

## Will There Be Yodeling in Heaven?

In the 1930s someone in Bob Wills's Texas Playboys posed the metaphysical question, "Will there be yodeling in heaven?"<sup>1</sup> perhaps for several reasons. If there *is* yodeling in heaven, then heaven'll be a rollicking joint. If all goes well, maybe he can front the houseband—God being the manager and all—as long as they packed them in.

And yet yodeling, especially the Tyrolean *lederhosen* type with its rapid variations in tone and pitch, lies within cheap earshot of that annoying<sup>2</sup> Oktoberfest *biergarten* oompah music—jolly, mindless escapism—hoist another stein, stretch another octave. The word yodel, or *jodel*, after all, derives from the Latin *jubilare*, meaning to shout with joy. And so yodeling, even its crassest Vegas warbles, can aspire to instants of "higher" purpose because to entertain is a mission of joy meant to distract us from the suffering that seeps into our mundane existences.<sup>3</sup>

But maybe this heaven will be a solemn space; not a juke joint at all. Indeed, there's another side to yodeling—a soulful, incantatory side—steeped in the ancient cowherds' prayer calls to appease the valley gods.

For my last radio show at WFMU<sup>4</sup> I decided to tackle this mysterious vocal technique known as yodeling: why is it so haunting and yet so easily written off, or worse, ignored? Most encyclopedias offer only a few cursory words on what a yodel is.<sup>5</sup> Never mind what it does.

I also wanted to know how a Swiss thing<sup>6</sup> became a hillbilly American thing. And why I was suddenly finding so many samples of yodeling blended into the ambient, electronic and post-dub material I was spinning?

Midway into the program, things began to click as to why I *liked* yodeling. Like dub music, it involves echo, echo as a rearrangement of our psycho-acoustical apparatus, echo as entry point into another realm, echo as a way for the modern recording studio to tap into the organic, human voice reverberating through valleys.

But aren't yodels just silly ululations cleverly situated somewhere between the regular human voice and falsetto? Or what Christoph Wagner calls "low-down high-up vocal trickery."<sup>7</sup> And yet, there's some evidence that this is also the place where chord intervals are created that allow the yodeler to find har-

mony with him- or herself? Picture yodels bounding off hillsides until there are any number of versions of your own voice harmonizing in mid-air—until *voilà*, we witness what the first instant of “recorded” sound—mountain valley as recording studio—might have been like.

For this radio special I’d collected all the usual suspects: Jimmie Rodgers and the like. I’d also discovered newer, post-modern appropriations of the yodel, mega-sampled yodels swirling around inside atmospheric musics that weld electronics to nervous system, plus all the “new” and sometimes tongue-in-cheek reappreciations of yodeling and avant-scat-yodelers like Leon Thomas who stretch the possibilities of the yodel around new concepts.

### A Jodl Is a Jodel Is a Yodel?

So what exactly *is* a yodel?<sup>8</sup> Greeting? Warning? Joyous outburst? Pious ululation? Flashy pop chorus? Or an irritating “variation upon the tones of a jackass,” as Sir Water Scott referred to yodeling in 1830?”<sup>9</sup> Most ethnomusicologists seem to agree that yodeling is some ancient rural form of calling.

A genuine yodel, or *yutz*, is wordless and not really “music,” but an acoustical signal, usually associated with cowherds communicating with one another and their herds. But at this juncture the experts begin to disagree. Some associate it with prayer, positioning the ululations somewhere between pragmatic navigation and spiritual steerage. Leonard Bernstein once calculated a general formula for music that might apply to yodeling: “one part aural excite-



*Modern alpine yodelers at work and play—folk custom or kitsch?*  
Photo by H. Hruschka.

ment, one part visual excitement, four parts identification feelings with the beyond, two parts adoration of almighty forces”<sup>10</sup>

Some musicologists persist in the wrongheaded notion that somehow the accompanied yodels were “influenced by the singing of Protestant hymns . . . others have thought they recognized in the Appenzell yodel stylistic traits of Baroque music or even [of] the pre-Gregorian period.”<sup>11</sup> This is not to ignore the fluid borrowings of yodelers but to insist, like Zemp, that polyphonic yodels are “no rigid imitation of ‘debased art music’ . . . but is a vital folk music, doubtless affected by outside influence (as all music), but which should be regarded . . . for its own individual qualities and not necessarily in relation to art music . . .”<sup>12</sup>

Yodels with verses are a more recent invention—around four or five hundred years ago—when cowherds purportedly began spending more time in villages. They may have become more like songs as yodels began expressing the townspeople’s longing for the idyllic lifestyle they had left behind. This style of yodeling is often sung by choirs (usually with organ accompaniment). One yodeler takes the lead and the others join in, singing a subtle harmony, with the melody mostly improvised on the spot.

In the Appenzell region of northeastern Switzerland, a treasure chest of local folk music(s), yodelers sometimes sing *zäuerli*, or relaxed, deep-voiced yodels accompanied by musicians swinging big cowbells worn by the lead cow. Sometimes singers mimic the sounds of the bells of an entire herd while musicians provide accompaniment by rubbing silver coins on the inside of earthenware bowls.<sup>13</sup> Here, we can surmise, is where the pop entertainment yodel, the third and most common form of yodeling, began.

Although there are still some songs which remain pure yodels, unadulterated by meaning or message, most pop songs relegate yodels to the role of ornamental choruses. Yodels are bastardized as punchlines to musical jokes or showoffy riffs—the guitar solo of vocals, if you will—that showcase vocal gymnastics while offering raucous interludes to audiences. Professional Alpine musicians often sing snazzy mod yodels called *coloratura*, which consist mainly of trilly decorative veneers and abstract scat-yodels aimed at tourists. These *coloratura*, ironically, have helped *preserve* the very folk traditions purists fear they are killing. Baerg-Roeseli, a Swiss folk yodeling group from Australia, for instance, states its mission this way: “Founded as a non-profit organization our goal is . . . promoting the customs and music of Switzerland while keeping traditions alive. . . . At the end of the show we often encourage the audience to join us . . .”<sup>14</sup>

## Yodel Soundings

What does a yodel sound like? It depends on whom you ask. Someone taking a cold shower? There’s Mark Twain who wrote that it sounded (at first) like a “melodious Lul . . . l . . . l . . . lul-lul-*La*hee-oo!”<sup>15</sup> and a “sort of quaint com-

mingling of baritone and falsetto which at home we call ‘Tyrolese warbling.’”<sup>16</sup> Others claim it approximates a cow’s mooing, or is an imitation of the alphorn, a train’s whistle, a steam organ or a bird’s plaintive song. M’Benga Pygmies imitate the sounds of antelopes, chimpanzees and gorillas. Some ethnomusicologists suggest the loon, whose characteristic territorial announcement “yodel” serves as the model for some popular American yodels. In Bavaria, the name for *kulning* (a Scandinavian yodel-like call) is the word *gallen* or *gallna*, onomatopoeic words for the call of the rooster or the cuckoo, respectively.<sup>17</sup>

Yodeling consists of warbled melodies that use sudden alternations of vocal register from a low-pitched chest voice to high falsetto tones sung on vowel sounds—AH, OH, OO for the chest notes, AY, EE for the falsetto.<sup>18</sup> Each nonlexical syllable ends with a distinct glottal break at the moment of transition between these two registers, giving yodels their particular character.<sup>19</sup> Or as Cathy Fink explains in her charming “Yodeling Lesson,” “F for low, E for high, two vowels sounds with a break and that’s where the yodel takes place . . . AY EE AY EE . . .”<sup>20</sup> Cathy Fink is not so far off from the refrain of “A Young Hunter Went A-Hunting,” “an eighteenth-century Swiss song sung in Pennsylvania, “Hei lie, Hei loo,” or from the sixteenth-century German folk song “Dadd Drive” brought to Northern America by eighteenth-century immigrants. That song contained the refrain “ei die ei, ei di O.”<sup>21</sup> It takes only a small leap of imagination to hear the Seven Dwarves singing and yodeling “Ho-la-la-ee-ay, Ho-la-la-ee-ay . . .” But like jazz yodels these eighteenth-century songs are difficult to describe and better to listen to.

## Who Yodels Why?

The earliest account of an actual yodel is found in 1545 in George Rhaw’s *Bicinia Gallica*—where yodeling is referred to as a *Kühreihen*, or “call of a cow-herd.”<sup>22</sup> However, as early as 397 C.E., in *Act of Martyrs*, Roman Emperor Julian complained of the northern mountain people’s wild shrieking songs; definitely *not* a yodel fan, he. Many ethnomusicologists venture even further back and date yodelish ululations to shortly after the dawn of humankind.

They also agree that mountain cowherds—both men and women—communicated with their herds via bells and melodic calls as they guided the herds through villages and valleys. Just as importantly, yodels may have offered cowherds a temporary reprieve from a prime occupational hazard, loneliness.<sup>23</sup> Yodels echo greatly throughout the mountains, giving comfort and fellowship to the isolated herders.<sup>24</sup>

The calls may have also served as endearments so that shepherds could express affection to their herds. Similarly, witness dog owners prattling with their canines on the street in their own abstract coochy-coochy language.

In Scandinavia cowherds use signals related to yodeling called *kulning*,<sup>25</sup> which means “ . . . to communicate with the herd of distances amounting to

even a few kilometers by means of calls: wordless acoustical signals . . . with specific sub-features primarily concerned with pitch and intensity.”<sup>26</sup>

*Kulning*<sup>27</sup> is not “music” per se, but an acoustical signal of the ancient herding culture, serving as calls to domesticated cattle, and as signals between shepherds. “The governing principle steering the overall course is pragmatic. Shall the cattle leave for grazing, or are they to be called back? . . . *Kulning* is a matter of near-field commanding . . . and distance-field signaling to the cattle.”<sup>28</sup>

Such long-established yodeling practices suggest why it is hard to take seriously some expert claims that yodels are mere human attempts to imitate the sound and function of the extremely long alphorn, another of the cowherd’s communication tools.<sup>29</sup> Although this may happen from time to time, it is, as an explanation of the yodel’s *origins*, ultimately not only culturally unsatisfying but historically far-fetched because yodeling and the domestication of grazing animals certainly *predates* the early medieval invention of the alphorn.

Still others argue—even more speculatively and unprovably—that the yodel’s origin may be the human soul, the sound of a psychological reaction to the breathtaking scenery surrounding the cowherd—yodeling’s wide leaps of high and low notes evoking the exalted hills, the awe of the human spirit, the commingling of outer beauty and inner wonder. Herman Hesse in his coming-of-age novel *Peter Camenzind* describes a yodel as an “inarticulate hymn to beauty . . . bellowed like a bull with joy and excitement into clear mountain air.”<sup>30</sup> If “melody exists in the soul of man,” as Rudolph Steiner insists, then perhaps the scenery helps write the melody sung as a yodel.<sup>31</sup> To paraphrase John Lee Hooker: If it’s in’m it’s gotta come out.

