



A Norman Lear Center Conference

Annenberg Auditorium

USC Annenberg School for Communication

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**USC ANNENBERG**

The Norman Lear  
**CENTERTAINMENT**  
Exploring Implications of the Convergence of Entertainment, Commerce, and Society

## ***Ready to Share: Fashion & the Ownership of Creativity***

On January 29, 2005, The Norman Lear Center held a landmark event on fashion and the ownership of creativity. Ready to Share explored the fashion industry's enthusiastic embrace of sampling, appropriation and borrowed inspiration, core components of every creative process. Presented by the Lear Center's Creativity, Commerce & Culture project, and sponsored by The Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising/FIDM, this groundbreaking conference featured provocative trend forecasts, sleek fashion shows and an eclectic mix of experts from fashion, music, TV and film. Discussion sessions covered fashion and creativity; intellectual property law; fashion and entertainment; and the future of sharing.

### ***Participants***

***Cate Adair***, Costume Designer for *Desperate Housewives* (ABC)

***Rose Apodaca***, West Coast Bureau Chief, *Women's Wear Daily*

***David Bollier***, Senior Fellow, The Norman Lear Center; Author, *Brand Name Bullies*

***John Seely Brown***, Former Chief Scientist, Xerox Corporation

***Barbara Bundy***, Vice President, Education, The Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising/FIDM

***T Bone Burnett***, Musician and producer

***Ted Cohen***, Senior VP, Digital Development & Distribution, EMI Music

***Tom Ford***, Former Creative Director for Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent

***Kevan Hall***, Designer, Kevan Hall Couture; Former Design and Creative Director for Halston

***Kevin Jones***, Curator, The Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising Museum

***Martin Kaplan***, Director, The Norman Lear Center; Associate Dean, USC Annenberg School for Communication

***Rick Karr***, Television correspondent and writer

***Michael Patrick King***, Executive Producer, *Sex and the City* (HBO)

***Norman Lear***, Television and film producer

***Booth Moore***, Fashion Critic, *Los Angeles Times*

***Danger Mouse***, Creator of the *Grey Album*

***Rich Nichols***, Producer of The Roots

***Sam Phillips***, Grammy-nominated singer and songwriter

***Laurie Racine***, Senior Fellow, The Norman Lear Center; President, Center for the Public Domain

***Sheryl Lee Ralph***, Actress, singer, director, producer and designer

***Cameron Silver***, President, Decades, Inc., Los Angeles and London; Creative Consultant, Azzaro, Paris

***Rani Singh***, President, Harry Smith Archives; Senior Research Associate, Getty Research Institute

***Jonathan Taplin***, Television and film producer; USC Annenberg Professor

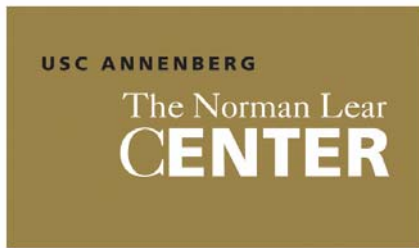
***Guy Trebay***, Reporter, *The New York Times*

***Siva Vaidhyanathan***, Professor of Culture and Communication at New York University; Author, *Copyright and Copywrongs*

***David Wolfe***, Creative Director, The Doneger Group

## The Norman Lear Center

Founded in January 2000, The Norman Lear Center is a multidisciplinary research and public policy center exploring implications of the convergence of entertainment, commerce and society. On campus, from its base in the USC Annenberg School for Communication, the Lear Center builds bridges between schools and disciplines whose faculty study aspects of entertainment, media and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. Through scholarship and research; through its fellows, conferences, public events and publications; and in its attempts to illuminate and repair the world, the Lear Center works to be at the forefront of discussion and practice in the field.



## Creativity, Commerce & Culture

When art is created for commercial purposes, who owns it? Once it's in the hands of consumers, what rights do they have to change it? Headed by Lear Center senior fellows David Bollier and Laurie Racine, Creativity, Commerce & Culture explores the new digital environment and the impact of intellectual property rights on innovation and creativity.



