I discovered that I wasn't making music for myself anymore, I was making music for others. That was a huge turning point for me: I came out of my room and I started performing and there was this whole thing of really getting the point of my music across to people. Then I started having a message myself and I started incorporating that into my music and people found it valid. And it really became a communication between me and an audience instead of just from me. (Interview with Ryan, 6 June 2016)

'Conversion' narratives are central to religious identities in many religions. Since Scientology is an 'applied religious philosophy', those narratives are 'becoming' narratives: as in Ryan's story above, Scientologists apply Hubbard's religious tech to their daily endeavours to free themselves from the encumbrances that keep them from taking complete control of their lives and fully actualising their potentials. This idea was expressed to me by Harriet Schock, a Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter:

> When I came here [to the Celebrity Centre], I'd already had a hit, the Grammy nomination, the whole thing. So, I didn't come here to learn my craft. I came here because I had been on a quest my whole life for truth about life. As I told you my first book was *Science of Survival*. When I found a particular piece of information in that, I knew I had found what I was looking for the entire time, and that if I did – because this is an applied religious philosophy – if I did the things that you do to get really free spiritually that it would affect my writing, it would affect my singing, my performing. What I didn't know was all the courses also affect it because as you have reality with your audience, their affinity comes up as you communicate. All of these things help you mentally. I didn't even plan on all that. . . . I just

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

wanted to get free. And so, I went up to what we call O.T. VIII[15] and the freedom is indescribable. But my point about . . . the music is that it is so easy now to create. Because of all this stuff that's just not there. (Interview with Harriet Schock, 5 June 2016)

In the above, Harriet discusses music performance in terms of Scientology's understanding of communication, particularly in relation to the triangulation of Communication to Reality and Affinity. She also told me that the Tone Scale is a good way to structure a concert:

[The Emotional Tone Scale] was the thing that helped me the most in performing. Because the audience comes in with all this stuff, [so] you have to start them low on the scale because that's where they live. . . . And then you bring them up the tone scale so that at the end of the concert they truly feel better. You know, you can't put them into grief at the very end of the show [laughs], but you take them through there so that they can expunge all the stuff that they've been sitting on. (ibid.)

In the above two quotes, Harriet talks about applying Scientology's tech to her musical activities. But she and other Scientologist musicians I spoke with were also quick to emphasise that the tech is applicable to all areas of life. As Pamela Lancaster, a professional singer who teaches at the Celebrity Centre in Los Angeles put it, 'Not only is [Scientology] a formula for how to have stage presence, but it's a formula if you want to go do any job in this universe' (interview with Pamela Lancaster 5 June 2016).

The Celebrity Centre International offers classes not only in performing, but also in the other aspects of making a career in music, such as finances, contracts and promotion. Special mentoring seminars are given by industry stalwarts such as the film composer Mark Isham. Perhaps most importantly, regular gigs are organised at the centre's Garden Pavilion, where aspiring musicians can test out new material and apply the tech in a supportive atmosphere. The Celebrity Centre is therefore a microcosm of an important aspect of musicking in Scientology: its community and infrastructure.

Religions are not only conceptual toolkits that provide ways of understanding oneself and actions in the world; they are also material networks of people, places and things that are embedded in, and interact with, the secular world. Scientology's network of musicians, sound engineers, venues, record labels and recording studios is concentrated in Los Angeles, but has nodes in countries around the world. In the 1960s and 1970s, several popular musicians experimented with the religion as part of counter-culture's search for alternative spiritualities. Some, such as members of The Incredible String Band and jazz great Chick Corea, became deeply involved. As Pamela Lancaster recalls:

We were in a warehouse in the worst part of L.A. Who knows how we got there? We all had flowers in our hair, we had shows every night and during the day we turned the chairs around to do a seminar and then we turn the chairs around and have a gig. And then Chick and his friends would come after their other gigs and jam until four in the morning. (Interview with Pamela Lancaster, 6 June 2016)

As Scientology evolved, it formalised a complex structure of people and places. Today, it has several 'classes' of churches, each dedicated to a specific function.

[15] OT VIII stands for 'Operating Theatan VIII'. It is the highest level one can achieve in Scientology.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

For example, Scientology Missions provide lower-level auditing while Class V Churches provide auditing through Clear (Church of Scientology n.d.a). Scientology's Celebrity Centres are places where its tech is delivered specifically to influential people such as artists, musicians, actors, politicians and athletes. The flagship centre is the Celebrity Centre International in Los Angeles, CA. Opened in 1969, it was an important site of Scientology's rapid expansion and commercial success during the 1960s and early 1970s, attracting an array of famous actors and musicians (Urban 2011, p. 121). Today, it is an important training centre for up-and-coming artists.

