

Chapter Outline — Rock & Holy Rollers

Chapter 1

Across the Universe (The Beatles)

32 pages

George Harrison and John Lennon, in particular, forayed deep into the teachings of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Sai Baba, the Hare Krishnas, and Paramahansa Yogananda. The effects of that can easily be heard in their music and lyrics, in songs like “Dear Prudence,” “Bungalow Bill,” “Within You Without You,” and “Across the Universe”—the latter’s lyrics being derived from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, via LSD-guru Timothy Leary’s *The Psychedelic Experience*. (“Come Together” was actually written in support of Leary’s 1969 campaign to become governor of California.) Likewise for solo works such as “My Sweet Lord,” “Instant Karma,” and the Jean Houston-influenced “Mind Games.” (Houston is past-president of the Association for Humanistic Psychology.)

Chapter 2

Beliefs, They Are A-Changin’ (Bob Dylan)

8 pages

The Jewish Dylan’s “Highway 61 Revisited” (from 1965) opens with the Torah’s story of Abraham’s near-sacrifice of his son, Isaac. The *John Wesley Harding* album, from 1967, contains more than sixty biblical references. In the late ’70s, Bob had a mystical experience in which he felt himself to be in the presence of Jesus. He consequently spent the 1980s as a Pentecostal Christian, first showing his born-again side on *Slow Train Coming*, and then again on *Saved*. On the tours for those two albums, Dylan sermonized on stage, often discussing the apocalyptic predictions of Hal Lindsey. He has since been seriously involved with the Chabad Lubavitch group, whose members believe that their late rabbi was the Messiah.

Chapter 3

Sympathy for the Devil (The Rolling Stones)

8 pages

Notwithstanding the “papier-maché Satanism” of “Sympathy for the Devil,” guitarist Keith Richards explicitly dabbled in the black arts. Mick Jagger, in turn, was interested in both the Maharishi’s teachings and the Taoist text *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, the latter of which was said to have inspired the Stones’ album *Their Satanic Majesties Request*. Mick was later officially denounced as a “warlock” (i.e., male witch) by the Vatican Press.

Chapter 4

White Light Fantasy (The Kinks)

8 pages

Kinks founder Dave Davies' paranormal interests include UFO-spotting and claimed experiences of sending "healing light" out to the band's audiences at their shows. During his first LSD experience, he was guided through the cosmic vistas by his "Captain"—"a being above my head," later interpreted by a psychic as the voice of his "higher self." Following a bout of suicidal paranoia, he gave up drugs, and began reading books on Kabbalah, along with Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*—being sufficiently impressed by the latter "masterpiece" to quote directly and complimentarily from it in his autobiography. He has since written tunes extolling telepathy, and love songs about finding enlightenment.

Chapter 5

Meher, Can You Hear Me? (The Who)

8 pages

Pete Townshend followed the teachings of the "Avatar for this Age," Meher Baba, with that providing a basis for his rock opera, *Tommy*. He actually ran a "Baba Center" in London for a time; the "Baba" in "Baba O'Riley" refers exactly to Meher. Townshend's first solo LP, *Who Came First*, further grew out of a planned tribute to the guru, who himself claimed "to have been taken into the council of the gods and to know the future of all mankind."

Chapter 6

Bad Vibrations (The Beach Boys)

7 pages

Brian Wilson and his band toured with the Maharishi—to the complete disinterest of their fans—after Mike Love had joined the Beatles on their 1968 trip to the Maharishi's ashram in Rishikesh. Members of the group also hung out with New Age cult leader Charles Manson prior to his mass-murdering spree. Manson actually lived at drummer Dennis Wilson's house for a time, writing one of the Beach Boys' songs ("Never Learn Not to Love"), which was recorded for their *20/20* album in 1969.

Chapter 7

White Rabbit Habit (Jefferson Airplane)

4 pages

The Airplane valued psychedelic drugs more for their "party" value than for attempted spiritual growth—though still utilizing a geodesic dome for meditation on their property. The band's songs "Good Shepherd" and "Son of Jesus"—the latter concerning the alleged bastard child of Jesus, by Mary Magdalene—further demonstrated their interest in religion.

Chapter 8

A Saucerful of Sant Mat (Pink Floyd)

7 pages

Pink Floyd founder Syd Barrett was deeply involved with the astral-voyaging Sant Mat path led by Charan Singh, until being rejected in his request for initiation as a “Sat Sanghi.” “Astronomy Domini,” from the group’s debut album (*The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*), was actually billed as an “astral chant.” The *I Ching* formed the basis for “Chapter 24” on the same record, in the lyrical idea that “change returns success.” The marshlands outside of Cambridge, where guitarist David Gilmour once lived, were further legendarily haunted by “web-fingered mutants given to grunting uncouth phrases like ‘ummagumma’”—the title of the group’s fourth album.