## The Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising/FIDM

The Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising/FIDM is an internationally recognized college that prepares students for leadership in the global industries of Fashion, Visual Arts, Interior Design and Entertainment. As an accredited institution granting Associate of Arts degrees and providing Advanced Study programs in 14 industry-specific majors, FIDM has equipped more than 30,000 students over the last 30 years to become skilled professionals. FIDM is headquartered in a state-of-the-art campus in downtown Los Angeles, with additional campuses in Orange County, San Diego and San Francisco. The FIDM Museum houses one of the nation's finest costume collections dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as well as ethnic costumes and selections from top fashion designers.



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*Ready to Share event photos: Cherie Steinberg Cote*

## ***Session II – Handing Down the Song: Music, Ownership & the Creative Process***

### ***Moderator, Jonathan Taplin***

Television and film producer; USC Annenberg Professor

### ***Participants***

#### ***T Bone Burnett***

Musician and producer

#### ***Danger Mouse***

Creator of the *Grey Album*

#### ***Richard Nichols***

Producer of *The Roots*

#### ***Sam Phillips***

Grammy-nominated singer and songwriter

#### ***Rani Singh***

President, Harry Smith Archives;  
Senior Research Associate, Getty Research Institute



Jonathan Taplin: I'm Jonathan Taplin. I'm a professor at the Annenberg School. Before that, I was a producer of concerts for Bob Dylan and The Band and George Harrison. And a producer of movies for Marty Scorsese, Wim Wenders, Gus Van Sant, *Mean Streets*, *The Last Waltz*, *To Die For*, *Until the End of the World*. I'm going to first introduce our panel, who are a very distinguished group of ladies and gentlemen.

First, T Bone Burnett. I first met T Bone in 1967, watching him play in a Blues bar in Fort Worth, Texas. He's probably, as you well know, one of the most famous producers in America. He won the Grammy for Producer of the Year for *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and has produced Elvis Costello, Roy Orbison, Counting Crows, The Wallflowers, Tony Bennett, k.d. lang, Gillian Welch, among many others.

Next is Rich Nichols, who kind of single-handedly started the notion of hip-hop soul. He is the producer of The Roots, as well as MC Shorty and Scott Storch.

Next is Sam Phillips, a wonderful singer who has made many albums, including the Grammy-nominated *Martinis and Bikinis*. She started out with Beatles-influenced music and has moved to a more simple work with her last record called *Boot in a Shoe*.

And next to her is Rani Singh, who is the Senior Research Associate, Contemporary Programs, at the Getty Research Institute. And, more importantly, for our work, is the Director of the Harry Smith Archive and has researched and done documentary work on Harry Smith, the great folk archivist.



And, finally, Danger Mouse, who is the most important new force in this topic we're talking about, with his release of the famous – or infamous – *Grey Album*, where he took Jay-Z's *Black Album* and mixed it up with backing tracks from The Beatles' *White Album*. He is also an artist on his own. He just put out an album called *Ghetto Pop Life*, a very important new work.

Can we put up the slides? I want to start with a little bit of background information here for everybody. Because we're going to try to talk about two things: One, a bridge from what Tom Ford and Guy Trebay were talking about, which is the notion of how creativity and sampling and sharing can be a part of the music ecology. And the second is the reference that Guy made to the importance of the digital world, and how the digital world changes the distribution of music radically, and how it might change the way that the artist could have more control,

and that the economics of the business might be better off for artists.

This is the economics of the current record business. The record company takes \$8 for putting up the money to make the album, for marketing it, for paying off Clear Channel and the other jobs that they take on. The retailer takes \$4.50 out of it. The producer takes 40 cents. The songwriters get 90 cents, and the artist ends up, on a \$15 CD, with \$1.35. Now, in a world of digital distribution, that might change quite radically, because, as you can see, the production costs, which include packaging, distribution, the retail markup and everything, are about \$7.76. In a digital world, those get eliminated. Our hope is that perhaps the artist might end up with more, and we think that some of the work U2 has done in that world is a great start.

