

The “Resort” Studio:  
An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Residential  
Recording Studio

by

Gabrielle Kielich

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Carleton University  
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## **Abstract**

Residential recording studios began to emerge in the 1960s. They were located in remote areas, featured onsite living accommodations, state-of-the-art technology, and recreational amenities. The “resort” studio conceptualizes the function and use of these studios as alternative workspaces. In this thesis, three case studies illuminate their development, ownership, and operation, and their intersection of work and living spaces in isolation. Resort studios were marked by diversity, but featured consistent design and working conditions. By combining the workplace and living space in relaxed atmospheres, resort studios blurred the distinction between work and leisure. However, their isolation from distractions created a concentrated creative work environment. The resort studio highlights music production as a social process beyond an industrial context, and draws attention to the confusion around musicians’ work as play. This thesis situates the resort studio within the continuum of studio configurations to contribute to a more complete version of studio history.

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## Introduction

At its most fundamental, this thesis was inspired by a long-time curiosity about the way musicians work, and where and with whom they do so. In the interest of clarifying what I mean by *work*, I am referring to how musicians work together in the process of cultural production, with whom they depend on and interact to make that possible, and how the environments and technologies they engage with affect that process. I understand work and cultural production as *social* and collaborative processes and experiences, and examine them through the writings of scholars such as Howard Becker (1982) and Keith Negus (2006) rather than through an industrial perspective, though I account for and recognize the important role of industrial forces. I also want to emphasize the significance of the *workplace* in the act of cultural production for its role in shaping and constraining the way work is enacted. Therefore, I want to understand musicians as creative people who participate in and depend on the “art world” of human networks, environments, and technologies to create. Within that art world, I am most interested in the *conditions* of musicians’ work. The work environment of the recording studio particularly sparked this curiosity given the processual and collaborative nature of studio work, the technologies that shape and are shaped by it, and the dynamic division of labour that gives it life alongside its characteristically mysterious identity.

In this thesis, I examine the residential recording studio specifically from this perspective. Residential recording studios emerged in the early 1960s and were established as popular alternatives and legitimate studio business models during the 1970s and 1980s (Leyshon 2009). They were the sites of significant contributions to popular music during this time and beyond, and continue to be built and operate despite a

smaller profile. Residential studios were distinct for their geographic locations in remote, rural, and exotic settings. They were known, first and foremost, for the recording studio itself, with studio owners maintaining state-of-the-art equipment and regularly upgrading to stay technologically relevant and competitive. Given their locations, residential studios — hence the name — were equipped with onsite living accommodations to house visiting musicians, their crews, and sometimes their families, for the duration of the recording session, which ranged between three weeks to three months. These accommodations included, in general, fully catered meals prepared by an in-house chef, a communal kitchen and living room, and domestic recreational facilities such as swimming pools and game rooms, among others. These remote locations placed musicians within the countryside or in close proximity to area attractions, ranging from ski resorts to Caribbean beaches — though, as privately owned and operated properties, they were quite distinct from nearby tourism and were not vacation sites. The cost of these facilities was approximately \$16,000 per week, though the specific rate varied with each studio.<sup>1</sup> In exploring residential recording studios, their attributes and use by musicians and staff raise interesting and significant questions about studio history and the role of studios in musicians' working lives and creative process. In addition, these studios make obvious the current state of literature on the recording studio as yet incomplete.

The idea of a group of musicians and their crew working and living together in a remote, private, and all-inclusive isolated space for weeks or months at a time is a

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<sup>1</sup> Rather than the more common daily or hourly rates, resort studios' rates were usually on an all-inclusive weekly basis, in accordance with the blocks of time these studios were booked. As example, *Billboard* reported a sharp increase in studio rates in 1977, when they ranged between \$125– \$200 per hour with sessions totalling 200–250 hours (McCullough 1977d: 90), which did not include additional costs for living arrangements. In this way, the figure could be misleading for the way it may suggest a disproportionate or inflated cost for resort studios. It does, however, draw attention to the rates studios could and did charge at the time, a point that was often mentioned in interviews (Perry 2014, Blagona 2014, Ward 2015). The figure refers to the amounts indicated in dollars at the time and has not been converted to today's equivalent.

complex one. The number of musicians that chose to “get away from it all” in the 1970s and 1980s, and the number of studios that opened to service this choice elevates this interesting idea to a phenomenon to be explored. In view of basic concepts of supply and demand, the sheer number of residential studios that existed clearly meant that musicians wanted to work this way. But what was the appeal? And why at that specific time? Opting to temporarily relocate to a remote area to record an album suggests there must have been reasons to leave the city, where studios were usually found, and that there was something particularly effective about doing so. As well, the ability to work this way indicates the presence of broader contributing factors. The use of residential studios also seems to suggest something about the creative process and the elements that facilitate music production. Was there something about these spaces that created suitable conditions? Moreover, working and living together 24 hours a day in the same space raises complicated ideas of both the workplace and the home, and confuses working hours with free time. Why did studio owners design them this way? How did musicians actually use the space? And what factors does this arrangement point to?

This thought process set the framework for my investigation. Through the historical lens of three prominent residential studios — Rockfield Studios, Le Studio, and AIR Studios Montserrat, this thesis aims to answer, to some degree, these questions. Through the following chapters, I explore two major areas: the residential studios’ development, ownership, and operation, and the manner in which these sites functioned as both workplaces and living spaces in isolation. I argue that residential studios were alternative creative work environments marked by diversity in ownership, operation, and circumstances of success whose use blurred the distinction between work and leisure but

created conditions that emphasized fostering work in the recording studio. I will demonstrate, on one hand, how the geographic, social, and physical isolation of residential studios, including the working, living, and recreational accommodations, created conditions conducive to work. In addition, I will highlight how the design and use of these studios created ambiguities between the activities and spaces associated with work and leisure while also reinforcing them. These factors will highlight the social action or art world involved in music production, illuminating this process as one that extends beyond an industrial context. It will also show how the nature of musicians' working practices creates difficulties in characterizing their labour. The research will establish that residential studios are part of the longer history of the recording studio as a cottage industry for their independent operation distinct from forces in the music industry (Théberge 2012: 79). This discussion also serves to situate the residential studio within studio history and in the continuum of studio configurations, and will emphasize the recording studio as part of the global network of music production (Théberge 2004, 2012).

I am interested in highlighting how studio owners created conditions that were suitable to musicians' working process. And as such, how musicians worked within those conditions. Part of this develops from understanding the particular backgrounds and philosophies of studio owners themselves, and assessing why and how different people conceptualized similar models. Most specifically, in their design and construction of these conditions, residential studios brought together the unique intersection of work and leisure, and through their use presented a set of consistencies and paradoxes. My research will demonstrate how the conditions of these studios created complex divisions and

overlaps in these two structured and mutually dependent organizations of time and space. The particular way residential studios did so tells something about the complex character of musicians' work.

In framing my examination of the residential studio to situate it in the broader history of the recording studio, I am paying particular attention to how it intertwines with existent studio literature, and, therefore, how it expands and problematizes common arguments and themes. I am also intentionally participating in the discourse on the residential studio, with the purpose of providing theoretical service and critical observation, by re-conceptualizing it as the "resort" studio, which I outline in Chapter 1. The basis for this approach is rooted in the many labels given to the residential studio by the trade press and studio owners throughout its history. While the operational term was "residential," the most common alternatives were "environmental," "vacation," "hideaway," and "countryside." These names draw either on salient features of the studio configuration or refer to the quality of its remote geography, and their significance will become clear throughout the following chapters.

The lifespan of the residential studio began in 1963 and continues today. Given this history, my research is narrowly focused on the period of 1974 to 1989. This timeframe was selected for how it includes André Perry's founding and sale of Le Studio, begins following the first decade of Rockfield's existence, and ends with the demise of AIR Studios Montserrat. For this reason, I write in the past tense. However, while the majority of content presented is based on evidence from these years, I delve earlier and later as needed, in the same way that I discuss other residential studios contextually. Though oriented to the conditions that shaped musicians' work experience, this thesis is

written based largely on information gathered from studio owners, engineers, and managers and, in this way, is told from their perspective, along with support from the music industry trade press (see Appendix A).

I present the synthesis of my findings in the following chapters. Chapter 1 is a combination of theoretical framework, literature review, and historical background. I provide an overview of the salient themes that permeate my thesis, collected from both my research on the residential studio and those prominent in the existent literature on the recording studio. These themes comprise part of the theoretical basis of my discussion. I outline the brief set of academic literature on the residential studio, and point to how this body of work interacts with the goals of my project. As a way to situate the residential studio in a longer lineage, I highlight how the recording studio functions on a continuum. A brief outline of the technological, social, musical, and industrial conditions that intersected to lead to the emergence of the residential studio sets the background for the case studies and analysis in the chapters that follow. Chapter 1 concludes with an outline of my concept of the “resort” studio, the other part of my theoretical basis, from which point I use the term almost exclusively save for context.

Chapter 2 consists of the case studies of Rockfield Studios, Le Studio, and AIR Studios Montserrat. The parameter of each case study is based on its distinguishing factors, including details of each studio’s geographic location, founding, the background of the owners, and the manner in which each survived — or did not. The particular emphasis on these elements demonstrates the broader trend toward studio work outside of cities, the studio owners’ construction of suitable working conditions based on their own career experiences, and how their histories were intertwined with and affected the

studio's identity and lifespan. In this way, understanding the relationship of the studio owner with the studio's broader functioning draws insight into the role of the art world in music production. As well, these case studies highlight different conceptualizations and the influence of reputation and branding on the residential studio. This chapter also discusses the impression of the residential studio based on its relationship to tourism and vacationing. As important sites of popular music production these case studies are part historical documentation, but are included to demonstrate different occurrences of the residential studio phenomenon and thereby solidify this studio configuration as a significant aspect of recording studio history.

Chapter 3 moves from the history and lifespan of residential studios to the dynamics of their function and use. I explore the intersection of the workplace with living accommodations and identify this attribute as the distinguishing feature of these studios. This chapter also highlights the various layers of isolation that characterized the residential studio and shows how it extends existent notions of this theme. I address how the residential studios' conditions contributed to a blurring of work and leisure time and activity, but ultimately worked in cohesion to render the residential studio a concentrated creative work environment. The Conclusion covers a summary of my findings, connects themes from the residential studio to the longer history of the recording studio, and suggests additional interdisciplinary research and contributions.

## **Chapter 1**

### **History and Theoretical Framework**

Given the developing body of literature on the recording studio more generally, and the small assortment of work on the residential recording studio more specifically, this history and analysis works in a particular frame. This thesis aims, on one hand, to contribute to a more complete history of the recording studio and, on the other, to present an understanding of how the residential studio fits into that history. My theoretical framework is therefore structured in two ways: with selections from the existent literature on the recording studio, and the themes that emerge both from this body of work and from my research on the residential studio. I engage with the existent literature to support my case but also as a way to show how the residential studio presents problems, limitations, and extensions.

In examining the residential studio within the broader history of the recording studio, I explore themes of the studio as an urban phenomenon and the relationship of the studio with isolation. As I will discuss, these two themes have been and continue to be particularly prominent in the recording studio's discourse and history. They are especially relevant to residential studios because of their geographic locations and this role in the studio setting. From the research findings on the residential studio, the theme of leisure emerges for its relation to the environment and creative work that took place. Finally, I include the theme of the art world based on my findings of the residential studio as a workplace strongly organized by collective human interaction. It is this finding that forms the basis for the sociocultural approach to this study. The residential studio operated within the industrial process of the music industry, and an exclusively industrial view

would yield useful, pertinent information. However, the research shows a much more dynamic system around the residential studio, one with a clear emphasis on the social aspect of music production.

## **Themes**

### ***The Studio as Urban***

Recording studios have a strong association with urban environments. Studios such as the Hit Factory in New York City, Capitol Studios in Los Angeles, and Abbey Road in London confirm this reality. The urban location of studios was related, initially, to the relationship studios had with affiliated record companies, and were thereby logically situated in the same building or area (see Théberge 2003, Millard 2005). The correlation of the studio with urban life has been further developed by the presence of particular studios in the music scenes of major cities: independent and “makeshift” studios such as Stax in Memphis, J&M in New Orleans, and Sigma Sound in Philadelphia (see Cogan and Clark 2003). Allan Watson (2015: 93) understands the studio’s urban location as an extension of the recorded music industry: because this sector is, in general, housed in urban settings, recording studios, as important parts of the musical economy, are also likely to be in cities.<sup>2</sup> The studio therefore serves as a convenient workplace for the way it situates musicians to the larger group of people involved in music production through the city environment. Chris Gibson (2005: 200)<sup>3</sup> argues that major cities provide musicians with both socio-economic and creative opportunities due to their ability to

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<sup>2</sup> Watson states in his book that he is primarily focused on the recording studio in the digital age. I raise this point here to avoid contextual issues given that this thesis addresses the studio predominantly during the 1970s and 1980s. Despite his orientation, Watson’s book contains content, themes, and issues that transcend particular studio configurations and therefore applies to the longer history of the studio.

<sup>3</sup> Gibson’s work is specifically oriented toward urban studios and the relationship between the city and creativity. I acknowledge and understand that this is the focus that drives his research and that he is not necessarily concerned with other types of studios and environments, though he does refer briefly to the residential studio. However, I see his work as exemplary of the association of the studio with urban settings.

foster contact with audiences and other musicians. Watson (2015: 93) agrees with this view, identifying the large inflow of people through cities as a continuous revitalization of the “creative bloodstream.” In addition to the movement of people, the city often provides the physical spaces (e.g. venues, studios) to enact musical creativity. Jason Toynebee (2000) states that while recording studios promote creativity, they also serve to direct and regulate it through cities and corporate structures. In other words, the interaction and community-based atmosphere that cities organize allow musicians access to a professional network and financial resources.

Recording studios are simultaneously “insulated spaces of creativity, isolated from the outside world and spaces influenced directly by wider contexts” in which they function (Watson 2015: 85).<sup>4</sup> This was also true of residential studios, but in an urban context this factor is potentially problematic. Though these scholars highlight the studio in its capacity to foster creativity, which translates into work, Gibson and Watson imply that while booked at an urban studio, musicians can also tend to other forms of business — record label meetings, live concerts, interactions with other musicians, access to fans and audiences — while working on the recording. By aligning the studio with the broader music industry and within a stimulating setting, Gibson and Watson unintentionally but effectively identify the city’s potential as a distraction, and highlight factors that also specifically suggest why the studio needs to be isolated. Gibson (2005: 200) notes that these factors in turn support the recording studio business: cities provide musicians with a stimulating atmosphere and social environment and therefore create a steady clientele, but the studio ultimately remains dependent on the city to generate this setting. Further,

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<sup>4</sup> See Louise Meintjes’ (2003) detailed ethnography on a South African studio for evidence of the mutuality of the studio and its surrounding environment. Her work also provides further evidence of the urban centrality of recording and the social relations of workers.

steady clientele from the populous city means that studios can cover the expense of recording technologies and skilled personnel (Watson 2015: 93).

In selecting a recording studio, Gibson (2005: 200) explains that musicians continuously cite an inexplicable “magic” in certain recording rooms, which renders them appealing and draws them to return. Other important selection criteria include price, reputation, and proximity to residences.<sup>5</sup> In aligning issues of price and the location of residences with urban studios, Gibson does not account for the possible cost of the combination of studio time and residence for visiting musicians working in major cities. He also suggests that there is a convenience in having a residence close to the workplace. Gibson raises a potential problem by including the role of reputation as an important consideration. As I will discuss in more detail, if reputation matters, location may not, nor is a reputable studio dependent exclusively on the influx of the *city* to cover expenses and the cost of personnel. Gibson elaborates that during the majority of the twentieth century, the importance of maintaining current recording technologies meant significant investment, and therefore played an important role in substantiating musical reputations. In this way, the best technology was difficult to acquire, he argues, and was normally found in cities with active music scenes (ibid.). This solidifies the city, a “crucial mediating factor in the production and consumption of music” as an important part of the economic and industrial process of music production (Watson 2015: 85). His identification of the best technology as “normally” being found in urban studios may

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<sup>5</sup> Gibson differentiates between the selection criteria of studios for newer and more established musicians, and I have provided a summary here of the various considerations. In his discussion on reputation, he highlights the possibility for both the reputation of the studio *and* the reputation of the city to be an important factor in a musician’s selection of where to record. This relates to his discussion on the reciprocal relationship between the city and the studio, their reputations, as well as the link between creativity and the city. See Gibson (2005: 194, 200, 203).

have statistical grounds, but he does not directly account for the significant role of the 24-track studio.<sup>6</sup>

In becoming a stable presence in the industry by the late 1970s, the 24-track studio shifted the recording studio into the global network of music production. The 24-track studio became a widely adopted studio model that featured similar, almost interchangeable characteristics (Théberge 2004: 769). These studios were “acoustically dead, less connected to local musicians and musical styles ... possessing a range of sophisticated and standardized recording technologies” (ibid.). In this way, residential studios were a product of what Paul Théberge (2004: 772) identifies as the “touristic character” of the recording business at the time that supported musical “travellers” to “stop over to make recordings whenever and wherever it suits them, and always within the comfort of a certain temporary isolation.” With this transferability, a studio’s reputation and the “magic” of the room could take place on a global, as opposed to only an urban level.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Studio as Art World*

As musical recordings are temporary projects that unite a group of skilled professionals to complete a task, creativity in the recording studio depends on social relations (Watson 2015: 106). Negus (2006) argues for an approach to cultural production that examines music making beyond its industrial context. He believes that the study of cultural production should make use of Becker’s (1982) concept of the art world, which aims to understand this process in a wider social context (Negus 2006: 202). For Becker (1982:

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<sup>6</sup> Gibson (2005: 204–205) does mention that music production can and will be increasingly “geographically dispersed” but does not directly discuss the role of the 24-track studio. He refers more to the home studio and the democratization of technology.

<sup>7</sup> As example of these possibilities, Paul Simon recorded *Graceland* (1986) in studios located in several geographic locations, including South Africa, New York, London, Louisiana, and Los Angeles (see Théberge 2004).

34), an art world is “all the people whose activities are necessary to the production and characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art.” He states that “we look for groups of people who cooperate to produce things that they, at least, call art; having found them, we look for other people who are also necessary to that production, gradually building up as complete a picture as we can of the entire cooperating network that radiates out from the work in question” (35). Becker also highlights that art worlds are comprised of groups of people who organize their practices around common conventions through cooperation and collaboration (42). These conventions form the basis for how artists create their own specific norms for their work. Conventions are therefore powerful forces that foster artistic work and creative communication (Negus 2006: 203). In the case of the studio and music production, the specific conventions shift with time and context but include the set of contemporary working practices that are affiliated with a particular studio configuration and recording technology, along with genre and its ideology, and the current distribution format.

Gibson (2005: 192–194) applies Becker’s concept to recording studios through his description of them as “relational spaces of creativity in the city” in which “various human actors involved in the recording of music ... and its consumption ... in addition to numerous non-human actors (recording technologies, acoustic spaces, city landscapes) are all in some way connected through affective relations.”<sup>8</sup> Gibson again frames the potential for the studio’s art world to be limited to the urban, where as the global network of the studio is facilitated by relationships connected through cities and beyond. The city as a centre may anchor the industry, but people and technologies extend the art world.

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<sup>8</sup> Gibson does not explicitly draw on Becker’s work, but his description overlaps with the idea of the art world. He states that his work is influenced more specifically from actor-network theory, human geography, and the sociology of science. See Gibson (2005: 193).

As Gibson alluded, how these art worlds function is partially dependent on the reputation of the studio, its owner, and the roster of clientele. Watson (2015: 175–176) identifies reputation as fundamental to acquiring work in the music industry, and as being maintained by a network of contacts. Drawing on Stephen Zafirau (2008: 102), he describes reputation as an important aspect in the “interactional contexts of the creative industries” for the way it “acts as a stabilising feature of an otherwise uncertain business, helping to make contacts, facilitating the development of trust within networks and marking competency” (Watson 2015: 176).<sup>9</sup> Zafirau (2008: 102) links a network’s strength to the success of a business. The recognition and reputation of a studio owner or producer becomes fundamental for trust accorded by a client. Watson refers to Gernot Grabher (2001: 1331), who calls this concept “swift trust,” in defining how people act on the basis of their professional roles and responsibilities more than as individuals. In turn, this creates a particular, standardized expectation of, as examples, a producer or studio owner that is “defined more in terms of tasks than personalities” (Watson 2015: 177). A person’s reputation develops based on clients’ experiences and through the previous successful projects a studio has produced (Watson 2015: 177–178). In turn, these factors generate trust on the part of record companies that invest in musicians’ projects and can lead to repeat business. Grabher (2001: 1329–1331) also identifies interpersonal skills as integral to building reputation. His arguments illuminate the importance of knowledgeable and experienced people in the production process, who possess strong communication skills. However, his emphasis on the role as opposed to the individual

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<sup>9</sup> Becker (1982: 351–371) also discusses the role of reputation in the art world, however I do not draw on this aspect of his work for this discussion. Becker emphasizes artists’ reputation as being created by collective action; I am focused on how the reputations of studio owners’, and therefore studios, were produced and how those reputations affected their business and lifespan.

seems problematic in view of the potential influence and importance of *specific* individuals and their reputations in creating recognition and trust and generating repeat business. The music industry renders particular people highly visible, and the reputation and influence of residential studio owners was in some cases a prominent fixture in their business operations and success.

