

HAVE TO SAY IT IN A SONG

TONY WARD

And good evening, ladies and gentlemen, as we welcome you again to another of our great album roundups. Yes, each week on this show you can hear the very best and the very latest in album music. Tonight we have a rather special show for you, as we round up the top ten albums for 1977, based on record sales across Australia. So without more from me, let's get into the number 10 album for 1977: Rod Stewart's "Footloose and Fancy Free", with the single "You're in My Heart"...

While Rod Stewart's singing out his affair with Britt Ekland, we'll begin. There once was a time, indeed still is for many 'lefties', when the starting point for any radical analysis of music or art was a class one. Is this bourgeois art or proletarian art? Is Rod Stewart, working class lad that he is, living in multi-million pound splendour, bourgeois or proletarian? How many references to Celtic and Manchester United would he need to make him proletarian?

Or take Pussyfoot's "The Way That You Do It". Completely unthinkable as a hit pop record fifteen years ago — the record companies would have crushed it. So have we had the revolution? Is Pussyfoot the vanguard of the next stage?

The questions aren't easy to answer — indeed they're rather boring questions. They show a classic misunderstanding of what rock music (and art in general) is about. Rock, of course, is strongly affected by politics — and shapes politics in its turn. But there's no way rock can be reduced solely to class politics.

So let's start with deciding what rock is. Not technically (loud noise and dramatic scenes) but how it works in our society. There's no point in arguing out whether rock is Art (with capital A). All art, rock included, is part of a society's culture at a particular time. Next time Beethoven sells a million LP's in Australia I might feel he's more important culturally than Abba. But our task is working out how Abba taps such a culture response in Australia — not wishing that people would somehow 'appreciate' Beethoven (or revolutionary operas, for that matter).

Culture is, above all, a lived thing — the way people order and structure their lives. The thousands of boats on Sydney harbour for the Hobart race are as much a part of Australian culture as rock music or Fosters Lager. And much more so than Beethoven.

There are, of course, many different styles of living and types of culture within Australia — from migrants, Aborigines, middle class 'suburbia' to the jet-setting, trendy styles in inner city areas. While there are many similarities between these, especially in the overall 'Australian' experience, the differences do reflect different ways people order and conduct their lives. These are not innate to individuals in any sense — we are all born and brought up in given cultures and living patterns. The interaction of these and the other diverse influences we come under during our lives are certainly very complex, giving rise to

individuals' characteristics. But concrete analysis of culture must start with the general social patterns, not with any supposed basic characteristic of individuals. In Marx's words: "social being determines social consciousness".

Rock plays a significant part in the 'youth culture', concentrating on the 15-30 age group. To speak of a monolithic 'youth culture' is clearly oversimplifying — there are many different divisions within these ages: class, sex and ethnic background being fundamental. But once again, there are similarities stretching across these divisions. Especially in the 1960's, rock music was one of the ways young people lived rebellion against the 'older generation'.

And so culture, the milieu that rock works in, is the first point. But then, seeking out why and how rock changes, there are other questions. Why do people produce rock? What with? Who controls it? We can only start to answer the questions, but posing them at least helps along the way.

There you are — Rod the Rocker doing it yet again. A fantastic album. Although it was only released in November — or was it late October — it ranks number 10 on this year's album listings. "You're in My Heart" made it to 23 on the singles charts, and Rod's previous album, "A Night on the Town", kept in there at number 14. A great year for the lad, and for Rod Stewart fans all over Australia. Well, it's onwards and upwards to the ninth biggest selling album in Australia: here's 10CC with "The Things We Do for Love" off their great album "Deceptive Bends"...

Music is obviously consumed by each of us — either actively (buying of records, concert tickets, etc.) or passively (simply listening to it). As will be argued later the music industry is eager to see as much active consumption as possible. Centring for the moment on the idea of consumption: what do we 'consume' in rock music?

First off, it is a mistake to concentrate too much on lyrics. The importance of lyrics do vary, of course, across a wide spectrum. But the primary impact of rock is sound, including lyrics as well as the music. Saying we 'like' a group or a record is in effect saying that music 'means' or 'says' something to us. This 'saying' is not primarily verbal.