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**The record company takes \$8. The retailer takes \$4.50. The producer takes 40 cents. The songwriters get 90 cents, and the artist ends up, on a \$15 CD, with \$1.35.**

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 One last thing I want you to look at is a chart of what we call the long tail, which is what Rhapsody and iTunes and other music services are putting out. If you look at the far left-hand side, it is what a normal record store puts out, which is essentially 39,000 songs. Needless to say, the digital music systems have no shelf-space limitations, so the ability to put a million songs on a server is nothing and the addition of one extra song is less than a penny. The ability to now have a gigantic amount of music available to the audience is important. That has another effect, which is, if you look at the middle column, Amazon has an inventory of 2.3 million books. The average Barnes and Noble store has 130,000 books in its inventory. Amazon makes more than 57 percent of its money, top-line revenue, off of books that would never be in the largest Barnes & Noble bookstore. It tells you something about the ability of people to find content that isn't necessarily hit content. So this notion of the 80-20 rule that we've lived with, i.e. you make 80 percent of your money off 20 percent of the product, is perhaps a dead

**I knew it was illegal. I knew it wasn't going to be something that was in stores.**



notion.

Now, I want to show one brief music clip, because, after all, I want to play you a really old Scottish ballad. It's in the public domain and it may give us a sense of where the public domain sits in this. Can you roll that clip, please? It's 1963, Ray Charles in São Paulo, Brazil. You might recognize the tune. That's the real Margie Hendricks. *[Video clip plays of "My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean."]*

Okay, so I guess the Scottish balladeer who wrote that in the 19th century might not recognize it. But the idea that Ray Charles was able to appropriate something in the public domain and make it his own is really important.

I'm going to just jump into probably the most controversial issue and pose this to Brian Burton, to Danger Mouse. Can you talk a little bit about the creative process that went into making the *Grey Album* and give us a sense of whether there is a way for mash-ups and expropriated material to allow all of the stakeholders, whether it's The Beatles or anybody else, to profit from it and allow your work perhaps to get out into the commercial world as opposed to just the underground world?

Danger Mouse: If I miss any of those that you just asked, tell me and I'll come back to it. The creative process of doing the *Grey Album* was basically trying to see if I could execute the concept itself. That was really what the goal was. I knew it was illegal. I knew it wasn't going to be something that was in stores. I wasn't going to try to shop it to a label when I was done. It was just something I wanted to see if I could do. It was a way of sampling that I wanted to try to put into an interesting concept. Because my parents always ask, "What do you

play? What do you do?" And I can never really say anything good. So I figured, "Okay, I'll show them that sampling can be art. It can be something else."

I had this insane way that I wanted to try and chop it and make it so complicated, just to try to impress them in some way. But they don't listen to The Beatles, so they were like, "What is this?" And it didn't really have the effect that I was looking for with them. *[Audience laughs.]*



**I'll show them that sampling can be art.**



But I got obsessed with it because I was wondering why, nowadays, if you want to be in a band or you want to do music, you pick up a guitar, you pick up a bass or drums. It's the same thing every time. It doesn't mean that the music you do is the same. It's different. There's a lot of great music every day. It's just that this was a choice to try to do something a little bit different.

Now, if I'd done it a little bit differently, it wouldn't have been as hard. I've done mash-ups where you take one record and lay it over another record, and it's not hard. It's just hard to find the ones that work really well. But the actual process of doing the *Grey* was going to be very challenging. That's why I said, "Well, I'd do it. It doesn't have to be good, as long as I can accomplish a couple of things and try to put them together. And it's so hard to do that maybe it will have a little cult following or something like that."

So, I just hid away for a couple of weeks and spent all day trying to dissect it and put it back together again. If I had used outside materials besides the *White Album*, like for drums, it probably would have been a little bit more accessible, a little bit more beefy, but it wouldn't have

forced me to do what I had to do, which was do different things I wouldn't have come up with if I wasn't forced just to stay within that.

When I was done, I thought it was pretty good. I thought I would get it to some people and see if people liked it and see if I could make some Beatles fans out of some Jay-Z fans and vice versa. So I pressed up some CDs and sent them out to a bunch of people I figured would like it. And then, all hell broke loose.



Jonathan Taplin: Rani, could you tell us a little bit about Harry Smith and Moses Asch, because this notion of taking a risk and putting stuff out where not everything is cleared is not a new notion, and tell us a little bit of the beginning of the first great archive of folk music.

