"Pretty Girls Everywhere": The Gendering of Space and Technology

in the Demise of Scopitones

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ABSTRACT

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Scopitones

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This thesis offers a history of Scopitones, a largely overlooked element in the history

of popular music promotion. Though these music video jukeboxes were expected to

change the face of the popular music industry in the 1960s, they remain mostly

forgotten today. By examining some of the reasons for the defeat of this location-

based technology, insights on the links between space, gender and technology can

be gained. These observations lead to a better understanding of how the

combination of these very factors led directly to the bankruptcy of the Scopitone

company. The analysis reveals how the gendered dimensions of space were indeed a

factor in the operation of this short-lived technology.

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Introduction, or "The Best is Yet to Come" (Barbara McNair)

The year is 1965, the place Chicago. You walk into a nondescript tavern; stop to let your eyes adjust to the dim light and smoky air. Strains of Jody Miller's song "Queen of the House" drift over. Men are seated at the bar, but a group is clustered near the back. As you move towards them, you catch a glimpse of something you've never seen in your life, something so extraordinary you can't help but get closer. Not only can you hear "Queen of the House," but you can also see the song. A screen sits atop a jukebox, showing Jody Miller singing, accompanied by a bevy of glamorous, attractive, and semi-clothed women…all this in Technicolor. This is unlike anything you've ever seen before. Everyone watching is captivated. As the song comes to an end, one of the men slips a quarter into the machine and selects Frank Sinatra Jr.'s "Love for Sale." The singer performs surrounded by girls dancing in bikinis, the whole group in Technicolor.

As you lean in closer to get a better look, you notice the company name on the machine: *Scopitone*. So this is the machine you've been reading about in *Billboard*. This is the machine for which you've been seeing ads, touted as having the "greatest library of scintillating films," and "dazzling productions in full-color, full-sound" (scopitone.archive.com/scopitones/ads/us_ads.html). This is the machine that not only lets you hear singers, but also *see* them.

In *L'aventure Scopitone*, a chronicle of the history of the device, Jean-Charles Scagnetti points out that the word *Scopitone* is in fact formed from Greek words meaning "looking at sound" (6). Invented in France in 1960, Scopitones were music

video jukeboxes that allowed the user to select and watch a clip from an array of 32 16mm films. The film clips typically featured established singers performing in various contexts (at the beach, on a boat, in a domestic setting, in a studio environment, for example). The technology encouraged individual viewing in public spaces and offered an often-problematic representation of women on-screen, showing them in skimpy outfits performing dance routines in stereotypical settings. Additionally, the film clips focussed on established artists rather than up-and-coming ones. These characteristics may have resonated within the popular music promotion industry at the time, which relied heavily on reproducing past successful ventures, but they were also retrograde enough to have been responsible, at least in part, for the eventual demise of Scopitones. This thesis will examine the rise and fall of the Scopitones. By studying the trade press from 1960 to 1968, a general industrial opinion of Scopitones will be identified. Given that music video platforms and viewer habits are changing today due to the invention and use of new technologies, displacing the reliance on and frameworks of previous media, this thesis provides a modern glance on past forms of the genre, permitting better comprehension of what is different and what remains from the earlier form. Scopitones offer one example of the dynamic relationship between the press and popular culture, and the results of my research speak to other publicly situated technologies, both past and present. These include, for example, the nickel-in-the-slot machines of the turn of the twentieth century, the Soundies of the 1940s (Soundies were black and white musical films watched on a jukebox), the Voice-o-graph of the 1940s and 1950s (the Voice-o-Graph was a small booth in which the

user could record a message on a 6 inch, 45 or 78 rpm record

(www.pinrepair.com/arcade/voice.htm)), the Solotone Entertainer of the late 1940s

and 1950s (the remote jukebox selection devices placed on tables in restaurants),

television and music video television in bars and waiting areas, and other (not

necessarily music video related) technologies.

I will explore this topic through discourse analysis. Though several authors

have applied this approach to the field of media studies using the work of Foucault,

Barthes or Said, the definition of "discourse" I am using is taken from Gillian Rose's

Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Methodologies

(2007), in which she provides a method for discourse analysis. Drawing inspiration

from Foucault's work, discourse "refer[s] to groups of statements which structure

the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking. In other

words, discourse is a particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the

world is understood and how things are done with it" (142). Beyond the printed or

verbal statements, discourse can also include visual images: "Discourse analysis can

also be used to explore how images construct specific views of the social world"

(146). Rose also underlines the role of intertextuality in analysing discourse. Since

the forms in which discourse can be found are varied, intertextuality takes into

account "the way that the meanings of any one discursive image or text depend not

only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried by other images and

texts" (142). In sum, the main objectives of a discourse analysis are discerning the

"social production and effects of discourses" (147).

This method will allow me to examine how power and gender inequalities in the Scopitone industry are revealed through trade press articles, scholarly work on the subject and the clips themselves, while taking into account the intertextuality between various forms of discourse. In terms of considering the clips themselves, Rose writes: "[...] the visuality that, according to Laura Mulvey makes 'woman as image, man the bearer of the look,' could be described as a visual discourse that has effects on the making of masculinity and femininity, men and women" (143). For this research, these images and texts (the clips and press articles) comprise a series of discursive objects and technologies, through which a certain discourse on female bodies emerges. This method will also allow for an examination and evaluation of the power relations between, on the one hand, the trade press and the public and, on the other hand, between the trade press and women. The ultimate effect of discourse is crucial, since "Human subjects are produced through discourses. Our sense of our self is made through the operation of discourse" (143), which can make problematic portrayals of women on-screen and in the press particularly damaging.

A further element in Rose's explanation of discourse analysis is the importance that must be granted to what is left out or unsaid. She writes, "Absences can be as productive as explicit naming; *invisibility* can have just as powerful effects as visibility" (165). In the case of my research, the active roles of women as well as their capacity for self-expression are often suppressed and rendered invisible. This insight serves to remind me to be aware of these omissions and the constructed, often biased nature of the written and visual discourses.

Just as the omitted isn't visible, the intended audience and context of a discourse must also be searched for outside of the discursive unit itself. The discourse changes according to the audience, and Rose adds that the "*audience* [is] assumed by images and texts" (166, original italics). Similarly, when it comes to the context, "the social location of a discourse's production is important to consider in relation to its effects" (166).

Finally, given that "the power of discourse means that it produces those things it purports to be describing" (156), when applying discourse analysis, the constructed nature of the content of any discourse must always be realised and remembered. Using this method will allow me to grasp that the discourse is in this case creating and generating the gendering of both space and technology through its omissions, projected audience and context, among other factors. This ensures that I remain conscious of the ideologies latent in the discourse under scrutiny, but also, and of equal importance, of the interplay between the various forms of discourse.

In terms of theory, I am influenced by the work of Timothy Wisniewski (2007) and Lisa Gitelman (2006) and their approach towards media history. Timothy Wisniewski argues for an "against the grain" approach to archiving. "Against the grain" research, he writes, "is described as a tactic for revealing and circumventing the institutional bias of the period's official written evidence" (6). He traces this approach to the use of the term 'against the grain' by Walter Benjamin and defines the approach more specifically as "an established practice of critically reading historical documents through fragmentary traces that illuminate unintended or contradictory evidence, usually buried within records created to

document entirely different actions" (5). In the context of Scopitones, this could mean that "Scopitones are therefore best understood not as individual, fixed texts but through an examination of the larger tensions between [...] shifting [aesthetic and social] elements. Even the most cliché-ridden musical short can tell us vital information about its aspirations" (Herzog, 2010, 41). I suggest a modified application of the "against the grain" approach to the study of Scopitones, reading them not only as precursors to music videos, but as texts in their own right, that can reveal information on the context surrounding their invention and their use. The importance of focussing on the context figures in Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's work as well: "No medium today, and certainly no single media event, seems to do its cultural work in isolation from other media, any more than it works in isolation from other social and economic forces" (15). This is a key concept in the history of Scopitones, reinforcing the necessity for an exploration of the cultural, social and economic contexts. The authors push this interaction of medium and context even further, explaining that media will always be in a situation of exchange with other media; they will "function in a constant dialectic with earlier media, precisely as each earlier medium functioned when it was introduced" (50).

Lisa Gitelman expresses, and offers alternatives to, the tendency in media history to forget that the present isn't the linear continuation of the past. The historian must be constantly aware that there isn't necessarily a direct line to be drawn between technologies of the past and modern ones. Thus, Scopitones are treated as the precursors to MTV and music videos as we know them now. To do so is to suppose that Scopitone inventors, producers and users saw and knew how the

future would unfold, to assume they were aware that what they were using was merely one element in a chain that would eventually culminate in modern era music videos. This is, of course, impossible, and so Gitelman and others propose an alternative way of doing media history, taking technologies for what they were and what they represented at the time of their invention and use rather than placing them within an evolutionist narrative.

Furthermore, Gitelman, in the introduction to *Always Already New*, explains that her principal goal is to challenge how media "tend casually to be conceived of as what might be called the end of media history" (2). She elaborates this idea, arguing that "history comes freighted with a host of assumptions about what is important and what isn't [...] and causal mechanisms that account for historical change. If there is a prevailing mode in general circulation today, I think it is a tendency to naturalize or essentialize media – in short, to cede to them a history that is more powerfully theirs than ours" (2). By applying linear narratives to the invention of media, then, historians risk attaching too much importance to the most recent incarnation of a technology, viewing it as the height of development and eclipsing all that came before. Media history must instead work to resist the teleological explanations and the evolutionary narratives so common in history (11).

The tendency to essentialize media pervades the scholarly and not-so-scholarly writings on the subject of music video history, with many of the works' titles implying a linear progression. A quick search on Scopitones gives results such as Wikipedia's definition ("Scopitone is a type of jukebox featuring a 16mm film component. It was a forerunner of music video") or the title of a book on the history

of music videos: *Medium Cool: Music Videos from Soundies to Cellphones.* An article in *Spin* magazine in 1986 frames Scopitones as "the true antecedents of contemporary pop video" (Truman, 10). Herzog writes that "largely critically ignored, Soundies and Scopitones are only occasionally cited as records of rare performances or as failed precursors to the music video" (2010, 40). Once again, Scopitones are framed (when they are mentioned at all) as the failed attempt at music video that led up to MTV.

This systematic linearity of the history of music videos only serves to further emphasize the idea that Scopitones were nothing but a failed attempt at music videos, which could only be successfully implemented in the present. This risks casting an evolutionary perspective, which leads to a categorization of the past as primitive and therefore 'bad' and the present as civilized and therefore 'good'.

It is in the same vein that I hesitate to use the term 'failure' when outlining the history of the Scopitone. By applying the "against the grain" approach laid out above, it is impossible to see the Scopitones as having failed, seeing them instead as having existed for a time, in certain circumstances, before being pushed away by a change in context. Naturally, some elements of the Scopitones were residual from previous technologies, and subsequent technologies would incorporate some residual Scopitone traces, but this doesn't necessarily imply a direct evolutionary continuation. The concept of failure is a relative one, and by casting Scopitones as failed proto-music-videos, we are imposing our embedded assumptions about progress narratives on the development of this invention. As Gitelman reminds us,

"media are unique and complicated historical subjects. Their histories must be

social and cultural, not the stories of how one technology leads to another" (7).

Running parallel to this argument is another one: when they first appeared

on the scene in the United States, it was thought that Scopitones would play a

significant role in the popular music industry promotion sector. From our vantage

point in the future we can see that this was not meant to be. The lesson, as explained

by Gitelman, is that it is impossible to accurately predict how a technology will end

up being used. As with the phonograph, the telephone and the Beta/VHS rivalry,

users rarely employ a medium the way its inventors or promoters expect they will.

Gitelman writes, "Among the most obvious lessons is the failure of the 'beta' device

[not specifically the videotape format] unveiled to public acclaim to presage

anything like the functions that subsequent, related devices eventually serve. That

the social meanings of new media are not technologically determined in any broad

sense should be clear" (56). This disparity between the conception the creators of a

new medium may have of its future use and how this definition can be challenged

once the medium is produced and released is also echoed by Bolter and Grusin: "The

technologists working on the device may have some sense of where it might fit in

the economy of media, what it might remediate […] Or they might be working on a

device for a different purpose altogether, and they or someone else might realize its

potential for constituting a new medium" (66). Case-in-point, after Scopitone Inc.

went out of business, some of the machines were converted into peep-show viewing

machines, a use that was most likely not envisioned by its inventors and especially

not by its promoters (Stevenson, 45). Just as any media historian must be wary of

imposing progress narratives on past media, there must also be an awareness that everything changes, that users take a medium and adapt its use, so that it is impossible to predict how any medium will be employed. Evidently, this also can be applied to the present, looking toward the future, and not only to the study of past media. This perspective also has economic aspects, as the new medium "has to find its economic place by replacing or supplementing what is already available, and popular acceptance, and therefore economic success, can come only by convincing consumers that the new medium improves on the experience of older ones" (Bolter and Grusin, 68). This factor can allow for a better understanding of the possible reasons for Scopitones' eventual "failure."

The conceptual and historical scholarship on film sound, elaborated by scholars such as Jeff Smith, Simon Frith and Murray Forman is a major component of cultural studies research. More specifically, the work and methodologies of James Lastra and Rick Altman serve as a foundational point of departure for the present study. In *Silent Film Sound* (2004), Rick Altman describes a historical method he names "crisis historiography": "[it] assumes […] that the definition of a representational technology is *both historically and socially contingent*" (16, original italics). He uses the term "crisis" because media, with all their multiple identities, rather than having a definite "birth date" instead have a "crisis of identity" (19). This method implies that "the media are not fully and self-evidently defined by their components and configurations. They also depend on the way users develop and understand them" (16). This means, as he explains, realising that the distinction between what we call "radio" and "television", for example, is based not on actual

differences between the two, but rather on the way people use and interact with the

media. It is a knowledge based on historical situations that could just as easily not

have existed, and not inherent differences between media. Television could have

been called "screen radio" or "image radio" and the line between radio and

television would be drawn at present in an entirely different place (16).