Perhaps it was a prayer call—an incantation as part of a pagan exorcism rite to chase away evil spirits while insuring the safe passage of herds through treacherous terrain, hence the ethereal and haunting quality of some pure (alpine) yodels. Is it not highly probable—given Christianity’s propensity for assimilating the rites of competing faiths—that these are the sorts of calls the Christian priests eventually appropriated for Christianity?<sup>32</sup> John Horton in his *Scandinavian Music: A Short History* implies that newly converted herds (wo)men were forced to amend their familiar prayer calls to address Christian saints instead of pagan deities. “While pagan songs were adapted as far as possible to Christian use . . . the convert’s ears and throat became accustomed to the chants prescribed by Rome.”<sup>33</sup>

## Where Yodels Are Yodeled

We’re all familiar to some degree with the Swiss yodel. At the very least we’ve heard Julie Andrews yodeling in *The Sound of Music*.<sup>34</sup> But people in Germany, Austria, Romania, Estonia, Hawaii, Melanesia, Mexico, Texas, Kentucky, Maine, parts of South America and Papua New Guinea all yodel as well, as do the Inuit, Lapps, North America Chippewa and African Rainforest Pygmies. Even in India, especially in a number of low-budget “Bollywood” flicks

there is a propensity to break into a Hindi way of yodeling, characterized by an eruption of wrought-up, deliriously shrill warblings. In Hawaii, popular singers perform something called *leo kl'eki'e*, an indigenous version of falsetto marked by a similar emphasized break between the normal voice and the falsetto. Even the British music hall stage of the 1800s was frequently enlivened by the freakish performances of yodelers. At some over-the-top level, yodeling was even suited to the ostentatious, highbrow excesses of opera.<sup>35</sup>

Other cultures may have different names for the yodel, but most of them seem to fulfill its basic melodic characteristics. One often hears yodeling where landscapes offer natural echo conditions or where natural barriers to face-to-face communication, such as forest thicket, exist. In other words, before the telephone and before reverb and echo were knobs on a soundboard there was the yodel.

Is there an aural connection that unites the world's yodelers? Nils Wallin suggests that:

... Despite the differences . . . between geographical regions . . . the few existing sites where corresponding styles of vocalization are sound demonstrate an organic kinship with each other. The main regions outside Scandinavia where the traditions of these singing styles have been kept alive . . . are the Central European Alpine region, the Jura, the Pyrenees, localities on the Italian peninsula (including Sardinia), and Balkan, Turkish, Armenian, and Caucasian regions. Some economic geographers dealing with historical aspects of the agriculture and utilization of land have proposed that these regions once made part of a common, possibly matriarchal herding cultures with roots in the Upper Pleistocene. Physical anthropologists have further suggested that some of these regions have hereditary links with each other . . .<sup>36</sup>

## Is the Pygmy a Real Yodeler?

Many of the nomadic Pygmy tribes of Gabon, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Congo, Zaire, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi practice variations of the yodel.<sup>37</sup> These hunters and gatherers live in forest and marshland areas considered dangerous and uninhabitable by others. Pygmies, however, consider their homeland, the forest, the source of their being providing as it does food, shelter and spiritual sustenance. The yodel is a way to communicate with various forest spirits, and a way of negotiating its hazards and communicating with one another.<sup>38</sup>

The Ituri and Bantu language tribes, known as the Ba-Aka and Ba-Mbuti, perform a hunt preparation ritual called a *yeli*. In the *yeli* the female participant gathers ritual substances—herbs, barks and leaves—and as she rubs and burns these substances, hunters follow the direction of the smoke plumes to find game.

“Rites performed in order to attract game are very elaborate in the *yeli* ceremony. Powerful hunting prowess is attributed to the ‘yodel’ polyphonies . . . ”

To call game into their midst “the *yeli* spirits stay in the bush and start dancing when they hear women singing *yeli*.” The Pygmies drink a honey-based “pot liquid” which “reinforces the ‘yodel’ songs’ capacity to attract game”<sup>39</sup>

Their polyphonic yodels or hockets, however, are more commonly heard during feasts. These songs are comprised of two interlocking melodies upon which others perform variations, creating dense overlapping contrapuntal textures of simultaneous melodic lines. The continuous repetitions of short patterns of call-and-response yodels are continually repeated to create a cyclical pattern that takes fuller shape as different voices enter. The yodels are punctuated by a variety of grunts, hums, trills, tremolos and glottal attacks “[accomplished by rapidly] opening and closing a section of the throat called the glottis” to create “an interrupted or quavering sound.”<sup>40</sup> This allows the singers to communicate with spirit worlds and associates divinity with their game, such as the elephant, or even the benevolent forest itself.

Especially interesting are the nonhierarchical exchanges of lead solos and the improvisations within the yodel’s constraints. Once a performance begins, musical leadership shifts and different voices move in and out of the background. Daou Joiris and Susan Kent, among other ethnomusicologists, see this as a reflection of the Pygmies’ egalitarian society: “Egalitarianism permeates not only the social and political organization, economics and division of labor of these societies but also their ethos or worldview—in other words, every facet of culture and behavior.”<sup>41</sup>

## My Sweet Scat Yodeler

Jazz vocals often showcase Pygmy yodeling’s influence on “western”-style singers. Leon Thomas, for example, sings a unique madcap style of scat singing that utilizes the opening at the top of his larynx, allowing his voice to veer off into yodeling that hearkens back to Pygmy style.<sup>42</sup> It is most evident on saxophonist Pharoah Sanders’s “Creator Has a Master Plan” and “Shukuru.” Ashenafi Kebede goes so far as to suggest that the Pygmy “performance styles remind us of contemporary European avant garde music at its best.”<sup>43</sup>

In his autobiography, Ray Charles remembers that when he was all of fifteen or sixteen he “worked with a hillbilly band called The Florida Playboys. I learned how to yodel when I was with them.”<sup>44</sup>

Bebop jazz vocalists, “cooling” Louis Armstrong’s signature scat singing, best highlight the way yodeling can be utilized as an aspect of scat. Scat is partly the human voice’s attempts to imitate or “talk” with a musical instrument (often the trumpet), while yodeling is sometimes said to evoke the alphorn’s sound.<sup>45</sup>

Frank Rosolino on “That Old Black Magic” and “Pennies from Heaven” most exemplifies this hybrid. Bessie Smith, interestingly enough, often performed a song called “Yodeling Blues,” which furthered the stage (but not so illogical) hybridization of jazz and yodeling. Meanwhile, Robert Farris Thomp-

son provocatively suggests that in James Brown's "vocal quality—those growls, those slurs—you hear real African stuff: textless displays of verbal energy, as in yodel sounds and screeches and cries."<sup>46</sup>

At this point we should also mention the legendary Dutch jazz-rock group Focus, which produced a strange amalgam of metal, jazz and yodeling (the "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" of yodeling, if you will) in their March 1973 Top Ten hit "Hocus Pocus." This firmly set in place the fluid notions of influence, genre hybrids and cross-over hits.

Closer to the forest bed is Cameroonian folk hero Francis Bebey. Author, cultural ambassador and "the tallest pygmy in this life," he sings in French, English and his native Douala, combining classic guitar, Makossa, jazz and yodels to produce eccentric, mellifluous pop-yodel songs that often concern everyday life among the Pygmies.

Thomas Mapfumo is nicknamed the "Lion of Zimbabwe" and is Zimbabwe's most famous musician. He combines electric music and reggae with traditional rhythms and Shona yodeling (*mahonyera*).

Zap Mama, a fourth-world a cappella group led by Marie Daulne, performs a very lilting Afro-Cuban mouth form of jazz—a scat-yodel alloy that fuses influences from many corners of the world—effectively linking tradition with invention, meaning with exuberance. Daulne, of Belgian and African parents, sought refuge among the Pygmies when she fled her homeland of the former Belgian Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo). They sheltered her and taught her polyphonic singing. She was airlifted to Brussels where she listened to her mother sing Pygmy songs and eventually went on to study jazz as well as Asian and Arab polyphony. Years later, when she returned to thank her Pygmy hosts for saving her life she found they, along with their forest habitat, had disappeared.

In the same vein of modern musical omnivores is Laura Love, an American, or more accurately, a *world* singer who describes her music as "funkabilly"—funk + rocka/hillbilly, as in soul + yodel. She expresses her prodigious multi-cultural meltdown talents with a broad palette of blues, rap, nursery rhymes, swing, Celtic music, scat and yodeling—an ambitious convergence of musical tributaries. Her mission, according to her website, is "to put the 'yo!' back in yodeling."<sup>47</sup> Such efforts along with World Beat music have greatly extended the palette of worldwide sound to anyone talented enough to convert those sounds into a global (yet nonhomogenous and unhackneyed) expression.

## Transmission and Transition

The process of how American white culture studied, borrowed, dueted with and ultimately stole from black culture and how black culture learned a few things in return is what interests us here. We have here a fairly anomalous and unique situation—a politically-unempowered (black) minority musically domi-

nating the (white) majority. As Alan Lomax observed: “the tremendous enthusiasm of all Americans, no matter what their prejudices, for Negro folk music and the profound influence of this music on American culture—all this denies the effect of Jim Crow [laws] . . .”<sup>48</sup> This makes the mutually-beneficial musical relationship all the more vexingly ironic. The more blending and hybridizing that takes place, the more vociferously the various cultures and nationalities within black and white begin to “safeguard” what is perceived as their ethnic identity from erosion and melting pot disappearance, sometimes with a special racially demarcated fervor. As Gene Bluestein notes, “Despite the fact that the United States remains one of the most racially segregated societies it is without a doubt the most integrated musically.”<sup>49</sup>

This makes it a daunting task to analyze the individual ingredients of the stew that Bluestein calls “an unlimited number of possible syncretic configurations”<sup>50</sup> in what Walt Whitman called “the teeming nation of nations.” Perhaps we can make sense of this leapfrogging of symbioses between European- and African-based musics, especially if we use able guides like Wilfrid Mellers.<sup>51</sup>

Although Mellers makes no direct mention of yodeling, he offers tangential insights that blast open some speculative deep-breathing room. Educated speculation is what it will take to bridge the gap between what we do not *know* but what we suspect. Unlike material culture, the unscripted yodels, if not passed along from echo to echo, from mind to mouth, disappear into thin mountain air. Let this serve as a temporary pontoon bridge of circumstantial evidence, hearsay and supposition that may lead to aspects of how exactly the yodel (from Europe or elsewhere) was transmitted to North America. Who were the carriers and when?

Mellers presents the nineteenth-century development of “shape note tunes” or hymns whose “method encouraged the singers to make up their own versions of the tunes,” introducing the notion of improvisation through necessity because many of the singers were illiterate.<sup>52</sup> Later improvisation, of course, would become a major jazz technique. These “shape note tunes were the main ‘white’ source for the Negro spiritual,” which in turn became “part of the origins of the American folk-art that is jazz . . .” which the kinetic genius of Louis Armstrong propelled into the modern age with his prodigious improvisations and jazz scat singing.<sup>53</sup>

Although Africans, mostly as slaves, had been present in the American colonies since the mid-seventeenth century, the black-white leapfrogging symbioses began to truly heat up in the decades after Emancipation. Blacks began adapting European ballads as “secular story songs.”<sup>54</sup> Leadbelly adapted “John Henry” as a heroic, non-religious folktale employing the cadences and rhythms he’d adopted from working the fields and railroads with workers who killed the monotony of their labors<sup>55</sup> via the “trance-like repetition” of their hollers.<sup>56</sup>

As the workers and prisoners “hollered to themselves in the empty fields the deepest, most primitive roots of their racial heritage seemed stretched in

ageless pain.”<sup>57</sup> This is a bull’s-eye definition of the blues that pinpoints the time and area where hollers, combined with story-telling ballads, evolved into the blues.