Rani Singh: I think the Harry Smith *Anthology* is a good case study to link everybody here and tie them all together. The *Anthology of American Folk Music* was the brainchild of avant-garde filmmaker, folklorist and anthropologist Harry Smith. It was released on Folkways Records in 1952 on three two-box, two-LP sets each, and it consisted of commercially recorded 78s that were recorded between 1927 and 1932. Smith drew his selections from early Black blues, Appalachian folk songs, fiddle music, gospel, hillbilly and Cajun tunes. They were originally released on major labels, primarily for regional audiences. But by 1952, they were out of print and long forgotten. All these records had come from Smith's personal collection he had started as a teenager. By the time he put these records out, it was rumored that he had thousands and thousands of records, almost 10,000 78s.

When the *Anthology* came out, it was a historic bomb on the American

folk scene and almost single-handedly redefined folk music. In doing so, the *Anthology* became an important source of material and inspiration for a lot of young singers in the 50s and the 60s. It was the touchstone of the early 1960s' folk revival. The *Anthology* turned out a whole generation of listeners, including Bob Dylan, Phil Oakes, Peter, Paul & Mary and Joan Baez, who performed the songs and interpreted the songs, modified the songs and made them their own. In a sense, you can also see the connection between the alt-country movement with Wilco and Beck and even Moby doing samplings of some of these songs.

It also reignited the careers of a lot of now-mythic musicians, several of whom were still living, but were living in near obscurity. A lot of the young folk revivalists sought out some of these musicians like Dock Bobbs, Mississippi John Hurt and Charley Patton, and brought them back into the circuit. Within a few years, they were performing at the Newport Folk Festival.

Jonathan Taplin: My understanding is that Harry didn't have everything cleared, though.

Rani Singh: Oh, there was no sense of that at all. It had mostly to do with Moses Asch, who started Folkways Records. His lofty goal was nothing less than "to record and document the entire world of sound." His promise was to keep everything in print, which Smithsonian Folkways Records, who now control the materials, do. You can order any of his materials and you will have world music, street sounds, all types of obscure folk music, music from all over the world.

Jonathan Taplin: Rich, can you talk a little bit about what you think about the future of sampling and mash-ups? It's a kind of complicated question. How that gets administered?

Richard Nichols: I think there will be sampling indefinitely. As far as mash-ups, I think that it's more of a trend now and I don't know if it will continue. But it is about appropriation, and if you're sampling someone's voice, you're taking more than just some notes. You're actually putting the person in the middle of the mix. It is a form of borrowing their identity. And, really, you're recontextualizing music that was initially from one particular person and had a specific emotion that other people have ties to. It's almost like a Pavlovian effect that kicks in. You

associate this with a particular time or particular memories of which you borrowed and invoke again on your own. So I think it will be around. I'm not going to be sampling The Beatles much, though. *[Audience laughs.]*

Jonathan Taplin: Sam, let's talk about the possibility of digital music distribution and how that might change the world for an artist like you. I remember you did an album called *Zero, Zero, Zero* in which you did some remixes of your older tunes and rethought some work that you'd already done and put it out as something else. Would the ubiquity of digital distribution – where you could put out everything that you'd done and your audience could find it and pay for it – change your life somewhat?

■ ■ ■  
Please mash me. Will you mash me?

■ ■ ■

Sam Phillips: That would be great. I would love that. But to go back to the other topic for a second: You were talking about copyrights. The copyright of a master recording being sampled, being used in a mash-up. That's something, if I were to be so lucky you mashed me. *[Turns to Danger Mouse.]* Please mash me. Will you mash me?

But if I were mashed and not paid, it would be a little bit like if I went out and got one of Tom Ford's sexy purple silky things and put that on, but decided, because I'm kind of short-legged, that I would want to attach a Yohji Yamamoto shapeless blob on the bottom. And it would be like I went out and stole both of those things, didn't pay for them and put them together, and started selling this ensemble as Sam. "This is Sam, please buy this," and made money off it. I don't know if we can really compare this because somebody pays for the master, works hard on the master, writes the song. Somebody's doing this.