Part of the culture we have all experienced in our socialisation has been music. This music varies between cultures — from negro blues or soul to southern country and western to Jamaican reggae. Within each culture the music plays particular roles and functions, of reflecting and organising social experience. In this way the music acts very much as a branch of ideology. Every society (and each class within the society) has a particular ideology, reflecting and organising the way people behave and live.

We have all been socialised into a particular ideology, the classic Western capitalism one stressing individuals above society, particular sex roles, and so on. Along with this we have been taught to 'like' special forms of music associated with the society and class we belong to.

Ideology is not totally static — and changes to it come in a variety of ways. They can come through conflict between the ideology and new scientific findings. They can come through conflict between social classes, rendering previous "we are all one society" ideas redundant. In general, since ideologies reflect and organise social practice, the ideology will change with changes in that social practice.

Similarly with music. Changes in our liking of music can come either through development of the music itself, or through more general changes in cultural/ideological patterns. Both of these have had important effects, with the late 1960's being a prime example. Here the 'revolt of the young', especially associated with Vietnam, the anti-middle class ethic and so on, found responsive echoes in music. The development of new musical instruments — amplifiers,

synthesizers — plus strong interest in other types of music — eastern, blues — fused into a general upsurge of experimentation and expansion of musical boundaries.

Rock music was a key element of the youth cult. "Blame it on the Stones" was a conservative catchcry. Interest in and liking of rock music then was an aspect of the especially cultural but also political rebellion. In general, the more rebellious, the more outspoken the people, the greater the interest in rock. The cultural angles spilt over into other areas as well — 'drugs' and eastern mysticism, for example.

Within rock music there are many different strands, reflecting its diverse origins. The more specific differences obviously come down to individual tastes — whether Fleetwood Mac or Eric Clapton 'says' more for you. But general trends and patterns can be outlined, and the implications of them drawn.

Returning once again to ideologies, the different social practices and different backgrounds of groups within one society means there will be different, and often conflicting ideologies. The cohesion of a society (which in the last instance means the continued rule of one class) is obviously compromised if ideological conflicts become widespread. Consequently one aspect of rule by any class is the presentation of its ideology as the general social ideology. If everyone, no matter what their social practice, lives that practice in bourgeois ideology, the possibilities of rebellion against bourgeois rule are sharply reduced. This insertion of dominant ideology throughout society, taking place through schools, the media and so on, is termed 'hegemony'.

There are also conflicts in the forms of culture and their representation in music. Once again the hegemonic culture wishes to dominate, to control the other cultures. As will be argued below, this background is a key to understanding the role of the music industry.

10CC groovers with the album you put into the number 9 slot, following up their previous success "How Dare You" in 1976. Number 8 this year is by one of the four male vocalists to make it into the top ten — the smooth rock of Brian Ferry with "In Your Mind". Here's the title track...

Rock music has to be produced as well as consumed. The production of music, as with the production of anything, is governed by three key agents: the means of production — the technical instruments and equipment; the direct producer — the labourer or artist; and the organisation and control of production. Each of these have been changing over recent years, often quite dramatically. These changes have had important effects on the types of music produced.

Let us start with the direct producer, the rock artist or artists. There are tonnes of rock artists, of varying degrees of success, ranging from the local pub band to 'superstars' who reach the top ten albums. The background of these people is obviously a key element in determining their development as musicians. A lot of this comes down to individual psychological make up — trying to generalise from Bob Dylan or Leonard Cohen is an exercise in futility.

But for most rock musicians, there are particular styles of music they are interested in, and particular ways they approach the music. Rock, rock 'n' roll, country, blues — and so on — are all styles or types of music requiring different interests and playing abilities by the musicians concerned. In the initial stages of these styles, they normally reflected a particular region or class, and the leading exponents were from that milieu. Blues singers were rural negroes, country singers from white southern U.S.A., and so on.

The distinctions obviously become blurred over time — the development of 'white blues' in Britain, for example, and people not sharing a particular milieu

can develop music that came from those roots. But once an artist or group has developed a particular style or way of playing the possibility of changing to other styles is very limited — the best example being 'supergroup' rock bands trying to come to terms with reggae.