### ***The Studio as Isolated***

Antoine Hennion (1981: 147–158, 1989: 407) describes the recording studio as “entirely isolated from the outside acoustically and whose interior has been transformed into a quasi deaf chamber,” identifying both a physical and acoustic seclusion. Hennion (1989: 407–408) emphasizes the importance of the physical isolation of the studio — padded rooms, soundproofed doors — for its ability to “cut off” the external, real world and its “outsiders” and leave the various producers, musicians, and technicians sealed inside. Once there, those involved in the recording process recreate their “world” according to their own needs in order to test “musical experiments” (406, 408–415). This description offers several interpretations of isolation: the studio’s physical and architectural isolation; the isolation of people from the outside as well as those outside from the inside; and the insulated acoustic space. As well, the ability for the studio as an isolated space to foster working relations and human interaction inside draws on a more complex understanding. The remote location of residential studios, and their combined living and working facilities contributes to and extends this notion in layered ways. Hennion has linked the French residential studio Château d’Hérouville and its relation to isolated space and the

creative process.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, he articulated desirable conditions for the creative work environment, which place emphasis on calm and relaxation, and will be outlined in more detail later in this chapter (*ibid.*). Eliot Bates (2012: 7) observed the role of isolation in relation to residential studios in a more explicit social context: remote geography isolates musicians from society while simultaneously protecting them from outside scrutiny.

Within these isolated spaces, the studio has historically been marked by a set of constraints, most specifically for musicians: the physicality of the studio itself, the hierarchical division of labour that supports it, and the restrictions placed by time. While the physical separation between musicians and engineers originated from a longer history of supposed technological fear on the part of musicians, given the temporality of the residential studio, I focus on the most historically relevant aspect.<sup>11</sup> The construction of the control room window in the studio suggested a power dynamic between musicians and technicians by physically imposing the latter's presence over the former during a recording session (Williams 2007: 3). Allan Williams states that the installation of the control room window allowed technicians to continuously observe musicians, thereby placing them in a subordinate position (*ibid.*). This design is a manifestation of the hierarchical division of labour that became established in the studio between the technical and artistic roles. Hennion (1989) depicts some of this hierarchy through his discussion of the producer as an "intermediary." Through a trial-and-error process, the producer trains a musician in the studio to gauge the musical preferences of the public as a way to build and prepare the artist for the demands of success. In another variation on hierarchy, Bates

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<sup>10</sup> Château d'Hérouville was a recording studio built inside a French château located an hour outside of Paris. Many popular musicians, such as The Grateful Dead, David Bowie, and Elton John — who termed it the "honky château" — recorded there between 1969 and its closure in 1985. See Willsher (2013).

<sup>11</sup> For information on this historical relationship between musicians, technology, and architecture in the recording studio, see Millard (2005), Williams (2007, 2012), Bates (2012), and Schmidt Horning (2013).

(2012: 2) places emphasis on studio architecture and space in the recording process. He explains that within studios, musicians are in “spaces that seem by their very nature to constrain social and musical practices and practitioners.” However, he elaborates, studios are also the product of “a design process which arguably mirrors the social organization of studio work, and perhaps, the broader music industry in which these studios reside” (ibid.). In this way, the studio is designed to the particular working needs of engineers and the production crew that places musicians in an unfamiliar terrain in which they must produce creative content.<sup>12</sup> However, the dual identification of residential studio owners as both musicians and producers — evidence of the blurred division of labour I will discuss later in this chapter — played significant roles in studio design and working relations.

### *The Studio and Leisure*

James P. Kraft (1996: 4) argues that the understanding of musicians’ work is skewed based on glamourized portrayals of popular bands in the media — and, significantly, that this distorted view is understandable given society’s tendency to think of musicians as “artists who ‘play’ rather than work.” Matt Stahl (2012: 1) builds on Kraft by examining the public’s misunderstanding of musicians as autonomous labourers, and clarifies some of the realities of the political conditions under which they work. However, Kraft sets up a particular view of musicians’ work, simultaneously foregrounding an impression while suggesting a form of labour that is actually more complex. Moreover, the descriptor of “play” suggests an element of ease — or leisure. Simon Frith (1981: 255) identifies leisure as a form of pleasure, and as existing in opposition to work, duty, and routine.

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<sup>12</sup> Of course, not all musicians feel uncomfortable in studios. The studio can also be understood as the workplace of session musicians who are hired specifically for studio work. For insight into the working lives of session musicians, see Faulkner (1983), Schmidt Horning (2013), and the documentary *The Wrecking Crew* (Tedesco 2008).

Leisure, he states, is a “particular, complex organization of free time, related to the organization of work itself,” and argues that organized work could only develop around organized leisure (249–250). This sets up work and leisure as disparate but dependent acts. Ultimately though, leisure is both a choice and a constraining force (ibid.). It is at once a source of freedom, an important change from and means to restore labour, but it is also controlled and undermined to prevent interference with work (250–251). Frith specifies that this control involves the setting of limitations on leisure opportunities (253). These terms take on a similar character when situated amongst locations traditionally associated with leisure. Orvar Löfgren (1999: 5) states that the “vacationlands” in which people seek leisure give an impression as areas for freedom, yet in actuality are marked by a set of routine and habit.<sup>13</sup> This statement confirms the nature of the image and perception of areas associated with vacation and tourism while also placing emphasis on these qualities as *impressions*. This does not mean that “vacationlands” do not or cannot actually be places where freedom exists and is enjoyed. Rather, it acknowledges and allows for the possibility that, despite their impression, these places may be complex and contradictory to the image they suggest in the same way that leisure is seen as free but is ultimately controlled.

Frith sees leisure as the sole context for “the experience of self, for the exploration of one’s own skills and capacities, for the development of creative relations with other people” (262). In a complementary tone, Löfgren (1999: 7) identifies vacationing as a “cultural laboratory” which allows people the opportunity to “experiment with new aspects of their identities, social relations, or their interaction with

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<sup>13</sup> Löfgren’s work largely deals with the tourist industry, the standardization of travel, and the tourist’s experience. I extend these ideas here to the social experience.

nature” as well as facilitating the “cultural skills of daydreaming and mindtraveling.” Placed in the context of the residential studio, this statement suggests an ability to use creative thought to extend and generate new meaning amongst the group of people situated in the environment. The importance placed on atmosphere is among the most specific reasons a producer or musician selects a particular studio, along with technical facilities (Negus 1992: 84). Negus notes an importance in ensuring the comfort of the musician and assigns the producer with the role and responsibility of “creating the conditions which are most suitable to the working style of a particular act (ibid.).” This is significant to the process because both the inside of the studio and its location can affect the atmosphere of a session (ibid.). In extending the responsibility of the producer to that of the studio owner, this is a quality that underpins the residential studio.

The conditions of the recording studio, as articulated earlier, can be marked by isolation and sterility, in contrast to the openness of live performance environments musicians may encounter more frequently. Negus explains that studio personnel utilize “subtle psychological and social skills ... to physically creating a particular environment” in “shaping the recording context” or creating a space in which musicians can successfully work (ibid.). While the residential studio was marked by elements of and access to leisure per the activities associated with their natural environments as well as the amenities provided by their owners, the creation of the kind of space for *working* was the most important consideration and was a regular point of reference. As Löfgren (1999: 9, see also Urbain 1994) also explains, “getting away from it all” can be understood as the desire to find an “unspoiled corner of the world, to relax and build up an alternative life.” This statement conveys a strong sense of escapism and a desire for change, and

confirms the possibility of an alternative workspace: one that utilizes similar qualities to other spaces but does so in a different setting. It also suggests movement away from something and the creation of something new. Löfgren's concepts create the potential for work and leisure to occur simultaneously and in nuanced ways in vacation settings. In this way, Negus (2006: 202) argues that cultural production is a "process that encompasses an array of enterprises that obscure traditional binaries such as public/private, professional judgment/personal preference and work/leisure time."

### **The Residential Studio: Absence and Presence in the Literature**

The residential recording studio has been largely unexplored in the existent academic literature. However, when it has, the scholars addressing it have made foundational, significant observations from which to build. Some of the existent literature has already been covered in this chapter (Hennion 1989, Bates 2012). In addition, Théberge (1997, 2004) has positioned the environment of Le Studio and AIR Studios Montserrat in relation to Hennion's concept of the recording studio as an isolated place. Andrew Leyshon (2009: 1318), in addition to his identification of the residential studio as a business model, commented on the use of these studios by record labels to deter newly signed bands from the lures of urban environments, though in my findings this statement cannot be generalized to all cases. John Cherry, Krysta Ryzewski, and Luke Pecoraro (2013) have studied the archaeology of AIR Studios Montserrat, which they theorize as a tourist destination despite its decomposed state, and, thereby a source of nostalgia for fans of the music produced within.<sup>14</sup> This iconography of the workplace supports the

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<sup>14</sup> This idea of a tourist destination is not in the traditional sense. Rather, visiting a defunct studio constitutes a form of secondary tourism, as the site would only be accessible to visitors in this current condition and is additionally problematic given it is still private property. See Gibson and Connell (2005) for a discussion on music and tourism, of which the recording studio is part.

importance of space and production in understanding musicians' history and working process.

While the limited presence of work on the residential studio is important and provides strong foundational knowledge, the absence is increasingly visible. Though attention has been paid to studios such as Stax (see Bowman 1997) and the much-celebrated Abbey Road (Cunningham 1998, Bastian 2003), the residential studio's presence in recording studio history — both as related to music production and as a type of studio — has been overlooked. As an example, Watson (2015) has published an insightful volume on cultural production “in and beyond the recording studio,” and presents detailed accounts of rarely discussed aspects of studio work, including emotional labour and, as outlined, the strong influence of personnel's reputation on studio success, all topics that make an important contribution to the literature and provide foundation for issues addressed in this thesis. Watson makes it explicitly clear that he is concerned solely with the recording studio as a “relational space” in a specifically urban context, building on Gibson's (2005) work. In doing so, he discusses “the urban centres in which recording studios are (typically) located” (Watson 2015: 2). What is striking is that nowhere in the volume does he elaborate on, even briefly, the suggestion made by his use of parenthesis around “typically,” leaving no guidance or historical indication of that set of *atypical* studios — the residential studio amongst them.<sup>15</sup> However, 23 years earlier, Negus (1992: 84) stated that the location of the recording studio can “range from the middle of a city ... or it may be in a converted manor house in the English countryside

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<sup>15</sup> In the interest of clarity, I should specify that Watson, drawing on the work of Théberge (2004), refers at times to the technological possibility for studios to be linked together in “distant locations.” Watson notes areas such as Singapore and Bath, UK. In this way, his use of “distant locations” is vague and can refer to studios positioned in geographic areas that are at significant distance from each other — and may be urban — or can imply remote areas. Watson points more to the ability for studios to function technologically in relation to each other at significant geographic distances, but does not clearly articulate the types of studio configurations in question.

with luxury accommodation and an accompanying swimming pool.” With his inclusion of the residential studio’s features, Negus seemingly takes it for granted as one of the common configurations, to the point that he did not even distinguish it with a specific label, and thereby raises questions as to how and why it has been overlooked.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Residential Studio in the Historical Continuum**

As I’ve emphasized, analyzing and understanding the residential studio means, in part, placing it in relation to the longer history of the recording studio. An overview of this history has been covered elsewhere (see Théberge 2003, Millard 2005, Schmidt Horning 2013, Watson 2015) and its reiteration is not required here. Rather, I locate the residential recording studio as existing in a historical continuum, highlighting that “varying industrial and technological changes that have given rise, over the course of several decades, to a number of different studio configurations” (Théberge 2012: 89). The studio’s architecture, design, technological capabilities, and division of labour have altered considerably. In addition, recording technologies have shifted the meanings and uses of studios, and subsequently altered the associated labour (Gibson 2005: 192). Studios have been an assortment of models: large, record company-owned multi-function studios (e.g. Abbey Road), independent, “makeshift” studios housed in converted facilities (e.g. Sun Studios), the 24-track analog studio (e.g. Sound City) that, as articulated, became commonplace in the studio business — and in the public’s perception of the recording studio — and the various incarnations of the home studio made possible through the democratization of recording technologies and computers (Théberge 2012: 80).

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<sup>16</sup> Negus’ inclusion could be a product of — but also attests to — the residential studio’s ubiquity in the UK in the years leading up to the publication of his book.

In this historical continuum, the constitution of a recording studio continues to change, displacing the notion of studio history as an act of progress where one type simply supersedes the previous (Théberge 2012: 83). Instead, “each phase in the development of the studio represents different moments in the accumulation of various concepts, practices, and sensibilities related to audio production, each of which can coexist to some degree” (ibid.). Each type of studio, then, is the concurrent manifestation of a complex combination of artistic, technological, and economic circumstances that relate to musicians’ working conditions and practices (ibid.). This view explains why some studio forms, such as the residential studio, are utilized more frequently at a given time while also acknowledging that their existence predated and continues beyond a given moment of relevance (ibid.). In this way, the residential studio can be understood as having a particular significance during a specific time due to the unique set of broader intersecting circumstances.

### **The Conditions of the Emergence of the Residential Recording Studio**

The length of bookings at residential studios meant that musicians and crew worked and lived together onsite for an extended period. At this time, musicians’ working practices included writing, composing, and recording an album during a session. Part of what lent to this style of working was a shift in attitudes and methods related to studio hierarchy and the division of labour. Edward Kealy (1990 [1979]: 177) outlines the entrepreneurial mode of collaboration in the studio that followed the rise of the independent recording studio. In contrast to the focus on technical accuracy, hierarchy, and union-regulated time that defined the earlier “craft-union” mode, the entrepreneurial mode is a more “fluid and open collaboration which allows an interchange of skills and ideas among the musicians,

technicians, and music market entrepreneurs” (ibid.). This era marked an important shift between the duties of the engineer and musician, by way of the former allocating increasing amounts of access to and information about studio technologies to the latter in order to directly assist with the process and aesthetics of music production (ibid.). In this way, the role and identity of the engineer moved from “narrow, instrumental, craft-union technicians” to include a “client-oriented, entrepreneurial outlook reflecting the new roles of salesman and producer of hit recordings” (ibid.).

This shift in division of labour related to developments in recording technologies. The relatively low-tech studios of the 1950s gave way to more elaborate production techniques in the 1960s with the advent of magnetic tape and multitrack recording (see Théberge 2003, 2004; Schmidt Horning 2013). Multitrack was a “social technology” that contributed to the reorganization of production, recording techniques, and studio architecture (Théberge 1997: 217). It shifted the focus from capturing the original or specific sound in and of the room to the creation of sound (ibid.). The studio therefore became an environment for composition with working practices defined by “a process of layering and experimentation” (ibid.). The creative process and length of recording sessions were considerably extended, which set the foundation for the collaborative mode of the residential studio (Théberge 2003: 643).<sup>17</sup> The multitude of new creative possibilities for musicians through composition and experimentation defined the art mode of collaboration (Kealy 1990 [1979]: 179). In this mode, Kealy cites the involvement of all parties in the production process (ibid.). The engineer’s work — previously seen as technical — became artistic, though musicians continued to appreciate engineers for their

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<sup>17</sup> Schmidt Horning (2013) notes that this practice marked a change in the engineer’s work process. Those more accustomed to recording many songs in a short period had to practice patience with the lengthier working style of rock musicians.

knowledge of “studio magic” (182). These factors demonstrate the overlap that occurred in the roles of studio workers at the time (Théberge 2003: 643).

In accordance with multitrack recording, the album was the central creative and commercial format at the time, with musicians and producers recognizing the LPs’ possibilities. The 12-inch LP, which could contain up to twenty minutes of music per side, expanded the creative boundaries of recordings (Hegarty and Halliwell 2011: 20). In the early 1970s, sales of LPs surpassed singles, and were generally granted greater aesthetic weight due to the longer format (Shuker 2008: 48). Records were reconceptualized as art, production decisions were made prior to a session starting, and extensive work occurred in the studio to realize goals (Schmidt Horning 2013: 185).

The working methods around the album and multitrack were related to the particular ideology of creativity at this time. Creativity is a key attribute to musicians’ work, and can be understood as the requisite and basis for musicians to effectively produce a recording. Creativity is commonly conceptualized as a mysterious process, with creative people defined by their seeming ability to randomly develop ideas (McIntyre 2012: 4). It is understood as unpredictable and as “striking” spontaneously from unidentifiable origins (ibid.), a notion that relates to the ideology of popular music making of the time. In accordance with this notion of creativity and in my interest of discussing, most specifically, the *conditions* that facilitated creativity in the workplace more than creativity itself, I utilize Hennion’s description to define the conditions of the creative work environment for this thesis. He labeled this space a “sound engineer’s dream” that was differentiated from “a non-creative work environment punctuated by a million telephone calls” (Hennion 1989: 408). The creative work environment was

comprised of an isolated studio setting featuring “absolute calm, state-of-the-art technology, a framework that provides you with whatever you need to relax: horses, motorbikes, pinball machines and video games” as well as onsite lodging (ibid.). As Negus (2006: 203) argues that artists work according to accepted conventions, which enable work and creative communication, the facilitation of creativity is one that can be understood as a convention of the musicians’ workplace. This description of the creative work environment coheres with Schmidt Horning’s (2013: 208–209) observation that musicians began to view city studios as austere, institutional, and more appropriate for short, three-hour sessions than the lengthier ones that were in accordance with contemporary working practices. In this way, Kealy (1990 [1979]: 180) also notes how gradual awareness of resistance prompted musicians, rock in particular, to move toward entrepreneurial and art modes of working. In discussing Rockfield Studios, *Music Week*’s Terri Anderson (1975: 32) articulated that at the time there “grew an awareness of a need for peace, a feeling for the pastoral, and a turning away — especially where musicians were concerned — from the stresses and overcrowding of big cities.” These factors suggest that musicians developed an interest in moving away from the city to work in a supportive environment favourable to creativity, and did so following broader shifts in practice made possible by multitrack recording and the view of the album as art (Schmidt Horning 2013: 185, 209).

The success of the album format and its role in record sales was also important for practical reasons. The ability for musicians to record meant they needed financial support, either through their own career establishment or the budgets of their labels. By the end of the 1960s, record sales had the highest revenues of all entertainment forms

(Peterson and Berger 1975: 167). This had a subsequent affect on the studio business. As Théberge (2003: 643) observed “musicians demanded, and received, large recording budgets, which were then put into independent recording studios, allowing them to grow in size and number.” During this era of large budget recordings, studios began to develop international reputations among producers and the public (Gibson 2005: 192). In the 1970s, labels such as Warner Brothers used artist development strategies that involved paying large advances to promising musicians and obtaining profits through long-term investment in their careers (Stahl 2012: 118, see Keightley 2004). In this way, residential studios were supported by the more general health of the music industry at the time. Through their intersection, these factors provided the foundation for the emergence of the residential studio and its characteristics as a studio configuration.

### **The Resort Studio**

In view of the studio’s relation to concepts of the urban, the art world, isolation, and leisure, I propose the phrase the “resort” studio to conceptualize and theorize the residential recording studio. My use of this term refers at different times to either the *concept* or the *type of studio*, and context should effectively distinguish its use. In one sense, the resort studio is another label for the residential studio, along with the several descriptive phrases commonly used in *Billboard*, *Music Week*, and other sources to characterize the studios’ specific set of features as discussed in the Introduction. I utilize the resort studio for its ability to refer to and actively engage with the studio’s distinctive set of characteristics. By “refer to” and “actively engage” I mean that the use of the term not only *describes* the physical and geographic attributes. It also *draws attention to* the way these studios were used as workspaces and how their physical attributes and

geographic locations interacted with their use to foreground qualities of musicians' labour and the social organization of the studio more generally.

To define the concept, the resort studio draws on the dual meaning of the word "resort." The chapters that follow will provide evidence of how these two meanings are part of the studio's use, but for now I offer the basic definition and application. The word "resort" is both a verb and a noun, and I maintain this use in its conceptual application to the studio. In one sense, a resort can be an alternative or a form of recourse, often at times when there are no other options available (*American Heritage College Dictionary* 1993: 1162). A person can therefore resort to doing something, or something can serve as his or her resort when another option is no longer viable. In the context of this thesis, recording studios are workspaces for musicians. Therefore, with this definition, resort studios were alternative types of studios. Though resort studios included many of the same attributes as other studios, they served as recourse by way of their geographic locations, and the attendant influence of these settings. Resort studios therefore also provided an alternative *workspace* for musicians. The significance of this will be more fully detailed in the following chapters.

The resort studio's geographic setting alone strongly differentiated it from other studios in a physical sense — one of the reasons that makes its exclusion from the existent history and academic literature on the recording studio surprising. However, further insight into how and the degree to which these studios served as alternatives becomes additionally clear with the inclusion of the second meaning of resort. In its other definition, a resort is a destination that is frequented for relaxation or recreation (*ibid.*). In general, resorts are isolated, self-contained, and all-inclusive settings situated at a

distance from metropolitan areas, though are at times within reasonable proximity of a city to facilitate access if and as needed. Travelers can stay at a resort near the beach outside of, but close enough to, a major city or spend a few days at a spa-themed resort in the mountains, for example. In this context, this definition illuminates the way these studios were based in remote and/or exotic locations and were positioned near such leisure activities as ski slopes and Caribbean beaches. Given all of these factors, resort studios can be understood as having been marked by an element of tourism. The resort studio therefore positioned leisure and work on the same grounds. The touristic quality of the resort studio can also be understood as an extension of the excess that characterized 1970s music culture — as related to the musical stylings of progressive rock, the image of glam, the mythologized lifestyles of rock musicians, and the general prosperity of record sales and the recording budgets that they generated.