I was going to say all that, but then when I saw Ray Charles sing that song, I thought, God, if Ray Charles had sung one of my songs, I would've just laid that copyright down. You can just have that, have the song. My God, because he made that song so much better, didn't he? So much better. So, I don't know.

Jonathan Taplin: I think we're dealing with an issue where the idea that expropriation is seamless and painless in the music world is very hard for a lot of us to stomach. We believe, at least, I believe, that there ought to be mechanisms where people can get rights to sample that look more like a mechanical royalty.



Danger Mouse: I think the thing that differentiates it is that when you cover a song or when you're talking about fashion, if you knock something off, it's a lot different than using the exact recorded material. And that goes back to what I was saying about it being a choice. I think it's inevitable. It's going to happen anyway. I could've basically covered the *White Album* and it wouldn't have done anything for anybody. It would've been terrible. But if I had gotten a band together, and we played the whole thing and then tried to do something with it, it would've been a lot harder for me to do. I think that the end results wouldn't have taken it anywhere. But, even now, I don't know that it's always a good thing. Sometimes it is, sometimes it's not, artistically. Critically, people might dislike things that come after this.

I think you've got to ask if it's worth the risk of somebody doing something really good with it outweighing whether somebody does something that's really bad with it. It's still an artistic thing that people have to decide on their own. But as far as the model the way it's been, the way it is now, there may be a time when we just don't make very

much money off of music, nobody does. They just do it because it's better than going to work every day. It's only been a drop in the bucket that people are getting rich off of music anyway, so far, and it may not last very long.

Jonathan Taplin: Rich, do you have some thoughts about that?

Richard Nichols: Yeah. Using The Beatles is sort of an unfair example. I mean, they're The Beatles. I'm thinking more of an artist like The Game. I don't know if you guys are familiar with him. He sold about 600,000 records in the first week. He's not that talented. You know what I mean? He's not a talented guy. Jimmy Iovine is the head of Interscope. He's had a lot of luck with Dr. Dre. Dr. Dre has had a lot of luck with Eminem. Eminem's had a lot of luck with 50 Cent. 50 Cent's had a lot of luck with G-Unit. And now, The Game is part of G-Unit, and The Game is Dre's protégé. I think The Game is bullshit at the end of the day. Somebody's doing his chorus, somebody's doing his music. He has a great publicist. He has tattoos of old rap groups on him. He runs around with a chain and invokes Eazy-E. I don't know if you're really creating something there. You're just attaching yourself to something that's already in the collective unconscious or just being beat over your head. Tupac's still selling records. He's been dead for seven years now and he's platinum every time. And Eminem goes and remixes his stuff. There's something different going on there.

There was a time when The Beatles were capping out music theater of the 19th century, and that was a moment that happened, and I think maybe somebody will cap out something in 2050. But right now, it's the postmodern period where everybody is just invoking, at least in the most popular music, something that's already happened. It's an original creation, but I don't know, a lot of these things are covers. Think of the Fugees and "Killing Me Softly." They changed the beat, did the exact arrangement, and, once again, it was a hit song. What's going on there? It's largely a Pavlovian effect kicking in. I think that you're taking more than just the music. You're taking the memories that are associated with that particular music, which is something that's different, you know?

Jonathan Taplin: When I hear you talk about The Game, I think back to David Wolfe's presentation about how the advertising messages and the marketing are getting pushed to the fore of the business.

Richard Nichols: That is the business. Everything is pretty much mediated, so you're always plugging back to the media. As you were saying before, the popular culture is influenced by all these things. But all the things you talked about – politics, economics – people receive all that information through the media. So we're talking about the media.

The media almost removes the artist from the process. The artist is a product at that point and associated with other things that were products. Take Puff Daddy, for example. He pulls Diana Ross' "Upside Down" and puts on a shiny suit and dances around and it's recontextualized. Now that's Puffy's thing, where he takes this theme song and invokes not only the death of Biggie, but Sting, and whatever remembrances of them. And then the media icons shove it down your throat and something's happened.