In most cases then, rock artists have developed through and within particular styles — it is, in fact, a mark of 'greatness' (though not necessarily commercial success) to break through into new styles and develop new techniques.

For many rock musicians, of course, the key point of rock is not to 'produce' a great work of art or even a major commercial success — it is purely to survive economically. The pub bands, through both interest in music and need for money, develop styles that 'suit' the clientele — or are picked for that purpose.

Summarising the roles of rock musicians then, we have seen that, while individual attributes do have some importance, especially at the 'star' level, most artists are in fact much more combination of the influences they have come under and the tasks they are expected to perform. The music situation determines the artists much more than the other way around.

Of course, Brian Ferry had successes all over the place this year. "Let's Stick Together", the earlier album, ranked 37 and the single "This is Tomorrow Calling" crept into the top singles sales at number 29. Thought it'd do better than that myself. Well have more on the singles chart coming up on the programme, but for now here's the British group Supertramp. Their earlier albums making it big here were "Crime of the Century" (and how many times have you seen that filmclip?) and "Crisis — What Crisis?" Once again this year, Supertramp with "Even in the Quietest Moments" at number 7 on the album charts...

The first part of the means of production of rock music is the final commodity — the records. Great changes have occurred in record production over the last twenty-five years, reflecting wider social development of technology.

Around 1950 a large proportion of records bought each year in Australia were imported, especially from Britain. Records then were predominantly 78's, recorded in mono to be played on antique equipment (to our eyes). By the mid-fifties, eight million records a year were being produced in Australia, half of them 78's and mostly pressings taken from imported master discs. With development of new techniques, however, 78 production declined rapidly, replaced by 45 singles and 33 long players. In 1960-61 there were seven million records in total: four million singles or extended players (nearly all 45's); and three million 33 LP's.

During the 1960's record production increased phenomenally, growing to twenty million in 1969-70. The composition changed again, with a strong trend towards LP's: 11.5 million LP's to 8.5 million 45's. Now two-thirds of Australian-produced records were in stereo — a proportion that increased to 93 percent in 1976-77.

Imported records again became important after the dropping of tariffs in 1968, and by 1975-76 there were four million LP imports and one million singles. These supplemented the domestic production of 22 and 6.5 million respectively, giving a total supply on the market of 33.5 million records.

Pre-recorded cassettes became popular in the 1970's, with local production rapidly climbing from two million in 1972-73. Ten million were produced in 1976-77, and another one million were imported in that year.

In 1975 the total Australian record market was worth \$US151 million in retail sales — the sixth largest Western market. Each Australian on average spent \$11.15 on records and tapes in 1975, a figure second only to Sweden's average of \$15.47 and just ahead of the States with \$10.97 and England at \$10.56.

The figures show a large and growing market for records across the inter-war years, and important changes in the types of records from 78's through 45's to LP's and now cassettes. These changes incorporate changing technologies, musical tastes and the levels of incomes.

Playback equipment too has changed. Valve radios and gramophones have given way to transistorised stereo equipment. Speakers have become more sophisticated and powerful, along with changing amps. The sheer size of the market has grown as well. In 1960-61 49,000 radiograms were produced in Australia (17,000 being only single play) and 24,000 record players (20,000 single play). The figures for 1973-74 were 142,000 radiograms and 111,000 record players, the vast bulk now being automatic multiple players.

The wider spread and improved technology of both records and playback equipment has brought recorded music into a new importance in social and cultural patterns. There has possibly been a decline of individuals making music themselves, although the massive sales of guitars would tend to reject this idea. Certainly the breadth and technical quality of music available to the average person has increased considerably in recent years.

Supertramp there and their distinctive brand of English rock with the synthesisers pounding away. Great stuff. Moving on up the charts we get to the high-flying Australian group of the year. Back from the U.S. tour and the very successful Rockarena concerts, Little River Band were the only Australian group to make the top ten, either in albums or singles. "Diamantina Cocktail" ended the year's sixth best selling album, with, at number 18 on the singles chart, "Help Is On The Way"...