I must clarify one aspect of the concept's usage. Being that the resort studio consisted of several important features — the recording studio, onsite living accommodations, the land on which it operated, and the amenities it featured — the term does not refer exclusively to the *recording studio*. At times, I may use italics to indicate that I am referring to the recording studio at a particular resort studio, but in general, this term is meant to refer to the entire workspace, which should be evident as the thesis unfolds. The term, however, does imply the centrality of the studio, but should be understood as inclusive of all features.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have outlined the pertinent themes of both the existent literature on the recording studio and those that emerge from research on the resort studio. I have

provided this overview for context and to connect the following research. However, for the purposes of the chapters that follow, I now clarify how I use the various themes most specifically. My framing of the *studio as urban* is designed to show, first and foremost, the resort studio's geographic contrast and how it is significant to musicians' work. I also engage with this theme necessarily to explain that the resort studio did in fact depend on the existence and structure of the urban studio to operate. This discussion also sets up the emphasis on the global nature of the recording studio sector for the way it allowed musicians to move outside of the city and thereby formed the basis for the resort studio's emergence. In utilizing the concept of the *studio as art world*, I define this term as the organization and entire site of the resort studio, inclusive of the people, environment, and technology. Given my specification of the art world as the entire site of the resort studio, I am aware that I am reducing Becker's definition of this concept. Becker (1982: 35) specifies that art worlds "do not have boundaries around them" and that "the world exists in the cooperative activity of those people, not as a structure or organization." In his view, the art world includes a group of people involved in music production that extends well beyond a particular site of creative work. I am aware of the broader meaning and Becker's more expansive definition. However, given the tension between the art world and isolation at the resort studio, I am reducing the frame of this concept to narrowly focus my study and illuminate these studios' features and social organization. While I am fully aware that, as part of a wider process of music production, the resort studio's art world could extend beyond its own isolated confines, I am most focused on the site and organization of the resort studio space and, in this way, must acknowledge and account for my more limited use of the concept. I realize that with this framing, I suggest that

certain networks of people in the art world may effectively be cut off or removed from inclusion in the resort studio's art world, and that this usage may raise questions about inclusion and exclusion, and who and for what reasons this is the case. Some of the answers to these questions should be evident in the resort studio's nature as an alternative workspace, but this thesis also does not attempt to fully address issues of inclusion and exclusion in the art world, though recognizes this subject as both worthy of study and as a possible limitation.

In addition, my use of the art world as the intersection of people, place, and technology is, in some ways, akin to Bruno Latour's (1988) concept of the interdependent relationship between human and non-human agency. However, I am not emphasizing this theory here because of my particular focus on social interaction. I understand the art world as a cohesion of Becker's (1982) and Gibson's (2005) concepts to highlight the important roles of these factors in music production. Given the link between calm and creativity, the significance of onsite residences, the importance of state-of-the-art technology, and a relaxed atmosphere in facilitating work at the resort studio, these aspects cannot be overlooked as part of the collective view of the creation of art. In addition, I use the art world to foreground significance in the role of people in the process of creative work, most specifically for the role individuals played in the development and lifespan of resort studios. As well, I pay particular attention to reputation, part of the collective action of people, as a "stabilizing feature" strongly connected to why or why not music was made at particular studios.

The *studio as isolated* is significant to this discussion first and foremost for the way it connects the resort studio to the longer history of the recording studio. More

specifically, I use Hennion's (1989) description to establish how the resort studio extends and presents a layered understanding of the studio as an isolated space, but also to indicate how the entire space of the resort studio functions the same way as Hennion's concept of the studio. I make particular use of the resort studio's distinction from the external world as well as the re-imagined setting for musicians' musical experimentations. In approaching the *studio and leisure*, Frith's (1981) arguments form the orientation to my assessment of work and leisure at the resort studio, a framework I use to support and synthesize my findings. Frith's outline is particularly useful for the way it is formed from an industrial view of work and leisure, and serves to illuminate why it is difficult to apply this same notion to creative work. Kraft's (1996) identification of musicians' work as play forms the backdrop to this problem, and while I am not aiming to solve or explain it fully I do endeavour to highlight why this perception remains. I engage with Löfgren's (1999) arguments to explain the resort studio as a workplace even in its capacity as a site of recreation and do so by using it in cohesion with Hennion's (1989) view of working in the studio.

All of these theoretical usages underpin the conditions for the creative work environment. Again, my emphasis is on the *conditions* of work and how those factors play a role in musicians' creative process rather than theorizing creativity itself. In understanding the construction of conditions, I refer most strongly to Negus' (1992) argument that studio personnel are responsible for and must contend with their creation, and foreground the environment of the studio and its surrounding location as among the significant factors. In defining what those conditions are comprised of at the resort studio, I use Hennion's (1989) identification of the creative work environment as the basis for

those factors that facilitate creativity and thereby work. Taken together, these components cohere to situate the resort studio within the studio's historical continuum and as part of the longer history of the recording studio (Théberge 2012).

## Chapter 2

### Case Studies: Themes and Variations of the Resort Studio

As outlined in Chapter 1, the resort studio emerged based on the intersection of a set of contemporary forces. These included recording technologies (multitrack), the associated working practices (extended, compositional sessions) that also related to the album format's new creative possibilities, the globalized structure of the studio sector, the availability of large recording budgets, and musicians' interest in recording in areas outside of the city. As Leyshon (2009: 1318) articulated and Negus (1992: 84) and Schmidt Horning (2013: 209) implied, the resort studio became a standard business model of recording studios. In this chapter, I outline three case studies — Rockfield Studios, Le Studio, and AIR Studios Montserrat — to demonstrate different aspects of the resort studio phenomenon. These case studies aim to illuminate each studio's specificities and individual operation while providing insight into the various factors that defined resort studios more generally. I argue that despite broad common characteristics resort studios were marked by diversity in ownership and operation, and that the individual success and existence of each was a product of its specific personnel and circumstances. In these ways, the resort studio demonstrates the social process involved in music production and illuminates the recording studio as an enterprise distinct from wider forces in the music industry (see Théberge 2012).

I will begin with a discussion on the rise in popularity of the resort studio to historically situate its emergence and foreground its key aspects. Next, I will highlight how these studios were aligned with vacation and tourism, an important issue to the resort studio as a configuration that also extends the lifespan of each case study. I will

then briefly discuss patterns amongst studio owners to introduce their relation to the development and character of resort studios. From there, I will highlight how resort studios maintained business despite larger lulls in the studio and music industries, which will lead into the three case studies. Each will focus on their most important aspects and suggest particular reasons for these occurrences. I will then offer an analysis before concluding.

The case studies of Rockfield Studios, Le Studio, and AIR Studios Montserrat are only three examples of the larger trend toward recording at resort studios during the 1970s and 1980s. Various resort studios were established throughout this time, including Chateau d'Hérouville in 1969 (Hérouville, France), the Manor in 1971 (Oxfordshire, UK), Ridge Farm in 1975 (Surrey, UK), and Compass Point in 1977 (Nassau, Bahamas). In 1972, *Billboard* reported that musicians “especially liked the environmental approach to the recording offered by [having access to multiple facilities (e.g. editing, recording, reduction)]” that “recording complexes” such as the Manor featured (Hammond 1972: L-6). The article also reported that these studios were continuing to expand despite a *decrease* in investment in recording at the time, citing as reasons the personal approach the studios offered along with the “imagination” that went into their design (ibid.). In 1977, Dallas Smith, co-owner of Chateau Recorders, a resort studio in North Hollywood hypothesized to *Billboard* about the “emerging trend for younger studios toward ‘environmental recording’... I think we are going to see a trend to studios like this. It’s far more conducive to the creative process and it makes far more sense for the artist and label financially” (McCullaugh 1977c: 50). These reports indicate an interest on the part of musicians to work in an area with access to an array of recording facilities and space

conducive to creativity, in the same description that Hennion (1989) provides. The attention given to the role of client service and ingenuity in generating business during a period of decline suggests a particular value in working among such qualities, and can be seen as “stabilizing features” in business (Zafirau 2008: 102, Watson 2015: 176).

However, the continued expansion could also simply be the result of the advantageous rates, meaning that clients selected resort studios because they provided financial feasibility, which in turn allowed them to prosper.

The prediction that resort studios would “flourish” along with studios built by producers and artists<sup>18</sup> — which resort studios often also were — was further described as an extension of the upsurge of studio business in 1977, following the 24-track studio having “finally matured” into state-of-the-art in major centres, fostering the global network discussed in Chapter 1 (McCullaugh 1977a: 11, 38). These forecasts continued into the late 1970s and were supported by increasing evidence. *Music Week* reported in October 1979 that during the preceding decade there was both a rise in popularity and numbers of resort studios that offered “an array of lifestyle from the grand to the rustic” (Anderson 1979: 4). By 1979, *Music Week*’s advertising, studio directories, and coverage became increasingly interspersed with listings for resort studios. In 1980, the same publication linked the rising emphasis on ambiance and environment as significant considerations for musicians during the recording process to the increase in the number of resort studios (Anon. 1980d: 10). This escalation suggests that studio owners acted on an awareness of musicians’ preferred working environments and, as Negus (1992)

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<sup>18</sup> *Billboard* reported a trend in Los Angeles of “recording resorts” in which homes were being equipped with 24-track studios and leased to musicians for \$1,500 per day. The company, Lagniappe, was developed to rent to artists and producers who wanted to work on extended projects in a setting different from Hollywood (McCullaugh 1977b: 1). In a similar trend, Randy Bachman opened Legend Studios, a “hideaway retreat” on 30 acres of land south of Vancouver (Anon. 1980e: 66).

argues, likewise created suitable conditions. The same article, however, limited the possibility of working in these environments to those groups with “sufficiently high earnings,” thereby countering the more affordable rates attributed to resort studios in *Billboard* in 1972 and aligning them with a specific bracket of clientele (Anon. 1980d: 10). However, it is also related to the aforementioned upturn in the studio business and the more generalized health of the music industry discussed in Chapter 1.

With the suitable conditions and ambient environment of the resort studio, musicians could “experience the service of a first class hotel and a premiere recording studio — just as if they were both within your own home” (Anon. 1986: 4). As Frith (1981: 251) argued that leisure is necessary but also must be limited to avoid interference with work, the trade press included concerns that these environments and amenities may actually *deter* musicians from working on their projects. While this concern was minimal, it is important for how it draws attention to the salient features, element of tourism, and the insight it provides into the resort studio’s function and use. In a 1986 feature on resort studios in *Music Week* titled “Bed, breakfast and boogie,” journalist Richard Dean opened with the following:

“Whisper the term ‘residential studios’ into the shell-like of some music executives or indeed somebody who doesn’t use them, and you could end up with a flea in your ear. ‘What record company in their right mind would send one of their artists off on holiday to work? They’re full of distractions. Think of the cost, you can’t get in touch, what an indulgence,’ they bleat” (Dean 1986: 12).

This statement appeared in one of *Music Week*’s annual “Residential Roundup” features which, that year, included profiles of 31 resort studios around the United Kingdom. The presence of such a feature in the trade press combined with the number of studios it listed is in and of itself evidence of the success and popularity of these workplaces. However,

Dean effectively drew attention to the *impression* of these sites. The settings of resort studios in locations such as the Laurentian Mountains, the Bahamas, and the Caribbean — commonly thought of as tourist destinations — does conjure the perception of vacation, further supported by the labels accorded to these studios such as “hideaway,” “countryside,” “vacation,” and “resort.” Likewise, *Billboard* noted of AIR Studios Montserrat that, “it seems incongruous to see a state-of-the-art recording studio in this environment” (McCullaugh 1979b: 41). Moreover, the specific combination of musicians in these settings adds to the confusion around their work as play, a notion that both informs this impression and is reinforced by the environments of resort studios (see Kraft 1996).

In terms of the risk of distraction, of Super Bear in the south of France, *Music Week* speculated: “although how much rehearsing will be done amid three pinball machines and a Scalectrix set remains to be seen” (Anon. 1977c: 55). This impression was at times encouraged by the marketing campaigns of resort studios. For example, Highland Recording Studio’s advertising suggested explicitly “why not turn your work into a holiday in the beautiful Highlands of Scotland” (Anon. 1982: 24). This tension was most visible with AIR Studios Montserrat:

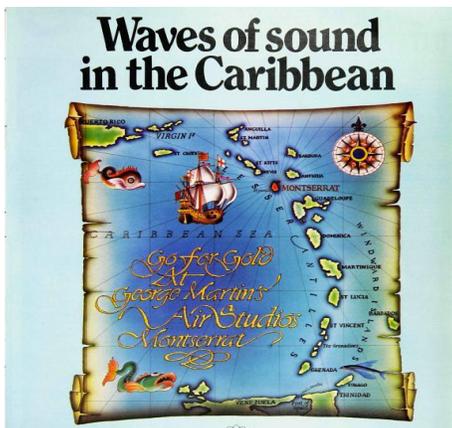


Figure 1

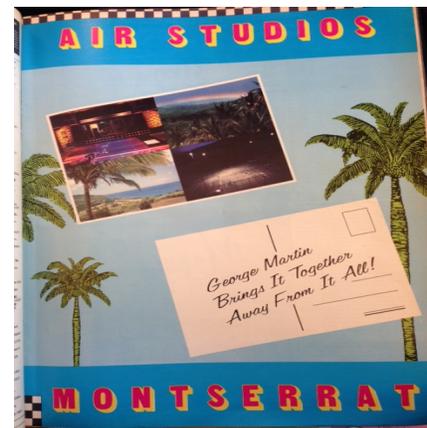


Figure 2

These images, from 1979 (Figure 1) and 1980 (Figure 2), capitalize on common notions of leisure and vacation: maps, islands, palm trees, and postcards. The advertisement copy cleverly uses double *entendre* to tie together the purpose of using a recording studio with the character and geography in which the studio was set. However, despite the vacation theme, they also clearly suggest a link between successful music production and isolation. In each case, AIR Studios Montserrat offers record companies reasons to send clients there, promising “waves of sound” and George Martin. It was referred to as the “ultimate environmental studio to date” for the way it was set in the Caribbean and accessible only by boat or small plane. Nonetheless, even within this context, the emphasis on isolation, which Hennion (1989) argues is necessary for musical experiments, aligns with Löfgren’s (1999: 7) view of vacationing as a “cultural laboratory” (see Chapter 1) in which people daydream and experiment with their identities. Extended, this notion includes similar qualities to creativity and thereby presents the same type of conditions related to isolation and leisure that Hennion outlines for the studio and the creative work environment. As well, these locations can be understood according to Löfgren’s (1999: 5, 9) concept of “getting away from it all” as the desire to retreat into an alternative life, and his conceptualization of “vacationlands” as areas marked by routine but perceived as free. In this way, resort studios supported creative work even in their capacity for recreation and even if misunderstood as sites for vacation. Yet, as much as they were organized creative work environments, leisure and recreation was built into their design and use, and drawing attention to this in advertisements and press coverage is accurate representation. Additionally, these factors further illuminate the significance of their locations, which are discussed specifically in

the case studies. It was these elements that distinguished and informed their function, and this role cannot be overlooked.

The reason for this particular atmosphere, which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 3, was related to the studio owners' awareness and sensitivity to the working needs of musicians. Some owners were previously affiliated with music production as producers, engineers, and industry, and at other times, the decision to open a studio originated as a hobby and evolved. This orientation was often a product of the owners' backgrounds and experience as or with musicians, and these patterns, by extending their professional skills and personal interests, can be understood as motivating their decision to open these independent studios. As examples, the owner of Super Bear in Côte d'Azur, Damon Metrebian, previously owned Nomad Records; Chris Blackwell, chairman of Compass Point Studios in Nassau, Bahamas, was the founder of Island Records; and Frank Andrews of Surrey, England's Ridge Farm, was an art college graduate who previously worked as a lighting and sound engineer on concert tours.<sup>19</sup> In turn, these experiences in turn can be understood as exposing them to a particular set of conventions that informed their orientation to studio design, and as generating an awareness of suitable working conditions. Whether their intent with the studio was originally for their own personal interest or based on greater commercial prospects, their own sensibilities seemed to translate to the interests of clients. These owners' decision to utilize their previous experiences to open studios combined with the roles they took on aligns with the studio's blurred division of labour at the time. Studio owners possessed diverse skill sets

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<sup>19</sup> In addition, Dave Grinstead, owner of Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire, began his career as an in-house producer and engineer for Decca Records. A former philosophy teacher, Gil Markle, owned Long View Farm in Northbrook, Massachusetts. He bought the property with the intention of living and farming, and to use the studio to satisfy his life-long interest in tape recording (Anderson 1978b: 32).

and in turn took on a range of new roles that either overlapped or differed in varying degrees. As such, they blended their range of experience, and in doing so, also drew on, defined, and reinforced existent and nuanced understandings of familiar roles in the recording studio hierarchy.

The prevalence of resort studios in the 1970s caused reporter Terri Anderson (1980: 32) to quip that “there was a period when one felt that every water mill, oast house, farm barn, or Tudor manor house concealed period décor, acoustic cladding and tens of thousands of pounds of recording equipment.” By 1984, *Music Week* began featuring the aforementioned “Residential Round-up” guide, with annual guides to follow,<sup>20</sup> which highlighted the amenities, accommodations, and technological specifications unique to each studio. The same year, advertisements referred to a “definitive” resort studio, suggesting that a set of standardizations were in place and validating Leyshon’s (2009) and Negus’ (1992) inclusion of these studios among the common models (Anon. 1984: 41). In 1985, *Music Week* called the resort studio an “ever-expanding area of the market” and reported again that, “despite the ups and downs of the record business, the residential studios constantly report full diaries, with some facilities ... being booked solid for months ahead” (Anon. 1985: 26).

In this way, resort studios seemed to bypass issues that other studios experienced during more generalized difficulties in the music industry related to declining record sales. The substantial sales of 1978 gave way to decreasing numbers in the years that followed and impacted studios schedules. In October 1979, *Music Week* reported uneasiness amongst UK studios regarding the “lack of logic” in their being well booked while the industry and record sales were shrinking (Anderson 1979: 4). *Music Week*

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<sup>20</sup> This refers only to the years covered in the scope of this project.

observed that “the general feeling is that recording budgets are being more carefully used — the days of long block bookings during which the studio is used part of the time as a rehearsal room, and some other times is simply not used at all, have gone” (ibid.). Yet, at the same time, “from studios in London ... to the many countryside residential studios ... the reports indicate full booking” (ibid.).

This overview, though a brief sample, demonstrates the prominence of the resort studio in the recording studio sector and provides evidence of its legitimization as a studio configuration. The frequent referrals to expansion and growth, as well as the steady increase in numbers as evidenced through *Billboard*'s and *Music Week*'s coverage and directories, solidify its position. The use of resort studios at times of decreasing investment and industry upsurges alike by clients with a variety of means can be explained by the entrepreneurial nature of the resort studio as independently owned and operated, and thereby private, enterprises, and for how studios, more generally, operate distinctly from the broader music industry (see Kealy 1990 [1979], Théberge 2012). This also suggests different business models and purposes of resort studios while implying additional factors in their establishment and popularity. This sample sets a foundation for the three case studies to follow by positioning them within the larger studio sector.

In the interest of space, the following case studies cannot be comprehensive. Therefore, I have selected particular themes to address that will highlight significant aspects of each. I focus most specifically on each studio's remote location, development and lifespan, the background of the studio owner, and the role of tourism. My intent with doing so is, on one hand, to give an overview of the salient aspects of each studio's lifespan for historical documentation and to explain their functionality. These themes, in

different ways and in varying degrees, also defined each studio's art world and in turn shaped their reputation. Watson (2015: 176) places great importance on this factor in a studio's success through Zafirau's (2008) identification of it as a "stabilizing feature" in an unpredictable business that promotes growth and contacts. In their own ways, these factors were key to how each studio functioned and sustained in relation to broader industry trends and illuminate the importance of social forces in the studio sector. The following case studies will be highly descriptive as a way to demonstrate their unique character. After these outlines, I will return to an analysis of these themes and their relation to each studio.

### **Rockfield Studios**

When arriving at Rockfield Studios, it is indiscernible that amongst the dirt roads and serene countryside are two recording studios that have produced some of the world's most successful popular music. Rockfield is situated on a private plot of land in the Wye Valley outside of Monmouth, Wales, near the A40 motorway. The town of Monmouth is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with a population of approximately 10,000 (Monmouth Gov UK 2015).<sup>21</sup> The tranquility that characterizes Rockfield's geography extends from its origins. Prior to its conversion, the land on which it functions was a fully operational farm. Despite the active presence of the recording studios and living accommodations for several decades, the land maintains some of its original character.

Rockfield, for all intents and purposes, is and has always been a family business.

Its longevity is directly intertwined with its status as a family property, as well as the

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<sup>21</sup> Rockfield Studios took its name from the village in which it is located after musician Dave Edmunds, during a 1967 recording session, mentioned that he saw the name on his way to the studio after noticing the village sign (Toby L 2004).

tendency toward reinvention that owner Kingsley Ward stated is key to its existence (Petrie 2010). The Ward family has owned and operated the property, and later the studios, since the 1950s. In its current configuration, Rockfield has two recording studios, the Coach House and the Quadrangle, each with its own distinct acoustic features, technical specifics, and living accommodations. The two studios and their accompanying residences are situated at opposite ends of the property, so that visiting musicians do not have to meet — unless, as studio manager Lisa Ward specifies, they want to. The site also has a common kitchen and dining area as well as office space for administrative purposes.

Rockfield's first instance of reinvention was its development from a farm into a site of music production, an occurrence based largely on circumstance. During the early 1960s, Kingsley and brother Charles Ward divided their time between two worlds, their duties on the farm and the daily 120-mile journey to London to work in the studio of influential producer Joe Meek.<sup>22</sup> This hectic routine eventually prompted the Wards' mother, who Lisa Ward (2015) attributes as the person integral to Rockfield's development, to ask if recording at home was possible. Charles and Kingsley purchased their own equipment and set up a studio in the front room of the farmhouse, which they christened The Courtyard Studio (Toby L 2014). Officially, Rockfield Studios began in 1963, but the improvised nature of the early sessions renders the exact date unclear, and its origins may have been earlier (Ward 2015). The growing popularity of the Charles Kingsley Combo and affiliation with Meek made the Wards a visible presence on the

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<sup>22</sup> Meek was known for producing experimental popular music in the early sixties, such as the chart-topping "Telstar" by the Tornados. His music was praised early in his career for its originality, but following the success of the Beatles it was seen as a gimmick. However, he was also well known as an innovator in studio production for experimenting with and contributing to the development of multitrack practices and echo effects in the same London studio that the Wards worked (Laing 2015).

thriving local Welsh music scene, and these two factors positioned them alongside other bands working the live circuit in the area, many of whom had nowhere to record. When they began renting out the studio, Rockfield developed from a “barn-located two-track operation to one of the busiest 24-track outfits in the country” (White 1975: 2). It also benefitted from the presence of “flower power” in the local music scene. Similar to Schmidt Horning’s (2013) observation of musicians’ interest in working outside of cities, *Music Week* reported that those musicians preferring to “commune with nature while working found the smaller, out-of-the-way, studios suddenly very attractive, and Rockfield gradually gained reputation” (Anderson 1975: 32). By circumstance, the Ward brothers could offer clients suitable working conditions (Negus 1992).