While it should be emphasised that most Scientologists, musicians or otherwise, are not celebrities, the Celebrity Centre is important to understanding musicking in Scientology because it materialises Hubbard's view of musicians as prospective evangelists for Scientology. Throughout his life, Hubbard searched for ways to 'disseminate' his tech to the public, a mission the church continues to pursue today. To this end, in 1955 he instituted 'Project Celebrity', a scheme through which Scientologists were encouraged to recruit celebrities to his growing religion.[16] Hubbard believed that celebrities – and artists in particular – excelled at communicating and therefore a relationship between them and Scientology would be mutual beneficial: artists who underwent auditing would enhance their already extraordinary talents and in return – having experienced the benefits of that auditing – they would extoll the virtues of Scientology to their audiences.

Scientology's musicians disseminate the religion in a variety of ways. One way is through recordings: albums of explicitly Scientological material such as *Hymn of Asia, The Road to Freedom* and *The Joy of Creating* feature contributions from famous musicians such as Chick Corea, Doug E. Fresh and Isaac Hayes. Hubbard also features, albeit often more subtly, in musicians' own recordings. For example, Corea, who discovered Scientology in the 1970s, produced albums inspired by Hubbard such as *To the Stars* and *Delphi* and thanked him in the liner notes of almost all his releases. Scientological themes also often appear in the songs of the British swing band The Jive Aces (e.g. 'I've Got Affinity for You and 'Clear Body, Clear Mind') and the band performs in zoot suits that are the yellow colour of the church's Volunteer Ministry.

Beyond the music itself, many of Scientology's musicians use their celebrity and their music to support one of the Church's social betterment programmes.[17] For example, soul legend Isaac Hayes was a long-time spokesperson for the World Literacy Campaign, which uses a literacy programme based on Hubbard's study technology called Applied Scholastics. Similarly, The Jive Aces promote the Truth About Drugs programme through concerts in schools, jails and town centres across the UK. These programmes sometimes meet with controversy: while proponents claim that their programmes are 'secular' and meant to better social ills, opponents claim that the true goal of the programmes is to recruit people to the church and that, because they are based on Hubbard's writings, they are not grounded in peer-reviewed science. In this regard, Scientology's social betterment programmes are like those of other religions: Christian missionaries to the developing world have, for example, long coupled aid with 'soft' evangelism. Furthermore, faith-based

[16] Hubbard's original 'wish list' included musicians such as Bing Crosby, Leopold Stokowski and Arturo Tosconini (Acuna 2012).

[17] https://www.scientology.org.uk/how-we-help/, accessed 6 April, 2022.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

social projects are always already embedded in the world view and personal experiences of that group.

The controversies surrounding the social programmes that Scientologist musicians support raise a final point about religious musicking, which is the limits of musical communication. Hubbard strongly believed that music could bring people to his religion. Before the recording of *The Road to Freedom*, Hubbard wrote:

> I am composing a special album of ten Scientology songs. In doing these I discovered that it is potentially a very heavy dissemination tool. The songs actually would tell public persons what Scientology was all about. I have been trying for thirty-four years to develop a dissemination tool for the general public. If a musical dissemination tool existed, Scientologists could play it for their friends while enjoying it themselves. Thus, we have here what could be a very valuable dissemination tool. (L. Ron Hubbard, quoted in Kent 2017, p. 105)

The Road to Freedom is perhaps the most explicitly 'Scientological' album produced by the church and the lyrics are replete with its specialised language. For example, in 'Make it go right', David Pomeranz sings:

> When the reg* line is broken
> And the meter* doesn't work
> When the bills flood in and stats* are down
> There is no faintest need to shirk.
> (Liner notes, stars in original)

The starred words, reprinted as they appear in the album liner notes, have special meanings in Scientology, and to that end a page of definitions is provided in the notes. Musicking is an intertextual process; on the one hand, the lyrics in Scientology's music are understood 'properly' by those steeped in Hubbard's teachings. On the other hand, those same lyrics are often the basis of derision by outsiders to the religion (e.g. Rabin 2014). As noted in the introduction, musicking affords the opportunity to engage with a religion on its own terms and to understand its relationship to wider society it. Here, it both reveals the beliefs of Scientology and highlights the challenges of communication across the sacred/secular divide, and in particular the strained relationship between the church and wider society.[18]

Conclusion

Music featured prominently in L. Ron Hubbard's thinking, and this awareness is reflected both in the musical language embedded in Scientology's discourse and its use in the church's contemporary communications. For musicians in the church, musicking is an intertextual practice through which a world view and cosmology are embodied and expressed. This intertextuality is perhaps clearest in the multifaceted role that 'technology' plays in Scientology's musical practice. In Scientology, music 'tech' is the utopian promise of 'clear' – at once a tool of spiritual enlightenment, a set of guidelines and inspiration for making music – and this promise is realised in the sonic expression of Scientology's cosmology, 'whole track sound'. However, Scientology's 'sound' – or Hubbard's hopes for it – may be at odds with the realities of musical communication.