James Lastra offers a similar approach to media history in *Sound Technology

and the American Cinema* (2000) stressing the importance of contextualizing

technologies and avoiding technological determinism. Writing about cinema, he says

"if we examine the cinema not only as a self-contained history but also as part of

larger patterns of historical transformation [...] different questions appear not only

as suddenly obvious but suddenly pressing, and familiar historical landscapes

suddenly reveal alternate topographies" (10). Lastra also accentuates the

importance of considering the whole apparatus of a technology when dealing with

issues of representation. Using photography as an example, he attributes a role in

"representational intervention" to all the steps of obtaining a photograph, from

clicking the button, to getting the film developed, etc. (12). Even though "the

discursive and even material parameters defining particular technologies [...] are

always open to negotiation and redefinition [...] standard histories still tend to view

technology in terms of devices whose apparent material intransigence encourages

us to regard their roles as stable and unchanging" (13). The media historian must

then take into account the whole apparatus, not merely a fraction of the technology,

a point that echoes Bolter and Grusin's emphasis on the necessity to consider the

surrounding context of a medium.

The influence between discourse and technology runs both ways, as Diane Railton and Paul Watson make clear in their contemporary analysis of women's representation in music videos. They enumerate three premises that recur in academic work on women in music videos. These are, firstly, that the images on screen impact how the viewer sees women in real life. Secondly, that these images are "*either* good or bad, positive or negative, progressive or reactionary" and thirdly, that the viewer can identify which is good or bad by comparing this image against reality (19, original italics). The result of this perspective in critical discourse is usually to demonstrate feminine identity as being "only knowable and transformable through its discursive articulation" and not "interior to the body nor anterior to representation" (19). On screen representation thus becomes the site for not only the "production of identity formations, but also [...] for political analysis and intervention" (ibid).

The authors indicate that cultural products gain significance politically because they are the very material from which individual identities are constructed, since, according to postmodern theory, "our identity is not something that comes from within, something to be revealed in its truth or concealed in its denial; it is a product of our specific social, cultural and historical situation" (20). If therefore our identity comes from what we view on screen and is reflected back to us via the screen in an endless cycle, the debate of what construes a positive or negative representation of femininity becomes a highly charged one. It can be just as limiting to present what are "good" feminine elements as to present "bad" ones, as there is never a "right" or "wrong" answer to the question of what a woman truly is. As the

authors write, "the very fact that it is presented as an either/or choice negates the possibility of engaging with and finding value in the multiple identity positions which are possible within the overarching categories of femininity and womanhood" (20). By keeping these concepts in mind, I present a nuanced interpretation of the representation in the Scopitone clips, not merely casting a modern gaze on a past visual medium, but rather attempting to contextualize the problematic representation of women in the clips.

I have chosen to investigate the links between gender, technology and popular culture through the concept of space, inspired by the work of Keir Keightley (1996) and Anna McCarthy (2001). As a constant component of our interactions with technology, space is unavoidably affected and shaped by, as well as affecting and shaping ideologies and, by extension, gender representations. Doreen Massey indicates that "space and place, spaces and places, and our senses of them (and such related things as our degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through" and that the gendering in turn affects and is affected by our understanding and experience of gender (186). Through the examination of trade press, I aim to further understand to what extent the press played a part in the gendering of the spaces where Scopitones were placed and the Scopitones themselves, beyond the gendered spatial deployment effected by all media forms. This gendering in turn played a part in the eventual lack of long-term success of the Scopitone.

The first chapter consists of a literature review, looking at works on related subjects such as the gendering of space and technology, the public and private spheres and popular culture hierarchies. The second chapter outlines a history of

Scopitones, some possible reasons for the demise of the technology, and a brief analysis of some clips. The third and final chapter consists of an analysis of trade press and newspaper material from the 1960s and an exploration of the gendering of space and technology this coverage generated as well as its role in Scopitones' eventual fall from grace.

Chapter 1: Literature Review, or "That Old Gang of Mine" (January Jones)

Though Scopitones offer a wide range of possible angles from which to study popular culture more generally, they have been largely overlooked by most scholars. Those who do mention them do so only briefly, usually as a way to introduce and explore other forms of music videos. As such, there is a very limited scholarship dealing directly with Scopitones. However, by studying works relating to certain elements found in both Scopitones and other media forms, a better conception of some of the prevalent issues is possible. These include the hierarchies found in popular culture, especially adult versus youth tastes, which was a crucial factor in the eventual lack of interest in Scopitones as I explain in the next chapter; the critical accreditation of popular music, by which emerging musical genres were granted legitimacy, further delineating hierarchies; the gendering of space and technologies, through which a segment of the consumer public is excluded from using these spaces and technologies; and the overlap between public and private spheres, as the Scopitone, like other similar technologies, can be neither classified as a strictly public technology nor a private one. Exploring these factors, an understanding of how various authors analyse these themes and how Scopitones fit within popular culture scholarship can be attained.

An important aspect of popular culture concerns the various hierarchies it embodies, be they the historical antagonism between mods and rockers, for example, or the status of classical music versus that of popular music. Bourdieu wrote that "the history of the field [of cultural production] arises from the struggle

between the established figures and the young challengers" (60) and indeed, this struggle is plain to see in the musical choices of adults versus those of youth. Between each generation, there is a discrepancy of musical tastes, which is then reflected in the music industry, as producers attempt to woo the spending market by merchandising what is happening at the grassroots level and critics attempt to grasp the appeal of the new music for youth (Frith, 35, 39). Throughout most popular music scholarship and cultural studies more generally, these oppositions resurface. Stuart Hall, when defining the "popular" in popular culture, indicates that this "continuous struggle over the culture of working people, the labouring classes and the poor" (227) is present throughout the history of capitalism. He notes that "this fact must be the starting point for any study, both of the basis for, and of the transformations of popular culture" (227). Indeed, in the context of shifts in "traditions and activities," popular culture is "the ground on which the transformations are worked" (228) and not the form resistance to these changes may take. Furthermore, regardless of the fact that people are able to discern the constructed nature of the representation of life in media, he warns that "the cultural industries do have the power constantly to rework and reshape what they represent; and, by repetition and selection, to impose and implant such definitions of ourselves as fit more easily the descriptions of the dominant or preferred culture" (232-3). Another traditional definition of popular culture evokes the fact that it is "all those things that 'the people' do or have done" (234), which Hall rejects, since "we can't simply collect into one category all the things which 'the people' do, without observing that the real analytic distinction arises, not from the list itself – an

inert category of things and activities – but from the key opposition: the people/not of the people" (234). Additionally, the category of popular culture is ever changing, given both the cultural industries and the "relations of power which are constantly punctuating and dividing the domain of culture into its preferred and its residual categories" (234). What is perhaps the most constant hierarchy in popular culture is its "continuing tension (relationship, influence and antagonism) to the dominant culture," which is itself a class struggle (235). Similarly, for Rob Drew pop culture serves as a way for "young people (and, increasingly, older people as well) to symbolically enact alternative class identities" (372), the working class historically proving especially alluring to middle class youth. Not only this, but more recently, "the culture of exclusion that once defined the upper classes has been transformed into a culture of inclusion. In their survey of musical tastes among occupational status groups, Richard Peterson and Albert Simkus find that the highest ranked occupational groups profess a liking for the widest variety of music, including genres like country music that in the past have been closely associated with the working class" (373). Applying Hall's work, this legitimization of so-called lower class cultural forms is an extension of the class struggle inherent in popular culture. Trent Hill expresses a different hierarchical structure, one present in popular music scholarship, in which country music is often brushed aside in favour of pop or rock'n'roll. He declaims Simon Frith's take on country music, that "the message of country populism remains, 'We're a loser!'" (162) – an example of the general academic opinion of this genre recalling the class struggle expressed by Hall. Hill's analysis also extends to the generational gap when one takes into consideration the

emerging trends within country music. Within popular music as a whole, writes Hill, there are several "binarisms that have structured oppositional culture (and youth-cultural theory and practice) since the 1960s: blue-collar/white-collar, urban/rural, youth/adult, popular/elite, men/women" (183).

Both Keir Keightley and Bernard Gendron explore these oppositions, identifying certain hierarchies at play in the 1960s, the relevant period for this research. These hierarchies can be directly related to the context of the Scopitones. Keightley looks at the historical elements contributing to a shift in discourse surrounding adult and youth tastes in the 50s and 60s. He explains, "specific historical contexts, audiences, critical discourses, and industrial practices have worked to shape particular perceptions of this or that music or musician as belonging to 'rock'" (2002, 109). Though already in 1939 critics declaimed the fact that some swing bands were only understandable to younger audiences, it wasn't until the 1950s that "teen taste [was] officially institutionalised as a separate segment of the mainstream, with 'rock'n'roll' as the name for that taste" (2002, 112). This classification led to a separation in format, with the LP being used for standards and the (less expensive) 45 being used for contemporary hits. The adults bought the LPs; the teens bought the 45s (2002, 113). This development of a separation between adult and youth tastes did not immediately grant legitimacy to the teen music, as "during the 1950s, rock'n'roll was regularly viewed as just one in a series of passing dance crazes, giving way to the calypso and the twist […] even rock'n'roll performers themselves might have scoffed at the idea that they were doing anything more than entertaining their audiences" (2002, 115). Conversely, adult music was

being granted more and more cultural legitimacy, considered a serious endeavour

for established performers like Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald. By the mid-sixties,

however, teen albums would top the sales charts in *Billboard*. According to

Keightley, this indicates that "rock's commercial success (LPs are more profitable

than singles) and its artistic legitimacy (albums can be serious 'statements', unlike

ephemeral novelty singles) thus developed hand in hand" (2002, 118).

Despite the perceived differences between the established adult music and

the new youth music, some of the dichotomies of popular culture of the late-fifties

and early-sixties were incorporated into the discourse surrounding rock music.

"Seriousness and self-consciousness serve to distinguish the rock listener's

participation in consumer culture from that of the trivialised and unaware 'masses'"

(2002, 127), which eventually leads to the conclusion that rock is "good" and pop is

"bad". Despite this professed stand against mass consumption, rock was, at its core,

mass consumed. However, "anxieties about mass society's alienation were thus

effectively displaced into the category of the 'adult'. If 'youth' was opposed to the

'adult', and the 'adult' was responsible for 'mass society', then 'youth' could

understand itself as inherently 'anti-mass', regardless of how many million rock

records were sold" (2002, 124). Rock music and the discourse surrounding it thus

severed the link between mass culture and conformity and allowed for a new form

of mass culture, which could include various subcultures, marginal cultures and

both high and low musical forms. Keightley points out that "the development of rock

culture (*c.*1965-7 onward) is crucially tied to a shift from singles to albums and an

attendant shift in cultural legitimacy" (2002, 113), so that the new musical genres were henceforth recognised and validated as such.

The legitimation of art forms is precisely the subject of Bernard Gendron's *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club: Popular Music and the Avant Garde.* Gendron draws up a chronology of cultural legitimation, starting with French modernism and artistic cabarets, and the jazz age in Paris (from 1840-1920); the modernist and revivalist jazz movements and the jazz versus bebop phase in the United States in the 1940s; the Beatles' and rock 'n' roll's accreditation in the 1960s; and finally punk and new wave in the 1970s. Drawing on Bourdieu, he explains through these examples how certain forms of 'low' art came to gain cultural legitimacy at various points in the last few centuries. The chapters that are especially interesting for my purposes are the two that focus on the cultural accreditation of the Beatles and rock'n'roll in general. "Cultural accreditation" as Gendron defines it is "the acquisition of aesthetic distinction as conferred or recognized by leading cultural authorities, which, in the case of performers, means the acquisition of the status of 'artist' as opposed to 'entertainer'" (161). In respect to the Beatles, a prime example of this process, their cultural legitimacy in the United States came about between their two visits to America. During the first visit, in 1964, the focus wasn't on their music at all, which was arrogantly dismissed by the "cultural establishment": "The massive coverage devoted to the irruption of Beatlemania focused almost exclusively on the success of the Beatles as a social rather than musical phenomenon, as an artefact of teenage hysteria and ritualistic acting-out" (163). During their second visit in 1967, however, they were shown

respect and admiration for their music, lyrics and personae. How had this change come to be? The explanation Gendron provides involves examining the "shifting discourses of aesthetic legitimation, emanating from the various authoritative levels of the cultural hierarchy" (163), as well as the interplay between highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow cultural media. Curiously, he doesn't, however, mention the MBEs the Beatles were awarded in 1965, which may have had an impact on their legitimation.

One of the first shifts that occurred in the discourse concerning fans was a new explanation for their perceived excessive behaviour. Perhaps it wasn't merely a last burst of irresponsibility before adulthood, but rather a reaction to the "dysfunctions of adult society" (166) of the sixties, like the war in Vietnam or the assassination of the president. The first signs of approval accorded the Beatles appeared in the press as praise for their non-musical activities, namely the publication of John Lennon's book of poetry and the release of the film *A Hard Day's Night*. These hesitant praises led to the "first intimations of adult cultural discourse seeking to decipher in the midst of the Beatles' teenybopper effusions a message or aesthetic aimed exclusively at adults" (168). In the summer of 1965, in spite of no major stylistic changes to the Beatles' music, the press suddenly shifted its attitude, according serious analysis to the music not only of the Beatles but to rock'n'roll more generally. *The New York Times*, which had been reluctant to publish any kind of praise for the Beatles, "published a highly commendatory article reporting on the 'almost unanimous astonishment' among 'musicologists' over the way 'Beatlemania has taken hold'" (171). This about-face was nevertheless limited to middlebrow

publications, where musicologists compared the music to classical music, which, notes Gendron, was "a tenuous and somewhat patronizing endorsement, cavalierly doled out by highbrow agents outside of their proper venues in lower arenas of accreditation" (171). This change in attitude can be somewhat explained in economic terms as well; as the Beatles' durability was made more and more obvious, critics' opinion improved. Thus, "longevity in economic accreditation pays dividends in aesthetic accreditation" (175). However, as Bourdieu indicates, this only holds true in certain milieus: "Just as, in the dominant class, economic capital increases as one moves from the dominated to the dominant fractions, whereas cultural capital varies in the opposite way, so too in the field of cultural production economic profits increase as one moves from the 'autonomous' pole to the 'heteronomous' pole" (45). That is, the more economically viable a product is, the less it will be associated with artistic integrity, and consequently, the dominated class. In the case of the Beatles however, the three "principles of legitimacy" elaborated by Bourdieu were eventually fulfilled: the other producers (or competition), the dominant class (or "bourgeois" culture) and the "mass audience" all legitimated the group.