Chapter 9

Jerry and the Spinners (The Grateful Dead)

8 pages

The Dead inadvertently generated a cult of “Spinners” who followed the band around, literally believing that the voice of God spoke through Jerry Garcia’s guitar. Garcia, for his own part, once felt himself dissolving into a field of wheat at the end of an acid trip. The band’s name derived from European folklore and from “Day of the Dead” mythology—the Mexican version of Halloween. The lyrics to their “Terrapin Station” further quote from the mystical poet T. S. Elliot, of “still point of the turning world” renown.

Chapter 10

Voodoo Child (Jimi Hendrix)

8 pages

Hendrix was deeply involved in occultism and mysticism, with those themes permeating his music. He believed in numerology, UFOs, Transcendental Meditation and reincarnation, among other paranormal things. He further claimed to have been born in outer space and sent to earth on a divine mission, insisting that he was visited by spirit guides and was able to travel on the astral plane. The original chorus for his “Purple Haze,” based on a drug-inspired dream he had in which Christ rescued him from being lost under the sea, was “Purple Haze, Jesus Saves.”

Chapter 11

The Doors of Perception (Jim Morrison)

6 pages

The Doors took their name from Aldous Huxley’s book on the supposed value of psychedelic drugs in “cleansing the doors of perception.” Their “electric shaman” (cf. “Shaman’s Blues”) lead singer, Jim Morrison, actually believed himself to be inhabited by the spirit of a Pueblo Indian he saw dying by the roadside when he was a boy, as related in the song “Peace Frog.” “End of the Night” quoted from William Blake as to the bliss and light of spiritual reverie; the

first part of “Horse Latitudes” was based on a Nostradamus prophecy. Jim Morrison was also known, via the use of an anagram of his name in “L.A. Woman,” as “Mr. Mojo Risin’”—a “mojo,” properly speaking, being a voodoo charm, not a libidinous reference. In 1970, the “Lizard King” underwent a Wiccan handfasting (marriage) ceremony with the rock magazine editor Patricia Kennealy.

Chapter 12

Astral Years (Van Morrison)

8 pages

This '60s Celtic-influenced star is remembered for “Brown-Eyed Girl” and his album *Astral Weeks*, but also evinced a wide-ranging spiritual curiosity, from Scientology to Jiddu Krishnamurti to Yogananda. (His 1983 album, *Inarticulate Speech of the Heart*, gave a “special thanks” to L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology’s founder.) “Into the Mystic,” from 1970’s *Moondance*, was “a celebration of mystical union.” The same album’s “And It Stoned Me” concerned a mystical experience had by Van at the age of twelve, in which “time stood still.” Years later, on 1978’s *Wavelength*, Morrison averred that there are “guides and spirits all along the way” in our lives. He has since done research into music as a vibrational “healing force,” hoping for his own songs to “induce states of meditation and [spiritual] ecstasy.” His 1986 album, *No Guru, No Method, No Teacher*, gave a response to questioners who had wondered whose disciple he was.

Chapter 13

Timothy Leary’s Dead (Moody Blues)

6 pages

Explicit mystical and psychedelic influences are obvious in the Moodys’ “search for the lost chord”—the “sacred syllable” of Om. “Legend of a Mind” references Timothy Leary and his purported jaunts on the astral plane via LSD. “The Best Way to Travel” similarly touts the virtues of supposed movement through the universe at the speed of thought, flying “high as a kite.” And, lead singer Justin Hayward, in his in-concert introduction to “The Other Side of Life” (the title song from their 1986 album), stated that the song concerns “a man [who] went out in search of enlightenment. And, he found himself.”

Chapter 14

Stairway to Heaven (Led Zeppelin)

24 pages

Occult symbolism is present in many of Zeppelin’s lyrics, via Jimmy Page’s interest in Aleister Crowley’s magickal teachings: “Ramble On,” “Black Dog,” “The Battle of Evermore,” “Kashmir” and numerous other songs have been claimed to incorporate the occultists’ philosophy. Crowley’s motto “Do What Thou Wilt” (with “So Mote Be It” on the reverse side) was pressed into the vinyl of Led Zeppelin III. The *Zoso* symbol chosen by Jimmy for the cover of the group’s fourth album was taken from a sixteenth-century Hermetic text. There, the “Z” is a

stylized representation of the Capricorn (Page's sign) astrological symbol, while the "oso" part represents "666." Robert Plant, for his own part, claimed to have received the lyrics for "Stairway to Heaven"—whose "piper," Pan, was equated with Lucifer by Crowley—via unconscious, automatic writing.