The family approach and proclivity toward reinvention that originated with the insight of the Wards’ mother also factored in to the establishment of one of Rockfield’s most important attributes and the catalyst for the studio’s configuration: its conversion to the first “residential” studio. As Gibson (2005: 200) cited an importance of the proximity of residence to studio, given the location, bands recording at Rockfield had nowhere to stay. Musicians initially lodged with the Wards in their family flat in the property’s main house prior to the construction of the formal onsite living accommodations in 1972. During the 1970s and 1980s, Rockfield’s services were “fully residential,” which, for £1200 a day, included onsite accommodations, breakfast and lunch prepared at anytime, a three-course evening meal with waitstaff, daily guest room service and maintenance, an assistant engineer, and 24-hour studio access (Ward 2015). The living areas could accommodate up to 25 people (Rockfield Studios 2015b).

By 1973, both the Coach House and the Quadrangle studios had been converted and were fully operational. Through Rockfield's previous affiliation with producer Roy Thomas Baker, Queen was among the first bands that worked in the Quadrangle. There they recorded both 1974's *Sheer Heart Attack* and 1975's *A Night at the Opera*. The band's recording of "Bohemian Rhapsody" from the latter album stayed at number one on the UK charts for nine straight weeks and was the record that "set us in stone ... it just took off" (Ward 2015).<sup>23</sup> As Watson (2015) highlighted client affiliation and a studio's previous successful projects, these two albums defined Rockfield to the rest of the recording studio sector and were the foundation upon which it could build. In its history since, Kingsley Ward estimated that Rockfield has generated more worldwide sales "than all the other residential studios in the UK put together" (Schultz 1999).<sup>24</sup> Queen's success translated into word of mouth. Rockfield did not advertise, and was rarely featured in the trade press (Ward 2015). Rather, as Gibson (2005) articulates, clients selected the studios based first on who had recorded there and then after learning what they could expect (Ward 2015).

Rockfield sustained its definitive character partly due to its location but also due to consistency in ownership and philosophy, which was intertwined with client expectation (Harris and Burns 2011). Their conceptualization of the "family" was both literal and figurative: it included the members of the Ward family itself but also referred to the stability of their staff. Kingsley Ward, whose role has varied from producer and

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<sup>23</sup> Two artists in particular were key contributors to Rockfield's initial growth and visibility. An early incarnation of Mott the Hoople, known as the Doc Thomas Group, and Welsh musician Dave Edmunds who recorded and charted with the song "I Hear You Knockin." These successes led to an increase in Rockfield's profile and created the opportunity for expansion. Edmunds had additional successes produced at Rockfield, including "Baby I Love You," which reached Number 8 on the UK charts in 1973 and was released on the once-existent Rockfield label.

<sup>24</sup> Among Rockfield's clients during the 1970s and 1980s were Black Sabbath, Motörhead, Del Shannon, Simple Minds, Adam and the Ants, Echo and the Bunnymen, the Waterboys, and Robert Plant.

engineer to overseer, functions as the head of the business; Lisa Ward, his daughter, as the studio manager; her mother Ann as the accountant; and her sister Amanda as the housekeeper (Petrie 2010).<sup>25</sup> Outside of the immediate family, Rockfield employed the same maintenance engineer, Otto, from 1973 until his death in 2013. The original chef worked for 20 years while the current chef has been staffed for 12 years. This consistency extends further to the producers that work at Rockfield, such as Dave Eringa and Sean Genockey who have been recording there for nearly 20 years (Petrie 2010, Ward 2015).

Consistency and family orientation translated into a high level of personal attention offered by the staff to clients, in line with the studio sector's nature as a service industry. Lisa Ward (2015) specified: "our clients absolutely come first. And I think again if we were business minded, we wouldn't be doing this still." Ward placed particular emphasis on discretion and trust at resort studios given the proximity and duration of sessions, which inevitably positions staff and clients within awareness of personal dynamics and the same space. "If you work in a residential recording studio you have to be like the three wise monkeys: see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. What goes on in these four walls stays in these four walls. And they know that and we know that" (ibid.). She emphasized that disclosing confidential information is not worth losing decades of building a reputation. In this way, Ward explained that another factor that ensures the protection of clients is the size and nature of the group of people using resort studios. Highlighting the relational nature of the resort studio's art world, she confirmed that they are "a world within a world...it was a very small industry. Everybody knows everybody else..." (Ward 2015).

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<sup>25</sup> Kingsley and Charles Ward split the Rockfield company 50/50 in 1987.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Rockfield was usually booked nine to ten months in advance (Ward 2015). While bookings remained consistent, the same inflow of business they experienced during that time occurred again in the mid-1990s following the success of Oasis' (*What's the Story*) *Morning Glory?*, which rejuvenated interest in the studio and attracted a new era of rock bands.<sup>26</sup> Rockfield has therefore been able to sustain its business by continuously maintaining and building on the reputation that preceded it. Though they have continued to operate and produce Top 10 albums — e.g. Manic Street Preachers, Coldplay, and Royal Blood — Rockfield's rates have decreased to approximately £800 for the same services. Ward states, though, that now it is rare for any sessions to be “fully residential” due to insufficient budgets. To account for the difference in rates Rockfield has again reinvented itself by diversifying. However, rather than diversify in the traditional manner of recording studios<sup>27</sup> Ward has done so by capitalizing on Rockfield's capacity as a *residential* studio. She rents out the onsite living accommodations to tourists visiting the Welsh valleys, which are usually fully booked most weekends, and can accrue up to £600 per night. Though Rockfield's website provides a link to the “Rockfield Leisure” accommodations (Rockfield Studios 2015a), Ward is careful to the extent she mentions the studios in advertisements in order to deter any risk of interference with client's privacy, continuing its emphasis on client service and family orientation. Being the first residential studio has therefore become the manner in which Rockfield continues to sustain. Though resort studios were seen as potentially problematic for the risk of interference with work, Rockfield continues for its ability to

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<sup>26</sup> Oasis was highly visible in UK media for their association with the Britpop phenomenon from 1993–1997. This album in particular was among the era's most important. Ward (2015), observing their influence, stated that nearly every band that recorded at Rockfield during this time “sounded like Oasis.”

<sup>27</sup> Diversification refers to recording studios expanding their services to include, for example, remote recording, mixing and mastering, commercial work, and video production.

be a site of leisure. However, Ward emphasized the specific importance of Rockfield as a family business as the motivation that underpins their continued efforts, explaining that the studios have a particular personal importance, and likewise, investment. The problematic of the urban studio and leisure has worked in their favour: “It’s how you look at things, isn’t it? When Rockfield first started, what was considered its weakness was the fact that it was 120 miles from London. So who on earth was going to go out there? ... Ultimately it’s absolutely been our strength” (Ward 2015).

### **Le Studio**

Eleven years later and 3,143 miles west, producer and musician André Perry opened a resort studio at the far end of a dirt road in the “civilized wilderness” of Morin Heights, Québec, in the Laurentian Mountains (Melhuish and Pringle 1977: Q-16). *Billboard* called it “one of the most comfortable and up-to-date studio complexes in North America” (Farrell 1980: C-9). The Laurentian Mountain region, approximately one hour north of Montreal, is a popular, all-season tourist destination famous for its ski resorts (see Middleton 2009). Its geography is distinct for its mountains, more than 9,000 lakes, areas for camping and hiking, and an assortment of small towns. With a population of less than 4,000, Morin Heights markets itself on outdoor recreation, 100 miles of ski trails, and its municipal slogan “In harmony with nature” (Morin Heights 2015). Le Studio’s success turned Québec into a central location for the production of internationally marketed popular music (Théberge 1997: 194). However, since 2003, Le Studio has been an abandoned and defunct site.

Perry, along with wife and business partner Yaël Brandeis, built Le Studio next to a private lake on 250 acres of secluded land close to their home on the same property

(Perry 2014). In addition to providing convenient access for his personal projects, Perry foresaw a business opportunity to cater to established musicians of the time by offering them an enjoyable surrounding environment while working. Though Le Studio was constructed nearly a decade after Rockfield was founded, it was not inspired by or based on the character of existent resort studios. Former head engineer of Le Studio, Nick Blagona (2014), who conceptualized and designed the studio with Perry, stated that the two were unaware of the existence of those studios and, simply, thought it would be “really cool to build a studio up in the Laurentian Mountains” (Blagona 2014). In accordance with Le Studio’s frequent description as an “environmental” studio, the studio itself was a sloped-ceiling, hexagonally shaped 32-foot diameter space that featured a set of rectangular windows that overlooked the private lake and trees (Anon 1977b: C-16). In addition, Perry installed a large window in the control room, all of which contributed to a sense of openness in the studio.<sup>28</sup> This architectural design was a distinct contrast to studio conventions for the way it broke with the highly insulated and restricted space described by Hennion (1989) and for how it visually relaxed the physical division between musicians and the technical crew (see Millard 2005). Perry deliberately designed the studio this way in an effort to undo a sense of studio hierarchy and division of labour — the engineer distinct from the artist for being “on the other side of the glass” — that Kealy (1990 [1979]: 182) locates historically and that Williams (2007) describes as an ongoing force with which musicians must contend. Perry was particularly focused on musicians and their experience, and was concerned with giving them control during the recording process (Côté 2015). In this way, he wanted to provide a creative ambiance that

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<sup>28</sup> Other resort studios had similar architecture, such as Escape studios (Anon. 1977a: 48) and Super Bear (Anon. 1977c: 55).

would allow musicians to work according to their own preferences, a decision and philosophy informed by his own career experiences and observations (ibid.).

Perry opened his first studio, Studio André Perry, in Brossard, Québec, in 1962, where he developed a career-long interest in sound production (Côté 2015, see Chapter 3). His technical skills and working style were informed by his experience as a jazz musician, and despite the conventions of the division of labour, he maintained an awareness and sensitivity to musicians working in the studio (ibid.). Perry noticed the apparent tension between the technical staff and musicians, and given his background was able to identify with and earn their respect regardless of his role (ibid.). During this time, he was involved with several key projects that made him visible to the larger industry. In 1967, he designed the video and audio production for Expo Montreal and would later produce the music for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1976 Montreal Olympics. In 1968, he produced Robert Charlebois' *Lindberg*, an important part of Québec's Revolution Tranquille that earned Perry both visibility and respect.<sup>29</sup> However, he attained international recognition by recording "Give Peace a Chance" at John Lennon and Yoko Ono's 1969 Montreal bed-in, after which Lennon included the name and address of Perry's studio on the single's label. In 1970, Perry moved his studio to a church in downtown Montreal. The following year, Blagona returned to Montreal after several years of working in England, and met Perry while making visits to rediscover the local studio scene. After finding limitations in the local and commercial orientation of his projects, and in an effort to engage with work that stimulated and put him closer to the creative aspect of music production, Perry sold the studio in 1972 and

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<sup>29</sup> The Revolution Tranquille was an era of social transformation in Québec. Among the most prominent changes were a move to secularization and the transition to federal and sovereign political parties. See Dickinson and Young (2003).

“took a sabbatical” to reinvent himself (Perry 2014).<sup>30</sup> He turned his attention to Good Noise, his small underground record label, which placed him in New York, France, and Los Angeles, and within the international network of contacts that would be integral to Le Studio’s eventual client base and success.

Perry attracted high-profile clients from the start based both on early advertising (see Chapter 3) and through the contacts he cultivated early in his career.<sup>31</sup> The majority of networking took place from the inside, similar to Ward’s comments on the small and interconnected nature of the studio business (Côté 2015). Perry (2014) qualified this network as a “private club” that was comprised of the exclusive group of people involved in the production of music. This select group of “approximately 2000” people included studio owners, musicians, engineers, artist managers, and various other “show business” personnel. Perry (2014) explained: “We not only respected each other, but a lot of the acts did part of the work in one, part of the work at ours and elsewhere, and at moments where specific artists needed a very special piece of equipment, we would actually send that piece of equipment or vice versa ... how all this came about, all had to do with this private club.” These factors translated into extensive business for Perry and Brandeis, with Le Studio at times booked for up to a year in advance (Côté 2015). *Billboard* noted in 1980 that Perry’s “only problem is that he is booked solid for the next four months.” Demonstrating the operation of this “private club,” Perry observed “it’s embarrassing when you have to turn a client down ... it happens more and more these days. You get a few clients who do repeat business, they tell a few other acts about the studio and next

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<sup>30</sup> Though Perry sold the studio, as part of the arrangement he was given 3,000 hours of studio time. He continued to work in the studio for the next two years on various experimental projects (Côté 2015).

<sup>31</sup> During the 15 years he owned and operated Le Studio, Perry’s clients included David Bowie, the Bee Gees, Rush, Nazareth, April Wine, and the Police, the majority of whom worked there on multiple occasions.

thing you know, you are booked solid” (Farrell 1980: C-9). Despite this consistency in bookings, the studio was not always lucrative, due largely to Perry’s continuous investment in the studio, recording technologies, and generosity to his staff (Perry 2014, Blagona 2014). As well, Perry had a reputation for having exceptional taste and paid particular attention to the “best of the best,” which translated into his acquisition of high-end technology (see Chapter 3), the personal service he offered clients, and the décor and amenities he installed at Le Studio. As such, the studio was expanded and redesigned throughout its existence, and Perry took seriously the maintenance of “André’s Place,” the term he frequently used to describe Le Studio for the way it was designed for and by him but became a home to clients through the comfort and relatability he supplied.<sup>32</sup>

Perry’s role at Le Studio was flexible and varied according to the needs of the client. As many groups brought their own producers, he functioned more as an overseer than an actual producer, though he did take on technical roles at times, was often present at recording sessions, and was highly involved in daily functions. His primary concern was to ensure that clients had what they wanted and needed and then left them alone, preferring to stay out of the process (Côté 2015). As such, any issues that took place amongst the crew were kept separate from clients. Despite the fluidity between the technical and the musical roles at Le Studio, Blagona (2014) portrayed the internal division of labour as a “cruise ship that had stern discipline, but the passengers never knew any of it.” Blagona functioned as the head engineer,<sup>33</sup> and Brandeis was the studio manager who handled all the bookings and financial aspects. Perry also employed a

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<sup>32</sup> See Chapter 3 for more content on Perry’s client service.

<sup>33</sup> Le Studio also had another head engineer, Paul Northfield.

number of assistants who catered to clients in both the studio and residences and, similar to Ward's statements at Rockfield, were required to maintain discretion at all times.

Perry's continuous investment translated into several different projects. In the interest of staying "one step ahead," he expanded the studio in the early 1980s to include a state-of-the-art video suite. The facility became the most profitable aspect of Le Studio, accounting for nearly 90 percent of its business, with projects including a Kennedy Foundation television special, "The Cosby Show," and several CBS titles amongst others (LaPointe 1986: 57–58.). In 1986, Perry and Brandeis turned Le Studio into a public company by trading on the Montreal Stock Exchange, positioning Le Studio André Perry Inc. among the few non-broadcasting companies in the music industry to do so (ibid.). Their purpose was to raise funds to finance a second audio and video complex in Washington, D.C. and another location in San Francisco (ibid., see Canadian Press 1986). In 1989, shifts in the record industry and the cost of the studio's overhead became difficult to maintain (Perry 2014, Blagona 2014). In observing a decline in record sales and the advent of home and computer studios, Perry decided to sell Le Studio as he foresaw an end to the studio business.

In the years that followed, Le Studio gradually transitioned from a prosperous recording facility into an abandoned and vandalized site. The exact details of this progression are somewhat unclear and are told through Perry's and Blagona's peripheral views. Immediately following Perry's departure, the studio experienced financial difficulties, with the more lucrative video facility eventually being repossessed by the bank. Montreal-based live event production company Spectral then bought the audio division and managed the studio until 2003. In Perry's (2014) view, Spectral did not run

Le Studio with the same standard that clients were accustomed to, citing the fact that they were not “creative people” in the same capacity as those affiliated with the studio business. Perry observed neglect on the part of the owners and their failed recognition of the importance of personal attention in the studio’s identity. He noted that throughout their ownership, the studio was not maintained, modified, or upgraded — “they just lived off the reputation ... but then of course they started to lose money” (Perry 2014). In 2003, Spectral sold to the current owners, whose names and affiliations are unknown. Their intention, though as yet unrealized, was to develop the site into a nightclub, spa, and residences. In the time since, the studio’s interior has been stripped, broken into, and vandalized, and the structure has seemingly been abandoned. In recent years, the condition of the site has generated interest and speculation by fans of the musicians who recorded there. Fans of Le Studio’s most frequent client, Rush, have begun visiting the site of the studio, filming videos and reporting on its current status on online fora.<sup>34</sup> These videos and online discussions provide historical documentation and reveal the studio’s current condition to interested parties, thereby extending its lifespan and history through unlikely acts of tourism.

### **AIR Studios Montserrat**

AIR Studios Montserrat was accessible by a seven-and-a-half hour flight from London to Antigua followed by a 27-mile boat ride or flight to the east Caribbean island on which it was situated. Despite its remote geography, which *Music Week* maintained was “easily” accessible given its proximity to Antigua, AIR Studios Montserrat was a leading recording destination and an important site of popular music production from 1979 until

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<sup>34</sup> Websites such as the Facebook page “Sauvegardons Le Studio” and YouTube’s Le Studio Channel are among the sites maintained for and by fans. The Le Studio Channel features a documentary on the history and condition of Le Studio titled *Le Studio — Temple of Sound*.

it was destroyed by Hurricane Hugo in 1989 (Anderson 1979: 43, Cherry, Ryzewski, and Pecoraro 2013: 181). The 40-square-mile island was eleven miles long and seven miles wide, with a population of approximately 12,000 inhabitants employed as farmers, cotton pickers, and lime growers (McCullaugh 1979a: 57, Dean 1986: 12). In the same way that Hennion (1989) linked calm to the creative work environment, AIR Studios Montserrat was described as having “an over-powering sense of peace and amity — all the right ambience for the creation of great music” (George Martin Music 2011). This was reflective of Montserrat’s landscape, which consisted of tropical mountains and volcanic black sand beaches. The island received 62 inches of rainfall annually with temperatures that ranged from 74 to 87 degrees Fahrenheit year round (Anon. 1980a: M-3). Though it was situated in the Caribbean, an area generally known as a desirable tourist destination, the island of Montserrat itself was not among the frequented locations. The island had no high-rise hotels or tourist attractions, did not feature a vibrant nightlife, was the least visited of the islands, and musicians were reportedly surprised by its tranquility (McCullaugh 1979b: 41). The local tourist board summarized its quality by stating that there “time has gone to sleep” (ibid.).<sup>35</sup>

Martin constructed AIR Studios Montserrat based on his frustration by the “many distractions in the path of successful recording in major cities” (Cherry, Ryzewski, and Pecoraro 2013: 184). He also developed it as a secondary location for AIR Studios London. Martin started AIR<sup>36</sup> following his departure from EMI in 1965, and it became one of the most successful studios in the world. Eventually, the studio became so busy

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<sup>35</sup> Compass Point Studios was in a similar position. Though located in the Bahamas “within sight of the sea at a palm-fringed site,” it was at a significant distance from the tourist destination of New Providence Island and 20 minutes from Nassau (Hunter 1979: 42).

<sup>36</sup> AIR stands for Associated Independent Recording.

that he was unable to schedule time to work there himself, and found he was working at other studios abroad with greater frequency. In combination with these practical reasons, he became interested in opening a second studio that would be situated outdoors (Anon. 1980a: M-3). The idea for and development of AIR Studios Montserrat evolved over several years and across multiple conceptualizations. The initial idea was based on a reimagined version of a recording studio — a studio on a boat. This project was discussed in *Music Week* during the mid-1970s and its realization was initially presented as both likely and viable. John Burgess, who became co-owner of AIR Studios Montserrat, discussed the practical issues of such a project, highlighting the “various technical problems to overcome,” most notably the sound, which he stated would have to be acoustically acceptable but involved the problem of external noise prevention (Anon. 1974: 57). He estimated that the boat would need to weigh about 450 tons and be serviceable both for long voyages and recording, though recording would not have actually taken place while sailing (ibid.). The idea motivating the design was to offer clients a chance to combine their recording sessions with a family vacation during which they could hire the boat studio to sail for a set period, and then dock it to record. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 3, the fundamental concept of this model, through its intersection of work and leisure, was not unlike part of the function of the resort studio.

The boat studio ultimately did not come to fruition, but its underlying features can be seen as informing the development of AIR Studios Montserrat, and as offering early promotion for the way it kept the industry aware of Martin’s plans for a new studio project. Martin considered several other locations before selecting Montserrat. Hawaii was among his top choices, but was deemed too far for European clients; Canada was of

interest but presented too many tax issues; and Mexico was a possibility but was “too disorganized” (Anon. 1980a: M-10). In exploring the Caribbean, Martin sought an inexpensive and remote, quiet environment (ibid.). Upon visiting Montserrat in 1977, he became enamoured with the island and chose it because it was “the first place I’d come to which seemed to be together as a people” (McCullaugh 1979b: 41).