Nonetheless, at this point the highbrow press still hadn't jumped on the accreditation bandwagon, though some members of the highbrow establishment showed their enthusiasm in the middlebrow and high-middlebrow press. The inauguration of rock press and rock critics in 1966, in publications such as *Crawdaddy!* and *The Village Voice*, played an important role in advancing the legitimacy of rock music, although the influence worked both ways: "the cultural

accreditation of rock music was dependent on, but also contributed to, the cultural accreditation of the rock critic" (190). The presence of serious rock criticism greatly advanced the cultural accreditation accorded rock musicians, and extended beyond the Beatles to include rock music in general. The extent of the impact of both rock criticism and cultural legitimacy, Gendron writes, also in some sense served to undermine the monopoly exerted by the music industry: "Before accreditation, and before rock'n'roll fans found an institutional expression for their own voices, the only systematic and fine-tuned public discourse about the music came from the industry that produced it, marketed it, and attempted assiduously to decipher the taste of those who consumed it" (179).

The clips produced for Scopitones are representative of this hierarchy between established, older performers, and young newcomers. Indeed, as I will explain further on, the choice to film clips for artists who already had a solid fan base and past sales to back them perhaps contributed to the eventual demise of Scopitone Inc., the American manufacturer and distributor of the machines. Instead of being at the forefront and banking on the rock'n'roll craze and youth's willingness to spend money on related merchandise, the company produced videos primarily attractive to older customers. This was, and continues to be, how the popular music and television industries function, as Forman writes: "television networks worked overtime to hire proven artists or previously branded personalities […] who generated a wider name recognition among viewing audiences" (263). The placement of the Scopitones in public spaces reserved for grown-ups also could have led to the limited success of this technology in the United States. If they had

instead placed machines in more youth-oriented spaces, and produced clips of new performers teens liked, perhaps the machines would have been around longer. Even *Billboard* commented on the lack of interesting (for youth) clips in 1965: "if Scopitone becomes established in teen-age locations, the programming will have to be supplemented by films made by some of the newer pop artists. In that case the film producer would have to gamble" (1965-07-10, 1).

Based on this overview, not only did popular and critical discourse entrench the adult versus youth hierarchy, it also eventually served to dismantle it by legitimating the youth-oriented music that had been earlier disparaged. This slow process was only just starting when Scopitones entered public consciousness in the United States and the clip promoters chose not to endorse the emerging trends, effectively alienating a vast number of potential users. The work of Keightley and Gendron serves to underline the role the trade press can play on the public perception of popular culture, as well as the impact it can have on a technology and its conception. I will explain in greater detail how these hierarchies affected Scopitone's fortunes below.

A second consideration is the gendering of space and technology in popular culture, which figures in several analyses of popular culture. Lynn Spigel, for example, writing on the advertisements for portable televisions in the 1960s, notes that gender targeting was present even in seemingly progressive ads. Whereas the men were presented as active adventurers and sportsmen, the women were shown doing household chores while watching the television, a gendered representation that Spigel notes is still present in more modern ads, where televisions are

associated with women (or passivity) and computers with men (or action): "Indeed, the prevailing consumer discourses on new technologies aimed at the white middle class continue to present tableaux in which domestic subjectivity is presented through the logics of sexual difference and related divisions of public and private spaces, even if these logics are updated for a computer age" (137). Cynthia J. Cyrus also brings to light elements of gendering in the visual representation of 1960s girl groups, where every element was intended to appeal to teenage girls. The emphasis was put on self-identification of the fan with the group, on the possibility of belonging to a similar group (or to that group in particular). All members were, finally, replaceable. As long as the dance routine and clothes matched the other members' nothing else mattered: "their visual representations emphasized their sameness, their interchangeability" (183). Despite this aesthetic geared towards young women, the male gaze was still omnipresent, as the managers making the visual representation decisions were all male. Accordingly, "the girl group members lacked the power to be agents of their own representation" (190). The importance of the audience's identification with the members of the girl group reveals the importance of feeling a sense of belonging to a community, also a recurring theme in popular music studies. In the case of Cyrus's analysis, "such a message of belonging was an important part of a marketing strategy aimed at the increasingly multiracial and self-consciously female teen market of the period" (176). Cyrus quotes from Lisa Lewis' analysis of music videos in the 1990s, which found that "By imitating the dress and performance codes of their favoured musician, girl fans demonstrate their identification with the star and with female address […] and display their

association with a community of fans" (175). This need for a sense of belonging

resurfaces throughout historical analyses, especially when the public and private

worlds are confronted and combined. Spigel notes that Raymond Williams's notion

of "mobile privatization" becomes instead a "privatized mobility" when portable

televisions (or other portable media) are added to the mix. The conflicting needs for

input from the public world and the privacy of one's own home finds its solution,

according to Williams, through broadcasting, which "serves as the resolution to this

contradiction insofar as it brings a picture of the outside world into the private

home" (121). This desire to belong to a community, be it merely imagined,

resurfaces as a crucial element in the development of the music industry, which Lisa

Gitelman and Simon Frith have written about and which I will touch upon below.

Through all this, one important notion remains: "while it is important to

acknowledge the way in which gender ideologies work at an unconscious level

through the structuring of desires, it is also important to understand that these

desires are produced and are therefore potentially changeable" (Gilbert and Taylor

in Hurley, 336).

This gendering of space and technology in popular culture is present in the

work of Keir Keightley (1996), Anna McCarthy (2001), Lisa Gitelman (2003) and

Simon Frith (2002). Keightley and McCarthy approach the subject through specific

examples (hi-fi systems and television, respectively), whereas Gitelman and Frith

focus more generally on the gendering and interaction of the public and private

spheres. Keightley explains how the hi-fi systems of the 1950s were coded as

masculine technologies in the press (both trade specific and general publications) of

the time. He maintains, "men used hi-fi sound reproduction technology […] to produce a domestic space gendered as masculine" (1996, 150). According to Keightley, one of the reasons this coding developed, and was explicit in ads and articles of media at the time, was the change in home layout that came with the suburbs. These new homes centered on the idea of "togetherness", of the family's activities and not each individual's. This in turn led to a "discourse of entrapment, involving expressions of desire for privacy and autonomy" (1996, 153). The workplace was also conceived of as a site of entrapment and thus there seemed to be no escape for men. The housewife was "cast in the role of oppressor" (1996, 154) in sociological studies and mainstream media and the liberty of unmarried men celebrated in movies and magazines. Keightley quotes a writer for *Playboy*, declaiming the "female control of the residential interior and the resultant weakening of the man's 'inner self'" (1996, 155). The change in the layout of homes, from separate, closed rooms to open and split-level would have, according to the *Playboy* writer, led to "the displacement of the male [being] experienced as a dislocation, a literal loss of a sense of place and ultimately, of identity" (1996, 155). In addition to coding hi-fi as a masculine technology, the discourse surrounding this technology coded television as a feminine medium, and consequently, inferior. Hi-fi became a symbol of sorts; being "consistently represented as a weapon in the battle of the sexes." Furthermore, "masculinist discourse positioned women as the enemies of high fidelity" (1996, 161).

McCarthy draws on the corpus of work on space and power by Lynn Spigel, David Morley, Meaghan Morris and Doreen Massey in her analysis of television in

public spaces. Like Keightley, she notes particular dynamics between gender and the

presence of television sets (presumably when they were still considered masculine)

in taverns in the late 40s and early 50s: "[…] trade discussions of television tended

to foreground the tavern's cultural status as a space of male-oriented comfort, a

status referenced in patrons' descriptions of the space as a lodge, a club, or a 'home

away from home'" (41). Furthermore, the do-it-yourself element ("one of the signal

features of masculine domesticity") is also present in this situation, as the bar

owners tinker with their television sets (41). Moreover, the tavern was clearly

gendered through "internal, informal systems," such as a sign posted in Manhattan

establishments in 1947, stating:

Danger! Women Drinking

Notice! No Back Room Here for Ladies

Good Ale, Raw Onions, and No Ladies

No Unescorted Ladies Permitted at Bar (35).

McCarthy adds that "although no legal interdiction barred women from the tavern,

signs like these would severely limit their participation in the social life of taverns"

(35).

The search for authenticity that pervades popular music, especially rock

(both historically and at present) comes into play here, as the hi fi systems became a

technological symbol for "releasing one's repressed, true self, of momentarily

abandoning the sham, pretence and rationality of a compromised age, in favour of

authentic emotions and unbridled experience" (Keightley, 1996, 157). Through the

adoption of a new hobby or home improvement projects, the male, in some sense,

reclaimed his masculine identity and made the house his own. In the same sense, the

spaces such as the toolshed, the garage workshop, the basement bar, though

marginal in the home, served to reinterpret the separate male space within the

mostly feminine home. This preoccupation with the technological do-it-yourself is

not only a way of gaining social status, McCarthy writes, but may also be linked to

"stereotypically masculine anxieties about authority and technology" (43).

Ads and media showed men as having to convince their wives to let them

purchase a hi-fi system, and the debate over sound levels that would later define the

generational gap during the sixties was in this case a gendered one. Moreover, "high

fidelity represented a moment of masculine involvement not only in the

arrangement of the domestic interior, but also in commodity consumption during a

period when women still controlled the majority of retail expenditures" (1996, 172).

Indeed, McCarthy compares the tavern and the home of the 1940s, explaining, "one

was, in the 1940s, a space of homosocial, collective recreation, the other a space

defined by familial gender relations in dominant discourse" (49). Though the

hierarchies of popular culture in this case concern men and women, rather than

young and old, the press remains the common factor as a vehicle for the

representation of these differentiated statuses. In this case, men are associated with

active production, whereas women become linked to passive consumption.

Lisa Gitelman warns against this production/consumption dichotomy, which

tends to put the emphasis on production, thereupon shifting "the history of

technology away from the experience of any but white, middle-class men" (2003,

61). This in turn translates into a view of production as manly and good, and

consumption as feminine and less valued. The production/consumption dichotomy

also leads to the determinist perspective of using "technology as a sufficient explanation of social and cultural change" (61). Gitelman instead counters that the meaning of technologies emerges from the social interactions of people and things. Using the example of nickel-in-the-slot machines, she states that the interaction of the user with the machine allowed for an identification with an imagined community. The activity of listening to music in public becomes a cross between private and public entertainment when the machines are situated in public areas: "The first nickel-in-the-slot machines were located at train stations, then at hotels and drug stores, where such an imagined community would have been both diffuse and masculine [...] Customers listened to records through ear tubes, so that this public experience was in another sense a profoundly private one" (63). Paradoxically, by bringing people together through the imagined communities, the medium also divided this very community. Gitelman notes the male/female qualities of the public/private spaces, as well as the place accorded women in the new technologies: "It is not just that women were represented and reproduced, [...] rather that modern forms of mediation are in part *defined* by normative constructions of difference, whether gender, racial, or other versions of difference" (75, original italics).

Furthering the notion of the fusion of public and private spaces, McCarthy points out that public spaces aren't necessarily "purely and self-evidently public," but rather a combination of public and private. The divisive and exclusionary aspects of certain spaces comes from this very fluid nature of the space: "Indeed,

what makes the public/private division such a major category of social power is the fact that it is dynamic and flexible, varying from place to place" (121).

This flexibility further blurs the line between the private and public places in the case of Scopitones, given that anyone with the required money can make the private choice in a public space. With tavern television, only one person has this power, and as such, "the ceiling-mounted television even acquires some of the status of institutional speech; its inaccessibility communicates to the users of the space that the right to make a decision about what channel the screen is tuned to is reserved for its proprietor alone" (122). Thus we witness some examples of what role discourse plays in gendering space and technologies, whether consciously, as in the ads for the hi-fi systems and the tavern signs, or unconsciously, when the "neutral" technologies installed in a gendered space become associated with the gender of that space in society.

The fusion of the public and private elements of the popular music industry is taken further by Simon Frith. Music, he writes, "came to be defined as an essentially individual experience, an experience that we choose for ourselves in the marketplace and as a matter of our cultural autonomy in everyday life […] What we are possessing, though, is still an access to a collective world" (27). He points out, however, that if the act of listening to music has been privatized, the music one can listen to has not. This can be in some part attributed to the twentieth-century media, whose effect "was less to privatise musical and other cultural experiences than to blur the distinction between the public and private spheres" (37). Is listening to a song on a radio station more or less private or public than selecting a song on a

jukebox? In these cases, the public space can become the setting for a private listening experience just as quickly as the private space can allow a public listening experience. As such, Frith suggests, "we should, perhaps, see music as the medium through which we negotiate the complex relations between our public and our private selves" (38). The ties to an imagined community one feels when listening to music can also be considered merely a marketing strategy of the music industry. Indeed, by selling a sense of belonging, the music industry frees the buyer of guilt, portraying him or her not as indulging him or herself, but rather as taking part in something bigger than the self (38). Music, therefore, allows for a crossover between the public and the private spheres of entertainment life. Whether this is a strategy of the market or random occurrence perhaps matters less than recognising this capacity and acknowledging the influence it can have on media history.

Though these technologies are inanimate objects, McCarthy reminds us that not only can their use lead to a blurring of the private and public personas and spaces, but that their surrounding context also carries impact: "Television may indeed be 'just an appliance,' but appliances, like all commodities, are complicated discursive objects. In their design and placement, to say nothing of their sanctioned patterns of use, everyday machines, gadgets, and apparatuses speak volumes about the social structure, and power relations, of the environment they inhabit" (McCarthy, 118). Teresa de Lauretis explores this very link between technologies and gender, first disambiguating the notion of feminism from its multiple historical and discursive interpretations by stating that "a feminist theory of gender […] points to a conception of the subject as multiple, rather than divided or unified […] " (x).