As the development of technology, especially in the electronics area, has created new products and possibilities for domestic music, so it has also had effects in the machines used to create music.

The standards of construction for basic instruments such as guitars and drums have grown through these years. The development of new equipment has perhaps been more significant. Electric guitars are now almost universal even in pub bands. Amplifiers are widely available and synthesisers and electric organs are having a major impact on music. Groups such as Yes, Pink Floyd and the Alan Parsons Project are only beginning to open up the possibilities of electronic music.

These changes have also allowed more sophisticated and flexible performing and recording of music. From mono to quad, from four-track to sixteen-track recording, the changes are legion. The technical differences are obvious between early 1960's live performances and those of today.

These developments in equipment have not all been picked up by musicians, of course, and it is easy to see why. Performers long used to guitars as the centre of their act find it understandably hard to integrate synthesisers, electric organs and the rest. Some, especially older country or blues performers, find even electric guitars too much. Above all, these points show the difficulty of combining new technology with the accepted mores and customs music artists live in.

Another aspect of the greater sophistication and sensitivity of performing and recording equipment is, of course, cost. Pub bands face bills of up to \$5,000 each for 'required' equipment – and the hire purchase repayments can be deadly. At the superstar level, we are now used to jumbo jets being chartered to bring out supergroups and their tonnes of amplifiers, speakers and the rest.

In recording equipment too there are now high costs. In the United States, the average LP recording session costs around \$35,000 to create a master.

In Australia, presumably because of the delay in installing the most modern equipment, the costs starts at \$5,000, with most rock recordings \$10,000-\$20,000 for an LP.

In sheer economic terms these investments are risky. To recover \$10,000 in initial outlay, a record company in Australia has to sell 8,000-10,000 copies of the record. Of the 112 Australian LP's produced in 1975, only 20 (18 percent) sold more than 10,000 copies. The majority, 79, sold less than 5,000 copies. While this success (or failure) rate is not unusual, the small size of the Australian market makes even marginally 'good' records uneconomic.

While on costs, the average costs of an LP are interesting. For an imported master tape (which is much cheaper than Australian productions) the breakdown is as follows. Out of a \$7 selling price at the end of 1976: \$1 went in the raw materials of the record and cover; \$1 paid copyright and royalties fees; \$1 went in sales tax; \$2 covered selling and distribution costs and the record company's profit; and the final \$2 was the retail mark-up.

Well, just hang on there, 'cause help is on the way and LRB will be there just as fast as they can. C'mon then, how about some more support for the Australian artists? Marcia Hines did well last year, with albums "Shining" at 23 and "Ladies and Gentlemen" at 40. Sherbet had two as well, 29 and 48, but we need more up there with the good sales. On singles, Ferrets at 16 and LRB at 18 were the only two acts in the top twenty. C'mon Australia! Oh well, back to the imported talent and the smooth sounds of Leo Sayer. The album's "Endless Flight", the track "When I Need You"...

The final part of production, which has major effects on the types of music produced, is the ownership and control of production. The music recording industry in Australia is dominated by seven large companies (six of them foreign-owned), covering some 80 percent of the market. Of these companies, five operate record manufacturing plants, with two of these five having their own recording studios.

There are a number of small companies, normally specialising in Australian productions but the market is well and truly dominated by the big seven. To some extent this is a question of costs and economies of scale — the rapid expansion of Australian record production requiring major plant sizes. The initial capital costs of records, as detailed above, are another important factor.

But the key task of the record companies in Australia is to produce records here from master tapes recorded overseas. The six foreign-owned companies are therefore off-shoots of overseas companies: Australian Record Company (CBS); E.M.I.; Philips; Phonogram; RCA; and WEA (Warners). Their major function is promotion and distribution of the overseas records — both of which involve capital.

Charlie Gillett in The Sound of the City describes the late 1960's in the States:

As the turnover of records increased, with records coming up the best-selling lists faster and going out sooner, emphasis was put increasingly on speed of distribution, which entailed large resources that were rarely available to an independent firm. So the trend of the last few years of the sixties was for amalgamation, consolidation — or collapse (p. 341).