AIR Studios Montserrat was built on a 30-acre site situated on a 500-foot ridge, and the recording studio itself was 40 X 30 with a 28 X 24 control room. Martin invested approximately £800,000 in the studio, which was co-owned by Burgess, former London studio manager Dave Harries, and engineer Geoff Emerick, who also helped design the studio and select equipment (see Chapter 3). The island location presented several inconveniences. Due to the studio’s logistics, technological repairs were handled from Florida, which was 900 miles away. Given the unavailability of a local piano tuner, Martin had to bring in personnel from Antigua twice a week to service their Bosendorfer. Montserrat was also plagued by regular power interruptions, but the studio utilized a standby generator in those instances (Crump 1982: 82). In addition, the studio initially had to contend with sonic booms from the Concorde’s Paris to Caracas route prior to a change in its flight path (ibid.).

Martin was a prominent figure as both producer and owner of the studio. In recording at AIR Studios Montserrat, rock band Cheap Trick praised Martin and engineer Emerick: “We’d tell ‘em what sound we want, and one minute later we’d have it. George Martin would say, ‘Don’t do that, Geoff; you make it look too simple.’ It’s up in his head ... He knows how to get it” (Robbins 1980). Martin became the world’s “most famous record producer” through his work with the Beatles, playing an important role as

producer, arranger, and performer in their career (Oxford 2015, Laing 2015). He acquired much of his knowledge while working at Parlophone in the early 1950s as an “Artistes & Recording” manager (Grundy and Tobler 1982). His role initially involved tasks associated with the “factory” nature of the industry. Kealy (1990 [1979]: 175) described the responsibilities of the “administrative supervisor” of recording sessions as handling contractual arrangements, coordinating work, ensuring the adherence of budgets and schedules, and choosing music appropriate for the target audience.<sup>37</sup> Martin likewise gained experience in artist management and signing, which in turn gave him access to understanding contracts and handling payments. As well, he booked musicians and studios, and while there, his role involved the responsibility to “exert some critical assessment over the music” (ibid.). Given his duties, he spent a significant amount of time in the recording studio, during an era when the position of the A&R manager transitioned to an increasingly creative role — from which the more common concept of the producer emerged. Martin took creative risks by pushing for new directions and difference from one recording to the next. As Grabher (2001: 1329–1331) identified interpersonal skills as integral to building reputation, Martin was commended for his ability to negotiate group dynamics given his experience with the Beatles. His view of the working process was to “lead rather than drive ... allow the artist to think that he thought of whatever it was in the first place without taking credit” (Grundy and Tobler 1982). He understood the artist as more important than the producer, emphasizing the latter’s role to “build” the former up: “if you have a good idea, try to make him think of it” (ibid.). Following his orientation to the business, technical, and creative dimensions of music

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<sup>37</sup> Kealy’s description of the administrative supervisor is aligned with the title “Artists & Repertoire.” In this way, some of Martin’s experience, from the early 1950s, historically pre-dates Kealy’s observations.

production, after “a great deal of pressure from me,” Martin was influential and integral to producers receiving credits on albums, a turning point from the set pay granted to technical staff at the time regardless of a recording’s success (ibid., Kealy 1990 [1979]: 175).

Despite his experience, Martin expressed trepidation in building AIR Studios Montserrat. Rather than a general concern with the potential difficulties of the studio business, he admitted that it “does take a certain amount of courage to say ‘I am going to build a very advanced complex on an island that nobody has ever heard of’” (Anon. 1980a: M-3). In wanting to avoid advertising prior to the project being further developed, many of the early bookings were secured by word of mouth, though he eventually hosted multiple high-profile events to celebrate and advertise its opening (Anon. 1980a: M-12). As well, Martin could rely on the existence and success of AIR Studios London and his recognition for added exposure.

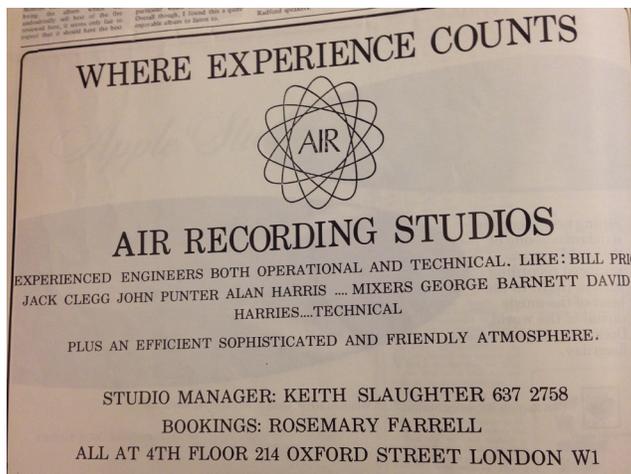


Figure 3

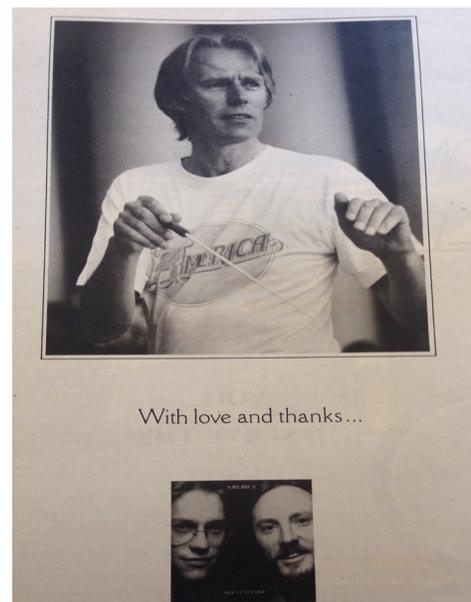


Figure 4

By employing the phrase “Where Experience Counts,” the 1972 advertisement for AIR Studios London (Figure 3) confirms its existent reputation while suggesting this

experience leads to further success. The 14 years of this studio's lifespan prior to the founding of the Montserrat studio can be understood as creating name recognition in the pages of the trade press and through musicians' experiences there. Martin's decision to employ word-of-mouth tactics in the studio's early days even indicates that he was already able to base it on the existence of the AIR brand, and that there was an accessible and interested "private club." The second advertisement (Figure 4) appeared in *Music Week* in 1980, a year into AIR Studios Montserrat's operation, as a way to congratulate the band America on their recent album. Though part of a larger advertorial section, it is striking that Martin's name does not appear and his presence alone suffices. This image also suggests a sense of relatability and support between Martin and the artist, with the former wearing the group's shirt and the latter thanking him. As well, it reinforces Martin's and AIR's reputation through America's success, as Watson (2015) argues for the experience of clients and through the previous successful projects a studio has produced. However, the image also reminds viewers of Martin's authority and role as a producer. In this way, Martin's concerns were unfounded.

Throughout AIR Studios Montserrat's lifespan many high-profile musicians recorded important albums there, and the studio had a strong repeat clientele (Cherry, Ryzewski, and Pecoraro 2013: 183).<sup>38</sup> The studio had a minimum two-week booking and in 1981, received 34 weeks of bookings plus two-week local projects scheduled in between (Crump 1982: 82).<sup>39</sup> Clients were encouraged to contact AIR Studios Montserrat before arriving in order for the studio to secure extra equipment or attend to specific

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<sup>38</sup> Among AIR Studios Montserrat's clients and recordings were Jimmy Buffett's *Volcano*, the Police's *Ghost in the Machine* and *Synchronicity*, Elton John's *Too Low for Zero*, Dire Straits' *Brothers in Arms*, Duran Duran's *Rio*, Black Sabbath's *The Eternal Idol*, and the Rolling Stones' *Steel Wheels*.

<sup>39</sup> Le Studio also had sessions in between major bookings that were either free or offered at significantly reduced rates to support local talent (Perry 2014).

needs (McCullaugh 1979b: 61). While visiting artists were surprised by the island's tranquility, the money generated by the studio was a contrast locally. (Crump 1982: 78) The island's government had an annual budget of just over \$5 million at the time, while the studio's parent company, Chrysalis/AIR, had an income close to \$100 million (ibid.).<sup>40</sup> At \$18,000 a week, the studio generated more revenue than the majority of industry sectors on the island (ibid.). In addition, the presence of musicians throughout the 1980s contributed to the income of residents and visibility for the island (Cherry, Ryzewski, and Pecoraro 2013: 184).

In September 1989, Category 4 Hurricane Hugo directly hit the island of Montserrat, significantly damaging a large portion of its buildings and effectively destroying AIR Studios Montserrat (Berke and Beatley 1997: 82–116). Early reports from *Billboard* indicated that the studio seemed to have survived the storm, but proved to be speculation (Nunziata 1989: 93). The structure of the studio was not irreversibly impaired, but when Martin visited six weeks later, he realized the extent of the damage to the equipment and the effects of prolonged power outages in a Caribbean climate, thereby forcing it to close (ibid., BBC 2011). Though the studio no longer functions, Martin continues to maintain the property and be involved with the island of Montserrat, having built a cultural and community centre which provided a “much needed focal point to help the re-generation of the island” (AIR Studios 2015). The studio is now “rapidly succumbing to irreversible tropical decay and will quite possibly be overwhelmed by volcanic ash” (Cherry, Ryzewski, and Pecoraro 2013: 190). However, it remains a significant site in the collective imagination of fans that visit — both in person and

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<sup>40</sup> Chrysalis' involvement with the studio was eventually bought out by Geoff Emerick.

virtually on the internet — and collect found objects to preserve and experience the meaning they associate with the music recorded there.

### **Analysis**

Each of these studios participated in the broader trend toward ambiance and environment outlined in *Music Week* by being situated in isolated locations — Rockfield in the Welsh valleys, Le Studio in the Laurentian Mountains, and AIR Studios Montserrat on a Caribbean island. In this way, the owners actively engaged their responsibility in considering the comfort of the musician (Negus 1992), while also confronting the locations as a potential problem given the centrality of the urban studio. The manner in which these studios — and thereby resort studios more generally — became isolated, remote workplaces occurred through a variety of circumstances. Rockfield developed as a convenient alternative to traveling to London; Le Studio was built as a combination home studio-business venture to fulfill Perry's career interest; and AIR Studios Montserrat was the product of Martin's need for a second studio and his specific interest in the island. This collection is further evidence of Schmidt Horning's (2013) observation of musicians' interest in working away from the city. Rockfield's appeal to musicians desiring to work amongst nature, Perry's and Blagona's unawareness of the existence of other resort studios, Martin's particular desire for an outdoor studio in addition to the prominence of isolated imagery in his advertisements demonstrates the more generalized trend. It also supports the importance of this type of location for working musicians and suggests a link between isolation and successful music production. The 16 years, thousands of miles, and distinct circumstances that separated their founding exhibits the

longitude of the conditions of the resort studio's emergence, and highlights the range of possibilities that occurred with the globalized nature of the studio.

Within these isolated and remote locations, the use of these studios and the philosophy of their owners were marked by a blurred division of labour and reflected the entrepreneurial nature of the studio (see Kealy 1990 [1979]). All three participated in and contributed to this type of division of labour, having learned both the technical and creative sides of the studio business in varying degrees, and all identified as musicians. This self-identification was important for the way it informed their orientation to creating the conditions of the resort studio environment. These factors are particularly significant given that studios are “privileged to the most intimate moments of musical creativity and emotive performance,” a product generated by the interaction of musicians and studio personnel (Watson 2015: 4). Each owner drew on and was informed by his past experiences while combining it with the technical roles and service orientation of the resort studio, but each did so in disparate ways. The Ward brothers transitioned from their role as musicians to studio owners, engineers, and producers. Perry directly engaged in the merging of the creative and the technical from his early career and continued to do so by placing musicians in control as part of his working practice. His dissatisfaction with studio hierarchy informed his architectural decisions in the studio and reflected his sensitivity to the musicians' workplace. Martin's emphasis on the centrality of the artist in the production process mirrors Perry's focus on foregrounding the musician. In addition, his direct involvement draws on Hennion's (1989) producer-as-intermediary and suggests an element of authority and interaction that the others do not.

Martin, like all others, identified as “basically a musician” who “learned a little about engineering purely from experience” (Grundy and Tobler 1982). As with many entrepreneurial producers (see Théberge 2003), Martin was never trained as an engineer, but gained knowledge from his time spent in recording studios. In this way, the evolution of Martin’s career and professional identity — from the “factory”-style industry to his influence on producers receiving royalties — embody the same qualities that Kealy (1990 [1979]: 177) defines as combining technical responsibilities with the roles of “salesman and producer of hit recordings.” These three figures demonstrate a spectrum of experience at the time of each studio’s founding, with the most polarizing being the Wards compared to Martin: two brothers raised on a farm with limited industry experience compared to the quintessential entrepreneurial producer. Perry, though he had credit and experience, did not achieve Martin’s level or have the same visibility. He arguably based his professional identity on this model, however, as an extension of Martin’s pioneering development of the entrepreneurial producer role. Though each arrived to this position differently, they drew on the same conventions in the studio.

The blurred division of labour and role of studio owners were a foundation for the reputation that would be produced and become affiliated with each (see Zafirau 2008). Musicians define good service based on the personnel’s ability to be helpful, supportive, and sensitive (Watson 2015: 185). This “service ethic” in the studio sector, highlighted by Ward (2015), where musicians receive priority and have aesthetic input aligned with the independent studio and was common during this time (Leyshon 2009; Watson 2015: 35).<sup>41</sup> Rockfield began to gain visibility through the Ward’s affiliation with Joe Meek and

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<sup>41</sup> Kealy (1990 [1979]: 179) also notes how the rock star became the “ultimate arbiter” in defining what qualified as a “good” record.

their own status on the local music scene. As Watson (2015: 178) noted the positive effect of a studio's initial commercial success on its reputation, Queen provided the studio with name recognition. This was further developed by the family orientation and reliability of its service — stability that created the “swift trust” that Grabher (2001: 1331, see Watson 2015) outlines by aligning Rockfield's staff with their particular tasks to develop a dependable expectation for clients.

Le Studio was shaped and affected by Perry's reputation, first through the network of contacts he fostered, a key factor identified by Zafirau (2008), and later through the quality that he invested in the studio. His “private club” extended the art world of Le Studio and the resort studio more generally, and shows a collective involvement on the part of the broader industry. However, in this way, as it is subject to those with access, it can be understood as both influential and binding. Perry can be understood as remaining dependent on that network to attract business, though legitimately developed a reputation of his own both because of them and through his own service at Le Studio. Ward's and Perry's sensitivity to discretion mirrors Watson's (2015: 55–56) observation that lengthy projects foster close relations between musicians and staff. This places importance on staff to understand how to work with a variety of personalities and manage problems with emotional labour. Ward implied and Perry made clear the regulation of their emotions for the benefit of clients and in maintaining an appropriate demeanour, while Martin was recognized for his ability to negotiate client relations (57). This personal attention and skill set are considered more important than accurately handling technical roles and equipment (Watson 2015: 54).

However, neither the Wards' nor Perry's name had the same recognition as Martin's, who could rely on his own history and previous studio successes — and speculations — to interest the same set of established musicians. Martin's early apprehension combined with AIR Studios Montserrat's success draws attention to the potential influence of branding — “the forging of links and image and perception between a range of products” — in his studio's business (Lury 1993: 87; see Longhurst 2007). Martin and AIR Studios London were visible and reputable brands by the time AIR Studios Montserrat was founded and, in this way, branding was the result of both AIR Studios London's existent success and Martin's reputation and legacy. All of these factors suggest that reputation can be more important than location and foregrounds reputation as among the significant considerations for the selection of a studio.

As outlined, resort studios were able to expand and were used consistently during times of decreased investment in recording and more general lulls in music revenue, as well as catering to both established and unknown musicians. As Gibson (2005: 203) stated, the “days of recording company-funded jaunts to overseas, exotic locations, with extensive budgets are effectively over” and in this way, when they were viable, it was for particular reasons. Given these conflicts, the role of reputation in these case studies provide some insight into how resort studios functioned this way and were accessible to a variety of clients. The factors described shape each resort studio's reputation, the “stabilizing feature” that can be seen as bridging the broader downturns in the studio and music industries in the 1970s and 1980s. Rockfield's reputation was built through word of mouth and the success of clients that worked there, though of particular importance was its consistency in staff and reliable family environment combined with the personal

investment that the Ward family placed into their business. Le Studio's reputation was built through Perry's membership to the "private club" and the personal attention and sensitivity to musicians he developed that created trust and encouraged repeat clientele (Zafirau 2008). As Watson (2015: 106) states that "chains of repeated cooperation are held together, or indeed cut-off, by the reputation members gained, or lost, in previous collaborations," the significance of this to Perry's operation was made highly visible for the way Le Studio's quality and business began to deteriorate with his decision to sell. AIR Studios Montserrat's reputation was directly intertwined with branding, made visible by Martin's image in advertisements that imply familiarity and instant recognition. In this way, Martin problematizes Grabher's (2001) argument that personnel become associated with tasks as opposed to personalities — Martin was very much a central figure and one whose distinct identity can be understood as integral to his studio's reputation and operation. The stabilizing feature of reputation that assisted resort studios with business despite broader industry trends overlaps with the key elements of their lifespans and, as such, the functionality and relational aspect of their art worlds. The importance of family to Rockfield, the private club to Le Studio, and Martin's brand to AIR Studios Montserrat can be seen as informing the manner in which these studios developed and continued — or did not. As well, these factors also define the particular nature of the collective action of music production for each studio, illuminating their individual qualities amongst more general patterns.

Despite clear distinctions in lifespans — Rockfield continues to exist, Le Studio is defunct due to unclear business dealings, and AIR Studios Montserrat was destroyed by an act of nature — the role of tourism extends these studios' histories. Contrary to

Gibson's (2005: 204) assertion that only studios located in well-known cities are probable to take advantage of tourism, Rockfield continues to exist and compensate for declined rates by way of its ability to provide leisure-seekers with accommodations. In later years, the inconvenience that prompted its development would be the factor that contributed to its livelihood. Fans' engagement with the sites of Le Studio and AIR Studios Montserrat demonstrates, on one hand, an extension and continued association of the perception of resort studios. On the other, in their defunct states, fans' attention preserves and extends these studios' history and lifespan. Therefore, the impression of tourism that was thought to be a potential detractor in their use has sustained their visibility in their demise, whether in business operations or in the collective consciousness of music fans. The continued role of tourism also extends the ability for these studios to be "resorts" for how it is another *alternative* use in their lifespans and histories.

### **Conclusion**

The brief overview of each of these case studies demonstrates the resort studio as a legitimate business. These three studios, and the many other resort studios that were founded at the time, make visible the set of "atypical" studios that Watson (2015) failed to specify. However, their number and contributions to popular music, in cohesion with Negus' (1992) inclusion of their features as amongst recording studio norms, indicates that "atypical" is an insufficient descriptor. Rather, resort studios were amongst the typical studio configurations that followed in a continuum that differed from traditional urban studios but were utilized with as much frequency at varying times. The diversified locations of these three studios demonstrate the extent of the possibilities created by the relatively standardized 24-track studio and the globalized network of the recording studio

(Théberge 2004). They confirm that successful recording studios can and do operate in areas outside of major cities and do not depend, as Gibson (2005) and Watson (2015) suggest, on the influx of business from the city for support. These factors, along with resort studios' repeat clientele, reinforce the importance of the "magic" of a particular studio's room that Gibson (2005) describes by highlighting the willingness of musicians to travel to remote and exotic locations to record an album.

The case studies presented in this chapter have been selected to show several specific aspects of the broader resort studio phenomenon. The detailed description of their individual characteristics reveals elements of their unique histories while also providing a collection of general patterns. Through these studies, I have aimed to show how resort studios were marked by diversity in ownership and operation and suggest that the individual success and lifespan of each was the product of its own personnel and circumstances. With the support of their individual reputation, each of these case studies contains elements that support how they existed despite shifts in the music industry, in addition to what the nature of their success or demise reveals about the studios defining qualities. The character of each shows in application some of the conditions of the resort studio's emergence while emphasizing the importance of social elements in these studios' existence. While the background of the owners inspired the design and was integral to the success and demise of these resort studios, I will next show how the particular conditions they created defined the studio as a configuration for the way it brought work and leisure onto the same grounds.

## Chapter 3

### Creating Conditions: Work and Leisure at the Resort Studio

George Martin described the resort studio as a paradox. Echoing the concern of the trade press, he captured the potentially problematic perception of his island paradise studio by articulating a possible reaction: “Oh God, the artist will spend all his time on the beach” (McCullaugh 1979b: 61). Yet, Martin’s experience revealed the contrary to be true: “I’ve found that groups work *faster* here than in a town studio ... people know what they can do here and they are efficient when they are in the studio. They might spend the morning on the beach but work from two until midnight in the studio with an hour off for dinner” (ibid.). Jimmy Buffett even finished prior to the originally scheduled end date of his sessions (ibid.). Martin described how the impression of the resort studio is offset by the reality of the work experience there. Despite the possibility of distraction, musicians worked more efficiently and structured their leisure time accordingly. His comments reflect the complex organization of the resort studio for how it brought work and leisure onto the same grounds, but also describe how this design foregrounded work. His comments additionally illuminate how the resort studio’s use further confuses musicians’ work as play (Kraft 1996).

In this chapter, I provide a sample and summary of my findings regarding the working and living arrangements at resort studios, and the factors that contributed and were the product of this type of studio configuration. I argue that resort studios were alternative and inclusive creative work environments whose use blurred the distinction between work and leisure but created conditions that emphasized fostering work in the recording studio. I demonstrate how the geographic, social, and physical isolation of

resort studios, including the working, living, and recreational accommodations, created these conditions. In characterizing the resort studio as among the significant historical configurations, I highlight the function of their various components. I suggest that the recording studio itself was the major *purpose* of the resort studio; the onsite living accommodations, as convenient products of their geographic locations, were the *key factors* in facilitating the conditions that marked them, through the manner in which they created 24-hour access to the studio and surrounding environment. The important role of each of the work and leisure facilities made this intersection the *defining characteristic* of resort studios. I suggest that the act of going away to work renders them “destination workplaces” that depended upon existing in “temporary isolation” (Théberge 2004: 772). This means that as a studio configuration, “the resort studio” should be understood as inclusive of its living *and* working facilities, as both aspects were integral to the functioning of the whole. This consideration highlights how the design and use of resort studios created ambiguities between the structure of work and leisure while also reinforcing them. Consistent with the broad themes of this thesis, these factors foreground the social process involved in music production, and illuminate this process as one that extends beyond an industrial context. This discussion further aligns the resort studio within the studio continuum and history, and provides additional insight into how the resort studio operated as a product of the global network of music production.