She then indicates that gender is a construction, influenced by technologies: "gender, too, both as representation and as self-representation, is the product of various social technologies" (2). These two elements, gender as multiple and gender as construction are crucial to a thorough understanding of the gender dynamics of Scopitone clips.

The clips' focus on the body effectively erases any form of subjectivity or agency the women on screen may have, whereas de Lauretis proposes a theory of gender that would instead recognize that women are indeed three-dimensional beings independently of their relation to men. This is in contrast with another feminist approach de Lauretis denounces for its interpretation of gender as being perceived in relation to men, where the changes in gender equality occur "in the social relations of gender: changes, in short, in the direction of more or less 'equality' of women *to* men" (17, original italics). Though at first glance the stereotypical representation of women in Scopitones is striking, with women portrayed as one-dimensional icons of a time- and culture-specific beauty ideal and sexual availability, one must remember that gender constructions are, as de Lauretis indicates, a product of the technologies and the institutions at any given time: "*The construction of gender goes on today through the various technologies of gender (e.g., cinema) and institutional discourses (e.g., theory) with power to control the field of social meaning and thus produce, promote, and 'implant' representations of gender*" (18, original italics). It is therefore the combination of what is shown on technologies and what the institutions say that constructs the way gender is

perceived and represented, which brings us to the second element, gender as construction.

Naturally, if gender construction affects gender representation and what technologies broadcast is considered to influence gender representation, then the opposite must also be true; gender representation must affect gender construction. De Lauretis summarizes this mutually influential relationship succinctly, writing, "Thus, the proposition that the representation of gender is its construction, each term being at once the product and the process of the other, can be restated more accurately: *The construction of gender is both the product and the process of its representation*" (5, original italics). Earlier I touched upon the mutual influence of rock criticism and public opinion; in this case it is similarly impossible to determine what came first, the representation in the press or the representation in the clips. It is obvious, however, that each one influences the other. In the same way, in both print and film clips, the stance towards women stems in part from ideological positions of the sixties, before the women's liberation movement, and from the portrayal of women on (not necessarily Scopitone) screens, which in turn play off one another.

To the concept of representation, de Lauretis adds the notion of self-representation, which is "the subjective representation of gender" (9). She then indicates, "*The construction of gender is the product and the process of both representation and self-representation*" (9, original italics). I interpret self-representation as the trace of the creator on the finished product as well as the user's interpretation. The portrayal and representation of women on the screen thus

becomes a self-representation of the creator(s) of the clip, telling the viewer more about the director, screenwriter or editor than about the women on screen, in addition to eventually becoming a projection of the viewer's self through his or her interpretation of the text.

In the end, the question of the representation of women has been and continues to be unsettled, women remaining not merely unrepresentable, but "unrepresentable except as representation" (20). This signifies that women are systematically only presented as representations of women, not as women, a reliance on clichés and the same tired stereotypes from the past merely being recycled endlessly, reoccurring over and over. As stated above, these representations feed back into ideologies and vice versa, and the whole cycle is repeated. Indeed, this was the case in the Scopitone clips and continues to be the case in technologies of representation today.

Through this series of examples, it becomes clearer not only how the hierarchies in popular culture come into play in the press during the fifties and sixties, in the midst of broad social changes, but also how the discourse surrounding media serve to assign a gender to both the technology and the space in which it is placed. This review of scholarly work also leads to a better understanding of the critical discourse surrounding this gendering. The examples serve to demonstrate the changing patterns in private and public entertainment and the various ways in which these are discussed in academic discourse. The results of the gendering of space and technology and the changes in viewing patterns directly relate to the eventual demise of Scopitones and the inability of the American production and

distribution company to convince the public to invest in and use the machines

despite its best efforts.

***Chapter 2: The Rapid Rise of Scopitones and Some Reasons for Their Lack of Long-term Success*, or "The Race is on" (Jody Miller)**

Almost forgotten today, Scopitones were once a hot-topic in the music industry, garnering much coverage in the industry press of the 1960s. In this chapter, I retrace the history of the Scopitones, from their very beginnings to their ultimate demise, with an eye to accounting for the factors that contributed to their fading from popular consciousness. Finally, I will conduct a brief analysis of three clips in order to identify some common representational elements that recur across the spectrum of Scopitone clips. The history and possible reasons for the waning interest in Scopitones offered here are presented specifically from a business perspective, dealing with technical and industrial questions and the release of a new product, an approach Frederick Wasser has argued for in his article, "Why Media Scholars Should Write Corporate Histories." Wasser expresses the need for a scholarly analysis of corporations, "if only because no one else will write their histories. Certainly corporate historians and trade journals write for an audience who are constantly worried only about the next new thing. They neither ask the right questions nor can afford the perspective of a historian" (1). Seeing as the entertainment corporations exert a wide influence in the entertainment industry, Wasser claims that journalists can no longer provide objective and in depth analyses, as they "remain bound to the frames provided by the media conglomerates. It is only the academics who can provide such analyses" (1). In the next chapter I will offer a different account for the waning success of Scopitones.

In his sweeping history of Scopitones, *L'aventure Scopitone*, Jean-Charles Scagnetti notes that visual jukeboxes did in fact exist before Scopitones. This is echoed by Jack Stevenson in his more informal chapter on Scopitones in *Land of a Thousand Balconies: Discoveries and Confessions of a B-Movie Archaeologist*. Both refer to the Panoram, a jukebox with a 43 cm by 57 cm screen on which moving images were rear projected, invented in 1939 by the Mills Novelty Company of Chicago. The Panoram played a sequence of eight three minute musical films. Thousands of these black and white films, which came to be known as "Soundies," were eventually produced by Globe Productions in Hollywood. However, when the United States entered World War II, production was halted, and by the end of the conflict, the interest in Soundies had waned (Scagnetti, 9; Stevenson, 31). In addition, Soundies seem to have been plagued by much the same difficulties that the Scopitones faced: "Limited by extremely small budgets and resistance from both the film and recording industries, the producers of Soundies created shorts that were often formulaic, stilted, and riddled with clichés. Despite attempts to engage viewers with comedic acts and even sexually suggestive material, the Soundies Distributing Corporation was never able to build or sustain a consistent audience" (Herzog, 2007, 34). The Scopitone was to suffer a similar fate, accused of being nothing more than a novelty, unable by virtue of its newness to secure a regular clientele, with users being somewhat bewildered by this hybrid medium, and prone to analogous aesthetics and production values.

The drive to create a visual jukebox was nonetheless still present and came to the fore in the late 1950s in Italy and France where inventors engaged in a race to

develop the best machine. In Italy, the first patent for the Cinebox was registered in September 1955. The first prototype was shown in Rome in April 1959 and the machine was immediately extremely popular. Thus on October 15th 1959, rights were acquired for Switzerland and France, and on July 10th 1959 for Austria, Belgium, Canada, the United States, Monaco, Germany and the United Kingdom (Scagnetti, 22). At this point, however, there were already tensions with the record companies, seeing as "les juke-box assuraient déjà la promotion des vedettes et ce nouveau support visuel ne garantissait nullement l'achat de disques supplémentaires" (23). This tension between the jukeboxes and the visual jukeboxes would be a recurring theme in the years to come, with Scopitone representatives repeatedly insisting they weren't competing for the classic jukeboxes' users.

As the Cinebox was being developed in Italy, almost simultaneously, in France, inventors were developing their own video jukeboxes. On July 19th 1957, an application for a patent was deposited by Roland Bourg (inventor), Gérard Godin (conception) and Roger Perier (engineer) for their Phonoviseur. They spent over a year attempting to create a prototype of the Phonoviseur only to find out that CAMECA (Compagnie des applications mécaniques et électroniques au cinéma et à l'atomistique) had applied for a patent on August 31st 1959, for the Scopitone. CAMECA had already shown the Scopitone at the *Foire de Paris* in May 1960 and the first orders were filled as of September of that year (10). Bittersweet victory for Roland Bourg perhaps, Scagnetti writes that he "n'en demeura pas moins le premier inventeur d'un juke-box à écran en France" (11). Meanwhile, three other patents

were being applied for in France, one by Roger Barascut in July 1958 for the Ciné-Robot-Sonor, another by Lucien-Félix Prat in July 1958, and finally one by Alain Brunet in February 1965 for the Polyscope. None of these patents would bear fruit though: Barascut was manipulated by CAMECA and eventually lost the rights to his invention; Prat's patent proved too expensive to produce and Brunet gave up his patent (11-18). The coast was clear for CAMECA's Scopitone to take over the visual jukebox field in France.

CAMECA was created in June 1928 and made film equipment for professionals. Originally called la Compagnie Radio-Cinéma, it belonged to la Compagnie générale de télégraphie sans fil (CSF) and its name was changed to CAMECA at the end of the 1950s. The team responsible for actually constructing the Scopitone was comprised of René Jacquemin (CEO), Frédéric Mathieu (director), Jean Pernelle (assistant-director), Pierre Janichewski (sales manager) and Jean-Claude Verger (assistant sales manager), as well as anonymous engineers, technicians, and designers (37).

The main differences (improvements, incidentally) between CAMECA's invention and the Panoram of the late 30s were the use of colour film stock and the freedom of choice granted the spectator via the possibility of selecting a film, instead of having to watch the reel in order. Writes Stevenson, "these might seem like minor details but in fact they were revolutionary breakthroughs that gave this juke box the impact of a new invention" (32). The first model, the ST-16 (or "the toad" as it came to be called), was patented on August 31st 1959 by Frédéric Mathieu and released in 1960 (Scagnetti, 41). The technology behind the ST-16 was remarkably innovative:

to ensure that the image would be visible in the natural light or in artificially lit spaces, a special 400 watts light bulb was developed by Philips. This in turn necessitated the development of an infrared filter to prevent the film stock from melting and deforming. Due to the frequent screening of the clips, the engineers also developed a sturdier sprocket system. The previously viewed film would rewind while another film played. The volume could even be controlled at a distance, thanks to a remote control (41-42).

Jürgen Lossau writes that the materials used for the construction of the Scopitone were originally meant for "high-altitude aerial reconnaissance" during the war (9). The parts were taken from 16mm cameras that were constructed like projectors. The 36 reels sat on a rotating steel ring in the centre of the machine, enabling the user to choose which song out of the 36 he or she wished to watch. Each film had a magnetic sound track attached to it (9). The buttons listing the songs and performers were placed on the square base, while the colour television screen extended from a curved neck. The soundtrack was amplified through an 8-watt speaker, measuring 21 cm by 32 cm and placed under the screen. The red, grey and beige machine measured 1,8 metres high, 1,08 metres wide and 98 centimetres deep, with a total weight of 180 kilograms (Scagnetti, 42), prompting Lossau to compare its size to that of a refrigerator (9). Three wheels allowed for easier moving of the heavy machine. The panels were Formica, which not only reduced production costs but also improved resonance. The screen measured 54 centimetres, which was very large for the time (see Appendix, Figure 1). Coupled with the colour image, the screen provided a much better image quality than the (few and far between) black

and white televisions located in private homes (Scagnetti, 42). The machine

required over 600 watts per hour in order to run and due to its oversize dimensions

could only fit in large spaces (41). As mentioned above, the ST-16 was officially

presented at the *Foire de Paris* in May 1960. By December 1960, the Scopitone and

its 40-song catalogue were available to the general public (45).

The ST-36, which employed the same technology, only within a more

streamlined exterior, came out in 1962. Like the previous model, the ST-36 was red,

grey and beige. However, the newer model measured 2 metres high, 86 centimetres

wide and 1,2 metres deep. The total weight of this model was 230 kilograms. The

screen was enlarged to 65 centimetres. The futuristic designed made it not only

easier to look at, but easier to program the next film even while a clip was being

watched. This improved performance and yield, making it possible to show up to 21

films in an hour and gain more money. An undated ad in Stevenson's account

(though based on the size of the screen listed, it can be guessed that it is for the ST-

36 model) boasts "remote control volume selectors and remote control sound

boxes" as well as indicating that "remote control selectors [for the clips] will soon be

available" (35). The head of the machine, including the screen, could be completely

retracted to make moving the huge Scopitone easier. Some ST-36 models came with

a screen measuring 1 metre, which, though compromising the image quality,

allowed more people to watch the screen at once (Scagnetti, 46). By 1965, *La

technique cinématographique* reported that 160 units were being produced per

month. In addition to the production, CAMECA also provided follow-up services and

repairs (40).

The price for viewing a Scopitone clip was set at four times that of listening to a song on a juke-box (a quarter instead of a nickel), in order to not "rendre les juke-box moins intéressants et leur causer une concurrence déloyale" (13), demonstrating an early good will towards the parent technology, though the friction with jukebox operators would continue well into the 60s.

In the spring of 1962, the first Cinebox machines arrived in the United States, with four English titles already recorded (29). Scagnetti indicates that "le décalage avec les langues chantées (italien, français) et la manière un peu osée de tourner associée à la révolution technique qu'incarnait l'appareil expliquèrent le succès fulgurant auprès des foules" (30). This language gap, though perhaps exotic at first when the Cinebox was presented to the American public, was to be one of the contributing elements to Scopitone's demise. Despite the success of the original Cinebox clips, ten new American clips were filmed in November 1963 (30). However, once the Scopitone arrived in the United States (in Miami at first), the Cinebox's success was limited. Scagnetti cites its continued dependence on importing machines from Italy as a major factor in its domination by Scopitone (33).

It wasn't until the winter of 1963-64 that the United States became aware of Scopitones. There are differing accounts from cultural historians Stevenson, Scagnetti, Jeff Smith and Frank Rose on what happened next. According to Stevenson, Alvin I. Malnik, a lawyer from Miami bought the U.S. and Latin American rights in 1963 after a tip from an insider at the William Morris Agency for either $5,000 or $33,000 (both prices are mentioned in reports) and royalties. He brought in eleven co-investors, including Abe Green, who also figures in Rose's account, and

Scopitone Inc. was born (33). Jeff Smith indicates rather that the sales rights were purchased by the William Morris Agency in June 1961 (142). However, according to Scagnetti, the William Morris agency was charged with the marketing of the Scopitone in the United States in September 1963; Malnik contacted the agency at the end of 1963 and bought the rights to Scopitone distribution in the United States and South America for a few thousand dollars and royalties. He then founded Scopitone Inc. in Miami Beach with his associates, some of which had ties to the Mafia, ties that would harm the company in the long run (65). Malnik had all the ads for the ST-36 translated from French for the American launch (65), already conscious of the importance of English material.