The costs of distribution and promotion have continued to climb. In Australia, spending \$5,000 on promotion is not unusual, and exposure of a best-selling artist may cost much more. Once again, the requirements of effective record manufacture demand heavy amounts of capital. For one last example, the use of TV advertising and film clips to promote records (rather than live performances) — both of which seem to be increasing — reinforce the need for capital.

With such large and growing investments the aim of the record companies is clearly to make good profits. In most cases they are very successful. In 1975 (not a good year for business generally) the big seven had profits on funds invested up to 150 percent. Smaller companies, faced with stiff competition and resources they cannot challenge, made much smaller returns and some losses.

Profitability obviously depends on organising resources skillfully to meet the needs of the market. Especially in the rock industry, with fast turnover of records and yesterday's star today's flop, sensitivity to the needs of the market is a vital part of successful management. Of course, through promotion, record companies do influence the tastes and attitudes of people buying records.

Leo Sayer with the fifteenth best-selling single of the year, from the fifth best-selling album. You know, it's a strange thing but album sales just didn't go with single sales in 1977. Abba's domination of both in '76 slipped well down – none of the artists in the top ten albums had singles in the top ten. Of the ten album acts we're hearing tonight, seven had singles in the top fifty – but of the top ten singles acts, only four had successful albums. Seems like the teeny-boppers quite like big brother and sister's music but there's no way big brother and sister are buying albums from the younger set's taste. On this, Eagles surprised a bit this year by not getting a single into the charts. Here they are with the title track from the number 4 album "Welcome to the Hotel California"...

What effects has this control of music production on rock music? The constant need for sales of new records to boost turnover is the driving force behind fast turnover and massive promotion.

As outlined above, music carries a particular, if diffuse, ideological message in it. In the simplest terms, those people buying the record indicate they 'like' that message. They like the sound, the group or something to do with the commodity. Once again, we can't go into all the personal and psychological reasons for appreciating particular musics – as many and as complex as the factors leading artists to produce it.

The overall trends do however come over clearly. Obviously, if a record company can tap the dominant ideology, present what people in general 'want to hear', then their record sales will boom, increasing profits. Again, we must stress that what people 'want to hear' is not a simple addition of large numbers of independent tastes. It is a reflection of the dominant musical ideology of the time.

This ideology is not static, and in fact the record companies have a large role through promotion in reinforcing aspects of it, and developing it. From these ideas, and the need to sell records, the companies put emphases on producing records that they feel will fit in with the dominant musical ideology. In other words, the companies emphasise their own interpretation of that ideology.

Through this pattern, the record companies exercise a strong conservative influence on the development of rock. The drive for commodity profits takes place in given attitudes within the companies. As will be seen in the outline of rock history, these attitudes are often antagonistic to 'radical' music, either musically or politically. The music expected to make the most profits then is above all 'safe' music.

The ideology of the record companies has, of course, been changing over time. The strongly McCarthy-influenced music establishment (with equally strong racist overtones) took a long time to accept rock 'n' roll as a musical form – or even a source of profits.

Australia is distanced from the centres of rock development and the social/political patterns that gave them rise. The conservatism of the record

industry thus was more entrenched and lasted longer unchallenged. The youth rebellions in Australia were lived in rock as well – but later, and to a less marked extent, than in America and England.

The 'safe' music in any situation, the music that the record companies will expect to make their profits (and hence promote them) is obviously a function of the general times. What was 'safe' in 1960 was far different from what was 'safe' in 1968 (was there any 'safe' rock in 1968?) or 1977.

Further, 'safe' in the States is far different from 'safe' in Australia. The growing experiences and traumas of rock possibly gave a diversity in the States leading to the rejection of slick-packaging techniques like Abba. Australia, on the other hand, with less rock diversity and a different social milieu, took Abba by storm.

That point raises an important issue, the genuine and widespread popularity of Abba in Australia. Technically, the group is certainly very slick, well-produced and promoted. It is also the epitome of 'safe' music – but in the terms we have been looking at here it clearly taps a major ideological current in Australian society. This necessitates a careful analysis of the situation – an open problem, not condemnation of the group as 'boring' or 'repetitive'.