Many suggest that young Jimmie Rogers learned *his* stuff working as a water boy side by side these “hollerin” black railroad workers. The blues that Rogers absorbed and eventually re-transmitted was itself a strange brew of hollers, European ballads, spirituals and . . . yodels.

In 1930, Louis Armstrong recorded “Blue Yodel #9” on cornet with Jimmie Rodgers adding “an alpine yodel to the end of each verse.”<sup>58</sup> This landmark/voiceprint instant where yodeling, country music and jazz fused was the pure cultural improvisation or syncretic goulash, or whatever, that eventually spawned rockabilly, an impatient younger cousin of country music that in due time sired rock and roll (which in turn died an ignominious death as arena rock).<sup>59</sup>

But it is this improbable duet of Armstrong-Rodgers (in a segregationist society) that actually presaged the rise of black-influenced white music(s) and the modern multiple-hybrid known as World Music. World Music is only the conscious side of what had been going on unconsciously for a long time—cultural collaboration. As Christian Wagner points out, “A hybrid music was emerging, where T stood not only for Texas and Tennessee but for Tyrol too.”<sup>60</sup>

Wagner notes that yodelers appeared on America’s shores as early as the 1830s, when homesick Swiss and German immigrants imported yodeling Tyrolese groups to serenade them in bars and civic centers, so they could feel a little bit of home away from home. Due to a process Bluestein terms “widespread interaction,”<sup>61</sup> the sojourns of yodeling families such as the Rainer Family resulted in a kind of craze for yodeling families. Hillbilly singers found themselves adorning ballads with ostentatious choruses of sometimes plaintive, sometimes rudimentary and often downright jovial yodeling as a necessary rite of musical passage.

By the early 1900s blacks were also considered among the most proficient and enthusiastic practitioners of yodeling. Several black singers were highly regarded and became renowned for their yodeling prowess. By the 1920s, yodeling was all the rage in North America, a phenomenon akin to the ascendancy of today’s rap music.

## The Hillbillies Are Alive with Yodeling

The confluence of hillbilly or cowboy music (later called country) and yodeling in America’s history is most commonly pinpointed around the 1830s during the second wave of immigration to North America.<sup>62</sup> I propose that the confluence may have occurred during the first waves of immigration during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, somewhere out in “the seed-bed of the southern back country,” in mid-Pennsylvania heading out toward the Appalachian foothills.<sup>63</sup> After all, the first man to explore York County was



*Mid-twentieth century American yodelers, the Delmore Brothers. Reprinted with permission.*

a representative of the German Mennonites from Switzerland.<sup>64</sup> Swedes, meanwhile, established New Gothenburg in 1643 and Germans settled in Pennsylvania in the later 1600s, attracted by William Penn's policies of religious tolerance and his immigration pamphleteering in Europe.<sup>65</sup> In places like Germantown and further west in Lancaster, they were the first to clear frontier land for farming and established their German or Pennsylvania Deutsch (later mispronounced as Dutch) immigrant communities.

By 1710 "alarming" numbers (according to the likes of Benjamin Franklin) of Swiss-German Mennonites and other refugees from war-torn regions of Germany were living in Pennsylvania as neighbors to the Irish and Scots, and on fairly good terms with the Native Americans. Among the Irish, Scots and the non-devout Germans, drink was the most common amusement and singing was an important diversion because music was to many not to be associated only with religion, so "in repetitive or drudging manual work, the Germans of Pennsylvania were in the habit of singing worksongs from the old country."<sup>66</sup> These work songs were their versions of hollers.

"The [second wave of] Germans pushed past the English into the interior" and were to mix with a flood of other nationalities: Scots, Irish, Welsh and Ukrainians. Tradition has preserved some of their folk songs, games, music and ballads.<sup>67</sup> "Characteristically, the music retains the flavor of the folk songs of the country from which it derives while the lyrics are often in dialect or in

broken English.”<sup>68</sup> Celtic narrative ballads rubbed up against the emergence of holler-based blues and maybe yodels.

By 1726 some of these early settlers were already migrating south into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and the Piedmont plateau. The further away they moved from their original settlements, the more distant they felt from their native culture and religion. Progressively, the strict rules against alcohol and partying were replaced by more festive and open attitudes toward diversion.

Many of the subsequent waves of immigrants who arrived from rural Germany, Scandinavia and Switzerland (with their yodeling traditions?) were attracted by the notions of self-determination and space as they headed even further south (and west) into the “great fertile valleys of the Appalachian Mountain range” and beyond.<sup>69</sup> Some moved to Texas where “New Germany” settlements were attempted and where they encountered enclaves of British and Irish settlers. Add to that French, Caribbean, Mexican, Czech and African influences and you have the setting for a wild “deep though often confused” cultural stew where, among the fortuitous meetings of cultures, emerged hillbilly music generously inflected with yodeling.<sup>70</sup>

“Unlike the Quakers, Germans had an innate love of singing” and they organized singing groups of all sorts.<sup>71</sup> Germans “carried their love of music with them to the New World,” and ultimately convinced earlier puritanical settlers that beer gardens “were places where the whole family went on Sunday to hear music . . .”<sup>72</sup> “The Germans made important contributions to music at the folk, popular and high art levels . . .” and although German immigrants often chose not to socialize with their neighbors, it seems likely that Germanic *Ur*-memories of yodeling may well have transformed the Appalachian hollers and pig calls into something more musical (listen to modern primitive Howard Finster yodel for instance).<sup>73</sup> Indeed, it seems safe to say that it was along these fault lines of folk music(s) that much of the intermingling occurred, transforming God-fearing hymn-based “American” music into something more jovial and pagan.

Note that the Appalachian Mountains may have served as a setting, not unlike the Alps, helping to swaddle the American yodel. Note as well that hillbillies and immigrant mountaineers who headed west and became cowboys (herders in their own right) were engaged in similarly lonely and dangerous occupations as the old Alpine herders. In 1905, Emma B. Miles wrote in *The Spirit of the Mountains*, “[He] conquers his chosen bit of wilderness . . . fighting and praying. His are the adventures of which future ballads will be sung. . . . His first songs are the yodel. Then he learns . . . songs of fighting and drinking.”<sup>74</sup>

While Wagner and others date America’s documentable yodelers back to the 1830s,<sup>75</sup> music writer Nick Tosches traces some of America’s yodeling roots to minstrels such as Tom Christian who sang yodels as early as 1847 in Chicago. Daniel Decatur Emmett, author of “Dixie,” also included yodels in his repertoire.<sup>76</sup>

Nick Tosches claims that L.W. Lipp made the first yodel sound recordings in 1892 for the New Jersey Phonograph Company.<sup>77</sup> Yodeling became popular in the early 1900s as it emerged as more than a mere vaudeville tent show freak feature. Yodel recordings—Swiss, “Negro,” or other—eventually began to proliferate and in 1924 the first hillbilly yodel record, by Riley Puckett, was released. However, it would be the success of Jimmie Rodgers that would convert the yodeling craze into a full-blown commercial phenomenon.<sup>78</sup>

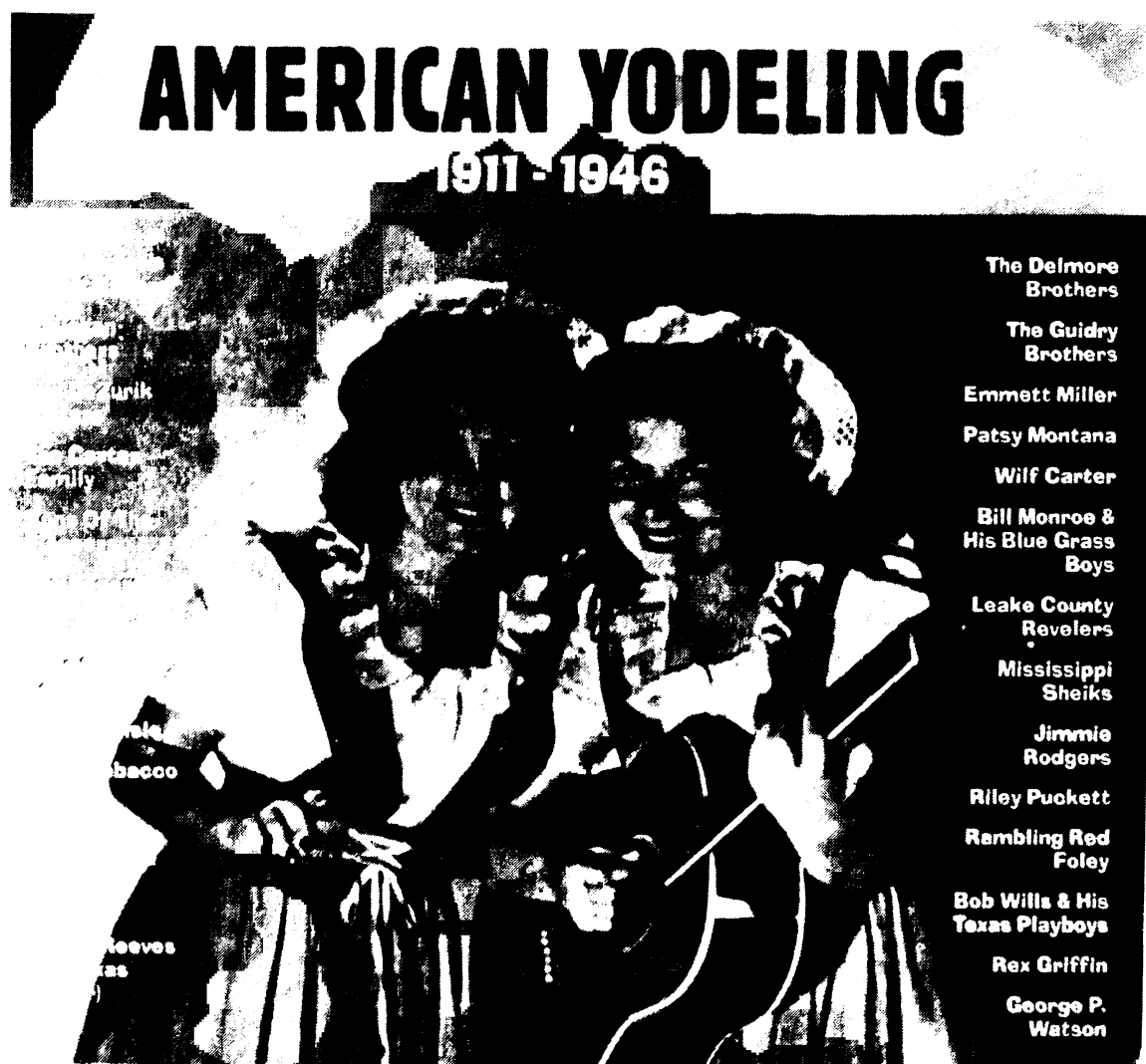
Although Rodgers had many predecessors—Riley Puckett and Emmett Miller were already known for their yodeling—it was Rodgers’s “minstrel show yodel, a sort of fake blue yodel (Swiss yodel, black lyrics) . . .” style that caught fire and soon had almost *every* country singer yodeling and every record buyer buying yodels.<sup>79</sup> His was the commercially-viable artistic weld point of Germanic yodel, British ballad and blues holler.<sup>80</sup> It was the “realness” of his blue collar railroad songs during his short six-year career (dead of tuberculosis at age thirty-three) that helped construct the myth of Rodgers as the “Yodeling” or “Singing Brakeman,” “the Father of Country Music” and “America’s Blue Yodeler.”