In his exhaustive history of the William Morris Agency, Frank Rose indicates that as early as April 1961, George Wood, an employee at the agency, was being investigated by the New York Police Department for his ties with the mob. In order to promote and finance Scopitones, Wood "was assembling a Who's Who of shady characters - his good friend Jimmy Blue-Eyes Alo; Danny Brown, New York loan shark and Alo associate; Joe Cataldo, AKA Joe the Wop, owner of the Camelot Supper Club, wiseguy hangout at Forty-ninth and Third; Aaron Weisberg, part owner of the Sands; Francis Breheny, AKA the Irishman, Alo associate with pull in the jukebox racket; Abe Green, head of a New Jersey jukebox manufacturing company with close ties to the Genovese family" (238). He had the distribution rights for the United States and Latin America, and was going to invest personally in the project. The agency would cover ten percent of the production costs of every film. The film producer who had been approached to make the films went to the police after

learning of the mob's involvement, and this led to intensified surveillance of Wood (239). Meanwhile, progress continued on the Scopitone deal. Wood arranged for Abe Green's Runyon Sales Company to oversee distribution (244). By May 1963, an agreement had been reached between CAMECA and the two Miami Beach attorneys Wood had selected to be in charge of the investor group for Scopitones (one of whom was Alvin I. Malnik). After a four-month trial period, the two lawyers, who intended to create Scopitone Inc., were granted the U.S. rights to the machine. The William Morris Agency stayed on as agent for CAMECA and Scopitone. It was a profitable deal for all involved: "The deal was worth more than $1 million in hardware alone, with Scopitone agreeing to buy two hundred machines and manufacture at least fifty-two hundred more over the next ten years. The Morris office stood to get a commission of $12 per machine, plus 10 percent of the $15 sales price of the color films the machines were designed to play" (261). A few weeks later, in November 1963, George Wood died of a heart attack, owing over $100,000 to various loan sharks (262).

According to CAMECA, by September 1963, there were already 1,068 Scopitones scattered throughout Europe (958) and North America (100 in Canada; 10 in the United States), though it isn't specified whether these statistics include both ST-16 and ST-36 models. The ten-fold presence of Scopitones in Canada isn't explained, but I would venture that the presence of a francophone market, with an interest in French cultural products would be the most likely reason. Malnik then had ST-36 models installed in New York, San Francisco, Las Vegas, in a dozen military bases and in traditional bars, lounges, restaurant chains, train stations and

bowling alleys, which in turn engendered 2,500 orders (Scagnetti, 60). In New York

State, one could rent an ST-36 for $250 per night, or $350 per week from the

Paramount Jukebox Corporation (65).

Overwhelmed by the demand for Scopitones, Malnik went to Wall Street for

help, where he was put in touch with Aaron A. Steiger, president of Tel-A-Sign, a

Chicago based manufacturer of giant illuminated signs, who was looking to expand

his company's product offer. On April 16th 1964 (or in July 1964 according to Rose

(480)), Tel-A-Sign bought 80 percent interest in Scopitone Inc. against 850 000 of

the company's own stocks listed at 5 dollars and Scopitone Inc. became a subsidiary

of Tel-A-Sign (Scagnetti, 66). Malnik would stay on as president until 1965. When

the purchase was announced, Tel-A-Sign's stocks soared by 3.5 percent in April and

this upward trend continued during the following months (66). In 1963 Tel-A-Sign

reported $3.7 million in sales and the projected figure for 1965 was $6 million. By

1964, its profits had quadrupled and it was expected that revenue generated from

Scopitones would add up to an additional $20 million over time (67). Rose cites a

Wall Street Journal article, of April 26, 1966, in which it was reported that "ten

Scopitone stockholders, among them Aaron Weisberg of the Sands and Abe Green of

the Runyon Sales Company, traded an $8,000 investment for Tel-A-Sign stock worth

$3.3 million" (480). By all accounts, then, this was a profitable enterprise.

Being a French import, all the available clips were of French artists, unknown

to the American public. Even early on, industry insiders realised this could be

problematic: "While no one could dispute the novelty value and initial draw of the

machines, it soon became clear that US Scopitone would be doomed without the

introduction of American films" (Stevenson, 34). Consequently, Scopitone Inc. was

searching for an American film producer in Hollywood who could provide them with

American clips. Nonetheless, by the summer of 1964, there were around 500

machines across the United States according to Stevenson. Scagnetti notes that the

first ST-36 arrived on the west coast (Los Angeles) in May 1964. By August 1965, he

continues, there were 427 machines in California alone (67).

In 1964, Tel-A-Sign purchased the manufacturing rights from CAMECA,

planning to commence production of the newly designed 450, the American model,

in their Chicago plant. The factory opened in mid-November 1964 and was fully

operational by January 1965. Its hundred or so employees had all been trained by

French technicians from CAMECA (67). The 450's release was scheduled for 1965,

with a projected 5,000 units produced that year and 10,000 in 1966 and in the

following years. The company intended to replace Cinebox but not jukeboxes, again

presenting Scopitones as a complementary medium and not as competition (68).

The 450 model sold for $3,500 and the rental of the first 36 films cost an additional

$720. After that, the cost was of $60 per month for the new clips. As writes

Scagnetti, "Les premiers *Scopitone* en exploitation à Miami et à New York

rapportèrent, chaque semaine, de 75 à 375 dollars par engin – soit 50 à 250

visionnages par jour en pièces de 25 cents. Selon les prévisions les plus optimistes,

la machine pouvait être amortie en trois mois" (69).

The 450 unit was mostly brown, with splashes of red (see Appendix, Figure

2). This newer model used solid-state technology, a more modern transmission of

current and sound. The speaker in the 450 was also an American model. The whole

model measured 215 centimetres high and weighed almost 300 kilograms (Lossau, 12). The screen was now embedded into the body of the machine, accounting for this increase in height. The buttons were illuminated and a sleek black and white. There were also new colourful ads, showing the "Scopistars" of the time (Scagnetti, 68).

To ensure its longevity however, Scopitone Inc. needed American content. In December of 1964, Tel-A-Sign signed a five-year contract with Harman-ee Productions, a subsidiary of Harman Enterprises, to produce 48 Scopitone clips a year (Stevenson, 34) (or 50 films, according to Scagnetti (69)), at a rate of one day of rehearsal and one day of shooting per film (Smith, 143). The first clip produced was for Harman Enterprises owner Debbie Reynold's "If I Had A Hammer" (Stevenson, 36). According to Scagnetti, Irving Briskin, the ex-president of Columbia Pictures, was made the director of the clips and first Paul Hunter, then Francis Ford Coppola, were the producers (70), whereas Stevenson reports that the director was Hal Belfer, with Fred Benson coordinating talent and production, while Briskin supervised the production of the clips (37). The clips were filmed on 35mm stock and transferred to 16mm. Though other production companies filmed Scopitone clips (Continental Cinema, Color Sonics, and others), Harman-ee was the only company to film in Technicolor (37). At this point, business was excellent, and Stevenson writes that "Scopitone's fortunes continued to gain throughout the winter and spring of 1965 as American made films became available" (36). The summer of 1965 would be Scopitone's zenith, both in financial and popularity terms. There were approximately 1,000 units of the 450 model in the United States, 400 of which

were on the West coast. A new add-on invention, the "stimulator," was being touted as a way of increasing revenue, by automatically playing the last song heard if the Scopitone was inactive for a certain period of time (36). Over 1,300 units had been sold (Scagnetti, 70). Steiger made the announcement in a *Billboard* interview in July that by the end of the 1965, most of the films available would be "English language productions" (Stevenson, 36). Indeed, Scagnetti indicates that in 1966, Tel-A-Sign had 75 films (some were from other producers), by 50 or so performers (70). By the end of the same year, over 2,000 machines were functioning in the United States (70).

While Scopitone Inc. was on the rise in the United States, sales had been stalling in France and a higher tax had been imposed on the establishments where the Scopitones were located (48). Tellingly, the price of *Scopitones* on the market plummeted: "En janvier 1967, un particulier pouvait acheter un *ST 36* pour 8 000 francs, alors qu'en décembre de la même année un cafetier vendait 'deux *Scopitone* en parfait était de marche pour 6,000 francs'" (49). In 1968, French production of Scopitones was halted (49).

In North America, however, "Scopitone was taking on a new identity as it underwent a metamorphosis from a novelty dependent on French product to a solid 'exposure medium' for popular American recording stars who were beginning to see the light [...] Scopitone was getting, if not hip, then at least a bit more 'with it'..." (Stevenson, 36). In September 1965, Steiger and three associates purchased the remainder of Malnik's Tel-A-Sign and Scopitone holdings, and in October of the same year, Harman-ee inked a contract with Mercury Records and its affiliate labels

to produce clips for several of their new acts, including some chart-toppers. Thus,

Scopitone Inc. continued to do well through the first months of 1966. In March 1966,

however, a lawsuit for $5 million was launched against Scopitone Inc. by The

Backporch Majority, who were displeased with the Scopitone film produced for one

of their songs, accusing the company of adding "smut" to their clip during post-

production (the lawsuit was ultimately unsuccessful). This was the first in a series of

events that would eventually lead to the company's downfall. This lawsuit garnered

a lot of bad publicity, which wasn't helped by an article in the *Wall Street Journal*

reporting that everyone involved with Scopitone was being investigated by the

Federal Grand Jury, for "possible gangster involvement in legitimate businesses"

(Stevenson, 43). On May 13, 1966, the *New York Times* revealed that since 1964 the

company had been suspected of fraud and mafia ties. Malnik's close associates were

under great suspicion. However, the inquiry had started much earlier than this, as

stated above. Rose reveals that documents obtained under the Freedom of

Information Act "show that on September 22, 1965, Gerry Catena of the Genovese

family was questioned by the SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission] about his

involvement in the Scopitone deal. Among other things, Catena was asked if he'd

been introduced to Scopitone by George Wood, and if he had any stock interest in

the William Morris Agency" (he refused to answer the questions) (480). Though

Rose states that nobody was convicted after these revelations (480), Scagnetti

reports that only Jimmy Blue-Eyes was accused of false testimony and obstruction of

justice (71). Even though the investigation was focused on independent Scopitone

distributors and not the central Tel-A-Sign management (newspapers always

maintained that Tel-A-Sign was not the one being investigated), the damage was felt. It became almost impossible for the company to get financing, and revenues and stock values dropped. On January 4th 1966, Atlas Music Company took over the marketing of Scopitones in Illinois, replacing Tel-A-Sign (71). Despite these setbacks, in June 1966, new exclusive contracts were signed and by July there were a reported 2,000 Scopitones across the country (Stevenson, 44).

Though losses were reported, a new distributor was found, shipments of prints were higher than ever and alteration of the machines to allow for paid advertising between films was in the works (44). The historical accounts once again differ on the subsequent events. Scagnetti indicates that on November 30th 1966 Jack Cameron Gordon took over as new president. Gordon became the Assistant CEO and Steiger remained CEO (72). Stevenson writes rather that this replacement took place in April 1967 and that Steiger was completely removed. Gordon was a veteran of the jukebox industry and had worked for Seeburg, a jukebox manufacturer, since 1946 (44). Though he tried to increase the sales of machines and clips, no new 450s left the factory that year. To rescue Scopitone Inc. from bankruptcy, Gordon had new artists and clips from France added to the catalogue (Scagnetti, 72) and developed a modified version of the 450 model, the 'Theater 16', which consisted of a 122 cm by 183 cm screen and a lower lease price for 16mm films (Brack, 1966-05-14, 58). In an interview in *Billboard* magazine in May 1967, Gordon declared that "Scopitone is dead. As a name. As a concept. As a machine" (Brack, 64). Smith indicates that a predicted 100,000 Scopitones were intended for distribution in the United States,

but there never were more than 10,000. He writes, "by 1967 the market for all cinema-jukebox formats had essentially disappeared" (144).

Adding to its shaky reputation, the company neglected to submit its financial reports for 1967 and as such was forced to leave the AMEX on July 26th 1967 (Scagnetti, 72). On August 8th 1967, Tel-A-Sign was given the go-ahead to declare voluntary bankruptcy. Final bankruptcy was either declared in early 1969 (73) or in November 1969 (Stevenson, 44). This signalled the end of CAMECA's interest in automatic machinery (Scagnetti, 73). Scopitone Inc.'s legacy, however, was to have distributed twice the amount of machines in the United States than had been distributed in the rest of the world (73).

There are several possible reasons for the eventual lack of interest in Scopitones, and here I will focus on five of these, namely the lack of outreach to a younger public, the lack of material in English, the lack of established relations between the film production and the record industry, the difficulties in classifying the Scopitone as a medium, and finally, the poor reputation of Scopitone Inc.

Perhaps the most significant mistake in Scopitone's trajectory is the targeting of the medium to adults principally, disregarding the possible pool of youth users. The price to play a song was $0.25, which was quite expensive for the time, thereby excluding teenagers (though this was, as explained earlier, a way to spare the operators from alienating juke box operators). The Scopitones were located in "class" localities, "where jukeboxes had never been known before," (Stevenson, 34) which were closed off to teenagers. Apart from these "classy" venues, Scopitones were installed "in any place men might hanker to see images of pretty women" (34),

further limiting their availability to teenagers, since they would not have been allowed in these places. In addition to their adult specific locations, the artists featured on Scopitone, when known in the United States, were generally uninteresting to a younger public. The strategy was "to focus on acts that were acceptable in all areas of the country" (42). For budgetary and profitability reasons, producers shied away from music targeted towards teenagers: "les chanteurs populaires étaient jugés plus sûrs" (Scagnetti, 131).