Eagles, doing very well for themselves booking in at the Hotel California. Another act which didn't have single success but did incredibly well in the albums races was Fleetwood Mac. With their sellout tour here in November the supergroup kept up the old interest and had albums "Fleetwood Mac" at number 13 and "Rumours" at 3. "Rumours" is now the biggest selling album of all time, with forty weeks at the top of the American album listings. Forty weeks! Here's "Dreams" off "Rumours"...

Our survey so far has covered the way rock is part of culture, and then turned to the various elements of the production of rock: the artist, the means and the ownership. It's time to draw these threads out in a brief overview of the way rock developed. Throughout, the emphasis is on the States – with Australia following some way behind.

Rock 'n' roll started as an explosion of black rhythm and blues into white urban middle class culture. The conditions for this and the reasons for its rapid rise to popularity are complex. The artistic sterility of the McCarthy years and the rebel qua James Dean can certainly be suggested.

Rock 'n' roll was originally bypassed by the established recording companies and banned by 'popular' radio stations. They considered it beyond the pale of 'decent music'. Devotees had to search for independent record labels and listen to far-off radio stations. The growing popularity soon attracted commercial interest, but rock 'n' roll had to be toned down. Elvis Presley's hip gyrations and 'black sexuality' were blotted out.

These were but the first restrictions. Elvis's career saw the general pattern. The record companies did start signing especially the white rock 'n' roll stars but very soon removed the wilder side of life. The control reduced rock 'n' roll by 1960 into material like high school rock and slow ballads again. And pressured the Stones into an early TV programme singing "Let's Spend Some Time Together".

Most of this initial impetus was limited to the States, but the next explosion was certainly worldwide. The Beatles, building on rock 'n' roll, opened the door wide to new forms of music. Once again the major record companies were behind the times. In 1964, the first year of the British rock craze in the States, thirty-two British singles made the top ten, with only twenty released by major distributors, well down on their normal percentage.

If the Beatles' revolt came primarily through music, it required certain cultural and social patterns to really bring it to fruition. 'Exciting' and 'new' music is not successful unless it fills some cultural/musical gap. Whatever, the next two influences on rock were well-rooted in social patterns.

The first was the pressure of folk and folk/rock music especially associated with Bob Dylan. Stemming from civil rights and protest groups of the early 1960's, the music matured with massive hits "Just Like A Woman", "Rolling Stone" and "Mr. Tambourine Man". As the anti-war movement grew, so the folk influence was reinforced and recreated.

The second, later in the 1960's, was the 'acid rock' from the western U.S. Linked in with the effects of drugs, the Doors and Jefferson Airplane were the vanguard of not only experimental music but alternative cultures and values associated with it.

Such were the key features of the musical explosion of the 1960's. The social and political situation, plus the development of new techniques (stereo, LP's) opened the door wide to a massive amount of creative work in music. Many different styles and ideas were tried from blues and sitars to electronic experimentation. The record companies were rapidly changing as well to keep up with the profits - CBS paid albino rock star Johnny Winter \$300,000 in 1969 when Victor had paid Presley only \$30,000 in 1956. The money reflected the very real changes that rock was going through.

Yes indeedy, thunder does only happen when its raining. Hope it's not raining out your way this evening as we spin on to the top two albums of the year. Anyone running any sweepstakes on number 1? Think a few people might have lost on "Rumours", eh? And one or two more on the number 2 act - it's Electric Light Orchestra with "A New World Record"...

From 1969 the whirly-gig started to slow down. Rock was still massively big business but the social and political climate was changing and the conservative company establishment reinforced the chilly winds.

Trends do have some independence of the forces that created them, so the Doors and Jefferson Airplane continued their popularity. But a new trend was emerging, with first Simon and Garfunkle and then Neil Diamond marking steps into the 1970's. The older stars, Hendrix, the Beatles, Dylan, Janis Joplin, were leaving the scene in various ways and the intense creativity of the mid-1960's was declining rapidly.