Yodeling became not only a stylistic flourish *de rigueur* for almost every country singer, but a commercial necessity because for a time “yodeling became almost synonymous with country music.<sup>81</sup> By the 1930s “yodelers and balladeers could be heard everywhere, even in New York. . . .”<sup>82</sup> Rodgers’s distinctive and plaintive “infamous blue yodel that defies the rational and conjecturing mind”<sup>83</sup> introduced black blues to many whites and further introduced white yodels to many blacks.<sup>84</sup> Rodgers became the ululating standard-bearer of what a yodel should sound like—somewhat melancholy, perhaps mimicking a “lonesome train whistle.”<sup>85</sup> Just as often yodeling was treated as nothing more than a throwaway flourish, or as Rodgers described them, “curlicues I can make with my throat.”<sup>86</sup>

Rodgers borrowed generously from black sources but “he proved to be nearly as influential on black styles, his own blue yodel providing the basis for Howlin’ Wolf’s patented howl.”<sup>87</sup> Tosches even suggests (and why not) that Rodgers may have been influenced by Bessie Smith who herself may have yodeled in concert, although she did not do so on the 1923 recording of “Yodeling Blues.” When Rodgers teamed up with Louis Armstrong in 1930, he of course introduced yodeling to jazz.

Rodgers’s “Muleskinner Blues” and “Blue Yodels” have been covered by so many singers it is impossible to track them all.<sup>88</sup> He influenced people like Ernest Tubb, Gene Autry, Merle Haggard, Jerry Lee Lewis and Hank Snow. Snow was once known as “Canada’s Yodeling Ranger” until his voice could no longer reach the high notes to imitate Rodgers, his idol, and thereafter changed his moniker to the simpler “Singing Ranger.” Countless others have acknowledged their debt to Rodgers and even *more* others have been known to yodel like him now and again.<sup>89</sup>

Meanwhile, further west, logical yet delirious amalgamations such as western swing, mastered by Bob Wills, emerged. Wills was an innovator. He intro-



Cover art for Tikont compact disc, *American Yodeling, 1911–1946*. Reprinted with permission.

duced drums, horns and electric instruments into country while borrowing heavily from big band jazz. Wills was known to incorporate the occasional yodel into his stage shows as well. The region is also home to Tex-Mex and Czech-Mex musical folk-pop hybrids that emerged from the Rio Grande Valley and spawned many a bizarre musical adventure with its combination of country guitar Mexican mariachi trumpet plus elements of Czech folk music, some accordions, German polkas and, yes, yodels.

To all this rooting around for roots and sources we must add the mass marketing of populist cowboy myths. The late 1800s saw the proliferation of the dime novel, the emergence of the Wild West show, Buffalo Bill and Karl May, a German cowboy storyteller. By the 1920s the Hollywood cowboy dandy, a cartoon in flesh, spangles, spurs, chaps and make-up, emerged from a dime novel into an ersatz West to vie with the wildly mythologized image of technically-pure, blue collar, free-thinking mountaineers.

Marketing makeover magic took Dolly and Milly Good, two young women from rural Illinois who sang close-harmony duets and reinvented them as “The

Girls of the Golden West, born in Muleshoe, Texas,” effectively creating a fantasy land in a fictional biography—they claimed their yodeling was influenced by the coyotes they heard howling on the dusty plains.

Around the same time that Jimmie Rodgers was touring, a carefully manufactured cowgirl, Patsy Montana, née Rubye Blevins, became country’s first solo female star. She had a big hit with “I Wanna be a Cowboy’s Sweetheart,” which introduced a breezy, joyous yodeling style to country music audiences.<sup>90</sup>

Bill Monroe, known as the “Father of Bluegrass,” is the real thing, however. His virtuoso styling brought hillbilly music back from the cowboy west to his (and its?) native Kentucky. His music interwove western retreaded traditions such as the yodel with the blues. Many consider him to be the twangy title page of rockabilly and a major influence on Elvis and other Sun Records veterans.

Hank Williams, who arrived on the scene in the later 1940s like some James Dean supernova, would throttle his talent as fast as his liver in liquor. He was dead by the age of twenty-nine. Williams was a truly gifted singer (and yodeler) and became the first country superstar.

Meanwhile, camera cowboys and novelty yodelers such as Gene Autry or Wilf Carter, a.k.a. Montana Slim, walked right off the drawing boards to become the industry’s role models. This tendency to concoct imaginal cowboys has never ceased; even today many country and country-rock musicians still sport *nom de saddle* variations on the “Yodeling Cowboy,” like Kenny Roberts as “King of the Yodelers.”<sup>91</sup> Many still pose and perform in spangly, shimmering aberrations of the cowboy costume—Las Vegas meets Cow Pie, Texas; some even court a look just short of androgynous kitsch while others are as cross-signaled as any seventies glam-rocker. The more real cowboys disappeared from the actual landscape, the more we had to have them croon and dance inside the magic lanterns of our collective nostalgic minds.

## Modern Frontiers

Jerry Lee Lewis’s “whiskey-drenched” yodels and Tompall Glaser’s heartfelt interpretations escorted us into the modern era of the late sixties that saw younger yodelers readily acknowledge their influences: Rodgers, Monroe, Montana, Williams and Autry.<sup>92</sup> But by the 1980s, Dallas (of all places) was veering off into some wacky and satirical tangents (satire as a necessary antidote against a whole warbly load of commercialized schmaltz), producing mescal-addled cow punks and Rubber Rodeo types. The Cowboy Junkies, who do not yodel, continue to filter their western standards and blues through heroin-ennui-restrained and Velvet Underground cool. Then there’s Randy Erwin, a Czech singer who grew up on a rice farm in Texas’s yodeling corridor in Ganado. He turned his genuine vocal credentials into a sort of “conceptual yodeling act,” lampooning some of the schlockier yodels, hoping to resuscitate them by recontextualizing them.<sup>93</sup>

Riders in the Sky, led by oral historian Doug Green, continues to perform

humorous Firesign Theatre-like takes on western lore with a heavy emphasis on yodeling. In the post-Byrds *Sweethearts of the Rodeo*, (post New Riders of the Purple Sage, post-psychotic punk era) yodels have managed to emerge from some very warped throats indeed. The yodel, in fact, seems perfectly-outfitted to bring out the silly or absurd in one and all. There is even a sub-genre of goofy songs with tacked on yodels to emphasize the fact that a particular tune is indeed silly. Take for instance “The Yodeling Veterinarian of the Alps” from *Larry’s Silly Songs*:

Some just stand in silence  
while some just scratch their scalps  
At the curious ways of the yodeling  
veterinarian of the Alps .  
Yodel-ay-yodel-ay-ay-hoo!<sup>94</sup>

At the cusp of the new millennium we discover a modest renaissance of yodeling, signaled by increased activity on the Worldwide Web as well as events such as the Western Music Association Yodeling Extravaganza, restricted to western-style yodeling, and how-to-yodel videos, exposing our senses to a proliferation of multi-entrepreneurial yodelers with their overly proud websites and geared-up sales pitches. The acrobatically-epiglotted Kerry Christensen, for all his rush to self-promotional hubris, is a very talented yodeler who preserves even while he debases traditions—kitsch hitched to *kultur*. He does it all: plays alphorn, cowbell, zither and accordion; sings Western, Swiss, German, jazz, Cajun and even manages to slip sloppy yodels into the “Stars and Stripes Forever” and the “William Tell Overture!” In a post-post-mod world where even earnest expression is suspect, yodeling has become “known as spectacle, as the craft of the singing comedians.”<sup>95</sup>

But there are also those who prefer to delve below the surfaces of diversion to hone modern tributes. Suzy Bogguss, for instance, lovingly reconstructed “Cowboy’s Sweetheart” in 1988. And then there’s Steve Earle, Willie Nelson and Sourdough Slim, “The Yodeling Cowboy” who in the late seventies worked on a UPS loading dock in Oregon and yodeled nights in his tiny attic apartment.<sup>96</sup> Finally, in 1995, he was invited to play Carnegie Hall as part of an evening called “The Singing Cowboys.” Atlantic recording artist Jewel also uses the yodel to good effect in a pop context.

One writer even insists the rock crooning of U-2’s Bono is really soulful yodeling.<sup>97</sup> Many others, myself included, think of Bono, despite his good intentions, as this year’s Sting or Sammy Hagar, more in the whiny vocal gymnastics style of seventies arena rockers than intimately embracing his purported hero, Jimmie Rodgers.

Yodeling, however, does manage to attract a colorful chorus of eccentric characters. Take for instance, the Australian lesbian activist yodeling sisters, Lynda and Jools Topp, the Topp Twins, who according to their website “grew

up singing to the cows” and who yodel to enhance their tales of ordinary life and their anti-nuke, Maori land rights, and pro-gay messages.<sup>98</sup>

## Absurd Heretics

Perhaps the most hauntingly resonant yodel I have *ever* heard is, strangely enough, a long, conceptual, stream-of-consciousness piece by New York avant-crooner Shelly Hirsch called “Haiku Lingo.” She gloriously evokes the *feel* of the Alps while simultaneously paying tribute to avant-garde-precursors like Meredith Monk. But perhaps there are also hints of homage in “Lingo” to exotic diva Yma Sumac (rumored to be Amy Camus from Brooklyn) whose five-octave trilling arias of pidgin patter purportedly descend from the Peruvian Andes.<sup>98</sup>

There are many other strange amalgamations that combine kitsch, operatic excess, and psyche-cleansing primal scream therapy with whimsical yodel-inflected falsetto. Once one lets go of the ethno-purist notion that a yodel must be only one thing and realizes that it can, in effect, be “any cry resembling this musical mode,” new horizons appear.<sup>99</sup> Those who have yodeled, whether they meant to or not, begin to reveal their vocal cords: Tiny Tim (tiptoeing, ambiguously-gendered singer popular in the hippie era), Yoko Ono (primal screams for peace with John Lennon), the late Klaus Nomi (most famous as a kind of semi-transsexual whose robotic operatics were applied to the *Wizard of Oz*’s “Ding Dong the Witch is Dead”) Diamanda Galas (high punk priestess of primal scream opera), Greetje Bijma (conceptual Dutch scat singer), and of course, let us not forget Nina Hagen (whose psychotropic and histrionic forays into yodel-arias help define much of her music but may be most evident on her record *New York, New York*). In this extrapolation of the yodel, improv is applied to new stresses and societal strains, and in these versions we can feel a certain indulgent release from the constraints of genre, logic, sobriety, tradition—all hindrances in *her* and *their* pursuit of the ululating muses.

Mary Schneider meanwhile, is called the “Australian Queen of Yodeling.” She yodels Mozart, Brahms and Beethoven. Mij, the “Yodeling Astrologer,” sings Martian love calls employing screams and yodels while the Seven Dwarves entertain Snow White with a chorus of “Ho-la-la-ee-ays.” The many hybrids we’ve discussed until now make it evident that the yodel can adapt itself to almost any genre of music.