Chapter 15

Station to Station (David Bowie)

10 pages

Bowie was greatly influenced by Tibetan Buddhism early in his career, to the point of visiting the Scottish ashram of the tantric sage Chögyam Trungpa. His later readings included books by the Russian "crazy wisdom" guru-figure George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, and Theosophy's H. P. Blavatsky. By 1970, Bowie was deeply into Nietzsche; the albums *The Man Who Sold the World* and *Hunky Dory* contain many references to that nihilistic philosopher's work. Kabbalistic and Gnostic imagery can be found in a number of Bowie's later '70s songs, including "Station to Station" ("from Kether to Malkuth") and "Quicksand" (re: Crowley's "Golden Dawn"). Conversely, 1985's "Loving the Alien" was "a diatribe against organized religion."

Chapter 16

None More Black (Black Sabbath)

19 pages

Black Sabbath's lead singer, Ozzy Osbourne, was branded a devil-worshiper, stalked by covens, and threatened by Satanists—all before he had even tried to strangle his wife, been sued for allegedly encouraging the suicides of his fans, pissed on the Alamo, or gratuitously bitten the heads off an assortment of live, flying animals. The band's album covers featured inverted crosses; the eponymous tune "Black Sabbath" had its narrator being chased by a smirking Satan; and "N.I.B." was a romantic song ... about the devil falling in love. The band's original drummer firmly believes that they were guided in their music and lyrics by an invisible fifth member.

Chapter 17

Welcome to My Sunday School (Alice Cooper)

6 pages

Cooper's stage name was chosen in a Ouija-board session, where (according to PR legend) it was disclosed by the board that he was the reincarnation of a seventeenth-century witch of the same name. The one-time cross-dressing shock-rock star—who nevertheless guest-starred on *The Muppet Show* in 1978—is now a fifty-something Christian restaurateur with an honorary Ph.D. His onstage "executioner," James Randi, was formerly a professional magician, who appeared numerous times on Johnny Carson, denouncing Uri Geller's spoon-bending feats there. Randi is now a renowned debunker of all paranormal claims, being voted the #1 skeptic of the twentieth century by the readers of *Skeptical Inquirer*. Assisting him in that debunking is guitarist Wayne Kramer, formerly of MC5, on whom "Wayne's World" was based.

Chapter 18

The Crimson King (King Crimson)

4 pages

King Crimson's founder, Robert Fripp, was heavily influenced by Gurdjieff—to the point of splicing tapes of that sage's student, John G. Bennett, into his songs (e.g., in "Exposure") and quoting Gurdjieff in his interviews and written articles. Fripp studied during the '70s in a residency program at the Society for Continuous Education, founded by Bennett, and actually contributed a back-cover blurb to John G.'s autobiography. Earlier, he had involved himself with Wicca, receiving and utilizing a Ouija board from a practicing witch—which board he later threw into the ocean, reportedly blaming it for having roused a number of evil spirits which he felt were interfering with his touring.

Chapter 19

Dances with God (Jethro Tull)

10 pages

Tull's most well-known album, *Aqualung*, was an attack on organized Christianity. Elements of pagan mythology and mysticism turn up throughout their 1970s output, especially on the self-indulgent *A Passion Play*. *Songs from the Wood*, too, had its "Jack-in-the-Green"—an ode to the elemental spirits which are held to be responsible for springtime growth. The same spiritual interest shows through in the more recent solo work (e.g., *Divinities: Twelve Dances with God*) of their creative founder, flautist Ian Anderson.

Chapter 20

Topographic Shastras (Yes)

4 pages

Yes' 1972 record, *Close to the Edge*, was based on Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*—an allegorical novel which deals with the spiritual journey of an East Indian man during the time of the Buddha. Their follow-up double album, *Topographic Oceans*, was inspired by a footnote concerning the four-part Shastric scriptures, which lead singer and lyricist Jon Anderson read in Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*. The band's celebrated keyboardist, Rick Wakeman, has a "long-standing fascination with UFOs." Guitarist Steve Howe, for his own part, enjoys books on radionics—the claimed ability to diagnose and treat illness from a distance via the interaction of subtle energy fields.