Certainly there were some new developments - Led Zeppelin, for example, the Crosby Stills and Nash combination another. But other trends, that had been present throughout the 1960's, re-emerged. The companies backed the anti-drug campaigns (which can be seen as one aspect of the conservative swing). They also started the massively successful expansion into the young teenage market.

Albums were now the lifeblood of rock, in Australia as around the world. But the singles promotions of David Cassidy and then Donny Osmond were classics of their time. The single "Puppy Love", surely one of the biggest singles of all time, played the 'safe' exploitation of the teeny-bopper market perfectly. Picking up adolescent dreams of maturity and seriousness, with technical wizardry and basic music, it sold millions.

Similar forces were at work in albums as well. Neil Diamond, with again a very competent technically workout of basic music forms was the new dominant figure. The idea of concept albums pioneered in the late 1960's was drifting back towards albums as collections of singles.

Experimentation did, of course, continue - Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon" leading the way commercially. The mainstream of rock was a more restrained

'safe' style, dominated by the major record companies. As noted above, their control of the market was now reinforced by the economic developments of recording technology and distribution importance.

And in many ways that remains the picture through to today. The 'soft rock' of groups like Fleetwood Mac (leaving Abba aside!) reflects both further development of technical skills in the recording industry and the rather limited styles of music involved at present. Alongside this, promotion and distribution continue to grow in importance.

Things are again on the move, if it may take some time for the hegemony to be broken. Perhaps the two key forces are both associated with clear social groups. The new wave in Britain, headed by Johnny Rotten and the Sex Pistols, draws heavily on unemployed teenage anger. Its music lives the rebellion in refusing to use the technical niceties — and again the record companies are less than impressed.

The second force, more to the left of the punk's links with the National Front in Britain, is Jamaican reggae. Headed by Bob Marley and the Wailers, reggae builds on the same social ills that Johnny Rotten gives life to. Coming through a different culture, its music is technically more interesting, and has already interested leading rock stars: the Stones and Rod Stewart among them. In Australia its records have received little or no promotion from the record companies.

ELO rocking it out there with "Livin' Thing" off the number 2 album of the year. "Livin' Thing" made it to 27 on the singles charts. And now, folks, the number 1 album of the year. Julie Covington took off number 1 single with "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina" and the soft rock sound won the albums top spot as well. Here we go then with 300,000 sales, Boz Scaggs — the "Silk Degrees" album and "What Can I Say?"...

With Boz Scaggs rounding up 1977's album successes we should round off the analysis as well. Rock music, we have seen, is a part of the culture of our society and its appreciation (as well as the different parts of it) is a function of the cultural patterns we all take part in. Culture, like ideology, changes across time and we have looked at some of the forces acting upon it.

The other side of rock, the production side, has also been outlined. The general development of rock music took place against improving technical equipment, both for performing and recording/reproducing rock. The rapidly expanding record market in Australia extended the influence of music across the country.

These situations were closely linked with the control of the music industry, a control that has been growing as the economics of rock develop towards more expensive equipment and distribution patterns. This control is not only economic — it acts as a conservative influence generally on rock development, reinforcing the dominant social relations of production and the dominant ideology.

And perhaps the discussion can conclude with political implications of the analysis. There is no way the bourgeois/proletarian music distinction can (or should) be resurrected. As we have seen, the whole phenomenon of rock is a very complex and varied one, with many forces acting upon it. Indeed, the article has probably summarised and generalised this diversity too much.

But as a part of culture, rock does reflect class outlooks and interests. The domination of the record companies does indeed have specific and conservative effects on the development of rock. Control of the music industry thus is an important issue, as it is in the rest of society.

Further, the analysis has insisted that culture and ideology have a degree of independence of economic and political struggles. In attempting to understand this relative independence, and the effects that rock has on general social patterns, we can hope to reach a fuller (and politically more useful) analysis of the forces that make our society what it is.

So there you are — take up your winnings of the sweep stake and take 'em down to the record shop and let's get going into the 1978 chart toppers. This year let's see some more Australian stuff and what about some new acts? Most of these artists have been around since I was buying singles and that's light years away.

1977 closes down and we are doing likewise — see you same time, same place on your dial next week for the albums you're buying across Australia.

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