[18] I discuss Scientology's 'media problem' in Wagner (2017). See also Cusack (2009).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Psychologist Steven Brown writes that 'music is, in its most basic sense, an *associative enhancer of communication* at the group level' (Brown 2006, p. 1, original emphasis). Music is therefore an effective tool of religious identity formation as well as an effective tool of dissemination and evangelism. Yet, identity formation is also 'basically an exclusionary process' that 'helps distinguish "us" from "them"' (Brown 2006, p. 4). Brown's observations have myriad implications when considering religious musicking and particularly musicking in new religious movements, which often already operate on the margins of society.

Music provides a window into Scientology's theology and cosmology. It also reveals the church's relationship with wider society. On the one hand, Scientologists work tirelessly to disseminate Hubbard's technology. On the other hand, the church has historically been at odds with the media and popular culture, a condition exacerbated by the internet (Cusack 2009; Wagner 2017). As a second- and third-generation religion, Scientology has survived longer than most new religious movements, yet its long-term trajectory from new religious movement to established religion remains unclear. In the meantime, it continues to provide a fascinating opportunity to observe the real-time evolution of musical practice in a New Religious Movement.

References

Acuna, K. 2012. 'Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard offered rewards for celebrity recruits in 1955', *Business Insider*, 19 July, https://www.businessinsider.com/scientologys-1955-project-celebrity-list-2012-7?r=US&IR=T

Atack, J. 2013. *Let's Sell These People a Piece of Blue Sky: Hubbard, Dianetics and Scientology*, 2nd edn (Scotts Valley, CA, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform)

Ayella, M. 1990. '"They must be crazy": some of the difficulties in researching "cults"', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 33/5, pp. 562–77

Barker, E. 2004. 'Perspective: what are we studying?', *Nova Religio*, 8/1, pp. 88–102

Barker, R. 2015. 'Scientology, the test case religion', *Alternative Law Journal*, 40/4, pp. 275–9

Becker, J. 2004. *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing* (Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press)

Bennett, A. 2002. 'Music, media and urban mythscapes: a study of the "Canterbury sound"', *Media, Culture & Society*, 24/1, pp. 87–100

Bridge Publications. 2012. *Ron: Music Maker, Composer & Performer* (Commerce, CA, Bridge Publications)

Bromley, D.G. 2009. 'Making sense of Scientology: prophetic, contractual religion', in *Scientology*, ed. J. Lewis (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 83–101

Brown, S. 2006. 'How does music work? towards a pragmatics of musical communication', in *Music and Manipulation: On the Social Uses and Social Control of Music*, ed. S. Brown and U. Volgsten (New York, Berghahn Books), pp. 1–27

Burns, E. 2015. '"Thanks, but no thanks": ethnographic fieldwork and the experience of rejection from a new religious movement', *Fieldwork in Religion*, 10/2, pp.190–208

Calhoun, S. (ed.) 2018. *U2 and the Religious Impulse (Bloomsbury Studies in Religion and Popular Music): Take Me Higher* (London: Bloomsbury Academic)

Cavicchi, D. 1998. *Tramps Like Us: Music and Meaning Among Springsteen Fans* (Oxford, Oxford University Press)

Chase, C.W. 2008. '"We travel the spaceways": Scientology and applied religious music', https://www.academia.edu/2917371/We_Travel_The_Spaceways_Scientology_and_Applied_Religious_Music

Christensen, D.R. 2005. 'Inventing L. Ron Hubbard: on the construction and maintenance of the hagiographic mythology of Scientology's founder', in *Controversial New Religions*, ed. J.R. Lewis and J.A. Petersen (New York, Oxford University Press), pp. 227–58

Church of Scientology. n.d.a. 'FAQ: the organisation of Scientology', Scientology.org, https://www.scientology.org/faq/the-organisation-of-scientology/how-is-the-church-of-scientology-structured.html, accessed 19 July 2021