I will begin with a discussion on the recording studio facilities common to resort studios, to serve in part as historical documentation of their features and use by clientele while also identifying the studio as the focal point of these workplaces. Next, I will discuss the environments in which resort studios were located in relation to their

geography and as isolated spaces. This will lead to an overview of the living accommodations and the importance of creating a home atmosphere to the musicians' work experience. I will then discuss the features of the working process at the resort studio. These attributes lead to the formation of conditions that serve as the basis for my analysis of the intersection of work and leisure, which I argue to be the defining characteristic of the resort studio as well as a factor that contributes to the ideological confusion surrounding musicians' work as play.

### **The Main Purpose: "They Can Create at Their Own Leisure"**

Nick Blagona's (2014) description of the working style at Le Studio indicates a flexible, pressure-free approach to the recording process. As Negus (1992) argues, the recording studio itself is the first and most important consideration for musicians in their selection of a place to record. Owners and observers of resort studios supported this argument.

André Perry (2014) viewed the "environmental" location as secondary: "it doesn't matter where they are, first thing, it's gotta be great. These studios, that have always made it at my level, have always been great ... they could've been anywhere else." Schmidt

Horning (2013: 203), like Watson (2015), linked the likelihood of where an artist chose to record as being associated with where successful records were made — which was usually correlated with the studio's technology. Perry's statement seems to undermine the role of the environment and other features of resort studios while distinguishing and identifying them first and foremost as workplaces.<sup>42</sup> They also align a studio's success with the technologies it offers clients. To maintain this, resort studio owners and engineers, per industry norms, made significant investments into upgrading and

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<sup>42</sup> In a similar view, Ridge Farm owner Frank Andrews recognized the importance of and invested in the studio's recreational amenities, though he minimized them as "extras" that are "peripheral to the studio," and clarified that what "really counts" are the recording facilities (Anon. 1983b: 24–25, Anon. 1984: 36–39).

maintaining recording technologies. As the studio became central to the creation of music, access to studio technology became a focal point of competition amongst producers and studio owners (Schmidt Horning 2013: 204). Current, state-of-the-art equipment has long been understood as a requisite to the success of a recording studio, and resort studios generally participated in this trend. Of the various pieces of equipment found in a recording studio, the most important is the console, which is understood as the “organizational center” of a studio’s control room (Zak 2001: 118).<sup>43</sup> The design and quality of consoles, among the most significant being Trident Triad, Solid State Logic, and Neve, became increasingly important in addition to becoming significant investments for studio owners (see Meintjes 2003, Schmidt Horning 2013).<sup>44</sup>

In their design of Le Studio, Perry (2014) and Blagona (2014) selected particular pieces of equipment, on one hand, because of the former’s interest in recording technologies designed by forward-thinking research, and on the other, because “they were the best that money could buy.” As mentioned in Chapter 2, Perry built a reputation for keeping at the forefront of technology and was preoccupied with capturing the best sound (Côté 2015). He was an early user of the Trident Triad console, a company with whom he worked directly in its design, and brought the first Solid State Logic console to Canada. In addition, he was among the first to use digital technology in the studio. The trade press noticed Perry’s and Blagona’s efforts, highlighting the facilities’ technical specifics and mentioning the frequency with which Le Studio was tested and upgraded,

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<sup>43</sup> For a recent example of the significance and centrality of the console, see Dave Grohl’s documentary *Sound City* (2013).

<sup>44</sup> Though an in-depth overview of technological specifications is beyond the scope of this project, resort studios broadly utilized the most important and influential technologies of their era, and studio owners were at times the pioneers of using specific equipment. By the early 1980s, Solid State Logic consoles became nearly ubiquitous at resort studios, with Ridge Farm, the Manor, Farmyard Studios, Park Gates, Jacob’s Studios, and Wool Hall all installing them (Anon. 1983b, 24–25, Anon. 1980e: 30–31, Evans and Anderson 1982: 23, Anon. 1983c: 13, Anon. 1984: 39–39, Anon. 1986: 1–4).

all of which can be seen as important for its business (Anon. 1977b: C-16). In a similar pioneering move, Martin commissioned a custom-designed 52-input Neve console for AIR Studios Montserrat.<sup>45</sup> *Music Week* described the console as having “highly unusual, if not unique, features,” given its extensive audio bandwidth and custom equalizers (Anderson 1978a: 56). The Neve company enthused that the commissioned console produced “the best Neve sound yet” while Martin and his clients were verbal in the press about being among the first to experiment with it (ibid.).

While these instances demonstrate efforts to stay current or ahead of contemporary technology, to both service and appeal to the interests of studio owners and clientele, there were times when owners found other options more viable. In 2003, Kingsley Ward installed two vintage analog consoles at Rockfield. The Coach House features a Neve 8128 non-automated customized 48-channel inline console made in 1984, and the Quadrangle’s console is a 42-input MCI 500 series inline from 1976 (Rockfield Studios 2015b). With the proliferation of Pro Tools, Ward viewed large automated consoles as undesirable to clients, and saw advantage in smaller, vintage consoles that were easier to maintain, less expensive to run, and, in his view, sounded better. In this way, he identified having “reinvented ourselves once again” by going “backwards” with the installation of these consoles (Harris and Burns 2011). Lisa Ward (2015) further elaborated that the desks were selected for both financial and aesthetic reasons. Kingsley was uninterested in spending the money to fully upgrade to digital equipment — though both studios are equipped with Pro Tools and various digital options for clients — and selected the more affordable analog consoles instead. In choosing this path, he created an

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<sup>45</sup> Neve was among the most influential and innovative producers of consoles during this time, with a reputation for “flexibility and sound quality virtually unparalleled by any other manufacturer” (see Théberge 2003).

appeal to Rockfield by providing access to vintage equipment to clients interested in working with analog while also offering digital options (Ward 2015). However, rather than going “backwards” he was participating in a broader trend: the nostalgia for vintage equipment that developed in response to widespread conversion to digital technologies (see Théberge 2012).<sup>46</sup> These patterns, consistent with many studios at the time, indicates that resort studios, in general, foregrounded staying current, being competitive, and participating in broader technological trends which assisted in acquiring and maintaining clientele. This serves to connect resort studios to the historical continuum and broader studio history by aligning it with common trends and shifts in the industry.

In addition to their technical specifications, resort studios fostered particular working conditions and serviced clientele, and each functioned as a “social technology” (Théberge 1997: 160). The resort *studios* were “great” for their ability to cater to a diverse clientele as well as for their 24-hour operation, both made possible by the advent of multitrack recording and the working practices developed in relation (see Théberge 1989, 2004). Perry (2014) noted that most artists at Le Studio used the recording studio as an instrument and experimented with and wrote their material in the studio itself. This method was utilized in the various genres of music popular at the time of the resort studio’s emergence, including rock and disco.<sup>47</sup> Disco was characterized by the dominant presence of the bass drum, often a drum machine, and followed a stable beat, in addition to using various effects and synthesizers (Brackett 2015). Théberge (1989: 99, see 2012) confirms that multitrack and its associated working practices developed alongside rock

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<sup>46</sup> This nostalgia for vintage equipment is also a major theme in Grohl’s *Sound City* (2013) and provides insight into the relationship musicians have with these technologies.

<sup>47</sup> Kealy (1990 [1979]: 178), citing Horowitz (1972) notes the influence of multitrack technology and the associated working practices on rock musicians as they realized that the division between sound engineering and music making had diminished. See Zak (2001) for an in-depth overview of rock music production and aesthetics, and Warner (2003) for a continuation into the digital age.

music's artistic and technical needs, but also informed its aesthetics and practice.<sup>48</sup> Frith (1983: 36) points to rock's blending of an emphasis on skill and technique with the romantic concept of art as original, individualized, and sincere. The priority of musicianship and the individual runs directly into conflict with disco's technologized, "artificial" production as well as its communal, participatory conventions (Warner 2003: 4–5). While the practices associated with multitrack may have created changes for rock music, they served as the foundation for disco. Disco was the first popular music to be developed in the multitrack studio by producers and engineers (Théberge 2003: 643). In contrast to Schmidt Horning's (2013: 206–207) argument that the recording studio was marked by competition and conflict over musical ideologies and the studio's purpose, though rock and disco utilized different aesthetics and conventions<sup>49</sup> both centralized the studio as a workplace and contributed to its use and understanding as an *instrument*. Therefore, in the creative work environment the resort *studio* can be understood as the end-point, the location where work was done.

The important role of technology in the studio business showed through the resort studio's diverse clientele. Demonstrating the studio's transferability and the creative possibilities in popular music production that followed multitrack recording, clients ranged from classic and progressive rock bands such as Queen, Bad Company, Elton John, Pink Floyd, and Rush, to disco and soul artists including the Bee Gees, Grace Jones, Stevie Wonder, and Toots and the Maytalls, in addition to new wave and pop groups including the Police and Frankie Goes to Hollywood (Schmidt Horning 2013: see

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<sup>48</sup> The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* is regarded as among the early significant works created with multitrack; Schmidt Horning (2013: 205) notes how it inspired musicians to experiment with their own recording techniques.

<sup>49</sup> An in-depth discussion on the aesthetics and conventions of rock and disco is outside the scope of this project. See Dyer (1990 [1979]), Brackett (2015), Keightley (2001), Moore (2001), and Fast (2015).

Chapter 7).<sup>50</sup> Resort studios were accessible to a range of clientele not only due to a willingness to participate in industry standards and cutting-edge technology, but deliberate decisions by studio owners about audio and architectural design. They offered clients *flexibility* — technologically, through the service orientation of the owners and engineers, and through 24-hour access — and, as such, could support the aesthetic interests of a variety of genres, working practices, as well as offer diverse sonic possibilities.

The objective of resort studio owners was to have sufficient resources to create any type of sound the client desired — and one that was indistinguishable to the specific studio. By this time, acoustic design in studios was no longer based on an “an appreciation of studio recording as aesthetically desirable in itself” (Kealy 1990 [1979]: 176, see Cogan and Clarke 2003, Millard 2005). The driving force in the production process was therefore the multitrack equipment rather than the studio itself. As Théberge (2003: 642) explains, the advent of artificial reverberation and the engineer’s stronger abilities to control audio characteristics downgraded the significance of the “studio as a room with its own unique acoustic properties” and resort studios were designed in line with this direction.<sup>51</sup> This interest directly shaped Perry’s acoustic design for Le Studio. He wanted to prevent an association with a “signature sound” and during Le Studio’s initial development experimented with acoustics extensively. “I always felt that even then the time had come in technology that we didn’t have to be associated with a sound,” he explained. Rather, he “wanted a place that was able, like a Ferrari, to run at 200 miles an

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<sup>50</sup> Though not in relation to the group’s recording at a resort studio, Warner (2003) provides a lengthy discussion on Frankie Goes to Hollywood’s recording process.

<sup>51</sup> It should be noted that many resort studios had specific acoustic qualities and possibilities, such as natural echo chambers and the ability to record outdoors. They should not, however, be aligned or confused with the “makeshift” studios of the 1950s and 1960s (see Cogan and Clark 2003).

hour and yet idle in front of the bank for three hours. I wanted something that would cover every need in the audio” (Perry 2014). Perry’s challenge became assembling a “system” versatile enough to prevent any association between the studio or equipment with a sound. Perry articulated pride in the ability to listen to 60 albums recorded and produced at the studio without distinguishing a consistent sound.<sup>52</sup> An example of Le Studio’s versatility occurred during the recording of the Bee Gee’s *Children of the World* in 1973. The group was working between Le Studio and Criteria Recording Studios in Miami, the latter often associated for its recordings of Latin and disco artists, and as having what Perry (2014, see Cogan and Clarke 2003) described as a “very round ... bubbly” sound. At the time of the sessions the sound at Le Studio had been configured to be “a lot brighter” based on the settings and use by the previous client (Perry 2014). During work on the voiceovers, one of the group members realized they would have to return to Criteria to mix the album because they could not achieve the same sound at Le Studio. In line with Schmidt Horning’s (2013) historical observation on the tendency for engineers to indulge musicians, during the night, Perry enlisted the technical crew to adjust the studio settings. When the Bee Gees returned the next morning, they discovered that Le Studio now sounded like Criteria, and stayed there to mix the album (Perry 2014). The ability to do this was assisted by Perry’s arrangement of studio staff. His employment of technical crew during the night demonstrates the 24-hour functioning of resort studios as well as their accessibility. Le Studio staffed two different technical

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<sup>52</sup> Rockfield’s acoustics could be arranged to the needs of bands with soundproof material, curtaining, screens and portable booths, and the service of long-term skilled employees familiar with the studios (Anderson 1975: 32). Despite the ability to insulate and artificially manipulate sound, the engineers at Rockfield do notice clear distinctions between The Coach House and The Quadrangle, and will advise a client to use one or the other depending on their particular aesthetic (Ward 2015).

crews in order for them to stay with the group as needed, 24 hours a day.<sup>53</sup> Perry also prevented breakdowns in equipment by keeping a generator on the property. This all-day operation was not unique to Le Studio, however. Rockfield made both The Coach House and the Quadrangle accessible to its respective clients, with an assistant engineer available at all times.<sup>54</sup> This further supports the resort studio as a *flexible* workplace with both the technological possibilities and those related to time. In this way, it also reinforces the notion of the resort studio as an alternative workplace for how musicians were not restricted to distinct time slots based on union regulations or bookings by other groups. This open format allowed for musicians to organize their working hours according to their own preferences, indicating the potential for great range and adaptability in their work and leisure time.

An example of this flexibility and its effect was during the 1978 sessions for Rush's album *Hemispheres* at Rockfield. During the two-month session, the band wrote, arranged, and recorded all of the music onsite. The group experienced a particularly difficult time arranging and recording the basic tracks for the album's final piece, the thirteen-minute "La Villa Strangiato." Bassist and lead singer Geddy Lee explained how the band spent 11 days trying to record the basic track, made more challenging by their preference to record it live and in one take<sup>55</sup> rather than dividing it into sections (McFayden 2010).<sup>56</sup> When they finally realized it was not feasible, they divided the recording into three parts. During this process, however, guitarist Alex Lifeson recalled

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<sup>53</sup> Blagona (2014) also discussed the studio's 24-hour operation. He explained that at times, one group would work during the day and the other at night.

<sup>54</sup> Other resort studios did the same, and made their 24-hour access central to advertising. These studios included Long View Farm, Park Gates, and Compass Point (Anderson 1978b: 32, Hunter 1979: 42, Anon. 1983a: 5).

<sup>55</sup> Schmidt Horning (2013) indicates how multitrack led to the "dissolution of live recording" but musicians did continue to record together live even with these studio capabilities.

<sup>56</sup> Rush only recorded the music at Rockfield. Vocals were recorded at Trident Studios in London, at which time Geddy Lee discovered the music had been recorded in a key too high (see McFayden 2010).

that the band's hours became increasingly late, eventually shifting to a schedule that had them go to bed at noon and get up for breakfast at 7 p.m., at which point they would work through the night (ibid.). He specified that the sessions continued this way "unending, with no time off" (ibid.).<sup>57</sup> These particular working conventions relate to Rush's own self-imposed musical demands and the stylings of progressive rock,<sup>58</sup> but the combination of that style with Rockfield's accessibility also supports this working style and, additionally, shapes it. In this way, the amount of time bands had for recording sessions, particularly during the era of large budgets of the late 1970s, could also foster problems.

In addition to the effort and preparation that were part of the "album as art," Schmidt Horning (2013: 183–185) observed how multitrack sometimes promoted perfectionistic tendencies during the recording process. In this way, Lisa Ward (2015) explained that having extensive amounts of time or flexibility available also meant that groups could overthink their work, whereas within shorter time constraints, they did not have the luxury. In working at AIR Studios Montserrat in 1989, Mick Jagger placed emphasis on the importance of organization when working on a major project. "We had to be very efficient...when you've only got an afternoon to do an overdub you go and you do it. If you've got weeks in front of you, you think 'well I don't think I'll come in today because you know, my voice isn't really ... and so you make excuses. When you've got to, you just go in and do it'" (Rolling Stones 2009). Jagger's comments point to the importance of time associated with resort studios in contrast to the lengthy

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<sup>57</sup> Within the dynamics and working practices of some groups, in contrast to Rush's preference to record live and together, some bands did not require the presence of all members in the studio at the same time. Ward (2015) recollected how during the first two weeks of a session, drummers would usually be preoccupied in the studio while singers would spend their time in Rockfield's communal areas. Once the drum tracks were finished, the reverse occurred. This gave some band members ample free time while others worked, indicating further flexibility of the resort studio to accommodate various practices and preferences.

<sup>58</sup> See Macan (1997).

sessions. While the craft-union mode was highly rationalized and urban studios were rigidly structured by allotted blocks of time, resort studios, too, were framed by the amount allocated for a session, and paid for by the record label. Along these lines, even though bands were given three weeks or three months to write and record an album they were still limited to and constrained by that timeframe. In addition, the lengthy sessions and individualized possibilities of multitrack influenced how musicians negotiated their working schedules. The very act of “getting away from it all” to record meant effectively organizing work and leisure time within a concentrated work environment. In this way, resort studios were marked, out of necessity, by routine and habit.

### **A Destination Workplace in Temporary Isolation: Technology *and* the Environment**

Recording facilities were the primary *purpose* of resort studios, as Perry and others emphasized. In staying current, upgrading, and keeping competitive, the technological specifications of resort studios were a fixture in trade press advertisements.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

Spanning ten years, these advertisements demonstrate consistency and continuity in the manner in which resort studios depicted their technological specifications. By placing emphasis on recording technologies — in all cases, the central figure in the studio: the console — these advertisements position the resort studio in its capacity as a workplace, clearly establishing the resources available to musicians and producers alike. Several of the advertisements directly reference their equipment — and thereby implicate their studio — as the “finest” or the “best.” This shows a desire to maintain an edge amongst standardization, but also reinforces the significance of being state-of-the-art at the time. Ridge Farm (Figure 6) was labeled the “most technically advanced” resort studio while Farmyard (Figure 8) was “state-of-the-art.” Its advertisement also specified that the studio was designed with “musicians and producers in mind” inferring that clients would be in a conducive and comfortable working environment. As well, this emphasis meant that musicians would have access to the best and most current technologies even when working in a remote environment. The emphasis on technology also points to a reliable workplace for record companies paying to send musicians to record.

Several advertisements suggest an overlap and direct relationship between the technology and the studios' particular geographic settings, and thereby imply significance related to the environments in which they were located.<sup>59</sup> Though small and subtle, the Manor's advertisement (Figure 5) includes a door with a window revealing the greenery of the surrounding countryside, reminding readers of the calm, remote location even when present in the studio. Moreover, this visual is indicative of the break with studio architectural conventions that were at times a character of resort studios.<sup>60</sup> In a more explicit versioning of this, the second Ridge Farm advertisement (Figure 7) is more ambiguous than its counterpart. While it still foregrounds the role of technology in the studio by superimposing an image of the console over the backdrop of the environment, the size and placement of the console suggests greater importance. However, the blurry boundaries between the two can be read as both factors operating in cohesion — or as equally important to the studio's function and character. The fourth advertisement, for Farmyard Studios (Figure 8), shows faders from a console underneath the studio's buildings — or as the studio's grounds. This suggests the technology, or the act of recording, as the foundation or basis for the studio and the activities that take place there. The small-print copy refers to the studio as intersecting technology with the rural lifestyle that is conducive to creativity. These advertisements indicate the coexistence of technology and environment at the resort studio, and a relationship between the latter with the work that takes place within the studio. Moreover, the advertisements, in combination with the diverse clientele and sonic attributes offered, position the resort studio as an alternative workplace for musicians. One that was characterized by

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<sup>59</sup> The content of these advertisements again reflects similarities to Latour's theory of the interconnection of human and non-human agency. See Latour (1988).

<sup>60</sup> See the case study on Le Studio in Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion on the significance of this diversion.

comparable attributes as other recording studio configurations, and functioned very similarly, but did so in an alternative environment.

As these advertisements suggest, these environments, comprised of their geographic settings, living accommodations, and access to recreation played significant roles in creating the suitable conditions that Negus (1992) foregrounds in the working process. Similar to the imagery in advertisements, *Music Week* described resort studios as having “the perfect mix of relaxed rural atmosphere and efficient technical facilities” (Anon. 1979: 1). Strawberry Studios offered “everything one could wish for in modern recording ... choice of quality equipment and studio acoustics with a relaxed atmosphere that will help you achieve the sound that you want to create” (Anon. 1984: 40). These statements bring the goals of recording in line with the environment. In this way, in addition to the state-of-the-art technology that Hennion (1989: 408) included among the characteristics of the creative work environment were a sense of calm, a framework that provides access to relaxation, and onsite lodging.