## Cybernetto Yodelario

Ed Sanders, poet-author of *The Family* and ex-member of the agit-prop band the Fugs, wonderfully foreshadowed the emerging fascination with cybernetic music and its possible trappings, when he sang his satirical ballad “Yodeling Robot,” in which a robot has an unrequited love affair with Dolly Parton. Heavy studio echo effects make Sanders’s pining yodel reverberate beyond its

usual homeostatic domain. As he sings the refrain “iron eyes never can weep,” we see the basic quandary besetting him. How will this science of control and communication, this Frankenstein fascination with bone fused to electronic prosthesis attempt to resolve its “soullessness” in the mad science lab-home of modern recording studios where yodels are lifted, revitalized with effects and reverb, and recontextualized in ambient settings to further fuse tradition with technology?

With the advent of sampling, the simple reuse of sound can often blur into the simplistic, and facility can become instantly facile and gimmicky.<sup>100</sup> Deep Forest is a New Agey fabricator of ambient dioramas that tread precariously between somewhat schmaltzy and yet not unaffected reappropriations of Pygmy yodels by accelerating, bending and layering them across vast continents of electronic space. In this context all depth is surface and all surface is depth. The soulful dubsters, *Up, Bustle & Out*, on the other hand, effectively retool Pygmy yodeling and water-drumming, allowing the yodel to hover somewhere in a remix between appreciation and appropriation.

Lee “Scratch” Perry is considered by many to be the omnipresent mad genius of present-day post-Jamaican dub.<sup>101</sup> Since his earliest days with Bob Marley & the Wailers he has consistently altered the course of sculpted sound by utilizing a welter of mega-sampling splices, extemporaneous scat-poesy and mind-blowing reverberated howls. His bawdy vocals sometimes veer into demented voodoo yodeling.

To my ears, the most beautiful recycling of yodeling samples (heartrending ornamentation) comes on “No Dog Barks” by Dub Syndicate, produced by the London mixmaster Adrian Sherwood. It threads the Pygmy yodels through as a melody which sounds as plaintive as any lonesome whistle yodel. These few examples offer further evidence that yodeling may serve as the organic precursor of contemporary ambient soundscapes.

## Echo as Ego

As we have already seen, there are many (reductivist) theories of how yodels evolved. Most seem to commence with the pragmatic nature of a herder’s work or a hunter’s toils and anxieties. But in this context, there is room for further speculation. As prehistoric humans domesticated animals, the herds were trained to be more and more heedful of the cowherd’s yodel and eventually the herdsmen just had less to do. As trained cattle grazed, cowherds discovered leisure. With leisure came idleness and with idleness, play, and with play, yodeling experiments perhaps. This transformation of the pragmatic yodel into something self-affirmingly improvisational is best described by Hermann Hesse:

Then I was made village goatherd. On one of the slopes where I usually drove my beasts was a sheltered nook . . . the blue sky hung like a canopy over needle-sharp peaks, and the tinkling goat bells mingled with the incessant roar of a

nearby waterfall. There I sprawled in the warmth, gazed in wonderment at the hurrying white cloudlets, and yodeled softly to myself until the goats noticed my laxness and took advantage of it . . .<sup>102</sup>

The human body serves as the prototype for all musical instruments. The respiratory system—lungs, throat and vocal cords—comprises the first wind instrument. “The vocal cords, a collection of thin membranes, are set into vibration by the rush of air. The throat and mouth then serve to resonate the sound”<sup>103</sup>

Vibrations along the vocal cords in the form of, let’s say, a yodel’s alternating throat (tightened vocal cords = raised pitch) and chest (slackened cords = lower pitch, deeper tone) voices, are forced from the throat to the mouth that serves as a megaphone and amplifies the vibrations as the sounds are released at 331 meters per second into the surrounding clear air. In fact, the entire chest cavity, serving a purpose similar to that of the body of a guitar, further amplifies the strummed vocal cords to aid in projecting the voice. The sounds travel in waves or clusters of agitated air molecules like ripples on water resonating out from a splash, each ripple pushing its neighboring ripple a bit further outward (but just as importantly, *inward*). Cup your hands around your mouth as you yodel and this so-called “inner music” will emerge from its constricted vocal chambers, abstract and pre-verbal, and begin to commingle with nature and occupy space and emanate so far beyond your bodily limitations that the awesome “out there” is brought in and the in is drawn out.<sup>104</sup> With amplification the sounds will linger even longer, get trapped in valleys, bounce off hillsides and ravines, and eventually reverberate back upon themselves to sing harmony with one another, like “vocal ghosts produc[ing] an imaginal space.”<sup>105</sup>

The yodeler is diminished and yet simultaneously *enlarged* in the landscape because, as Rudolph Steiner observed, “The soul is indeed the harp upon which the musician plays. The whole feeling body of man is a musical instrument on which the ego resounds and the soul produces the melody. It does not exist in the Cosmos. Melody lies within man himself.”<sup>106</sup> In fact in many oral cultures, sound verified—even signified—existence. Hesse put it thus: “quite overcome, I saw with fear and joy in my heart the immense distances bearing down on me. So that was how fabulously wide the world was.”<sup>107</sup> Sight and sound collaborate to inform the soul.

In the story of Narcissus and Echo, Echo was condemned to speak only as a response to others. But because Narcissus, her inamorata, was too self-involved he never managed to speak to her. Thus Echo never spoke and died unheard. One interpretation derived from this myth tells us that only after narcissism is overcome will echo flourish. And so, like Narcissus saw, lolling cowherds might have *heard*—not their fellow herders, but *themselves*. As Mellers observed, “We live in the noise’s process. . . . An ancient ‘way of life’ is rendered immediate . . .”<sup>108</sup> It is this self-awareness that must be put into proper context. Thoreau attempts this in his *Journal* when he suggests, “our minds should echo at least

as many times as a Mammoth Cave to every musical sound. It should awaken reflections in us . . .”<sup>109</sup> He implies that with each echo of our own yodel we are forced to take stock of the bigger world around us. Empowerment through the acceptance of humility is the message. Divining via yodeling can lead to knowing: Jack Kerouac, working as a fire lookout in Washington, was faced with the task of being alone with himself and took to yelling “questions at the rocks and trees, and across gorges, or yodel—‘what is the meaning of the void?’ The answer was perfect silence. So I knew.”<sup>110</sup>

When sound defines a space, that’s ambience. When it defines existence, we call it belief. A belief in the rapt yodel outburst reverberating beyond expectation while it directs its energy to discovering itself, where one can become momentarily absorbed in the process of perception, that instant of hallucinatory and transformative recognition at the point of interaction of one’s senses with one’s environment, that sense of awe—“the hills are alive” as Julie Andrews exclaimed—of feeling a space and a place are alive with one’s own voice, a voice that is perhaps part of a larger mosaic.<sup>111</sup>

Robin Maconie describes this exchange between self and world as, “the consequences of the act of creation as a declaration of a distinction between the (divine) self and the world; [which] includes a loss of direct control over the world . . . with the possibility of an original conception of order deteriorating into chaos. . . .”<sup>112</sup>

Hearing is our most temporally accurate sense; vision our most spatially accurate. The problem of how the nervous system organizes and integrates perceptual information at a given speed in a given locale has produced “psychological moment” theories. But echo (like reverb, delay or looping) seems to mimic psychotropic time-space dislocations; it stretches time, allowing the present to become a future in a reprocessed past. According to Michel, “Some music [jazz, pop and rock music in the sixties and seventies] was recognized symbolically as representative of the feelings and perceptions of drug users, i.e., in its distorted sound and sound effects. the music seemed to enhance, enrich and expand feelings of self-awareness and feelings of relationship with others.”<sup>113</sup>

Echo wreaks havoc with the inner ear’s “vestibular sense [which] registers movement on three planes via three semicircular canals. Projections from these receptor-sites lead directly into the vermis of the cerebellum. This area controls the anti-gravity muscles . . .”<sup>114</sup> Echo has the potential to confuse by over-stimulating the hair cell nerve endings in the canals. These confused signals are broadcast to the auditory nerve in the brain and in turn amplified by the auditory signals that are sent to the muscles that control balance, spatial relations and equilibrium. Space becomes tentative, non-geometric, sonically-defined.<sup>115</sup> Time becomes fluid and spatial, a non-calendrical “intimate immensity.” Yet “blocks of sound can overlap and interpenetrate in acoustic space without collapsing into a harmonic unity of consonance, thereby maintaining the paradox of ‘simultaneous difference.’”<sup>116</sup>

Synesthesia occurs when one is “exposed to a stimulation in one sense area but receives and experiences that stimulus in association with another sense area.”<sup>117</sup> For instance, this would occur if we feel or see the Alps when someone yodels.<sup>118</sup> This sensation occurs quite naturally and unconsciously. Merriam notes various studies that point out “the vowel *a* (as in *father*), *o*, *u*, [as] associated . . . with the dark-warm-soft series and *e* (English *a* in *date*), *i* (English *e* in *be*) with the bright-cold-sharp set.”<sup>119</sup> One quickly notes that yodels, their *ah*, *oh*, *oo* sounds might correspondingly evoke the dark cozy valleys while the *ay*, *ee*, falsetto sounds might evoke or have one experience the bright, icy mountaintops synesthetically.

If the mountain valley served as an ancient recording studio prototype,<sup>120</sup> the echos’s ephemeral memory only became remastered voice on tape deep into the twentieth century. The use of yodel and electronic second cousin echo



*Riders In The Sky, contemporary cowboy yodelers. Photograph by Jim McGuire. Reprinted with permission.*

in modern recordings allows disintegrations of standard musical syntax;<sup>121</sup> the smudging of precise instrumentation, while the techniques help re-outfit the message and its effects—affecting our dis- or relocation in the scheme of things. At the mental point where sound as mechanical energy is converted into bio-electrical nerve impulse, we bridge the synaptical gaps between ethnomusicology and psychoacoustics, between fader and phlange, body and spirit, I and it. Or as Mellers puts it, “we live in the noise’s process.”<sup>122</sup> We rewrite cultural anthropology, obliterate previous hegemonic (national)isms and re-map new routes into the sacred and speculative. Potentially, we recapture the notion of creative leisure in exchange for the less satisfying touristic parameters of leisure. As reverberation evokes the sacred it simultaneously transmits the iconoclastic. Reverberations are sound tag to a million Hollywood soundtracks that project the cataclysmic, whether personal or global.

Dub (a.k.a. versioning or doubling) is the strategy of reconfiguring Jamaican reggae songs by stripping them of their vocals and then customizing them with delay, echo and interspliced samples, which can transform a song into something like an aural psychotropic entry into altered consciousness.<sup>123</sup> Dub expands the space to be “the uneasy silence” between sounds.<sup>124</sup> Maconie states that “most sounds are intermittent and ephemeral, and because of this the aural concept of reality is framed to account for the continuing existence of things that may not always be signaling their presence. . . .”<sup>125</sup> To add further speculation to the mix, Joscelyn Godwin claims that, “expansion into bigger and bigger spaces slows down temporal events, to the degree that a single vibration, or rotation, of our planet takes a whole day, and that of a galaxy, millions of years.”<sup>126</sup> An echo of the original, which in time became the echo of an echo, until the echoes of the echoes began to mingle, harmonize and morph into something completely new and expansive, “dematerializing and eroding the integrity of singers and song.”<sup>127</sup> It is here, at this juncture of technology and deep abiding notions of connection, of inner and outer, that yodeling may function as connective or mantral.