I think we've given the idea of creativity on a certain level too much credit. Everybody can be creative, but if you don't have an environment that plugs into your creativity – take a basketball player, for instance. This is a little outside the field of music. But what would a basketball player have been in the 1700s? A fool. *[Audience laughs.]* You know what I mean. Like throwing potatoes against the wall. The context has to be one in which the creativity can be made use of. If the context isn't there, then you're just an idiot. I know a guy, he makes scratching sounds like a record. What would this guy have been in the 1600s? Set on fire. *[Audience laughs.]*

Jonathan Taplin: Sam, do you think there's a way for an artist to survive currently who doesn't sell 500,000 copies?

Sam Phillips: It would appear that the only way to survive would be to sell music directly to the listener, to find the people that would, in my case, like the kind of broken torch music that I do, and sell that to them without the record company taking such a heavy percentage, without the

middleman. It seems as if technology is setting up for all of us to be able to do that.

Jonathan Taplin: So then, Rich, how do you find that?

Richard Nichols: It's more like music has moved out of the realm of the creative process. It becomes a matter of how a particular artist is presented and if they have XYZ charisma, which at this point can almost be manufactured. I think you can do original music. People may or may not care. People are like, "Oh this person has a great voice." I personally don't give a shit about a voice. Could Donald Fagen sing? Did anybody think Bob Dylan was a great singer? I mean, come on. He was a great poet. But, I don't think anybody thought Bob Dylan was even Woody Guthrie.



**It's about wearing your references on your sleeve these days.**

You know what I'm saying. I don't think it's about the singing at that point. I think it's about your message resonating with people. And that's not really a musical thing. Somebody at a particular point in history because of whatever they are, it could be because their dad beat them, they could come out and make some moving music. But that person comes from the person's experience and they resonate with people, maybe with people whose dad's beat them. Then you sample it, and you bring it in, and you're like, "Oh, my dad didn't beat me but I'm going to roll with this." We're in a postmodern society, and we're moving away from the initial creative impulse. It's almost the exact opposite of what David Wolfe's saying about hiding your references. It's about wearing your references on your sleeve these days.

Rani Singh: I think there are a lot of issue distinctions here. There are several different layers of music going on. There are people who sell

hundreds of thousands of copies and they have a huge fan base and they do have a big company behind them. But there are lots of other layers of musicians who have a smaller fan base of devoted people who are interested in their music. You can see it in the changing model of the music industry today. I think they are completely redefining themselves and having to come up with different ways of connecting to that group of people, linking to their fan base, whether it's on the Internet or via their concerts. Creativity still will rule for a lot of people. There'll be passing phases that come and go, but there are a lot of other people who have wonderful voices, and they view songwriting as a craft and take it very seriously, as well as the idea of performance.



**Elvis was as much about race music as he was about his swiveled hips.**



Richard Nichols: I tend to think that music is not about music, though, at least popular music. It's more about that particular moment, how things come together, and what it represents. Music's the vehicle, but it's really about the person. You can be creative in how you represent yourself, but it's like, Elvis was as much about race music as he was about his swiveled hips. You know what I mean? I don't think Elvis would have been Elvis if he wasn't cute.

Rani Singh: Well, he was a package, too. He was packaged, and it was a very conscious thing.

Richard Nichols: I'm just saying that in that package, how much was being cute important relative to the music? You can resonate with people and you can do individual things as a musician and people come out and support you. But these days, especially because everything is so mediated, it ends up being about what the message is. If you're a rapper, the first thing is, "What's your story?" Meaning these days, you get shot. The Game was shot eight times. The 50 Cent story is: "I've

been shot and I was from the slums and my mom was on crack." It sounds like Tupac. How much of that is about the song at that point? How much of it is about the sneer? Punk, for instance, had to do with a lot of ridiculous social stance.

Rani Singh: Well, attitude.

Jonathan Taplin: But also, let's be clear, there is a media system now that needs this celebrity world to be fed. There are many supermarket tabloids and *Us* magazine and everything. If they didn't have these stories to tell, they'd be out of business. Where would Geraldo Rivera be without Michael Jackson? We are in a new world that did not exist when I was working for Bob Dylan in 1969. There was no media system. There wasn't even a *Rolling Stone* magazine in that sense.

Obviously, the Internet has changed all this, and Brian, you could talk about how the Internet affected your life.

Danger Mouse: Well, when I did the record, I put it on CD. I never put it on the Internet. Promise. Never did. It was somebody else.