As evidenced by the location of Rockfield Studios in the Welsh countryside, Le Studio in the Laurentian Mountain region, and AIR Studios Montserrat on a Caribbean island outlined in Chapter 2, resort studios were situated in remote, rural, and exotic areas, but often within reasonable proximity to major cities.<sup>61</sup> The geographic locations provided a natural sense of calm due to their remote settings, which studio owners identified as part of the design. Martin referred to AIR Studios Montserrat as a “whole concept that makes for peace of mind” (McCullaugh 1979b: 41) while Perry

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<sup>61</sup> To give further example of this pattern, Super Bear was located in the “beautiful and totally unspoiled village” of Berre-des-Alpes a half-hour from Nice; Long View Farm was built on 140 acres of farmland in Northbrook, Massachusetts, an hour and fifteen minutes from Boston; and the Manor was situated 62 miles from London on 100 acres of Oxfordshire countryside (Anon. 1977c: 54–55, Anderson 1978b: 32, Anon. 1979: 1).

conceptualized Le Studio as an “atmosphere for creative protection and encouragement” (André Perry Studio 2015). Likewise, Compass Point was highlighted in the press for offering “privacy, a relaxed, informal atmosphere” (Hunter 1979: 42). This emphasis on calm works in opposition to the concept of the studio as a nervous or constraining environment, a view that, as with architectural design outlined in Chapter 2, both Blagona (2014) and Lisa Ward (2015) agreed was a reality of studio work with which musicians must contend (Williams 2007, see Bates 2012). In this way, resort studios operated based on that set of considerations and in the service of easing that potential stress. However, the calm associated with these environments was not only how they undid or alleviated nerves and constraint, but for how that calm and relaxation provided the kind of setting conducive to the creative process.

This concept translated into practice. Ward (2015) observed that at Rockfield, musicians “relax, they breathe when they’re here” and it thereby “frees them up.” That freedom was noted in the trade press as having an apparent link with creativity and work. *Billboard* indicated how musicians could relax in a “convivial atmosphere” and use the studio “whenever the mood takes them” (Anderson 1973: UK 10). In an article on Bull Run studios outside of Nashville, owner Carl Frost explained, “we provide a relaxing atmosphere in which our clients can work and create” (Wells 1980: 70). All of these statements foreground work in the studio, and prioritize creating conditions for the successful delivery of studio work. In this way, they indicate that the calm atmosphere is suitable to work. However, this link between the use of the studio and the environment creates ambiguities in the organization of work time. As Frith (1981) argues that work and leisure time are mutually dependent, then the negotiation of these two acts is difficult

to gauge if work depends on mood or the unpredictable nature of creativity (Negus 2004 and Pickering, McIntyre 2012). Given these considerations, relaxation and work seemed to coexist at the resort studio, with each being part of the whole.

Within these descriptions, words such as “privacy” and “self-contained” emerge in addition to calm and relaxation. The sense of calm generated by the environment was possible because of the *isolation* of resort studios. Perry made this the focus of the first, and one of the rare, advertisements for Le Studio in 1976:

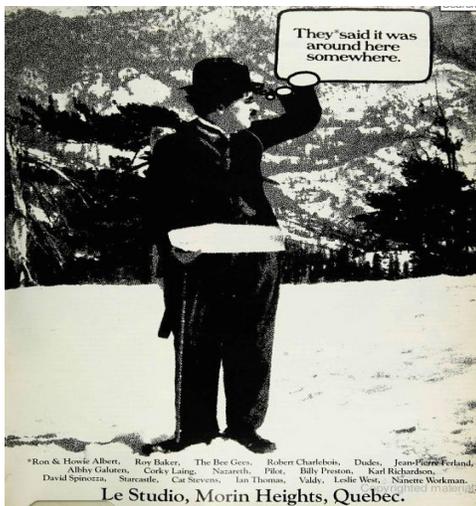


Figure 9

This advertisement (Figure 9) draws strongly on the secluded environment of the Laurentian Mountains in which Le Studio existed. Charlie Chaplin’s confusion over its location indicates the difficulties in finding the studio, and its placement in the trade press can be read as this geographic isolation being a desirable quality. The asterisk that indicated “they” — or the musicians who had worked at Le Studio by that time — suggests on one hand, a level of reliability and reputation to sell to the industry, and on the other, a collective agreement on the role of isolation in the working practice of musicians.

The resort studio's existence in isolation draws on the longer history of this theme in relation to the recording studio, and how it functions in accordance with working practices. Given this relationship and the character of resort studios, Théberge (1997: 218) observed that it was "perhaps no accident that during the 1970s recording facilities like Le Studio in Morin Heights, Québec, sought the refuge of isolated rural settings for their musical 'experiments'." With the globalized nature of the recording studio creating the possibility of the resort studio, the concept of the studio as isolated becomes more complex within remote geographic locations. In understanding the studio, as Hennion (1989) argues, as itself an isolated space, then placing the studio within a remote geographic setting unveils layered understandings of this term. It is important to note Hennion's highly metaphorical language, and this is made more so in consideration of the studio's association as a workplace marked by mystery. However, I draw on and participate in this metaphor for the service it does to conceptualizing the recording studio. Hennion understands the recording studio as a site of creative possibility and experimentation, and places equal importance on the studio being physically isolated and for its capacity to isolate people from the "outside world" in order for this work to occur. The studio itself is therefore a private, calm environment free from external influence and distraction. This statement was consistent with many of the recording facilities at resort studios. The resort studio was flexible in sound and access, but also concentrated by people and space. However, working within the recording studio located in a remote setting created *double* isolation, both in a physical sense and for people inside. Musicians were therefore doubly isolated in their "laboratories." Based on Hennion's (1989) assertion of the role of isolation in recording, this confirms the resort studio as an

effective work environment for the way musicians could create on their own terms in settings doubly free from outside distractions.

However, the concept and significance of isolation to the resort studio environment was made more complex by some of the architectural features of resort recording facilities. In view of the resort studio's features and functions, Hennion's description becomes limited to the *studio itself*. The resort studio moves it away from this limited space. As discussed in Chapter 2, several resort studios (e.g. Le Studio, the Manor, AIR Studios Montserrat) broke with the insulated architectural conventions assumed by Hennion by installing windows in the studio and control room. As *Billboard* reported in 1979, AIR Studios Montserrat featured a window in the control room that faced Iles Bay and the Caribbean Sea "with a shade for those producers and artists who like subdued lighting" (McCullaugh 1979b: 61). While pulling down the shade could mute some of the effect, this decision translates into a breakdown of the studio as a completely isolated space for the way it allows elements of the "outside world" into the studio. It also creates continuous visual access to the outside world, a constant reminder of its presence, and thereby extends and makes evident the cohesion between the isolated studio space and the isolated environment, presenting an overlap or mutuality between the two. However, the use of windows also reinforces the reality of the resort studio's settings: it does not have to be isolated the same way as Hennion's studio because, given the location, there is nothing to isolate it from. The studio itself is isolated as a by-product of the remote geography, meaning that the resort studio *as a whole* functioned as an isolated space free from the outside world. In this way, musicians utilized the entire space of the resort studio in the same way that Hennion described the studio: they shut out the

external world and recreated their worlds according to their own needs as a way to enact musical experimentations. As Bates (2012: 7) argues, musicians are therefore isolated from society while simultaneously being protected from outside scrutiny. This inclusive functioning supports the overlap between the environment and the technology depicted in trade press advertisements and situates the resort studio as an all-inclusive workplace dependent on calm and isolation to facilitate this process — the destination workplace existing in temporary isolation. However, temporary isolation is in itself a constraint that reinforces time in the organization of work and leisure.

### **The Key Factors: Living and Working in Relaxation and Isolation**

The resort studio had to be *residential* in order to function as a *resort*, both in its capacity as an alternative and as a relaxing environment. The specific residences and amenities varied with each resort studio, but they could generally accommodate large groups of people, featured domestic-centric recreational activities, and were usually close to off-site leisure facilities. Schmidt Horning (2013: 208) noted that as musicians began spending more time working in recording studios, their level of comfort was accorded more importance and consideration. *Music Week* reported that Martin focused on adding rest and recreation facilities for artists rather than acquiring more studio equipment, suggesting that he saw value in making these amenities accessible and, more broadly, a link between leisure time as a way to restore or inspire work (Anderson 1979: 4). The two guest villas at AIR Studios Montserrat could accommodate up to ten people, and the studio was connected to them by a walkway. The design was based on Martin's view that clients should have "psychological distance" between their work and living environments (Anderson 1978a: 32). In doing so, he acknowledged and reinforced the structured

division of time and space between work and leisure, and gave musicians clearly organized facilities for both. Musicians also had access to a full kitchen and catering, an open air dining area for up to 30 people, and a lounge with a hi-fi component system, television, and video equipment. As well, a staff of twenty provided cleaning and transportation services. For recreation, clients could use a powerboat, 50-foot onsite swimming pool, and a games room (McCullaugh 1979b: 61, Anderson 1979: 4). Le Studio featured a lakeside house with six bedrooms and bathrooms, as well as an additional guest house and access to Perry's realtor should further accommodation be required (Anon. 1977b: C-16, Blagona 2014). Le Studio's recreation room was in the same building as the studio, separated by a door. Schmidt Horning (2013: 209) observed that during this time studios took on qualities more similar to living spaces than studios, echoing how Blagona and Perry designed the space to look "like somebody's living room" (Blagona 2014). In an effort to cater to the comfort of the clientele, which they stated was their main concern, Perry imported a high-end cappuccino machine, installed a hi-fi system, pool table, and hired a French chef who took food requests and allergy notifications in advance of sessions. Clients could swim or canoe in the private lake, and go cycling, skiing, or play softball in the area. These qualities demonstrate full living accommodations and indicate the attention given to clients by staff.

The resort studio's living accommodations and its sense of privacy created a setting that differed and offered reprieve from the lifestyle of working musicians. Frith (2012: 221) positions the identity of rock musicians, frequent clients of resort studios, as existing between live and studio-based artists, locating them in a place of continuous creation of which both stage and studio are key sites. This indicates that musicians

constantly negotiate the realm of the public and private, which is among the traditional binaries that Negus (1999: 202) argues cultural production tends to obscure. Resort studios offered not only a geographic change, but were situated against the lifestyle around urban studios. *Music Week* described resort studios for how they removed “all the pressures of the town” by giving musicians somewhere to relax without having to worry about studio bookings running overtime, though, as indicated, musicians still needed to contend with time (Anon. 1973: XI). However, the contrast had less to do with the working process of recording and more to do with the experience around the studio that was a product of the city, and influenced studio work, as described by Gibson (2005) and Watson (2015). Le Studio offered “total seclusion” for those wanting to “get away from the distracting city lights” (Farrell 1979: C-14), a statement which suggests how city studios presented real problems for bands in the working process. Keith Richards identified working at urban studios as disadvantageous for bands because of the demands of each group member’s schedule outside of recording sessions (Rolling Stones 2009). Band members often have individual meetings or appointments, making it difficult to organize the group into the same place at the same time. In addition to work complications, Blagona (2014) noted a tendency for bands’ personal problems to follow them into an urban studio given the proximity of their lives to work. Lisa Ward (2015) further identified cities as laden with “frenetic nonsense” marked by “hangers on ... cause it’s always the hangers on that create the problems, it’s not the bands.” Perry (2014) observed that management firms preferred resort studios because they could better control the group, “it wasn’t like in the city where everybody was screwing up and doing this and doing that” (Perry 2014). Schmidt Horning (2013: 200) also observed musicians’

dissatisfaction with the simultaneously public and institutional nature of city studios that were also replete with people. In this way, she stated that wealthy rock musicians were keen to work in remote areas to retreat from these factors (209). As Gibson (2005) understood cities as sites of inspiration that placed musicians within convenient proximity to the record business, these factors were seen as problematic, counterproductive distractions that complicated musicians' ability to work on a recording. Going away to record allowed the group to focus in a concentrated environment.

Mirroring the character of resort studios, Théberge (1997: 218) explained, "the privacy of domestic space became an ideal site of musical expression and inspiration rather than the more public realms of the nightclub and stage." The nature of touring, which involves a combination of extensive travel and live performance, and often for lengthy periods of time, is a stark contrast from the working condition of the recording studio, in its public-centric quality, method, and purpose. The resort studio was seen in opposition to this other prominent mode of musicians' work. Ward (2015) observed the shift from public to private in musicians' experience, which she explained was personified through a sense of relief: "It's like phew ... we don't have to be the lead singer of this band. We can walk around in our slippers." Blagona (2014) spoke to Le Studio's environment as creating a needed opposition to being on tour, as most of the bands, at the time, toured for ten months out of the year. He elaborated that when musicians went to record they wanted to work in an area they could also enjoy (Blagona 2014). *Music Week* echoed this contrast in a feature on Park Gates studio, calling its relaxed and "homely" atmosphere a delight "after a demanding tour" (Anon. 1983a: 5).

These comments demonstrate that even in their capacity as workplaces, resort studios were seen as a reprieve from the demands of touring due to their environments. On one hand, this highlights the strain of that lifestyle, and on the other, reinforces the kind of calm, relaxed setting these studios and access to leisure time had. It also suggests importance. The contrast from the pace of the city and touring further explains why bands wanted a combination of *leisure* with their work.

While resort studios were a marked change in working pace from touring and could insulate musicians from distraction, their environments, residences, and amenities also created a sense of comfort and home, and as such, a different sense of ease from the nervous environment of the studio. The ability for onsite residences to accommodate large groups of people allowed musicians to bring their families with them. Rather than a possible distraction, Blagona (2014) called this a “rest” and noted this as particularly important given how extensive touring can generate issues with fulfillment and cause disruption in family life.<sup>62</sup> The Manor’s owner, Richard Branson, believed that a high percentage of recording artists would find an atmosphere that allowed for their families to stay with them to be extremely productive (Anon. 1979: 1). These considerations emphasized what Ward (2015) characterized as the resort studio being “human first”: “It’s a home, it’s so important that they have to feel like they’re at home. Because that is conducive to working well in the studio.”

The significance of being “human first” was in part for the comforts and reprieve it gave musicians. However, it was also directly positioned in relation to how musicians’ creative process runs into conflict with the industrial side of music production. Schmidt

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<sup>62</sup> This statement demonstrates the logic of Martin’s goals with his proposed boat studio as a way to meld a family vacation with a recording session. See Chapter 2.

Horning (2013: 201) noted that some musicians disliked how city studios felt like “institutions” while independent recording studios, such as the resort studio, allowed for a “looser atmosphere and shared musical aesthetic.” Echoing Becker (1982), Ward (2015) identified all parties involved in music production as being part of a creative environment — the art world — and part of this setting involved working with musicians, who are at times “sensitive souls ... [who] wouldn’t write the songs that they write about if they weren’t sensitive.” Consistent with the tension between commerce and creativity (see Cohen 1991, Negus 1997, Shuker 2008),<sup>63</sup> Ward noted that the corporate side of music runs into opposition with that sensitivity, and providing a setting that foregrounds the human side of the business rather than “the business side of the business” is “very key within residential studios.” Blagona (2014) also emphasized the importance of attention to human dynamics, and the need to be aware of “the politics, of the mood, of the emotions ... because you’re dealing with raw human emotion when it comes to making music.” Blagona noted this importance across all types of studios, but aligned it as particularly significant because of the business-centric nature of some studios. “Bands really don’t care about the business aspect to a degree ... when they want to walk into a studio they don’t want to see office staff and secretaries and so forth. They’ve got enough of that in their own life. They want an environment that works for them” (ibid.). Kealy (1990 [1979]: 179) notes that one of the defining attributes of the art mode was the absence of the “middlemen representing the commercial interests of record companies” at recording sessions, and resort studios were rarely visited by industry personnel. These statements confirm musicians’ participation in business and, in this way, realign the city

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<sup>63</sup> For a discussion of this tension as a cliché that highlights commerce as integral to commercial music production, see Frith (1991). For discussion on the relationship between commerce and creativity specific to rock, see Frith (1981).

setting as problematic for its proximity to music industry centres. It also suggests the creative process as distinct from other aspects of musicians' work, and as thereby benefitting from alternative environments. Blagona and Perry were aware that part of the reason for Le Studio's repeat clientele was due to the relatability of Perry and the home environment ("André's Place") he created, illuminating the importance of specific studios for musicians, which Schmidt Horning (2013: 200) associates with a musician's way of life. The personal nature of resort studios, through the attention and client service of owners and staff both in the studio and within the living accommodations functioned on a social level in opposition to the business side of music making. This demonstrates the shift from an association of the studio's ambiance with its acoustic qualities to the "vibe of its employees and the feel of its location" (Schmidt Horning 2013: 209).

As Ward explained that a sense of home was conducive to work in the studio, an effect of the resort studio configuration was that they situated musicians in the same space together continuously. As Richards highlighted the difficulty in organizing a group together, resort studios facilitated this cohesion. This created a method of working in distinct contrast to Kealy's (1990 [1979]) description of the craft-union mode, outlined in Chapter 1, during which all involved actors had a designated role and worked during an allotted time. This rationalized process was marked by an organized system of session musicians, who were based and accessible in cities, and specific time slots.<sup>64</sup> Resort studios, however, put musicians in a setting in which they were in the same isolated space together throughout the duration of the recording session, whether they were working or not. This was particularly important for rock bands given their functioning as small,

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<sup>64</sup> The popularity of rock music created problems for session musicians, and many jobs were lost due to an unwillingness to conform to the new style (Schmidt Horning 2013: 206).

creative groups and the associated nature and process of their work.<sup>65</sup> The Band's Levon Helm identified this style as the communal atmosphere or "clubhouse technique of making music" (Schmidt Horning 2013: 202). In this way, Greil Marcus (1982: 44) characterizes a rock band as a "banding together of individuals for the purpose of achieving something that none of them can get on their own" and placed emphasis on bands needing to put in their time *together*. Schmidt Horning (2013: 193) states that the "tension between musicians in the studio" may be integral to the effectiveness of their work. Ward (2015) echoed this observation on community, and the notion of a communal group of people *as the artist*, by noting the dominance of rock bands amongst Rockfield's clients. Martin agreed that the resort studio was "a lot more creative for the self-contained group" (McCullaugh 1979a: 57). This translated into practice: a concentrated environment and a concentration of people facilitated concentrated work. Blagona (2014) saw this as a result of living and working together for the way it continuously positioned bands in dialogue about making the record. As well, he observed a tendency for bands to drop the issues they brought with them in cities because they were "living the record 24 hours a day" (*ibid.*).

### **The Emphasis on Work and its Overlap on Leisure**

As discussed in Chapter 2, while resort studios gave the impression of freedom that Löfgren (1999: 5) argues "vacationlands" have, musicians partook in these kinds of activities when they were *not working*. *Music Week* noted the importance of relaxation "at the end of a productive session in the studio" (Anon. 1986: 4).<sup>66</sup> In this way, they

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<sup>65</sup> Given the popularity of rock at the time, the success of resort studios can be aligned with how they created the particular conditions that benefitted the working process of rock bands.

<sup>66</sup> As another example, Château d'Hérouville had tennis courts and a swimming pool to "provide entertainment for artists when they are not working" (Anderson 1974: 21).

thereby followed a conventional organization of work, per Frith's (1981) statements. Perry, too, acknowledged these tensions, correcting, "We don't make it a holiday but a working environment" (McCullaugh 1979a: 57). However, in view of the important role of a relaxed, calm environment in the creative process, these reports indicate that leisure was important to musicians for both the working process *and* for resting. Richards further supported these claims by reflecting on the advantages of working at resort studios for the way it fostered group organization and efficiency — and an absence of distraction. In going to a resort studio as a cohesive unit at the same time, "there's nowhere to go and you're actually living almost in the studio then you get a lot more done — quicker" (Rolling Stones 2009). Of Escape studios, *Music Week* reported that "contrary to expectation ... the relaxed atmosphere of the countryside has not encouraged groups to laze around doing nothing ... they get on with the job with renewed inspiration because there are no distractions" (Anon. 1973: XI). Richards' characterization of "living" in the studio serves to indistinguish the two, or at least suggests the mindset of musicians. AIR Studios Montserrat's Dave Harries discussed the convenience of continuously accessible work and leisure amenities: "It's a great place to work. You just pop out of the studio and into the pool." However, he also observed a problem: "the acts work so well they end up finishing early and not booking extra time" (Jacques 1980: ES-3).

As Rush had consistently worked overnight at Rockfield, other clients structured their working time differently, but generally within highly concentrated blocks. Blagona (2014) recalled that many clients at Le Studio worked between six to seven days per week and sometimes took a day or two off if family were visiting. Perry (2014) explained that rather than "play play play" musicians spent, on average, 14 hours a day in the

studio, and took one day off per week. He noted that sessions were marked by an “informal quality,” but with an orientation to hard work. For example, Nazareth, which he described as more inclined to leisure than other clients, would work a full day before going to a restaurant at 8:00 p.m. Following dinner, they would go out until midnight and then start again the next morning. This indicates an orientation to organization and routine. Assistant manager at AIR Studios Montserrat, Yvonne Kelly, recalled the lengthy sessions and rigorous work habits of musicians. As examples, she explained that Elton John recorded from 9 a.m. until 11 p.m., Little River Band worked in 11-hour shifts, and the Police were in the studio until 5 a.m. and returned each day at 10 a.m. (Crump 1982: 82). “We wondered when they slept,” she remembered (*ibid.*). At Rockfield, Ward (2015) confirmed a comparable average of working hours, between 15 to 16 hours a day in the studio. These lengthy schedules clearly show a focus and foregrounding of work and consistent effort to capitalize on accessibility.

Of Rockfield, Ward (2015) noticed that bands were able to “just concentrate purely on what they’re doing — their recording.” Though leisure was assumed to pose risks of interfering with work, musicians’ practices at resort studios took precedence over leisure, and work often overlapped — or arguably interfered — with their free time. At Long View Farm, small monitors were installed in the living room of the onsite residences so musicians could listen to recordings from the day’s sessions while relaxing by the fireplace (Anderson 1978a: 32). During the two months that the Bee Gees recorded at Château d’Hérouville the main tracks from the album “were to be heard everywhere, and at all times of day — including cassette versions played in the dining room during meals” to the point that the staff knew “every word and melody by heart.”