Chapter 21

Tea for the Muslim (Cat Stevens)

6 pages

The folksinger Cat Stevens left popular music behind at the height of his success in the mid-'70s, and transformed into the Muslim Yusuf Islam. Contrary to how he was portrayed in media sound

bites in the late 1980s, however, Yusaf never actually endorsed the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie for the latter's blasphemous *Satanic Verses* novel. (That wrong portrayal led the 10,000 Maniacs to exclude their cover version of "Peace Train" from subsequent pressings of their *In My Tribe* album.) In November of 2004, he was given the "Man for Peace" award by a committee of Nobel peace laureates. He is currently working on a musical based on his spiritual journey.

Chapter 22

You Make Cult Lovin' Fun (Fleetwood Mac)

5 pages

Mac's original guitarist, Jeremy Spencer, left the band to join the nontraditional religious group Children of God, in the early '70s. (Spencer, still living with that "sacred prostitution" group today, was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1998 for his work with Fleetwood Mac.) The addition of Stevie Nicks left the band no less mystically inclined, as shown in her song "Rhiannon," named after the dead, haunting/possessing cousin of an *Exorcist*-era book's protagonist. As Nicks summarized her own spiritual beliefs: "I think there is definitely a God.... I really believe that God makes my music good and makes me able to deliver it and makes me able to not look or feel fifty."

Chapter 23

Atlas Drummed (Rush)

7 pages

Many of Rush's songs were shaped by drummer Neil Peart's immersion in the Objectivist philosophy of the cult leader Ayn Rand. Thus, "Free Will" states forcefully, in accord with Rand's libertarian position, and against the prospect of preordination or the following of "celestial voices": "I will choose free will." The title track of *2112*, where the rediscover of ancient music is crushed under a totalitarian priesthood but still retains hope that their temples will one day be torn down by a wiser civilization, is actually dedicated "to the genius of Ayn Rand." Equally consonant with that philosophy, "The Trees," from 1978's *Hemispheres*, sketches the "mediocracy" which results when the lowest common denominator of society gathers together and decrees that we shall all be made equal simply by suppressing any higher achievements, without tolerance for excellence. "Mystic Rhythms," on *Power Windows* (1985), asserts that there are more unseen and unexplained things in the supernatural world than we dare to dream about.

Chapter 24

Wayward Son (Kansas)

8 pages

Prior to guitarist Kerry Livgren's conversation to Christianity, Kansas' 1979 album *Monolith* was heavily influenced by the ostensibly channeled/materialized, eugenics-supporting *Urantia*

Book. In earlier years, Livgren had read, written and sung about the philosophies propounded by Alan Watts, Ram Dass, D. T. Suzuki, Herman Hesse, Sri Chinmoy, Mahatma Gandhi, Ramana Maharshi, Paramahansa Yogananda and Jiddu Krishnamurti. He was also deeply influenced by the claimed “Seth” channelings of Jane Roberts, Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching*, and the Taoist *I Ching*.

Chapter 25

Route 666 (Iron Maiden)

4 pages

As leaders of the New Wave of British Heavy Metal, the release of Iron Maiden’s 1982 album, *The Number of the Beast*, led to accusations of Satan-worship and backward masking from American Christian activists, and then to actual record-burnings. (The cover of televangelist Jimmy Swaggart’s *Music: The New Pornography* sports a large picture of Maiden’s bassist, Steve Harris.) Nineteen eighty-three’s *Piece of Mind* had the track “Revelations,” concerning the presence of the death-and-resurrection theme in religious systems from Egypt’s Osiris cult to Christianity. “Heaven Can Wait,” from 1986’s *Somewhere in Time*, was about near-death experiences. The band’s 1988 *Seventh Son of a Seventh Son* near-concept record told the story of a child who possessed clairvoyant powers. *No Prayer for the Dying*’s “Holy Smoke” was “a potent attack on TV evangelists.”

Chapter 26

Prince of Light (The Artist Formerly Known as Prince)

5 pages

The explicit references to masturbation in Prince’s “Darling Nikki” (from *Purple Rain* in 1984) provoked Tipper Gore to start the Parents’ Music Resource Center (PMRC) to fight against offensive lyrics. Surprisingly, then, the Artist’s 1985 *Around the World in a Day* made frequent mention of God and Jesus. He finally embraced the Jehovah’s Witnesses faith in the late ’90s, peppering his *Rainbow Children* album with both JW doctrine and hints of anti-Semitism.

Chapter 27

One String, Two String, Red String.... (Madonna)

5 pages

Madonna has endorsed Yogananda and tantric yoga, and sung praises to gurus in Sanskrit on her 15-million-selling late-’90s *Ray of Light* album. The video for her earlier “Like a Prayer” showed her dancing in front of burning crosses, to the outrage of various Catholic groups. More recently, she has participated in a Kabbalistic organization which emphasizes protection from the “Evil Eye” via bracelets made of red string. She has also introduced Britney Spears to the same group. The controversial “Isaac,” from her *Confessions on a Dancefloor*, concerns a sixteenth-century Jewish mystic, Yitzhak Luria.