This notion of yodel as a pre-recorded sound in society’s collective cochlea lends itself well to the hyper-post-modern tactics of appropriation, dissembling, sampling, self-reference and *détourned* function. As it departs *from* it arrives *at*; as it renounces it reclaims. By departing from ethnomusical empiricism and genre-puritanism the reconstituted yodel may be able to hermeneutically reclaim deep feelings of awareness by destabilizing socially-determined contexts of what music *should* do and where it *can* go. This has already been loosely termed “Fourth World Music” (by Brian Eno) and includes musicians involved with extended electronica, inventive reuse of dub and speculative samples that do not necessarily neglect intelligence. It is where “analog doppelgangers”<sup>128</sup> reveal their “desire to travel through intangible dimensions to float and be intoxicated by rhythms and frequencies . . .”<sup>129</sup> while offering a voiceprint back to a pre-modern *Ur*-connection with what Marshall McLuhan referred to as “the Africa within”<sup>130</sup> or the vibration, that synaptical instant,

that segue between a yodel's high and low, where outer integrates with inner and past fuses to future. It could be that same instant of recognition where the yearning townspeople reclaim, if only for an instant, the idyllic surroundings of their mountain valleys, and simultaneously try to "reach or influence that which is thought to be supernatural."<sup>131</sup>

Vibe is slang for the invisible vibrations of feeling, emanations that travel between receptive souls. Vibration occurs when stagnant space is agitated by aesthetics, passion and sound. Vibration has emotional, physical and acoustical properties. It is perhaps the amplitude of emotion, the transmitter of mutation that sits atop every guitar string, every trumpet valve, every vocal cord. As Godwin contends,

The whole universe is in a state of vibration; in fact it is a fair speculative position . . . that it is nothing but vibration. There is an unbroken continuum of vibrations running from the infinitely large and slow to the infinitely fast and small. . . . Approached in this way, our perception of sound becomes something of cosmic significance for us . . .<sup>132</sup>

So, is this what gives the yodel its provocative potential as more than just silly goof-off throat wanking? Is *this* the key to its magic? Very likely, I think. But in the end, like Jimmie Rodgers, we're all just "yodeling all the way home." Home for him was a Texas mansion called "Blue Yodelers' Paradise."<sup>133</sup>

## Notes

1. Bob Wills & His Texas Playboys with The McKinney Sisters on vocals, "Will There Be Any Yodeling in Heaven" *For Collectors Only*, K-6002 (Kaleidoscope). The Girls of the Golden West in 1934 sang "Will There Be Any Yodelers in Heaven?"

2. "... during the remainder of the day [we] hired the rest of the jodlers, at a franc apiece not to jodl anymore. There is somewhat too much of this jodling in the Alps." Mark Twain, *A Tramp Abroad* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1982), 196.

3. Riders in The Sky's Ranger Doug declared aptly, "Nothing makes people happier than if you stand on a stage and yodel." Quoted in Hans Ibold's derivative "Was Ist Das Jodeln," *Inside 1*, no. 4 (1998): 17.

3. In the ever-shrinking terrain of American media freedom, freeform radio station WFMU in the New York City area becomes more unique with every passing year.

5. *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines yodeling in just thirty-five words (the entire entry comprises 150 words). *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed., s.v. "Yodel." Meanwhile, the *Encyclopedia Americana* sums up an eternity of music in just ninety-nine words. On top of that, the author of the entry, Herbert Weinstock, dismisses the yodel by declaring that "yodeling has not been widely used in serious composed music." *Encyclopedia Americana*, Intl. ed., s.v. "Yodel."

6. Frank C. Campbell suggests the yodel may have had much earlier Asiatic prototypes. *Collier's Encyclopedia*, third ed., s.v. "Yodel."

7. Christoph Wagner, "Yodeling in America," jacket notes for *American Yodeling: 1911-1946*, US-0246-2 (Trikont, 1998), n.p.

8. Nick Tosches explains in his excellent *Country: The Twisted Roots of Rock 'n' Roll*: "The word *yodel* is from the German *jodeln*, which means literally to utter the sound *jo*." (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996), 109. Of course, it's more than that, just as jazz is more than some wild trumpet blowing.

9. Sir Water Scott quoted in Tosches, *Country: The Twisted Roots*, 109.
10. Bernstein pinpointing the exact formula for the joy of music. Leonard Bernstein, *The Joy of Music* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1960), 13.
11. Hugo Zemp, jacket notes to *Switzerland/Suisse, Music & Musicians of the World* 703437 (UNESCO International Music Council, 1980), n.p.
12. Ibid.
13. "The accompaniment by a second and third singer was already mentioned by the German scholar, J.G. Ebel, during his travels at the end of the eighteenth century. How much further back in time this practice goes is uncertain." Ibid.
14. Baerg-Roesli, Inc., e-mail to the author, 1999. E-mail keg@maths.uq.oz.au.
15. Twain, *A Tramp Abroad*, 195.
16. Ibid.
17. Nils L. Wallin. *Biomusicology* (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1991), 426.
18. "... falsetto ... is an emission mechanism with thin vocal folds and almost no closing phrase, in contrast to the chest register with its thick folds and long closing phrase. ... The yodel makes use of the two registers with a "break" at the moment of transition between them, which can be hidden by a trained singer but is performed for a characteristic effect in the yodel." Wallin, *Biomusicology*, 426.
19. "... the yodler [*sic*] sings on vowels, sometimes preceded by a consonant functioning as a 'lever' for the articulation of the vowel." Enrich von Hornbostel, "Die Entstehung des Jodelns," in *Bericht über den Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress in Basel, 1924* (Leipzig, 1925), 202-10; quoted in Wallin, *Biomusicology*, 425-26.
20. Cathy Fink, *Grandma Slid Down the Mountain*, 8010 (Rounder, 1984). Also includes "The Yodel Polka."
21. "tri-hol-ri-ti-jo, di-ra-ja tralala dijo . . ." so goes the yodeling refrain in "Zwischen Berg und Tal" or "Between Mountain and Valley" as it appears in Ursula Henetek's *Echoes of Diversity* (Vienna: Bölag Verlag, 1996), n.p.
22. Georg Rhaw, *Bicinia Gallica et Latina* (1545; reprint Wilhelmshaven, Germany: Heinrichshofen Verlag, 1968), n.p.
23. There are many studies, some dating back to the early eighteenth century, which document the homesickness experienced by vagabond shepherds and Swiss expatriates when they heard a yodel or the bleat of an alphorn. "In nearly all cultures music and religion go hand in hand as a defense against fear and aloneness." E. Thayer Gaston, *Music Therapy in Action* (New York: MacMillan, 1968), 23.
24. Baerg-Roesli, e-mail to the author.
25. "It's significantly different in sound from yodeling. Although it uses the same high vibratoless voice, it doesn't use the same sound patterns nor does it descend much into chest voice. I would class it as related to yodeling by dint of its origins and original function, but the similarity ends there." Spidra Webster, e-mail to the author, 5 May 1999. "To my mind yodeling involves the ascent into the head voice, descent into chest or throat voice and ascent to head voice again and back and forth fairly often. The *kulning* I've heard (on Frifot's "Summersong") stays in head voice almost the entire time and doesn't really accentuate the difference when it does dip into lower notes." Spidra Webster, e-mail to the author, 9 May 1999.
26. Wallin, *Biomusicology*, 426.
27. Spidra Webster noted that "kulning [is] significantly different in sound from yodeling. Although it uses the same high vibratoless voice, it doesn't use the same sound patterns nor does it descend much into chest voice. I would class it as related to yodeling by dint of its origins and original function, but the similarities ends there." E-mail to the author.
28. Wallin, *Biomusicology*, 428.
29. "Von Hornbostel, like M. Bukofzer [in "Magie und Technik in der Alpenmuyik," in *Schweiyer Annalen*, Hefte 3, 1936], argues that the yodel has its origin in the alphorn and schalmei; in other words, it is an imitation of wind instruments." Wallin, *Biomusicology*, 427.
30. Hermann Hesse, *Peter Camenzind* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1973), 17.
31. Rudolph Steiner quoted in Mary Priestley, *Music Therapy in Action* (London: Constable & Co., 1975), 199.
32. "Christianity combined elements of strength from various sources. From the Jews it accepted a Sacred Book and the doctrine that all religions but one are false and evil. . . . Easter

combined the Jewish Passover with pagan celebrations of the resurrected God. " Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Civilization* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1945), 477.

33. John Horton, *Scandinavian Music: A Short History* (New York: Norton, 1983), n.p.

34. A recent commercial for Canon printers shows a decidedly American western setting for their printer while a very Swiss yodel lilt through fore- and background. A less recent Swiss Miss commercial attempted to make their hot chocolate product attractive by employing the yodel to hearken to the mystical land of virtual Switzerland(s). Mary Martin was the original yodeler in the Broadway production of *The Sound of Music* in 1959.

35. A yodel song, a *Tyrolienne*, appears in Act III of Rossini's opera *William Tell*. Meanwhile, Kerry Christensen on his "O No Kimosaube" (*Alpine Yodeling*) yodels his way through the television program theme song of *The Lone Ranger*, itself an excerpt from *The William Tell* overture.

36. Wallin, *Biomusicology*, 423.

37. The non-Pygmy Sans from Southern Africa, the Gogo from Tanzania and the !Kung from Angola also yodel. Ruth M. Stone, ed., *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol. 1, *Africa* (New York: Garland Publications, 1998), 307, 635, 705.

38. "Song above all else is believed to attract the attention of the forest and to please it." Colin M. Turnbull, *Wayward Servants: The Two Worlds of the African Pygmies* (London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1965), 254.

39. Daou V. Joris, "A Comparative Approach to Hunting Rituals Among Baka Pygmies," in *Cultural Diversity Among Twentieth Century Foragers*, Susan Kent, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 263.

40. Richard Carlin, *Man's Earliest Music* (New York: Facts on File, 1987), 94.

41. Susan Kent, "Cultural Diversity: Causes and Implications," in *Cultural Diversity Among Twentieth Century Foragers*, Susan Kent, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13.

42. Scat singing utilizes improvised nonsense syllables like the yodel does.

43. Ashenafi Kebede, *Roots of Black Music* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, Inc., 1995), 43.

44. Ray Charles, *Brother Ray: Ray Charles' Own Story* (New York: Dial Press, 1978), 87.

45. Some musicological reductivists continue to insist the yodel is nothing more than a vocal approximation of the alphorn.

46. Robert Farris Thompson, quoted in Cynthia Rose, *Living in America: The Soul Saga of James Brown* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1990), 127.

47. Laura Love's website address is: <http://www.rahul.net/hrmusic/artists/llvart.html>.

48. Alan Lomax, quoted in Gene Bluestein, *Poplore: Folk & Pop in American Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994) 58.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., 57.

51. Wilfrid Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land* (London: Faber & Faber, 1978).

52. Ibid., 17.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., 266.

55. "At two-thirty the Nut burst in, . . . He had a mildly maniacal look because his glasses were speckled with welding spatter.

'New foreman, a real Gee-mad-man. Sent a guy home for farting in a car. And an other one home for yodeling.'

'Yodeling?' I asked.

'Yeah, you know—' And he yodeled.