Church of Scientology, n.d.b. 'Filmmaker', https://www.lronhubbard.org/ron-series/profile/artist/filmmaker.html, accessed 2 April 2022

Church of Scientology, n.d.c. 'What is The Bridge in Scientology?', https://www.scientology.org.uk/faq/background-and-basic-principles/what-is-the-bridge-in-scientology.html, accessed 5 April 2022

Cowan, D.E. 2009. 'Researching Scientology: perceptions, premises, promises, and problematics', in *Scientology*, ed. J. Lewis (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 53–79

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Cusack, C.M. 2009. 'Celebrity, the popular media, and Scientology: making familiar the unfamiliar', in *Scientology*, ed. J. Lewis (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 389–410
Doubleday, V. 2008. 'Sounds of power: an overview of musical instruments and gender', *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 17/1, pp. 3–39
Evans, M. 2010. 'Straining the Future: Battlefield Earth, Space Jazz and the Sounds of Scientology', *Science Fiction Film and Television*, 3/2, pp. 201–16
Evans, M. 2017. 'L. Ron Hubbard's foray into the world of music', in *Scientology and Popular Culture: Influences and Struggles for Legitimacy*, ed. S.A. Kent and S. Raine (Santa Barbara, CA, Praeger), pp. 333–52
Foucault, M. 1988. 'Technologies of the self', in ed. L.H. Martin, H. Gutman, and P.H. Hutton, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst, MA, University of Massachusetts Press), pp. 16–49
Flinn, F.K. 2009. 'Scientology as technological Buddhism', in *Scientology*, ed. J. Lewis (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 209–24
Gopinath, S. 2019. '"Departing to other spheres": psychedelic science fiction, perspectival embodiment, and the hermeneutics of Steve Reich's Four Organs', in *Rethinking Reich*, ed. S. Gopinath and P. Siôn (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 19–52
Halupka, M. 2014. 'The Church of Scientology: Legitimacy through Perception Management', *Politics and Religion*, 7/3, pp. 613–30
Harley, G.M., and Kieffer, J. 2009. 'The development and reality of auditing', in *Scientology*, ed. J. Lewis (Oxford, Oxford University Press), pp. 183–205
Harkins, P. 2020. *Digital Sampling: The Design and Use of Music Technologies* (New York, Routledge)
Hubbard, L.R. 1951. *Science of Survival: Simplified, Faster Dianetic Techniques* (Wichita KS, The Hubbard Dianetic Foundation)
Hubbard, L.R. 1952. *A History of Man,* 1980 edn (Copenhagen, Scientology Publications Organization)
Hubbard, L.R. 1975. *Dianetics and Scientology Technical Dictionary* (Los Angeles, CA, Scientology Publications)
Hubbard, L.R. 1976. 'Art, HCO bulletin of 30 August [1965]', in Hubbard, L.R., *The Technical Bulletins of Dianetics and Scientology Volume VI 1965–1969*, pp. 83–85 (Los Angeles, CA, Scientology Publications)
Hubbard. L.R. 1978. Transcript. 'The Science of Survival lectures', given 21 May 1951 (Los Angeles, CA, Golden Era Productions)
Hubbard, L.R. 1991. *ART* (Los Angeles, CA, Bridge Publications)
Introvigne, M. 2020. 'Scientology studies 2.0, utopia or opportunity?', *Implicit Religion*, 23/2, pp.156–66
Kent, S.A. 1996. 'Scientology's relationship with eastern religious traditions', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 11/1, pp. 21–36
Kent, S.A. 1999. 'Scientology – is this a religion?' *Marburg Journal of Religion*, 4/1, pp. 1–23
Kent, S.A. 2017. 'Celebrities keeping Scientology working', in *Scientology and Popular Culture: Influences and Struggles for Legitimacy*, ed. S.A. Kent and S. Raine (Santa Barbara, CA, Praeger), pp. 103–48
Mall, A. 2020. *God Rock, Inc: The Business of Niche Music* (Oakland, CA, University of California Press)
Melton, J.G. 2004. 'Perspective: toward a definition of "new religion"', *Nova Religio*, 8/1 pp. 73–87
Meyer, B. 2011. 'Mediation and immediacy: sensational forms, semiotic ideologies and the question of the medium', *Social Anthropology*, 19/12, pp. 3–39
Miller, M.M., and Strongman, K.T. 2002. 'The emotional effects of music on religious experience: a study of the Pentecostal-Charismatic style of music and worship', *Psychology of Music*, 30/1, pp. 8–27
Partridge, C., and Moberg, M. (eds) 2017. *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Popular Music* (London, Bloomsbury)
Plourde, L. 2008. 'Disciplined listening in Tokyo: Onkyō and non-intentional sounds', *Ethnomusicology*, 52/2, pp. 270–95
Rabin, N. 2014. 'The curious rock career of L. Ron Hubbard, the ultimate cult musician', *Slate Magazine*, 1 May, https://slate.com/culture/2014/05/the-music-of-l-ron-hubbard-space-jazz-and-other-scientology-albums.html, accessed 20 July 2021
Raine, S. 2015. 'Astounding History: L. Ron Hubbard's Scientology Space Opera', *Religion*, 45/1, pp. 66–88
Rinder, M. 2020. 'Scientology's state of the art technology', https://www.mikerindersblog.org/scientologys-state-of-the-art-technology/, accessed 2 April, 2022
Robertson, D., Cusack, C.M., Gregg, S., and Thomas, A. 2020. 'New directions in the study of Scientology – transcript', *Implicit Religion*, 23/2, pp. 89–101
Rodman, G.B. 2013. *Elvis after Elvis: The Posthumous Career of a Living Legend* (New York, Routledge)
Roof, W.C. 1999, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press)
Rothstein, M. 2007, 'Scientology, scripture, and sacred tradition', in *The Invention of Sacred Tradition*, ed. J.R. Lewis and O. Hammer (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), pp. 8–37
Small, C. 1998. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press)
Spaulding, C., and Formentin, M. 2017. 'Building a religious brand: exploring the foundations of the Church of Scientology through public relations', *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 29/1, pp. 38–50
St John, G. 2006. 'Electronic dance music culture and religion: an overview', *Culture and Religion*, 7/1, pp. 1–25
Sullivan, L.E. 1997. *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World's Religions* (Harvard, MA, Harvard University Press)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Urban, H.B. 2011. *The Church of Scientology: A History of a New Religion* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press)