Hence, producers generally strayed from rock and roll acts and stuck with artists who had already been tested and were guaranteed to please adults (or, as Amy Herzog puts it, "performers and songs that […] were decidedly square" (2010, 59)). The goal, as explained by Scagnetti was not to give new artists exposure, but rather to make the machines profitable (130). Stevenson explains Scopitone's reticence to showcase rock and roll acts:

> Had Scopitone ever attempted to seriously exploit rock'n'roll, they would have needed a major rethink as well as a crystal ball since nobody knew that this 'long hair' music [as Harman-ee executive producer Irving Briskin called it] would stick around to become a multi-billion dollar a year industry. Since the cost of making a Harman-ee Scopitone was a lot higher than cutting a single, more risk was involved when gambling on the unpredictability of this 'long-haired' sound. New groups were coming out of the woodwork every month. Probably it was just a passing fad. So Scopitone passed (42-3).

This sentiment is echoed by a *Billboard* article of the time, where the author notes, "if Scopitone becomes established in teen-age locations, the programming will have

to be supplemented by films made my some of the newer pop artists. In that case the

film producer would have to gamble" (1965-07-10, 1). In fact one of the only rock

clips produced in the United States was for The Condors' song "Ain't That Just Like

Me," which according to Scagnetti is among the very few American produced clips to

feature black performers (131). This reliance on established performers and

formulaic clip content occurring in parallel to the experimental and innovative

promotional clips being produced for other popular music acts, like The Beatles, for

example, only exacerbated Scopitone Inc.'s stodginess. One can't help but wonder

what could have been if the company's executives had embraced this new

perspective on moving images by making available such clips as the promotional

films for "Help" (1965) or "Rain" (1966), the musical segments from the Richard

Lester directed *A Hard Day's Night* (1964) or D.A. Pennebaker's seminal clip for Bob

Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues" (1967). Though some more experimental

and youth targeted clips were indeed produced (Procol Harum's "A Whiter Shade of

Pale," Petula Clark's "Be Good to Me" or Moody Blues' "Nights in White Satin," for

example), these were part of the series of clips produced in France, where the style,

though influential on the American clips at first, was perhaps more progressive than

the Technicolor extravaganzas produced Stateside. Scagnetti indicates that the clip

for "A Whiter Shade of Pale" was produced for French distribution (131), and it is

unknown if the other French productions for American performers were available in

the United States. Ultimately though, the target demographic was "un public WASP

composé d'hommes blancs adultes des classes moyennes et supérieures en mesure

de dépenser de l'argent pour leurs loisirs" (131). This overlooking of newer acts

would eventually prove to be a fatal error, as would be the lack of Anglophone material.

When Scopitones first appeared in the United States, "even the top French pop acts of the period had virtually no name recognition value or record sales in America" (Stevenson, 34). Early reports on Scopitone in *Billboard* magazine underlined this frequently. In August of 1963, *Billboard* reported, "it is expert consensus that the success of Scopitone ultimately will depend on the supply of new films available" (46). In a May 1963 article in *Billboard*, titled "Worthy Pop Product Lack Irks British Phono Fans," John Thompson reports that Scopitone operators were expressing frustration, asking "what future is there in it […] until the major record companies allow films to be made around disks in the top 20?" (1) The issue was still being reported on in 1965, as Andre de Vekey wrote that British artists felt they were being denied the chance for exposure by the lack of films made locally (32).

This ties in with the next point: the lack of cooperation between the record industry and film production. This shortage of collaboration was expressed in 1965 in *Billboard*, with de Vekey writing, "one big problem is the time lag between the time a record is released and a film distributed. As things stand now, the record may take off, hit the top and be a forgotten proposition before a film can be produced" (32). Scopitone wanted this process to be simultaneous, but this was not to be. Later video producers did learn from Scopitone's errors however. Amy Herzog's analysis of Scopitones casts a much more critical eye on Scopitone Inc.'s management and the content of the clips than Scagnetti or Stevenson. She explains this drop in

popularity as being "caused by the lack of integration of the recording and jukebox film industries – a shortcoming that music video producers were careful to avoid. Whereas music videos were considered one of the most potent tools for advertising popular music in the height of the MTV era, the music industry in the 1960s viewed jukebox films as ineffective at best and a liability at worst" (2010, 63). This absence of cooperation was also expressed by an anonymous industry executive in an interview with Ray Brack in *Billboard* magazine, who, "after close acquaintance with the music-film trend […] has become convinced that the audio-visual concept is here to stay – but not in its present form" (1965-07-10, 48).

A fourth factor in the eventual demise of Scopitones is the difficulty in classifying the medium, both for the industry and for the public. Though they were expected by some to replace television as the prime entertainment medium, it seems that this versatility ultimately confused the customers: "Caught somewhere between television, the recording industries, and the coin-operated jukebox distribution networks, the Scopitone represented a failed synthesis of interests" (Herzog, 2010, 63). Herzog also credits the Scopitone with "creating an entirely distinct, more intimate mode of address" (2010, 69), which meant it neither fit into the category of televised live performance nor of rock-and-roll films. Faced with this multitude of influences and taxonomies, both the promoters and the public must have found it hard to situate the Scopitone in the spectrum of media available at the time.

And, finally, the reputation Scopitone Inc. acquired over the years was another contributing factor in its downfall. Stevenson indicates, "Scopitone's

meteoric rise resulted in insupportable growth and unrealistic expectations. Coupled with the 'novelty' tag the jukeboxes could never shake, this hexed the company as a solid, stable, long-term investment" (45). Add to this the links with the mob that caused the company to be investigated, and it isn't surprising that its reputation suffered. Not all aspects of the reputation were merely accusations either: "towards the end, the company itself engaged in shady tactics like serial-number shuffling to make it appear jukebox production was higher than it actually was" (45). The industry also reported that the machines themselves were of low quality. In July 1965, the report of a market analysis conducted for Scopitone Inc. revealed, among other things, that, "Much of the equipment is full of mechanical bugs" (1965-07-10, 45). In May 1966, Ray Brack wrote in *Billboard* that "the mechanical and esthetic [sic] flaws in the machines appear to have been eliminated" (60), though perhaps not from the consumers' minds.

The combination of all these elements made it impossible for Scopitones to exert a wider influence in the popular culture of the 1960s. However, as Stevenson points out, "ultimately, the biggest blow to Scopitone may have simply been the changing tastes of an ever fickle public" (45).

Before analysing three of the American Scopitone clips in more detail, I will sketch out the principal recurring elements of the clips. Scagnetti writes that the style specific to Scopitones eventually developed because of the technical constraints, such as the three minutes or less requirement and the financial limits and the rudimentary projection facilities of the time (112). It isn't clear why this time limit was set at three minutes, but most likely it is merely because the songs

themselves lasted no more than three minutes. Basically, he continues, "il s'agissait de faire passer un message musical concis en utilisant au mieux des moyens cinématographiques limités, mais en jouant sur l'efficacité visuelle" (113). Similarly, Stevenson writes that the director had to capture the viewer's attention, despite the small screen and distraction-filled environment in which the Scopitone was placed (39). Beyond this though, the goal was also to titillate the (male) viewer in order to make money:

> Produits pour être rentables, ces films s'adressaient majoritairement à un public masculin qui constituait une part importante de la clientèle des bars de l'époque. Grâce, au départ, à des filles aux nombreux attraits, le style se fixa rapidement sur des femmes dévêtues (en maillot de bain ou en transparence) […] En effet, afin de pimenter les films et de les rendre plus attractifs, sur fond de libération sexuelle et des mœurs, les réalisateurs introduisirent de nombreux plans osés. Des vues plongeantes dans les décolletés aux contre-plongées remontant sous les jupes, un style un peu léger se développa (Scagnetti, 119).

Though Scagnetti's qualification of the women as "filles aux nombreux attraits" only serves to reinforce the male gaze cast upon the women in the videos that he is describing, the summary of the camera work and the aesthetic of the clips is quite accurate.

In the United-States, where approximately 170 clips were filmed, the style of the clips was greatly influenced by the original French clips that came with the first machines (103). Though the American productions preserved the "French touch"

(which Scagnetti declares was identifiable in the camera work and its rapport to the feminine), they ultimately went further than this, by "offrant systématiquement des interprètes dénudées ou accompagnées de danseuses très court-vêtues"(128). However, where the United-States stopped at the bikini, several French clips showed topless women (128).

The clips I will use as examples of American Scopitone visual practices are the following: "Baby Face" by Bobby Vee; "Up A Lazy River" by January Jones and "Queen of the House" by Jody Miller. Most of what has been written on Scopitones notes the almost ubiquitous presence of women dancing in bikinis, incongruous shooting locations, unmatched lip-synching and innovative, and sometimes irrelevant, framing. Both Herzog and Smith critique the questionable place of women in the clips. Herzog writes that a principal feature of the Scopitone clips is the "shameless, clumsy reliance on sexploitative visual material, regardless of the subject matter or tempo of the song" (2010, 61). Smith, for his part, indicates that "Scopitone producers, especially those in Europe, traded on their lack of youth appeal by displaying scantily clad women [...] In fact, *Billboard* noted [this] as a particular selling point within the American market" (144-5). In an interview with Lossau, famous French filmmaker Claude Lelouch, who directed numerous Scopitone clips in France reveals, "'we could tell two stories all at once. The song and what was happening in the background. The viewer received two tales for the price of one. [...] The Scopitones had a regular audience. They wanted to see pretty girls. And that meant more butt shots'" (11).

All these elements are present in the three clips selected for analysis. The clip for "Baby Face" (Bobby Vee) begins with shots of isolated female body parts in bikinis, dancing on the beach. January Jones' "Up A Lazy River" begins similarly, showing bikini-clad women dancing by the shores of a river, while Jones herself reclines in a boat on the water. Jody Miller's clip also begins with shots of barely dressed women dancing, before cutting to a shot of Miller lying on a bed and extending her bare legs into the air.

The incongruity, or irrelevance, of shooting locations is demonstrated in the clip for "Baby Face," where the choice to shoot on the beach seems merely an excuse to have women in bathing suits frolicking in the water, having nothing to do with the lyrics. The women also appear swinging on gymnastic hoops, a somewhat incongruous activity for the beach. In "Queen of the House," a man is seen doing back flips, with no more than a tenuous relation to the lyrics, as we will see later on.

The framing is sometimes unconventional in the clips, as for example in Vee's clip for "Baby Face": the profusion of shots of women's body parts totally isolated from the body as whole, or the cropping of their heads as they come down a slide, zooming directly towards the camera. "Up A Lazy River" also repeatedly features close-ups of Jones' gyrating hips, and when the frame expands to show her whole body (or that of her back-up dancers), the focus always remains on the hips and breasts. Near the end of the clip, the boat she is floating down the river in is being followed by a tracking shot, but as she glides behind a tree, the screen is filled with branches and leaves, hiding the main focus of the shot, the singer. All three videos

have badly synchronized lip-synching, which for a modern viewer makes the video seem disconnected from the song, emphasising the artificiality of the clip.

Thus, the prevalence of these elements in Scopitone clips allows us to establish them as part of the visual standards of the genre, conventions that allow us to identify the clips as belonging to a larger whole, sharing this same code of reference.

The narrative of each of the clips, as well as the representation of the artist and of the other actors, is also revealing. In Bobby Vee's "Baby Face," the narrative thread is almost nonexistent; there is no story being told. The action takes place on the beach, where Vee is surrounded by women in bikinis doing various beach activities. They are shown reclining on surfboards, then move onto swinging from gymnastics rings, sliding down a slide, doing a choreography in shallow water, lying buried in sand, dancing on a lifeguard station and finally dancing in the shallow water again but joined by Vee this time. There is basically no link between the lyrics and what the viewer sees on screen. The song talks about falling in love with a girl's baby face, but most of the shots are not focused on the girls' faces at all but rather on their bodies. While the women are seen to gaze admiringly at Bobby Vee's face, he almost never looks at their faces, looking instead, like the camera, at their hips and breasts. Whereas the women are portrayed as being infatuated with him, he merely passes from one to the next. They thus become a series of unidentifiable objects, a blur of bikinis, whereas he, being the only male in the clip, pops out as a three-dimensional individual worthy of the viewer's respect. The use of the close-up in music video also serves to seclude the subject temporally. Carol Vernallis, in her

research on music videos, writes "close-ups can leave a viewer with just a face and a moment of the song; unlike actors in narrative film, who bear a past and a future that press on them as we view them in close-up, the music-video performer stands in a kind of temporal isolation. [...] The compositional features of the close-up, particularly the relation of the figure to the edges of the screen, contribute to this sense of the figure's being held in isolation" (48). The use of close-ups also figures in The Condors' "Ain't That Just Like Me," January Jones' "I've Got the World on a String" and Jody Miller's "The Race is On" to name only a few. The fact that women's body parts are here isolated, both from the whole body and temporally, only confirms the secondary place they occupy in the clip.

The clip for "Up A Lazy River" is somewhat more connected to the lyrics of the song, but again, the links are dubious. The action takes place near or on a river, illustrating to some extent the lyrical content, but nothing more. Here too the narrative is very basic, with scenes of January Jones dancing alone on a dock or on the side of the river, rowing a boat down the river or sitting in the shade alternating with shots of her back-up dancers on the sidewalk near the water or on a dock. Jones goes through several costume changes, but always wears a bikini, as do her dancers. There are no men in the clip, which could be a result of the Scopitone's target public. Men were behind the camera and in front of the screen and therefore women were more often than not in front of the camera. The camera in this case exerts a male gaze on the singer and the dancers, focusing, as in the clip for "Baby Face" upon the hips and breasts more often than the faces.

Finally, the clip for "Queen of the House," which presents images somewhat more illustrative of the lyrics, still presents a skewed representation of women. The clip alternates between shots of maids in revealing outfits dancing with feather dusters, ovens and frying pans, mops and other cleaning equipment and shots of Jody Miller in her night gown or dress walking around her house and singing. When the lyrics mention she has "no time to fix [her] hair," she is seen brushing her hair in front of a mirror; when she mentions the iceman and the milkman these two are seen on screen. They are the only men in the clip and both appear conspicuously overdressed when compared with the apparel of the women on screen. The iceman has a short sequence where he does back flips and twirls, perhaps elated after having delivered ice to the "queen of the house", although it isn't clear what this segment has to do with the lyrics or the rest of the clip. As in the previous clip, though women dominate the screen time, this is hardly a positive development for their on-screen representation. The placement of women in the domestic sphere is typical of music videos, writes Vernallis: "The most common setting of a music video for women is within the domestic sphere – most female artists make at least one video in which they appear alone, beside a bed. As is also true for the music-video genre as a whole, this setting can have a range of meanings, from sexual provocation to revelation of a woman's private space and the parody of domesticity" (82). Some other clips portraying women in domestic settings include Barbara McNair's "The Best is Yet To Come," Della Reese's "Won't You Come Home Bill Bailey" and Gale Garnett's "Where Do You Go To Go Away?"