*[Audience laughs.]*

Jonathan Taplin: We know other people did it. We're not blaming you.

Danger Mouse: Other people did it. Other people put it up on the Internet. I think the reason the record I did was so big, besides using The Beatles and Jay-Z, two of the biggest artists, is kind of simple. It was simply that people wanted what they couldn't have. The minute they took it away and said, "You're not allowed to have this," that's when it spread like crazy.

■ ■ ■  
 People wanted what they couldn't have. That's when it spread like crazy.

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Jonathan Taplin: Can you talk about the number of downloads that you think were pulled off the *Grey Album*?

Danger Mouse: There was the Grey Tuesday where everybody put it up. But I heard something like a million in a day. At the same time, I think it goes to people protesting in a way. It wasn't so much about the music as much as it was about what it stood for and also people wanting something and not being told what to do. The Internet is very anonymous and it's a very real, natural thing. That's why some people think some of the things that are on there are disgusting. But it's a very natural way. It's going to work itself out, and people just want what they want. Because they couldn't have it, they put it online and why it got to be such a big deal.

On a smaller level it does work that way when you have new artists and followings of certain labels in very specific genres of music, very underground music, like some electronic music and certain hip-hop music. On an underground level, you'll have an artist that's unknown, but if they are on a certain label, they'll get "x" amount of sales. It's pretty low. It's not going to guarantee a lot of sales, but it can give them instant credibility, which I think is a good thing on some of the underground levels. But, like you said, at the end of the day, the big ones are just a lot different. I don't know that people are so concerned on a bigger level. I think they want stars. There used to be a grassroots thing where people could see that you're a normal person and you make music and that you're hustling and doing your stuff. It's not the same anymore. People don't respect that as much. They want the stardom. Like it or not. I don't like that about me, but sometimes it turns out that way.

Jonathan Taplin: David Wolfe made some interesting future predictions and I thought Rich had an interesting future prediction of the role of the guy who made the play list that you would respect.

Richard Nichols: Can I go back just a little bit? Just to recap some of this stuff. I think part of the reason Danger Mouse's concept worked with this album was because The Beatles sold around that time like 8 million records again. There was the **1** album, the number one hits, and didn't it go to some crazy number? So there was already a good story there. The Beatles really capped

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off, they're the dividing line between the new era and all the music theater and Tin Pan Alley stuff that had gone before. A lot of that stuff was channeled through George Martin. And they were significant because of the time they came in history and what they capped off. You know, by the time Woodstock happened, the whole peace and love movement was over. It was the cap off. Like with Alanis Morissette, there was a whole women's movement that was happening. Alanis Morissette sold 16 million records. No more women's movement, no more women in music, you know? Now, it's true. In terms of what Danger Mouse was doing, besides the fact that it was The Beatles and besides the fact that it was Jay-Z, calling it the *Grey Album* was perfect for the media. It's like, "We got the *Black Album*, we got the *White Album*, hey, it's *Grey*." I'm serious. Little things like that, just a little flip like that. That's the creative difference. And after that, it's the Internet, and whole story and the finger to the copper. And lots of panels like these.

I've been on a bunch of panels that ask, "What about this Danger Mouse album? What about copyright?" It creates this dialogue. What we're really talking about, it seems, is the end of retail more than the end of the record company. The end of retail is something different from the end of the record company. Because the record company is just about making myths. And you're always going to need a mythmaker. I don't think artists are always the best mythmakers. You know what I mean? Because they don't understand what they're doing themselves half the time. That's part of the allure, "I have to make a myth about myself."

*[Q&A portion begins.]*

Jonathan Taplin: Okay. So we're going to take some questions from the audience. Does anybody have a question?

Joanna Demers [Assistant Professor, Music History and Literature, USC Thornton School of Music]: This is a question for Danger Mouse. I'm wondering if you saw the *Grey Video* and if you have any comments about it?