Chapter 28

Cloudbusting (Kate Bush)

6 pages

Kate has been strongly influenced by Gurdjieff—her song “Them Heavy People” acknowledges the “wonderful teachers” who read “Gurdjieff and Jesu [*sic*]” to her. She has also found herself impressed with the avant-garde psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich, of “orgone” discovery fame, who served time in prison for creating a “rain machine”—the incident on which Kate’s acclaimed “Cloudbusting” video (featuring Donald Sutherland) is based. Known for her belief in “other powers,” Bush has commented sincerely to at least one interviewer that she may well have met him in a past life.

Chapter 29

In My Eyes (Peter Gabriel)

40 pages

During his sojourn with Genesis in the early '70s, the meditating Gabriel was almost single-handedly responsible for writing both the Revelation-influenced epic “Supper’s Ready” and the 1974 double album, *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*. (Peter took est and Silva Mind Control training in the 1970s, and had both of his daughters christened at the Lake Shrine temple of Yogananda’s Self-Realization Fellowship organization.) Also, we have PG’s use of the *I Ching* as a writing and decision-making tool; his Mozo (cf. Moses) pieces (including “On the Air” and “Red Rain”); and his masterful “Blood of Eden” and “In Your Eyes”—the latter being a love song intentionally written both for woman and for “divine union” with God, in spiritual enlightenment.

Chapter 30

Trip Like a Butterfly, Sting Like a Bee (Sting)

16 pages

Songs on the 1981 album *Ghost in the Machine* by the Police were based on the writings of Arthur Koestler (cf. “Spirits in the Material World”); material on *Synchronicity* was prominently inspired by C. G. Jung’s ideas. Sting, the band’s frontman and bassist, had a psychologically transformative “genuine religious experience” in 1987 with the Brazilian shamanic hallucinogen ayahuasca. Through his yoga practice, he claims to be able to make love with his wife for up to five hours at a stretch. Of his spiritual life, he has recently said: “In a sense I am more of a Hindu ... I like the Hindu religion more than anything else at the moment.... I would not consider myself a Christian any longer. My beliefs are much wider than that.”

Chapter 31

Afternoons and Satan Worship (Crash Test Dummies)

6 pages

CTD and their philosophy-degreed lead singer/songwriter/guitarist Brad Roberts were (wrongly) rumored to have forged a literal “deal with the devil,” which ostensibly produced their success in the '90s. Of their spiritually themed songs, “Overachiever” alludes to historically answered saintly prayers; “God Shuffled His Feet” depicts an audience asking questions of an uneasily mute God in heaven on the seventh day of creation; and “The Psychic” ponders the knowledge of past and future events supposedly possessed by clairvoyants.

Chapter 32

Charles Monroe (Marilyn Manson)

6 pages

Shock-rocker Marilyn Manson took his stage name from Charles Manson and Marilyn Monroe. Often referring to himself as “Antichrist Superstar,” the artwork for his album of the same name contains Kabbalistic symbols; in the songs, he compares his own life to Lucifer’s fall from heaven. Manson is also an honorary reverend in Anton LaVey’s First Church of Satan. His third album, *Mechanical Animals*, was boycotted by Wal-Mart, on grounds of purported “obscenity” in the androgynous cover art.

Chapter 33

Integral Pumpkins (Billy Corgan, etc.)

22 pages

The spiritual search of the former Smashing Pumpkins’ frontman, Billy Corgan, has led to his current belief in the validity of New Age philosopher Ken Wilber’s “integral” notions. Live’s vocalist Eddie Kowalczyk, and Serj Tankian, lead singer for System of a Down—voted the #1 band of 2002 by leading critics—fully endorse the same “four quadrant” philosophy. (Kowalczyk has further stated that Live’s 1999 *The Distance to Here* album is “the story of the guru-devotee relationship that I was enjoying at that time” of being an official student/devotee of the infamous guru Adi Da. The video for SOAD’s #1 hit, “Aerials,” features a child with telekinetic powers causing a car to bounce up and down. In the song itself, amid references to oneness, the void, and “the Fall,” Serj and his bandmates declare that being released from “small mind”—such mind being the antithesis of Zen’s “beginner’s mind”—will “free your life.”) So, too, has Neil Osbourne of 54*40 adopted Wilber’s philosophy, as seen in that band’s 2003 album *Goodbye Flatland*, which was explicitly “inspired by the writing of Ken Wilber.”