Through the brief analysis of these three clips, we can draw a few conclusions about Scopitone clips and their meaning. The clips rarely serve as a narrative addition to the lyrics, showing instead, when they relate to the lyrics, a very literal interpretation of these. Women are represented as objects, whether they are back-up dancers or lead singers. Indeed, in the American clips, "Le glamour était devenu le maître mot des tournages américains et le filon semblait loin de se tarir, alimenté par des *baby dolls* et le fantasme masculine de la 'femme objet'" (Scagnetti, 103). Out of a total of 65 S-series Harman-ee produced clips available on Youtube, 57 have content that could be characterized as problematic, including, as described above, women doing dance routines in revealing outfits, in stereotypical roles (cooking, cleaning, etc), with shots and framing that could be said to objectify the female body, and in unbalanced power relations as back-up dancers. Stevenson captures the general idea succinctly: "People were reduced to decoration. They were lip-syncing, gyrating dolls and puppets and mannequins" (38).

By giving an overview of how the Scopitone came to be and eventually drop from public consciousness, I have demonstrated that its lack of long-term success in the United States was caused by a combination of five factors, the continued targeting of an adult audience, despite a growing youth market; the lack of native material; a lack of cooperation between the record companies and the production agencies; the difficulty in classifying this new medium; and Scopitone Inc.'s shaky reputation. The analysis of a few clips has in turn demonstrated that the most common characteristics to all the Scopitone clips are the presence of women dancing in revealing clothing, shooting locations unrelated to the content of the

song, unmatched lip-synching and innovative camera framing. By tracing these elements, we will be better equipped to understand how the popular music press and the development of Scopitones and their content are related to the gendering of space and technologies, as will be seen in the following chapter.

***Chapter 3: The Gendering of Space and Technology in the Press,* or "Pretty Girls Everywhere" (Bobby Vee)**

Having reviewed the scholarly works relating to Scopitones and their brief history, the present chapter explores how the trade press and newspapers of the sixties portrayed the technology. In the press coverage, the traces of a gendered perception of space and technology can be discerned, a bias that ultimately positioned the Scopitones in a disadvantageous position and a consequence of which was the eventual lack of long-term success of the Scopitone. Before demonstrating this, I define a few key terms that will allow for a better comprehension of this exploration. I start by providing a working definition of space, followed by an explanation of representation in the context of women on screen. Following this, I provide an overview of the press coverage garnered by Scopitones during the 1960s. And finally, I discuss the ways in which this very coverage was conducive to the gendering of Scopitones, space, and the general public's eventual loss of interest in the machine.

I want to emphasize that space isn't inherently gendered, but rather that ideological factors assign a gender to a space and the technologies in it. The trade press is a component of this ideological apparatus, which, like all media forms, contributes to the division of space and technology into male and female. Besides this consideration there are two principal elements to the interpretation of space I apply. Firstly, space is social (whether public or private) and secondly, it is always changing. Anna McCarthy, writing about television in public spaces like bars,

specifies that though these spaces are generally considered public, they can also be

private in some sense: "They may be privately owned, they may restrict access to

certain populations or individuals, or they may limit the kinds of speech and actions

that take place within them. It would thus be far more accurate to say that such sites

are neither public nor private but that they embody in one way or another, a

particular sense of the relationship between public and private" (3). This overlap

between private and public clearly applies to Scopitones, as well as other

technologies which blur the line, such as the Voice-o-Graph, the nickel-in-the-slot

machines, photo booths and newer technologies such as cell phones and self-posting

on Youtube. Activities that are generally considered private, such as speaking on the

telephone, or watching television (or, in the case of Youtube videos, a wide array of

activities ranging from applying make-up to sitting at one's desk watching a video),

take on a different nature when conducted willingly in a public setting. The use of

typically private media in a public space "produces a sense of being on display,

paradoxically, of placing oneself under public scrutiny through a desire for privacy"

(McCarthy, 137).

In all these cases though, the private space remains social, precisely because

bystanders can interact with a television or Scopitone like the person using it, for

example, or strangers can view a Youtube video and comment on it. Consequently,

the lines between public and private spaces are never clearly drawn and "[…] public

places are not purely and self-evidently public; they are, like every other cultural

space, characterized by particular configurations of public and private. Indeed, what

makes the public/private division such a major category of social power is the fact

that it is dynamic and flexible, varying from place to place" (121). Lisa Gitelman

portrays the public privacy or private socialness of the nickel-in-the-slot machines

as spurred by the medium, which "helped divide customers from one another even

as it drew them into crowds and helped imagine them as communities" (2003, 64). I

would modify this somewhat determinist thought to indicate that it was rather how

and where the media were used, and not the media themselves, that created this

reciprocity between private and public.

Not only can spaces and technologies be divided between public and private

but the public and private can also in turn be gendered. Doreen Massey indicates

that there is "an association between the feminine and the local because – it is said –

women lead more local lives that do men; it is an argument which clearly relates to

that about the public/private division" (9). I explored earlier how Keir Keightley's

1996 article covers hi-fi and its perception by women as an intrusion of masculine

elements in the feminine home, as he explains how "men used hi-fi sound

reproduction technology […] to produce a domestic space gendered as masculine"

(150). Previously men's space was outside the home, but the new technology caused

a confrontation of the male and female, public and private spaces.

Furthermore, not only is space flexible, it is constructed and produced by the

social relations that occur in and around it. McCarthy draws on the work of Massey

and David Harvey to explain that what defines a space is the "working out in that

place of interventions and influences from outside" (18) rather than the "inherent,

fixed properties of culture and community" (18). Given this interpretation, she

continues, "it is easy to see how television and video in public places are less agents

of destruction, perforating a bounded and coherent unity, than they are agents of a place's *con*struction" (18, original italics). Not only are the spaces constructed by various social practices, the links between these spaces "are produced in various localities through particular arrays of discourse and practice" (17-18).

To this interpretation of space, Massey incorporates the axis of time, explaining that the social interactions composing any given space occur in time (2). This combination of space and time also contributes to the flexible nature of space and to the power relations this entails: "since social relations are inevitably and everywhere imbued with power and meaning and symbolism, this view of the spatial is as an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification" (3). Essentially, considering space as a construction based on social interactions and ideologies allows one to think "in terms of the ever-shifting geometry of social/power relations, and it forces into view the real multiplicities of space – time" (4). Furthermore, de Lauretis proposes, based on the work of Joan Kelly, that the private sphere and the public sphere are impossible to completely separate. She suggests that "we can envision several interconnected sets of social relations – relation of work, of class, of race, and of sex/gender [...] Not only are men and women positioned differently in these relations, but – this is an important point – women are affected differently in different sets [...] The position assigned to women by our sex/gender system, as [Kelly] emphasizes, '*is not a separate sphere or domain of existence but a position within social existence generally*" (8, original italics). This reasoning implies that all the relations one has overlap and interact as well as both the public and private spheres. Furthermore, women (or men, for that matter) can't

be tied to one specific locality or position, but rather the whole socio-ideological apparatus needs to be taken into account when looking at social and spatial relations. Using this definition of space, it becomes easier to begin to understand how the press could have played a part in circulating a gender specific conception of Scopitones and of the spaces in which these were placed, feeding off of and contributing to the ideological apparatus in place at the time.

Concerning the representation of women's identities on-screen, both Laura Mulvey and de Lauretis indicate that women's on-screen portrayals often have less to do with the way women see themselves than with men's projection of womanhood. Mulvey states that "Women are constantly confronted with their own image in one form or another, but what they see bears little relation or relevance to their own unconscious fantasies, their own hidden fears and desires. They are being turned all the time into objects of display, to be looked at and gazed at and stared at by men. Yet, in a real sense, women are not there at all. The parade has nothing to do with woman, everything to do with man" (13). De Lauretis claims that this representation also serves to eliminate the differences between women, representing each individual woman as "Woman" instead, a prototype of the ideal being. This projection "makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to articulate the differences of women from Woman, that is to say, the differences among women, or perhaps more exactly, the differences *within women*" (2). This biased representation perpetuates the notion that gender is inherent to men and women, when instead it is "'the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations,' in Foucault's words, by the deployment of 'a complex political technology'" (De

Lauretis, 3). Basically, the differences represented on screen are products of this very representation (7) and, according to Gitelman, "it is not just that women are represented and reproduced [...] rather that modern forms of mediation are in part *defined* by normative constructions of difference, whether gender, racial, or other versions of difference" (2003, 75).

This constructed representation also has ties to the production/consumption dichotomy and the gendered division of space into private and public spheres, which Gitelman brings into question, as seen earlier. As writes Mulvey, "the image of woman as spectacle and fetish sets in motion another chain of metonymies, linking together various sites in which femininity is produced in advanced capitalist society: woman as consumed and woman as consumer of commodities, women exchanged in image and women transforming themselves into image through commodity consumption" (xii). The on-screen representation goes beyond what is visible however, as de Lauretis reminds us: "the movement in and out of gender as ideological representation [...] is a movement back and forth between the representation of gender (in its male-centered frame of reference) and what that representation leaves out or, more pointedly, makes unrepresentable" (26). As emphasized by Gillian Rose in her method for discourse analysis, when studying on-screen representation, it is crucial to be aware of what isn't evident on the surface. She indicates that discourse analysis "assumes that the efficacy of discourse often resides in the assumptions it makes about what is true, real or natural, in the contradictions that allow it interpretive flexibility, and in what is not said, and none of these is accessible to superficial reading or viewing" (165).

Herzog touches upon the projected audience of the Scopitone films, one of the elements that are invisible upon a surface reading. She writes, "the cinematography imagines a singular viewer as well, since performers always address the camera directly (not to mention the direct address of the up-the-skirt shot)" (2007, 52). The Scopitone producers imagine a male as the recipient of the clip, as does the press. The content of the articles repeatedly focuses on the fact that the female dancers are in bikinis and that they are beautiful, well-endowed women, which will be seen in the press review.

Not surprisingly, this production of a prototypical Women ends up being a better indicator of the inner vagaries of the men constructing it than of women, as Mulvey explains: "[…] the sexualized image of woman says little or nothing about women's reality, but is symptomatic of male fantasy and anxiety that are projected on to the female image" (xiii). However, E. Ann Kaplan and de Lauretis do provide some alternative ways of seeing and interpreting this representation cycle. To Kaplan, the viewer can reject the role she is assigned, based on the "already coded perceptions of the world that [Tony Bennett] calls 'reading formations.' These may have been shaped either by the same dominant codes as govern the popular text being read/viewed, in which case there will be little tension between the types of spectator; or by some sub-culture, such as feminism, trade unionism, Marxism, Moral Majority thinking, homosexuality, identification with minorities, etc., in which case the spectator may refuse the offered position" (4). For de Lauretis, this mutual influence of the on-screen representation of gender and its "subjective construction […] leaves open a possibility of agency and self-determination at the subjective and

individual level of micropolitical and everyday practices" (9). Despite these possibilities for alternative interpretations of women's representation on-screen, the fact remains that "the representation of gender *is* its construction – and in the simplest sense it can be said that all of Western Art and high culture is the engraving of history on that construction" (3) – and this constructed representation is a projection of male desire. Through the conventions of cinema (but also of other media of representation, including print), women (or rather Woman) are turned "into the spectacle itself […] Cinematic codes create a gaze, a world and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire" (Mulvey, 25).

Before examining how the gendering of space and Scopitones was effected in the trade press, I will review the press coverage of Scopitones to grasp globally some of the principal publications' take on Scopitones. There are two perspectives in the publications of the time that mention Scopitones: they are either viewed as nothing more than a novelty and a passing fad, or they are received with an enthusiasm sometimes bordering on indulgent. *Billboard* magazine, which had the most extensive coverage of Scopitones, falls into the latter category, even running articles that seem to be advertisements for the machine. Most of the articles published between 1961 and 1968 gave voice to Scopitone representatives or company members, who of course vaunted the machine's assets. As such, Scopitones were described as "an exposure medium for [American] pop recording artists" (1965-07-10, 1), or as bringing "record sales and earnings" to Tel-A-Sign (1965-08-21, 57). There was, however, an awareness of outside criticisms. In 1965, for example, Ray Brack's article entitled "Cinema Juke Box – Just a Novelty?" attempted

to demonstrate that the medium did indeed have lasting power. Brack quoted the president of a jukebox machine manufacturer, who generally viewed Scopitones as a threat to their business, as saying that "This form of entertainment will become a part of the business eventually" (45). The author also acknowledged one major criticism of the Scopitone: its high price, which "moved many industry observers to write Scopitone and other music film machines off as a passing fad" (45). A Scopitone executive explained the pattern of consumption, acknowledging that there was indeed a slump in use once the novelty wore off, but "with the availability of a variety of American films, we are seeing a third stage – a steady income stage" (48). Evidently, this was an attempt to placate fears about losing money after purchasing a Scopitone. A later interview pursued this trend, quoting an employee of Cameron International Ltd. (J.C. Jack Gordon's company) explaining that the updated version of the Scopitone would indeed last: "The early days of confusion, negativeness […] and lack of sufficient film for programming are gone. Most everyone must realize by this time that audio-visual machines are here to stay as part of the entertainment mediums" (*Billboard*, 1968-07-20, 43). Mention was made of the early assumptions by the industry that the Scopitone was nothing more than a novelty, as for example, in a July 1965 article: "The concept [of cinema juke-box] lay more or less dormant on the coin-operated entertainment scene, discussed by operators in idle moments, to be sure, but usually dismissed as a passing novelty" (47). These articles always ended on a positive note for Scopitones however, demonstrating how industry opinion had been reversed after witnessing the

revenue generated by the machine. Thus *Billboard* was generally on the company's side, acting as a quasi mouthpiece for Scopitone Inc.