Danger Mouse: Yeah, I saw the *Grey Video*. Everybody might not know: There is a video a couple of guys did where they used some old Beatles footage and then some Jay-Z footage and shot their own stuff. I was in England recording and got all these emails, "You've got to check this thing out." I was thinking it was going to be terrible before I saw it. I was like, "Oh no." And it's funny, because so much of the stuff that I did, actually happened back to me. I mean, if they did it and they made it really bad, it would reflect on what I did. It was good though. I liked it a lot. Eventually, I did get in contact with them. They had done a Volkswagen commercial. They were represented by a big company and it was just something they did on the side because they liked it. And so, they're actually doing a video for me now for a label. I got them to do my first video.

Jonathan Taplin: Other questions?

Deborah Siegel [music supervisor]: What do you think is the future of live concerts being that ticket prices are exorbitant and it seems like all the tours are dead?

Richard Nichols: Why do people think a lot concerts have to be in arenas? Throughout most of history, a concert was you and 20 people

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in the room. If your concept of a live performance is Madonna, then, I don't know. That might be a dinosaur. But there's nothing stopping me from grabbing a couple of friends and performing in front of them, which is the way it was done throughout history. But is that not a live concert, or is a concert the lights and the lasers and the smoke and the guitar techs?



Sam Phillips: In terms of the prices, I always thought that if you go to the Staples Center, it should cost a dollar. Because you are so far away, you are watching TV basically. But if you go to a small club, like you're saying, or somebody's house, then they should really charge \$100.

Richard Nichols: Let's assume that people go to concerts to actually hear the music. Most of the time they go to breathe the air of the celebrity that they are going to see. It's like, "I was in that room." You couldn't hear The Beatles. It was like, "Oh, they're so cute. Look at John."

*[Audience laughs.]*

Rick Karr [television correspondent and writer]: My name is Rick Karr, and I'm going to be moderating a panel later this afternoon, but I wanted to know, and I relate it back to what David Wolfe talked about this morning, but mediation is what? Isn't it like telling people what's cool and isn't that the record company's job? So, isn't the question in all of this: Who makes taste in the new world? We talk about the celebrities in the front row at a fashion show. That's a way of saying, "Hey, this is cool." So what's the new model for that?

Richard Nichols: Yeah, it's *cool*. It's Pavlov's dog. I don't know about the idea of creativity at this point, in postmodern times. Usually it reflected the creative impulses that were contained in small groups. So

it was more meaningful because we were all experiencing the same thing. We worked in a factory or in a coal mine.

Rick Karr: But what's the new model as we move forward?

Richard Nichols: The new model is just muscle, money, ubiquity.

Rick Karr: No, that's now. I mean the future. Go forward.

Richard Nichols: Muscle, money, ubiquity.

Rick Karr: I don't know, because I don't see Danger Mouse happening that way. It wasn't muscle, money, ubiquity. And everybody I knew in New York had that record.

Richard Nichols: Yeah, but it was The Beatles. The money's already been spent. The energy is already there. Tell me about a new artist that he's going to mash up that anybody's going to care about? Let him mash up two artists that have never been heard of, that no record company's money has been spent on, that no one's contextualized, that aren't iconic, and I guarantee you, no one will find that record. Let him mash one effort that nobody's heard of and a rock group that no one has heard of, and I'm sure that record will sell two units. I promise you.

Danger Mouse: I didn't sell *any*. *[Audience laughs.]* What you're saying is very, very true. That's the whole point. I've been doing these things for years and this was the last one I was ever going to do, so I thought, "I might as well go out with a bang. I'll just take the biggest ones." I always figured that we'd just get the point across. It was like the end of something. This was the end of something in that kind of



**The new model is muscle, money, ubiquity.**



It seems like all of your products are really different, sort of street-level-and-up ways of finding music, from the mixed statement in hip-hop, the Internet, to the indie label for independent artists. What do you think is going to be the next way of incorporating all that represents: the mixed tape, the visual you add to the big name, marketed artists like The Game?

Richard Nichols: I think that it's going to flatten out a lot and we're going to get to a point where the celebrities are disposable. You're starting to see that on reality television. Now they have lots of vested money in keeping a celebrity going, which is why there aren't a lot of new artists. Even the model Jon was talking about, U2. Lots of record company money has been spent on U2 to create that image.

Jonathan Taplin: Okay. I'm getting signals. Thank you very much. Let's have a hand for everyone.