Urban, H.B. 2012. 'The occult roots of Scientology?: L. Ron Hubbard, Aleister Crowley and the Origins of a Controversial New Religion', *Nova Religio*, 3, pp. 91–116

Wagner, T. 2017. 'Celebrity, South Park, and Scientology's "media problem"', *Religion: Going Public*, 13 June, https://religiongoingpublic.com/archive/2017/celebrity-south-park-and-scientologys-media-problem, accessed 4 July 2021

Wagner, T. 2020. 'Charisma, authority, and innovation in Scientology's "golden age" narrative'. *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 32/1, pp. 15–28

Weber, M. [1922]1968. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, trans. and ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich (New York, Bedminster Press)

Weiss, S. 2019. *Ritual Soundings: Women Performers and World Religions* (Champaign, IL, University of Illinois Press)

Westbrook, D. A. 2019. *Among the Scientologists: History, Theology, and Praxis* (Oxford, Oxford University Press)

Westbrook, D. A. 2020. 'Scientology studies 2.0: lessons learned and paths forward'. *Religion Compass*, 14/2, e12345

Widder, W. 1994. *The Fiction of L. Ron Hubbard* (Los Angeles, CA, Bridge Publications)

Wood, A. 2014. 'Soundscapes of pilgrimage: European and American Christians in Jerusalem's Old City', *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 23/3, pp. 285–305

Discography

The Apollo Stars. *Power of Source*. L. Ron Hubbard. SE1001. 1974

L. Ron Hubbard. *Space Jazz*. Applause Records, Inc., APLP 9000. 1982

L. Ron Hubbard and Friends. *The Road to Freedom*. L. Ron Hubbard Library. 3176. 1986

L. Ron Hubbard. *Hymn of Asia*. Golden Era Productions. 4949. 2000

Michael Nesmith. *The Prison – A Book with a Soundtrack*. Pacific Arts. PAC-101. 1974

The Jive Aces, 'I've Got Affinity For You', *Dance All Night*. Right Recordings. RIGHT039. 2005

The Jive Aces, 'Clear Body, Clear Mind', *Dance All Night*. Right Recordings. RIGHT039. 2005

Edgar Winter and L. Ron Hubbard. *Mission Earth*. Revenimus Music Publishing. R2 70709. 1986

Golden Era Musicians. The Golden Era Musicians and Friends play L. Ron Hubbard: The Joy of Creating. Golden Era Productions. 5089. 2001

Chick Corea. Delphi. Polydor. PD-1-6208. 1979

Chick Corea Electric Band. To the Stars. Stretch Records. SCD-9043-2. 2004

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114302300034X Published online by Cambridge University Press