(It's common in auto plants for men to break the monotony with noise, like the banging of tin cans in jail. Someone will drop something, his partner will yell 'Whaa' and then 'Whaa' gets transmitted all along the line.) Barbara Garson, *All the Livelong Day: The Meaning and Demeaning of Routine Work* (New York: Penguin, 1980), 92-3.

56. Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land*, 266.

57. Ibid.

58. Wagner, "Yodeling," n.p.

59. Two years earlier Emmett Miller had cut a country-meets-jazz classic when he sang "Lovesick Blues" to the jazzy accompaniment of the Dorsey Brothers.

60. Wagner, "Yodeling," n.p.

61. Bluestein, *Poplore*, 56.

62. This date may also derive from researchers' abilities to verify available evidence. Earlier evidence may simply not exist for this portion of the oral tradition.

63. Bill C. Malone, *Singing Cowboys & Musical Mountaineers* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 13.

64. Abdel Ross Wentz, *Beginnings of the German Element in York County Pennsylvania* (Lancaster, Pa.: Pennsylvania German Society, 1916), 14.

65. Many Moravians, Mennonites, Amish, Dunkers and Quakers, collectively known as Pennsylvania Dutch, emigrated to Pennsylvania to escape religious persecution in southern Germany and Switzerland between 1680 and 1840.

66. William T. Parsons, *The Pennsylvania Dutch: A Persistent Minority* (Boston: Twayne Publishing, 1976), 172-73.

67. Thomas Brendle & William Troxell, *Pennsylvania German Songs* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), 7-8. "German folksongs . . . entered Pennsylvania from German and Switzerland contemporaneously with the British folk songs. . . the two great song movements met, mingled, and to a certain extent blended. . . In 1840, as the Industrial Revolution was developing in Pennsylvania [and with it] a new wave of immigration . . . In the ensuing half-century, hundreds of thousands of immigrants poured in from the British Isles, and Ireland, and from Germany and other northern countries . . ." Ibid.

68. Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration. *Pennsylvania: A Guide to the Keystone State* American Guide Series. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940) n.p.

69. Maldwyn A. Jones, *Destination America* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1976), 120; Thomas Sewell, *Ethnic America: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 51.

70. Bluestein, *Poplore*, 58. Of course, this can only be presumed because the "precise knowledge of the South's early rural music will never be available to us." Malone, *Singing Cowboys*. However, Daniel Kingman believes the North American yodel developed from "a combination of influences: black field hollers and blues; Mexican song; and possibly . . . the yodeling of Swiss singers who toured the Midwest in the nineteenth century." Daniel Kingman, *American Music: A Panorama*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1990), 175.

71. Joseph Kelly, Jr., *Pennsylvania: The Colonial Years 1681-1776* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 664; Sewell, *Ethnic America*, 60.

72. Jones, *Destination America*, 125; Sewell, *Ethnic America*, 60.

73. Bill C. Malone, "Music," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris, eds., (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 985.

74. Emma B. Miles, *The Spirit of the Mountains* (New York: J. Pott, 1905; facsimile ed. reprint, Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1975), 68-69.

75. Wagner admits the possibility that yodels may have been transmitted prior to the early nineteenth century. "I have no exact evidence when yodeling came to the North America. I only assumed it arrived with the floor of Alpine immigrants in the nineteenth century . . . It could have been earlier." Personal correspondence.

76. Tosches, *Country: The Twisted Roots*, 109.

77. Nick Tosches, *Country: The Twisted Roots*, 110.

78. Ruth Reichmann, Ph.D. at the Max Kade German-American Center at Indiana University-Purdue University wrote that "... yodeling . . . came with the German/Swiss/Austrian immigrants from the Alpine region—not only one—but many. . . The name 'Jimmie Rodgers' tells you something about the country singer. Rodgers is the anglicized form of Roetgers. Although this is a northern German name, it is German nonetheless. Jim/Jimmy/James was a popular name among Americans of German descent." E-mail to the author. I agree with Tosches that others like Emmett Miller yodeled better and more soulfully than Rodgers. At this point in time as then, Rodgers is the most well-known yodeler and people have become too enamored of his fame to accurately assess the quality of his yodeling and singing.

79. Tosches, *Country: The Twisted Roots*, 111.

80. Jimmy Rodgers synthesized these strands in a highly palatable form—manufacturing the real as commercial while simultaneously managing to make his affected and decorative yodels sound almost organic or soulful.

81. Charles Wolfe quoted in Wagner, "Yodeling," n.p.

82. "Because its falsetto delivery was so different from his singing voice, it was a fine way to apply certain accents to whatever he was singing about. with the possible exception of the

mysterious blackface singer Emmett Miller, nobody could yodel like (Rodgers). Which prompted some lurid speculation. There were people who believed Rodgers magnificent yodeling was a by-product of the tuberculosis that was beginning to kill him." Nicholas Dawidoff, *In the Country of Country: People & Places in American Music* (New York: Pantheon, 1997), 12-13.

83. Bob Dylan, quoted in jacket notes of *The Songs of Jimmie Rodgers: A Tribute*, CT 67676 (Egyptian Records, 1997), n.p.

84. Bill C. Malone, "Country Music," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris, eds., (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 1004.

85. "[Rodgers] is the voice in the wilderness of the head." Dylan, quoted in Wagner, "Yodeling," n.p. Rodgers's yodels may have served as a self-effacing satire or ironic counterpoint to the woe-is-me nature of the songs. His "T.B. Blues" for instance, chronicles his struggles with tuberculosis, and yet, between verses, between the T. and the B. so to speak, the sprightly yodels emphasize the need to recognize our own helplessness and how self-effacing humor dignifies that knowledge.

86. Rodgers, quoted in Tosches, *Country: The Twisted Roots*, 113.

87. Peter Guralnick, *Lost Highway: Journeys & Arrivals of American Musicians* (London: Penguin, 1992), 20. "Rodgers didn't just take: black performers were as enchanted as anyone by the falsetto yodel he indulged in on refrains, and the Mississippi Sheiks' 1930 "Yodeling, Fiddling Blues" is practically a homage to him." Francis Davis, *The History of the Blues, the Roots, the Music, the People: Charley Patton to Robert Cray* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1995), 88.

88. There are thirteen-plus variations of Rodgers's Blue Yodels:

1. "T for Texas"
2. "My Lovin' Gal, Lucille"
3. "Evening Sun Yodel"
4. "Ain't no Blackheaded Woman Can Make a Fool Out of Me"
5. "Blue Yodel #5"
6. "Anniversary Blue Yodel"
7. "Blue Yodel #7"
8. "Mule Skinner Blues"
9. "Standin' on the Corner"
10. "Ground Hog Rootin' in My Backyard"
11. "Blue Yodel #11"
12. "Barefoot Blues"
13. Known as Jimmie Rodgers's Last Blue Yodel, "Women Make A Fool Out of Me"

89. A good example is the recording, *The Songs of Jimmie Rodgers: A Tribute*, which taps into a deeper (re)appreciation of Rodgers. This recording includes the artists Van Morrison, Bono, Dylan, Willie Nelson, Steve Earle, Iris Dement, Aaron Neville and others. Maybe they yodel *here* but I'm guessing not many of them had ever yodeled before.

90. A recording of that song can be found on *The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Country Music*, selected and annotated by Bill Malone, P8 15640/8 (Smithsonian Institution, 1981).

91. Roberts was the mentor of Shirley Field, Canadian yodeler extraordinaire and Canada's female yodeling champion of 1950. She co-produced the book/recording *How to Yodel the Cowboy Way* with Rudy Robbins (Anaheim Hills, Ca.: Centerstream Publishing, 1997), and produced a record called *Seasons of our Lives: Country Gospel with Yodeling*.

92. Tosches, *Country: The Twisted Roots*, 114.

93. Cynthia Rose, e-mail to the author.

94. VeggieTales, *Larry's Silly Songs*, available from the Ultimate VeggieTales Website at <http://www.veggietales.net/silly/sillyc.html>, accessed 28 October 1999.

95. Ibold, "Was Ist Das Jodeln," 17.

96. Related to the issue of the yodel representing sounds in our environment, Sourdough Slim claims to have written a yodel inspired by the song of the meadowlark.

97. Ibold, "Was Ist Das Jodeln," 17.

98. The controversy continues: Sumac insists she's the genuine article—an Incan diva. The liner notes to her various records seem to perpetuate this notion. Others consider her a talented if humorous DIY exotica myth and to be, indeed, Amy Camus from Brooklyn.

99. *Grolier's Academic American Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Yodel." Quoted in a posted e-mail from Martin Auer (100571.2073@compuserve.com).

100. Sampling is the art of recontextualizing pirated sound bites. The sampler, after much professional wrangling, is finally beginning to be regarded as a valid musical instrument.

101. Dub, in simplest terms, is a reggae song stripped of its vocals and then reprocessed using electronic effects.

102. Hesse, *Peter Camenzind*, 18.

103. Carlin, *Man's Earliest Music*, 40.

104. Priestley, *Music Therapy in Action*, 199.

105. Erik Davis, "Roots & Wires," *Fringecore #2* (Berchem, Belgium, Dec. 1997), 14.

106. Rudolph Steiner, quoted in Priestley, *Music Therapy in Action*, 200.

107. Hesse, *Peter Camenzind*, 17.

108. Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land*, xx.

109. Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, vol. 4 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), 144.

110. Jack Kerouac, *Lonesome Traveler* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1960), 128.

111. Singing Oscar Hammerstein II's, *Sound of Music*.

112. Robin Maconie, *The Science of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 11.

113. Donald E. Michel, *Music Therapy* (Springfield, Ill.: Chas. C. Thomas Pub., 1985), 63.

114. Paul De Rienzo and Dana Beal, *The Ibogaine Story: Report on the Staten Island Project* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia, 1997), 142.

115. "The power of music to evoke images or sensations can explain its association with psychic states in which individuality, time and space disappear or take on another dimension." Gaston, *Music Therapy in Action*, 85.

116. Davis, "Roots & Wires," 12.

117. Alan Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Bloomington, Ind.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 86.

118. "Music can create mental imagery of many kinds: realistic, fanciful, dream-like, fantastic, mystical or hallucinatory." Juliette Alvin, *Music Therapy* (London: Hutchinson, 1975), 83.

119. Merriam, *Anthropology of Music*, 86.

120. "We went yoddl[ing] [sic] and shouting to rouse the echoes." J.F. Campbell, *Frost and Fire*, (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1865), n.p.

121. Wilf Carter, also known as Montana Slim, utilized studio echo techniques to produce what "he called a three-in-one-yodel." Tosches, *Country: The Twisted Roots*, 113.

122. Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land*, xx.

123. "... reggae, an African-Jamaican music that incorporates and revives many American traditions..." Bluestein, *Poplore*, 60. Reggae is one of the world's most influential "sounds" as it presses its distinctive rhythms into the musics it borrows from (such as soul), reconfiguring them in reggae's own image.

124. Simon Reynolds, "The New Ambient: Muzak of the Fears," *Art Forum* 33 (Jan. 1995): 62.

125. Maconie, *The Science of Music*, 3.

126. Joscelyn Godwin, "Speculative Music," in *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, vol. 1, John Paytner, Tim Howell, Richard Orton, and Peter Seymour, eds., (London: Routledge 1992), 263.