This demonstrates a clear blurring of work *into* leisure time. The magazine commented that the “hyperconcentration” of their work was an effective technique based on the success of the album (Anderson 1978c: 38). The continuous emphasis on work demonstrated here and the paradox that Martin discussed by way of musicians working faster in an environment that was perceived to distract foregrounds the resort studio as a concentrated workplace. In structuring his schedule of business, Martin believed that bands should limit their time at resort studios: “I also don’t think it’s a good idea for groups to spend, for example, half a year here” and that most albums could “be completed in three weeks to a month” (McCullaugh 1979b: 61). His view, however, was unrelated to issues of potential distraction or misuse of leisure time on the part of musicians. Rather, it pertained to running a successful business. Martin thought studio owners were better served this way as it meant business moved more quickly (ibid.). This statement means that recording at AIR Studios Montserrat involved an element of constraint despite the relaxed setting and leisure facilities. Martin still maintained an expectation for musicians to complete their projects in order for his business to continue.

The ability to function this way also related to a lack of other concerns. Ward (2015) highlighted the fully catered sessions as assisting with musicians’ ability to work long hours. Given these accommodations, their focus was only on working in the studio. In others words, the daily tasks that people usually have to be responsible for in their free time were tended to at resort studios. Ward explained: “they just have to get out of bed ... and then they get fed and then they go into the studio ... and then they go to bed. And there’s no outside kind of distractions.” In this sense, distraction can also be understood as the daily responsibilities, which were handled by the staff. Both the daily and work

distractions for musicians were effectively removed, allowing musicians to renegotiate their use of work and leisure time.

### **Conclusion**

The resort studio was based on the creation of conditions that were suitable for musicians' working practices. Much of its design was centred around the idea of, as Hennion (1989) emphasized in the creative process, preventing external distractions. In this case, the distractions were most commonly those associated with urban life and studio work in cities. Given the globalized network of the recording studio, musicians could opt to "get away from it all" to concentrate exclusively on their recording projects. The idea of getting away from it all, as Martin used in his advertisements, is usually understood as an act of organized leisure, something that is done as a form of non-work. By going away to work, musicians engaged in the complex organization of work and leisure that defined the resort studio. Kraft's (1996) assertion that musicians' work is play is reinforced by such an idea, and this can further complicate the identity of the resort studio. Though getting away from it all is often seen through an escapist lens, Löfgren (1999) also identifies it as being marked by habit and routine.

By working in these isolated environments, musicians first cut off the "outside world" and its distractions. Through the assistance of the studio owners' design, whose own backgrounds informed those decisions, musicians then reconstructed their world on their own terms to assist in their musical experiments, thereby utilizing the entire space of the resort studio in the same way that Hennion (1989) described only the studio itself. The elements they used to recreate their world were the state-of-the-art technology, living accommodations, remote geography, and amenities, which worked in cohesion and

became part of the art world to facilitate the creative work environment (see Hennion 1989). The physical architecture of some of the studios provided a reminder of the all-inclusive space and was evidence of its integration into the total environment of the resort studio.

Within that environment, the presence of both the recording studio and onsite living accommodations presented a real intersection of facilities associated with, and usually divided by, work and leisure. This was made more complex by musicians' 24-hour access to both areas. Based on the understanding of Frith's (1981) outline of the dependency and structure of work and leisure as a complex and mutually dependent organization of free time that is related to the organization of work itself, resort studios consisted of all the elements — the studio as a workplace and the living/recreation accommodations to restore labour. As should be clear, the resort studio was designed as a workplace, and musicians entered into an act of structured work by being subject to the organized time of the session and its destination-design. While musicians had several weeks or months to complete a project, they still had to operate within a set time frame. While not always as clearly organized as the weekend Frith cites as exemplary, work and leisure were structured in a similar manner. As demonstrated, musicians did organize their work and leisure time accordingly, most specifically in relation to the recording studio. As the end-point and place where work is actually done, musicians worked lengthy hours bookended by short periods of relaxation. In this way, work and leisure were organized and mutually structured.

However, as work was the basis, the involvement of the creative process made the resort studio complex. Frith understands leisure as related to freedom, but as structured

around work. The all-inclusive environment meant continuous access to calm and relaxation, seen as important to the creative process. As well, the 24-hour nature of both the studio and the living accommodations supported the spontaneity of the creative process. Musicians did take time to enjoy the environments and recreational activities, but did so only when they were not working. They arguably used free time to partake in activities that were in contrast to work. They also selected from a limited range of available leisure choices, meaning they followed in line with Frith's assertion. The onsite residences, along with their ability to house musicians' families, can be characterized as a refuge from work and a space to restore labour that Frith articulates. However, in instances where musicians played recordings from the day during dinner or installed a speaker system in their communal living area, their home space no longer functioned this way. Rather, by doing this in the context of home and presumably during musicians' leisure time, work extended into supposed organized free time. In this way, work interfered with leisure and leisure was not effectively a contrast to work. Rather, the two worked in cohesion by overlapping, coexisting, and informing the other.

Leisure or free time was therefore inextricably linked to musicians' working process at the resort studio. In this way, a clear division between the two time structures is difficult to identify. The spontaneity of creativity, the total creative work environment, and operating on the expense and time of the record label illuminates that musicians were never really "free" and could never fully organize their time away from work. Leisure, whether taken to restore their labour, or used as a moment to inspire creative thought, were all designed according to the conditions to foster creativity — or work (Negus 1992). In this way, rather than use these environments exclusively for the leisurely

activities they offered, they engaged in those activities and geographic settings for their ability to help them work. As such, they rebranded the notion of “getting away from it all” by using the resort studio to escape the pressures of the city in order to work more effectively. As Martin’s boat studio placed value on the combined work and holiday concept, Ward and Perry confirmed these ideas by the number of clients who brought their families to resort studios with them. The environment presented an orientation to vacationing and offered musicians a reprieve from the pace of touring, the city, and the potential negative effects this had on family life. Yet within this setting, the fact that they were bound to the time constraints of the recording session — temporary isolation — meant they were consistently having to structure and organize their time around the act of work. In view of the working practices at resort studios as entailing not only the process of recording but also the act of writing and composition, these lengthy endeavours put greater restrictions on time even within long sessions. The process of multitrack recording and communal working methods likely explains why leisure time was so restricted even within 24-hour environments. Perhaps the trade press was further incorrect in their assumption that the impression of resort studios was for their ability to distract with leisure and recreation. In actuality, musicians operated under an impression of the availability of time, given the length the sessions suggested. While this could function as a luxury, the nature of their working practices required additional time, which was eased and accelerated through the concentrated presence of the group.

This also points to confusion surrounding Frith’s observation of leisure time as the setting for non-routine experiences such as art. Popular musicians, who arguably create a form of art, do so as part of their working lives or as part of their routine. It is

particularly these points that create difficulties in explaining creative work, or confuse work with play as Kraft (1996) argues. However, the resort studio confirms a relationship between this type of environment and creative work. While the urban studio more clearly foregrounded the institutionalized nature of the workplace that Schmidt Horning (2013) observed as undesirable, the resort studio offered access to a relaxed atmosphere that toned down work as institutional. In this way, the resort studio was an alternative workplace that brought work and leisure onto the same grounds.

## **Conclusion**

### **The Resort Studio as Part of Recording Studio History**

In this thesis, I have attempted to describe the features of the resort studio and the conditions in which musicians worked in these environments. I have used the concept of the “resort” studio as a guide to frame its characteristics and use as an alternative workspace in a relaxed environment. The resort studio emerged given the intersection of contemporary technological, economic, and social forces and became one of the prominent business models of recording studios (see Leyshon 2009). Many of these studios reported solid bookings even amidst moments of decreased investment in the music industry, which provides further evidence of their success while suggesting that their alternative configuration was of particular significance. Their characteristics were the product of studio owners’ sensibilities to the working practices of musicians, and their success and demise intertwined with the distinctive circumstances and features that shaped their reputation and art world. The resort studio’s sustainability can be seen as an extension of the small, exclusive nature of its sector, or the “private club” that Perry (2014) discussed and to which all of these owners eventually belonged through individual circumstances and processes. Their connectivity, built on the reputation, trust, and respect that Perry highlights, the consistency that Ward emphasized, and Martin’s legacy, functioned to surpass those moments of wider instability through “stabilizing features” and their network of contacts and repeat clientele. As Schmidt Horning (2013) stated, musicians want to work somewhere they can trust and where they are comfortable.

Resort studios were products of the globalized nature of the recording studio sector that became a possibility following the relative standardization of the 24-track

studio. This permitted musicians to record anywhere, in a flexible studio environment, and facilitated the placement of studios in isolated, remote, and exotic locations. Given this geography, resort studios were marked by an element of tourism and thereby created apprehension for the industry regarding the possibility of distraction. However, musicians used these environments to escape the distractions of the city, and found the concentrated nature of the resort studio more effective. With the design of these creative work environments, most specifically the combined working and living accommodations unique to resort studios, owners placed musicians in settings that brought together work and leisure and complicated the distinction between them. Resort studios were sites of a tension between a conventional organization of work and leisure time and the complex influence of the creative working process. This intersection comprises the defining characteristic of the resort studio as a configuration and workplace. In practice, musicians followed an organized routine of work in the studio, but their leisure time was marked by nuance. The nature of creativity as a spontaneous and unpredictable process in an environment isolated from the outside world rendered musicians' use of the resort studio as an experience of work. Though these environments offered them access to both work and leisure, the constraint of time and the demands of contemporary working practices meant musicians were never really free.

Though the resort studio was an alternative workplace characterized by relaxation and recreation, it was also dependent on the existence of the urban studio for its development and success. Rockfield's materialization in response to the need to travel to London confirms the centrality of the urban studio and was also the factor that led to the founding of the "residential studio" as a configuration. Perry's decision to construct a

studio with windows, which broke with conventions, meant Le Studio's architecture depended on urban studios in order to work against them. AIR Studios Montserrat had the benefit of the existence of AIR Studios London for support. It was positioned as the London studio's second location and could depend on this relationship to gauge interest and as a selling point given the studio's remote location — itself conspicuous because of its distance from cities. The dependence of the resort studio on the urban studio is therefore particularly salient in relation to AIR Studios Montserrat, but it also illuminates the two as complementary. The AIR Studios website foregrounds this point by stating, "AIR Studios Montserrat offered all of the technical facilities of its London predecessor, but with the advantages of an exotic location" (AIR Studios 2015). This alliance was further evident given that some musicians worked between the London and Montserrat locations. As one example, Paul McCartney worked at both studios for the 1980–1981 sessions of his album *Tug of War*, with his move to Montserrat linked to the private and secure space it offered in the aftermath of John Lennon's murder (Sounes 2010: 372).

In understanding the recording studio as part of a global network, the resort studio depended on the centrality of the music industry in cities to function independently and remotely (see Watson 2015). The dependence of all three studios on both the urban studio and the city environment was evident in the trade press, for the way they were continuously positioned in relation to a given location. What these factors strongly point to is less the way the resort studio differed from the urban studio but for how it was similar. Making variations on the urban studio configuration and participating in the same set of technological trends demonstrates how the resort studio aligns within the studio's historical continuum. Given its concurrent and ongoing existence, with its own era of

particular visibility, the resort studio indicates how various types of studios emerge, coexist, and continue based on a specific set of forces without superseding others (see Théberge 2012). In addition, the intersection of the studio and home environments combined with the private nature of the resort studio can be understood as providing the basic features of the home studio that would emerge with the democratization of recording technologies (see Théberge 1997, 2012). This further positions the resort studio within the historical continuum as both an extension of and precursor to other studio configurations.

Part of what drives this thesis is the manner in which the resort studio has been significantly overlooked in relation to the longer history of the recording studio, and therefore, the way studio history is still quite incomplete. This thesis has made particular use of the work of Hennion (1989) in both his arguments on the studio and isolation as well as using his outline of the creative work environment to theorize and support the conditions of the resort studio. Hennion's model of the isolated studio has been widely adopted and accepted in recording studio literature and has been applied to notions of the urban studio. As example, Louise Meintjes (2003: 91), in characterizing recording studios as being designed to "isolate the internal sonic environment from the noise of the outside world," assumes that the "hubbub of the vicinity is damped or extinguished." This description clearly refers to a bustling — or urban — exterior. In context with her ethnography of a Johannesburg studio, this generalization of the studio is indicative of how Hennion's work has been interpreted. However, it is significant that Hennion's model for the isolated studio and the creative work environment in which it was set was based on the environment of Château d'Hérouville. In this way, it is ironic that within the

adoption and application of his ideas it has been largely unnoticed that Hennion's conceptualization did not derive from an urban studio. This widely accepted description of the recording studio is in fact based on a very particular studio — a resort studio. While this fact further illuminates the parallels and similarities of resort studios to urban studios in function, the degree to which it has been taken for granted demonstrates the longer trajectory of unacknowledged studio history.

The creative work environment that Hennion describes draws attention to the significance of the workplace in musicians' working process and as an important topic in popular music studies and the sociology of culture. Through the lens of the resort studio, this thesis has also attempted to foreground the workplace in the broader art world of music production and as an important object of study to gauge how musicians work and the factors that shape their practices at a given time. As demonstrated by the resort studio, the work environment itself is comprised of particular conditions that affect how musicians work. In addition to highlighting those conditions and how studio owners created them, I have also tried to draw some attention to Kraft's (1996) argument of the perception of musicians' work as "play." Kraft's research focuses on a very different historical and media context: the effect of developments in sound and technology on working musicians in the entertainment industry during the late nineteenth- to mid-twentieth century. This indicates the duration and wide range of the problem of characterizing musicians' work, and creative work more generally, in media industries. Rather than attempt to explain this confusion, the resort studio's creative work environment, comprised of the intersection of work and leisure, further demonstrates the

difficulty in clearly defining musicians' working process and in applying conventional models of labour to their work.

My report from this inquiry is an introductory one. I have attempted to offer historical documentation and illuminate some of the salient features of resort studios in the interest of contributing to a more complete version of studio history. While I have endeavoured to situate the resort studio within this history, given the range of years that these studios have been in operation, the many that existed, and the extent of important and interesting factors that relate to their function, this thesis cannot and should not be comprehensive. Therefore, I wanted to explain a little bit about why they emerged, a little bit about what went on at these sites, and a little bit about what all of it says about the culture and process of music making. I hope this introduction will present a strong overview from which additional research can be conducted, more questions raised and investigated, and new knowledge generated. Of the various possible extensions to this research, a few areas in particular emerged during this process that could not be included. First, the various economic factors that surrounded the resort studio, including the rates and how they compared to other studios, as well as the tax reasons that prompted musicians to select particular locations would provide a fuller understanding of their conditions of use and circumstances of success. Second, the architectural design of resort *studios* combined with the all-inclusive quality of their creative work environments and the blurred division of labour raise questions regarding Bates' (2012) discussion on the studio as a workplace designed to the needs of technicians. The resort studio could be used to explore the limits of this argument and possibly present nuanced views. Third, the degree to which the resort studio can be understood as an alternative may have historical

limitations and requires further investigation. Finally, the theme of work and leisure at the resort studio can be used to investigate other aspects of the studios themselves or musicians' work more broadly. As example, the manner in which the resort studio provided reprieve to musicians from touring raises interesting questions about that working process, which arguably can be understood as an enactment of work and leisure through its combination of travel and entertainment under the organization of labour. In these ways, the resort studio offers a foundation for further interdisciplinary studies.

In addition to contributing to a more complete version of studio history, this thesis has been written to demonstrate the social process of music production and suggest that this has a particular importance. In this way, it follows in the lines of Howard Becker and Keith Negus in emphasizing the collective role of people in this process. In foregrounding how cultural production obscures the lines of work and leisure, this thesis acknowledges that it does so because of the conditions created for and by the personnel involved and as based on their own specific set of conventions that translate into the most suitable working conditions. As such, the resort studio was designed for and by musicians to foster creativity and therefore inspire work. By being situated in a calm, relaxed environment away from the city and external distractions, with state-of-the-art technology and onsite residences, musicians were provided with a setting that cohered with their working practices at the time. The resort studio illuminates music production as distinct from its industrial process, and in doing so, reveals an alternative view of the way musicians work.

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### **Interviews**

- Nick Blagona. Former Head Engineer, Le Studio. Phone Interview, 25 August 2014.
- Gérald Côté. Professor, Department of Music, Université Laval. In-Person Consultation, 30 May 2015; various follow-up emails and discussions.
- André Perry. Founder and Former Owner, Le Studio. Phone Interview, 08 August 2014.
- Lisa Ward. Studio Manager, Rockfield Studios. In-Person Interview, 16 February 2015.

## Appendix A

### Research and Sources

My findings come from a combination of archival research of the music industry trade press, interviews, and site visits. I selected the trade press because of the orientation of its coverage toward professionals working in the music industry. The coverage of these studios and their depiction in advertisements offer valuable insight into their characteristics, history, and understanding. The trade press coverage and advertisements can also be understood as the recording studio sector appealing to the music industry. These factors are significant being that record companies were responsible for providing the budgets for musicians to work in these facilities. I also understand the reporting in the trade press as indicative of trends in the studio sector, and found this particularly important given that my project was constructed historically.

The archival research was conducted through an exploration of the North American and British music trade press, most specifically *Billboard* and *Music Week*. I reviewed the online archives of *Billboard* ([www.billboard.com/magazine-archive](http://www.billboard.com/magazine-archive)) from the years 1965–1989. My objective with the archival research of the trade press was to gather content on residential recording studios in general, collect information specifically pertinent to my three case studies, and observe historical trends and shifts in the studio sector, recording technology, and the wider music industry. My aim was to use these archives to collect historical data and as a way to explore and explain the residential studio's emergence and relationship to the broader studio sector and recording industry. Given the online and searchable format of *Billboard's* archives, I conducted my research by searching each weekly edition with specific key terms that related to the residential

studio (“residential recording studio” or “residential studio”), my specific case studies (“Rockfield,” “Le Studio,” and “AIR Studios”) and the geographic regions in which they were situated (“Monmouth,” “Wales,” “Morin Heights,” “Montreal,” “Québec,” “Canada,” and “Montserrat”), and studio personnel and affiliations (“André Perry,” “Chrysalis”). I also conducted a search on recording studios more generally (“studio”) as a way to gain awareness of broader trends, and I reviewed weekly columns on studio and industry news. Some of the key terms varied historically; for example, “Rockfield” was used throughout the entire span of years, whereas “Le Studio” and its related terms did not become part of my search until the year it opened, 1974, and, likewise, AIR Studios and related terms until 1979. I documented my findings on a template that included bibliographic details, a short summary of the article, important quotes, and a set of tags with key words. Some of the online editions of *Billboard* were not searchable; in those cases, I reviewed the entire edition page by page. In certain years, not all weekly editions of *Billboard* were available in the online archive, and in these cases I reviewed print copies from particularly significant years, most specifically 1980 and 1989, at the British Library. Rather than use particular key words, a method that was not possible with the print version, I reviewed the entire content of each edition I consulted for information pertinent to the residential studio, case studies, and related industry trends. Given the fact that my research at the British Library was part of a research trip, and I was thereby under time limitations, to document my findings I first photographed the pages of relevant content and noted the date and page numbers, and later transcribed them into the template described earlier. For archival research of *Music Week*, I consulted the print legal copies of editions from 1972 to 1990 at the British Library. My search method and form of

documentation were the same as the print copies of *Billboard*. I also consulted *Music Week*'s regular columns and special sections on recording studios and the studio sector and, later, residential studios. In addition to reports, I collected advertisements for residential studios from both *Billboard* and *Music Week* (and related studios, such as AIR Studios London) and examined them for both their visual representation and print copy. Once the data was collected, I synthesized the information I gathered based on various topics and themes. This included any information available about each case study; the themes of studio owners; the studio's geographic environment and its relationship to relaxation, creativity, and distraction; technological specifications; details of client service; and work and leisure. I also analyzed reports of other residential studios for these same themes. In addition, I collected information regarding residential studio rates, the founding of various residential studios, and the relation of their business to wider trends in the studio sector and music industry.

I chose to conduct interviews with key people affiliated with residential studios given their first-hand experience and expertise, as access to this knowledge is crucial in ensuring historical accuracy. In addition, given their direct involvement developing and working at residential studios, this group of interviewees could provide access to the unique social experiences that my research depended on. The thesis contains information provided by four interviewees, three of which I categorize as "interviews" and the fourth as "consultation." I differentiate because the consultations do not involve direct quotes and were conducted for the purposes of having more complete background information. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and the consultations were noted. The first interview was André Perry, the former owner and founder of Le Studio, who

owned and operated the studio from 1974 to 1989. I spoke with Perry on the phone for approximately one hour and 15 minutes on 08 August 2014. The second interview was with Nick Blagona, the former head engineer of Le Studio. He was also involved in the design and development of the studio, and was affiliated from 1971 to 1982. I spoke with Blagona on the phone for approximately 45 minutes on 25 August 2014. The third interview was with Lisa Ward, the studio manager at Rockfield Studios since 1997, and the daughter of owner Kingsley Ward. I interviewed Ward in person at Rockfield Studios for one hour and 50 minutes on 16 February 2015. My consultation sessions were with Dr. Gérald Côté, a professor of musicology at Université Laval, who is currently researching and writing a book on André Perry and has interviewed him extensively. We spoke in person on 30 May 2015 for approximately 90 minutes in Ottawa, Canada, and thirty minutes via Skype on 30 July 2015, in addition to exchanging brief follow-up emails. I should specify that my discussions with Dr. Gérald Côté were not regarding residential studios, but focused on his current research on André Perry. Unsuccessful attempts were made to speak with a former studio engineer of AIR Studios Montserrat as well as a multitude of musicians who were clients at all three studios. I also interviewed a session musician who worked at one of the studios I cover in my case studies, but was not able to include the content due to this person's failure to return a signed consent form, which is needed for research ethics clearance. In addition to archival work and interviews, I visited and toured Rockfield Studios in Monmouth, Wales, as part of my interview with Lisa Ward, and visited the now defunct site and interior of Le Studio in Morin Heights, Québec, on 21 May 2015.