127. Davis, "Roots & Wires," 14.

128. Ibid.

129. David Toop. *Ocean of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound and Imaginary Worlds*. (London: Serpent's Tail, 1996), 270.

130. Marshall McLuhan, quoted in Davis, "Roots & Wires," 12.

131. Gaston, *Music Therapy in Action*, 23.

132. Godwin, "Speculative Music," 263.

133. At least it was before he had to sell it because of mounting medical expenses. Rodgers eventually died in a New York hotel, far from home.

Thanks to Nina Ascoly, Cynthia Rose, Ole Joe, Doug Henkle, Chris Potash, Leland Stein at Rounder, Christoph Wagner, Spidra Webster, Tom Riis and Black Sifichi.

## SELECTED YODELS: TITLES AND PERFORMERS

ALPINE MILKMAN • RANDY ERWIN  
 ANNIVERSARY BLUE YODEL #7 • DOC WATSON FAMILY  
 ARIZONA YODELER • CATHY FINK  
 BELLE ON AVE. A • FUGS  
 BLUE YODEL #2 • HANK THOMPSON  
 BLUE YODEL #2 • MERLE HAGGARD (*THE EPIC COLLECTION*)  
 BLUE YODEL #4 • BILL MONROE  
 BLUE YODEL #8 (RODGERS) • BELA FLECK & THE FLECKTONES  
 BLUE YODEL #9 • LOUIS ARMSTRONG & JIMMY RODGERS  
 BLUE YODEL #21 • GOD IS MY CO-PILOT  
 CATTLE CALL • LEANN RIMES & EDDY ARNOLD  
 COTTON EYED JOE • REDNEX  
 COWBOY YODEL • PETE SEEGER  
 DANISH YODEL • DEEP PURPLE  
 DE SCHRATTE ZUE • SWISS RADIO INTERNATIONAL (SRI)  
 DEVILISH BLUES • STOVEPIPE JOHNSON  
 DIKOBODA SOMBE • AKA PYGMY MUSIC  
 DIRTY HANGOVER BLUES • LEE O'DANIEL & HIS HILLBILLY BOYS  
 DOWN THE LINE • LINDA TILLERY & THE CULTURAL HERITAGE CHOIR  
 DOWN THE TRAIL YODEL • HOWARD FINSTER  
 THE DWARVES YODEL SONG • DISNEY SING-A-LONGS  
 HAIKU LINGO • SHELLY HIRSCH  
 HELL'S KITCHEN HOOTENANY • TOBY TWINING MUSIC  
 HE TAUGHT ME TO YODEL • YODELING COWGIRL  
 HOCUS POCUS • FOCUS  
 HONEY GATHERING SONG • MBUTI PYGMIES  
 I WANNA BE A COWBOY'S SWEETHEART • PATSY MONTANA  
 IKOBI #2 • MUSIC OF CENTRAL AFRICAN PYGMIES  
 IM ENGEL Z'URNÄSCH • SRI  
 IN TYMES OF OLDE • PAMELA Z  
 IT GOT ME YODEL • JAD FAIR (SUB POP LOST MUSIC)  
 JUST HANGING • CLINE AND STANLEY  
 L'AUTRICHE À MARSEILLE • CHANTAL DUMAS (*DING-DONG DELUXE*)  
 LEMME TAKE YOU TO THE BACK • FRANK ZAPPA (ED JOBSON YODELING)  
 LONELY GOATHERD • JULIE ANDREWS (*THE SOUND OF MUSIC*)  
 LULLABY YODEL • LULLABY FOR DREAMERS (GREENWOOD)  
 MULE SKINNER BLUES YODEL #8 • MERLE HAGGARD  
 NATURAL YODEL WITH COWBELLS • KIRCHLI YODEL CHOIR (SRI)  
 NIGHTBIRD • DEEP FOREST  
 NO DOG BARKS • DUB SYNDICATE  
 ODE TO A MEADOWLARK • SOURDOUGH SLIM  
 PALI YODEL • RANDY PARKER  
 POSITIVE-O • FAT BARBIE  
 POTHOLES IN MY LAWN • DE LA SOUL (*3 FEET HI & RISING*)  
 PYGMY DIVORCE SONG • FRANCIS BEBEY  
 PYGMY SONG • MOODY BOYZ  
 RIDE ON OLE PAINT • TEX RITTER  
 ROCKIN' YODEL • LEAKE COUNTY REVELERS

THANK YOU • LEE “SCRATCH” PERRY  
 THAT’S HOW THE YODEL WAS BORN • RIDERS IN THE SKY  
 TIMBER • COLDCUT  
 TRANSIENT SCRATCH • WE (*INCURSIONS IN ILLBIENT*)  
 VERY LAST REAL YODEL • STRING DRIVEN THING (NO YODELING)  
 WALTZ MEDLEY • MICHAEL WELCH “THE NEANDERTHAL YODELER”  
 WATERMELON HANGING ON THE LINE • CURLY RAY CLINE  
 WHEN THE CACTUS IS IN BLOOM • JOE VAL & THE NEW ENGLAND BLUE-  
 GRASS BOYS  
 WILL THERE BE ANY YODELERS IN HEAVEN • GIRLS OF THE GOLDEN WEST  
 WILL THERE BE YODELING IN HEAVEN • BOB WILLIS & HIS TEXAS PLAY-  
 BOYS WITH THE MCKINNEY SISTERS  
 WORRIED DEVIL BLUES • TAMPA RED  
 Y AHORA TU • UP BUSTLE & OUT  
 YODEL • PENGUIN CAFÉ ORCHESTRA  
 YODEL BLUES • VAN & PETE  
 YODEL = ART • SHIMIZU  
 YODEL FOR A BEER • HAPPY SCHNAPPS COMBO  
 YODEL IN THE CANYON OF LOVE • DO-RE-ME WITH KERRY  
 THE YODEL POLKA • CATHY FINK  
 YODEL STAMPEDE • FLYING W WRANGLERS  
 YODEL WITH ROTATING COINS • SCHÜTZE CHOIR FROM STEIN  
 YODEL YOUR TROUBLES AWAY • JIMMY LONG  
 THE YODELING FOOL • WYLIE & THE WILD WEST  
 YODELING HOOVER • SOFT BOYS  
 THE YODELING MILKMAN • MONTANA SLIM  
 YODELING ROBOT • ED SANDERS (*BEER CANS ON THE MOON*)  
 YODELING YIPPIE • FUGS

#### SOME OTHER YODELERS

JULES VERNE ALLEN  
 ROSALIE ALLEN  
 ALPENLAENDERS  
 GENE AUTRY  
 BAERG-ROSELI  
 THE BAND  
 BAND OF HOPE  
 LOU & PETER BERRYMAN  
 “DOUBLE YODEL”  
 ELTON BRITT  
 CLARENCE “GATEMOUTH”  
 BROWN  
 BUELACH TRIO  
 CACKLE SISTERS  
 CLIFF CARLISLE  
 FAYE CAROL  
 JOHNNY CASH  
 YODELING SLIM CLARK  
 CORRINA CORDWELL

JIM “THE ORANGE YODELER”  
 DAUTRY  
 JIMMY DAVIS  
 DEKRUIF SISTERS  
 DREADFUL SNAKES  
 DON EDWARDS  
 RAMBLIN’ JACK ELLIOTT  
 S. A. EMERY  
 DAN EMMETT  
 THE FLATLANDERS  
 GORDON FREITAS  
 LEFTY FRIZZELL  
 EDDIE GIGUERE  
 TOMPALL GLASER  
 SKIP GORMAN  
 REX GRIFFIN  
 GARY HALEAMAU  
 TRAVIS HAMMOND

RUSTY HEIDELSON & TANIA  
 MOODY "HOTTEST DUELING  
 YODEL"  
 THE HERISAU GROUP  
 JULIA HEYWARD  
 COLLEEN HONEYMAN  
 WAYNE HORSBURGH  
 RUSTY HUDELSON & TANIA  
 MOODY  
 JEWEL  
 JODEL JERRY  
 KG & THE RANGER  
 KAREN KEAWEHAWAI'L  
 BOBBY KINGSTON  
 JERRY LEE LEWIS  
 LAURIE LEWIS  
 L. W. LIPP  
 THE LOCAL GIRLS  
 LAURA LOVE  
 KEN & SIMONE MACKENZIE  
 KATHY MATTEA & SUZY BOGUSS  
 JANET MCBRIDE, THE "YODELING  
 QUEEN"  
 EMMETT MILLER  
 NEW GLARUS YODEL CLUB  
 ODETTO  
 KEN OVERCAST

DOLLY PARTON  
 SHAWN PHILLIPS  
 RILEY PUCKETT  
 HERB QUINN  
 RESCH UND FESCH  
 ROY ROGERS  
 PETER ROWAN  
 THE SAUERKRAUTS  
 HARVEY & EARL SHIRKEY  
 BESSIE SMITH  
 BILL STAINES  
 BILLY STEWART  
 THE STRATTON MOUNTAIN BOYS  
 TOM SWATZELL  
 ERNEST TUBB  
 TWEEZERHEAD REBELLION  
 TOBY TWINING  
 LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III  
 WALBURG BOYS  
 DON WALSER  
 GEORGE P. WATSON  
 CURLY WEST, "FASTEST YODEL IN  
 WESTERN MUSIC"  
 HANK WILLIAMS  
 YODELING RANGER  
 WERNER ZOTTER  
 THE "COWBOY FROM VIENNA"

### YODELING ODDITIES & ENDS

- The first cut in the *Raising Arizona* soundtrack
- A yodel, a *Tyrolienne*, appears in Act III of Rossini's opera *William Tell*
- "Austrians are a Friendly Face" by 8 Oder 9, is a sardonic send up of the marketing of Austrian folk culture, which includes the yodel.
- Yo! Deli (Yodel Mix) • Soeur plus Adi, the Yodeling Woodcarver from British Columbia and the Topp Twins, lesbian yodelers from New Zealand
- Learn how to yodel website:  
[http://birch.palni.edu/~key/website/pods/Big\\_Mac\\_Pod/gwaltney/yodel/The\\_Yodel\\_Course.html](http://birch.palni.edu/~key/website/pods/Big_Mac_Pod/gwaltney/yodel/The_Yodel_Course.html).
- Episode seventy-six of *Seinfeld*: Kramer yodels "Yodel-lay-hee-hoo!"
- During the 1972 Olympics, Swiss yodelers serenaded yodeling fans and the Emperor Hirohito and his wife.
- Yodeler Slim Whitman was the first telemarketed country star claiming to have sold more records than Elvis.
- The *Sound of Music* website has a yodeling contest.
- *Yodelin' Kid from Pine Ridge* is a film starring Gene Autry.
- Tex Ritter, cowboy horseman and roundup vet of rodeos and yodels once was a Republican senatorial candidate.
- Buzz Goertzen is a Gospel Yodeler.

- “World Class Yodeler” Margo Smith produced a yodeling instruction tape.
- *How to Yodel* • Tania Moody & Rusty Hudelson (cassette)
- Donn Reynolds has been known as the “Yodeling Ranger” and the “Canadian Yodeling Cowboy.” In 1990 he entered the *Guinness Book of World Records* when he sang a total of five tones (three octaves in less than one second) from the top of the CN Tower in Toronto.
- *Jodel-Madeli Verhaal Uit het Alpen Land* by B. Middergh-Bokhorst is a Dutch children’s story about yodeling.