One exception was a 1965 report titled "Influx of Sight-Soundies Disquiets South Dakotans," in which a few South Dakota businessmen associated with the jukebox industry declare that "[…] Scopitone will be a sixty-day wonder […] It will die out for good with the end of the tourist season" (1965-06-26, 49). This slightly critical piece notwithstanding, *Billboard*'s endorsement of Scopitones was absolute.

Variety's coverage of Scopitones was similar to *Billboard*'s, with both the daily and weekly editions exhibiting enthusiasm at the arrival of the new technology. In a 1964 article on the launch of Scopitones in Los Angeles, the author noted that "reception was distinctly positive" (Fessier, 26). The positive feedback continued, as Fessier noted that, in the French films and a few available American ones, "considerable imagination has been used in the choreography and staging of numbers" and that "tunes […] are performed by singers, often with seeming platoons of accompanying dancers, against a variety of intriguing backdrops (they twist through snow, on majestic gardens, on walls, on top of trains, along country lanes). Editing is jet-paced, color is exceptionally vivid and the production values generally top drawer" (26). In an interview, Malnik revealed that "in Sparks Pub in New York machine drew 19,000 plays over 13-week period for a $375 gross each week" (26). The same month, a machine was also presented in Las Vegas, at an event attended by, among others, "Henry Silva, Harry Ritz, Mitch Miller, Jimmy Dean, Dorothy Loudon, the Earl Twins, Dean Martin, Don Rickles, Betty Grable, Harry James, George Raft, Peter Anthony, Dick Contino, Jerry Wald, The Vagabonds, Dave

Burton, Sonny King, The Ink Spots, Danny Costello, Line Renaud, DeCastro Sisters"

(Duke, 11). Judging by the celebrities in attendance, the unveiling was quite an

event, indicative of the status Scopitones benefited from in the early days. A few

weeks later, on August 25, *Daily Variety* revealed that an "an exclusive showcase

deal" was struck between Malnik and P.J.'s (a club), P.J.'s installing the "first

Scopitone (film jukebox) in Los Angeles" (1964-08-25, 4). The edition a few days

later reported that Scopitones were being installed in San Francisco, with plans to

have more in Northern California. Pacific Scopitone Ltd., the distributor for the west

coast, had already installed "10 of the coin-operated machines […] in the Bay area,

as opposed to three in Southern California, none elsewhere in the west" (1964-08-

27, 14). The first machine had been installed in the Mark Hopkins Hotel where "it

collected $188.25 in three days, after which it was removed to Bustles 'n' Beaus,

where last weekend on its preem the device averaged $44.75 per day" (14). By

1965, the magazine reported that Minnesota was embracing the arrival of the

machines, one article stating that "Minnesota night clubs are a lucrative market for

the newcomer Scopitone giant jukeboxes […] Four of the machines already have

been installed in Minneapolis bistros and the same number in St. Paul and

Rochester, Minn. cafes. The distributor, a Minneapolitan, says he has orders for 100,

but will receive only 20 during the first two months of operation" (1965-06-09, 53).

In July of the same year, the Minneapolis column announced that "The Gaslight, one

of Minneapolis' top restaurants, going in for entertainment for first time with

Scopitone as the attraction" (Rees, 60). The placement of a Scopitone in an upscale

restaurant is telling of the early audience and intended association of the machines

with high-class and distinction. By 1966, the magazine was still providing positive

coverage for Scopitones, indicating that, as "Harman Enterprises enters its second

year of making jukepix […] exec veepee Irving Briskin reports big initial strides via a

trebling of print orders […] Market potential barely has been scratched, according to

Briskin. He foresees at least a doubling of current annual filming to the level of 100

jukepix per year, which translates to about $1,000,000 in future production costs

alone" (Murphy, 12).

Variety also briefly covered the lawsuit against Harman-ee Productions by

The Back Porch Majority, quoting band member Randy Sparks explaining that the

company "dirtied up the picture with a sex image after 'we were assured we would

have nothing suggestive in the film' […] After a day of shooting, 'when they gave us

pretty things and a good set,' Sparks asserts, 'they then went to their own studio and

added material that turned it into a dirty look in low taste'" (1966-03-16, 24).

Overall though, Variety's coverage of Scopitones was extremely positive, echoing

Billboard's excitement at the machine's arrival and trust in Scopitone Inc.'s

spokesmen.

The Los Angeles Times shared Billboard and Variety's enthusiasm for the new

machine in a 1965 article extensively quoting Briskin vaunting the technology: "A

demonstration in the company's headquarters in Beverly Hills revealed hitherto

undisplayed talents of some new stars. 'Actually these three-minute subjects

provide mighty fine color tests,' Briskin said. 'We encourage producers to come in

and take a look at the performers'" (Scott, C22). Not surprisingly, Briskin was

quoted promoting Scopitones by mentioning the content of the clips: "Femme

performers who have been appearing professionally fully clothed come over sensationally on Scopitone in bikinis" (C22). He also boasted "We have our stage [...] and a stock company of beautiful girl dancers and singers to back the artists" (C22).

A 1967 piece covering the opening of a new location of the Cheetah franchise (a series of night clubs for teenagers) juxtaposed Scopitones and in-the-know youth, revealing a shift in the perception of the technology in the press: "All Cheetahs cater strictly to America's restless and dizzying youthquake – and there's more than just dancing at Cheetah. Each one of them has a fashion boutique, a tiny movie theater showing avant-garde films, a color-TV and Scopitone lounge, and a reading room stacked with the latest domestic and foreign magazines" (Gruen, A27). Though the Scopitone may have been associated with youth in this case, the clips shown most likely had no appeal for the teenagers going to Cheetah, as seen in the previous chapter explaining some reasons for the lack of long-term success of the medium.

The New York Times also presented articles that almost seem like ads for the new machine. One item exposed the popularity of the Scopitone within upper class circles: "[...] in fashionable and affluent circles, the leased Scopitone is even more in demand. While guests try out the latest variations on the twist – the do-it, the whip, the swarm and the loose – Scopitone, the cinematic jukebox imported earlier this year from Paris, dispenses 36 French sound and color films" (Reif, 24). At the annual Start Your Own Business exposition in February 1065, the newspaper reported that "There were crowds all day long watching the Scopitone machine show pictures, usually song-and-dance subjects made in France" (Freeman, 1965-02-06, 36). The author also specified that "Scopitone is seeking franchise operators" (36). Coverage

of the 1964 presidential election also made mention of Scopitones, as one of the

hosts of an election party rented a Scopitone: "After dinner, 70 new guests […]

arrived. They congratulated Mr. Slater's mother, Mrs. Lyon Slater, because it was her

birthday and danced to Scopitone" (Curtis, 50), once again illustrating the high-class

status accorded the machine in the early sixties. Only a few days later, an article

specifically on Scopitones was full of praise for the machine. The author wrote,

"imagine a coin-operated music machine – a juke box in Broadway slang – combined

with a movie projector. Add a first-class musical film in brilliant color and high-

fidelity sound, conceived and produced with name performers for this purpose"

(Freeman, 1964-11-08, F5). He went on, explaining that the new machine is

"catching on so fast that plans are being rushed to manufacture the machines in this

country. Imports from France cannot meet the demand" (F5). The rave reviews

continued, as the clips were described as consisting of "expert choreography and

skilled acting by well-known personalities" (F5). The piece also included a picture of

Steiger and Malnik standing beside a Scopitone set in an upscale location, judging by

the chandelier behind them. Further illustrating the Scopitone's perception as hip

(or the attempt at making it seem appealing to youth), a 1964 article on the state of

bars after the inauguration of new liquor laws indicated that "on weekends at Don

Spark's Second Avenue pub, which boasts a Scopitone (a French jukebox equipped

with a movie screen upon which the performer or performers sing and dance in full

color), there are lines of young people at the door straining to get at the beer mugs

and at each other" (Blum, 80).

Time magazine ran one lone article on Scopitones in the 1960s, a piece in 1964 that was unequivocally patronizing, describing the Scopitone as a "monstrous new machine" and the clips as "delirious color and hi-fi-scooby-ooby-doo" (49). The author went on to write that "Television and Lucky Strike's Hit Parade put a merciful end to Soundies, but it looks as if Scopitone will be here to stay awhile" (49). This tone continued until the end of the article, when ironic song suggestions were provided: "Tea for Tuborg", "Music to Cry in your Beer To"; clearly a comment on the placement of the Scopitone machines in bars (49). It is interesting to note that, despite the sceptical tone, the author believed Scopitones would not fade into oblivion.

As mentioned earlier, there was also a strong feeling among jukebox operators that Scopitones were in direct competition with them. Scopitone Inc. went to great pains to reassure them that this was not so, but the jukebox business remained unconvinced. In a *Billboard* issue in February 1966, Ray Brack wrote "The big question raised in [juke box] trade association meetings around the country was, 'Is this machine a threat to juke boxes?'" (57). In another article the previous year, Brack had quoted Steiger declaring, "Scopitone is not a competitor of the juke box" (1965-07-10, 48). In the same article, he also quoted Malnik: "Although Scopitone has been tested right beside juke boxes in some locations […] it is not a competitor of the juke box. It is a new entertainment medium in its own right" (48). In 1965, *Billbaord* ran an article titled "Chicago Scopitone Operation Not Competing With Juke Box Trade," in which a Scopitone Inc. employee interviewed indicated that he didn't consider himself as competing with juke box operators in the city, saying

"'We'll never go into the neighbourhood bars,'" typical juke box locations (1965-07-10, 46). Both these concerns and attempts at reassurance were expressed many times in *Billboard* during the sixties. There were also echoes of the concern that Scopitone was a competitor of the jukebox, and the scepticism towards assurances that it wasn't, in the *Los Angeles Times*: "Quote from Alvin I. Malnik, president of Scopitone: 'It is not a competitor of the juke box. It is a new entertainment medium in its own right.' Uh-huh" (Scheuer, C23). One report in *Variety* evoked a similar tension between the Scopitone machines and live entertainers and musicians in St. Paul, Minnesota, where "musicians and live entertainment purveyors here feel they have reason for worry over the way that Scopitone has been starting to make inroads on their field of employment. There already have been 26 bistro installations of the machines" (1965-01-09, 47). However, "spots are convinced that customers sit around longer and keep drinking more when the machines are going" (47).

    Variety also ran some pieces focusing on the machine thought to be Scopitone's main competition, the Color-Sonic. On June 22 1966, the magazine reported that "several thousand of the new 'and improved' look-listen boxes will hit distribs 'sometime in July' and within a short while, there will be 10,000 boxes blaring away across the land, according to [Coast production chief of Official Films and Fairchild Camera Corp.'s video-juke, Color-Sonics, Bob] Blees" (49). Blees also stated that "front money offered performers is greater than that of Scopitone and royalties are 50c per print. Dancers, he adds, are paid 'way over scale.' From technological standpoint, he said, Fairchild has developed a box 'infinitely simpler'

than that of competitors" (49). Interviewed on the subject of the Italian Cinebox which was also vying for the visual jukebox market, Malnik and Steiger seemed unphased by the competition: "Cinebox, however, so far is using only 60 second films heavy on such provocative fare as strippers, belly dancers etc. Says Steiger of Cinebox's programming, 'We don't want any part of that kind of stuff.' And Malnik, on competitors generally says 'Even leaving aside the matter of patent protection Cameca has at least a five year engineering lead over any company that sets out to develop a machine to rival Scopitone" (Fessier, 26). Whether the competition posed by Color-Sonic and the Cinebox was nothing more than a publicity ploy or true attempts by the companies to take over the field, however, it appears not to have panned out, as the threatened take-over of Scopitones never occurred. It is noteworthy that Steiger dismissed the content of the Cinebox videos as too racy and not classy enough for the Scopitone clips, as the contrast between the content of both machines as described sounds minimal.

The coverage in *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* was often angled towards the business and legal aspects of the Scopitone. In *The New York Times*, for example, out of 25 pieces related to Scopitones 15 pertained to the stock information or business developments of the company. In the early years of Scopitone Inc.'s existence, the articles celebrated the rising profits and stock value. In April 1964, for example, *The New York Times* reported that Tel-A-Sign's stocks "soared after it was announced that the company had acquired the American rights to Scopitone" (1964-04-18, 38). A few months later, amidst a "downward trend" in stock values, Tel-A-Sign's stock value actually rose, and "the stock was the most

actively traded" (Hammer, 41). In August 1965, the newspaper explained that "the impact of such devices on profit is underlined by Tel-A-Sign's latest report. For the year ended Feb. 18, its sales doubled to a record of $7,675,000 and its earnings soared to $380,923 against $50,737 a year earlier" (Rood, F13).

However, after the 1966 article in the *Wall Street Journal* reporting that "for more than a year, a Federal grand jury in New York has been digging into the background of everyone and everything ever connected with Scopitone and Tel-A-Sign" (Schmedel, 32), the focus of the content in *The New York Times* shifted from enthusiastic praise to a chronicle of the company's trials. On May 13 1966 the paper published a short article indicating that "A certified public accountant was indicted yesterday by a Federal grand jury here on charges of obstructing justice by threatening a witness in the Government's year-long investigation of the distribution of stock in Tel-A-Sign, Inc. and its subsidiary, Scopitone Inc." (82), and named thirty-three-year-old David Edelman as the indicted accountant. A few years later, in October 1969, *The New York Times* reported that "A reputed Mafia figure was indicted by a Federal grand jury yesterday on charges of obstructing justice" (1969-10-28, 16). The article also indicated that "Tel-A-Sign has been under investigation since 1964 when it acquired the Scopatone [sic] Company. [...] The investigation has been centered on the possible influence of Mafia figures in the two companies" (16). *Variety* published very little concerning the SEC investigation, one blurb in both the weekly and daily editions referencing the *Wall Street Journal* article and saying that Briskin had "declined comment other than that Harman

Enterprises has a strictly business relationship with Scopitone" (1966-05-04, 22 and 1966-04-27, 15).

Thus, we can see that in general the press coverage of the Scopitone was either extremely positive, mostly in the entertainment and trade publications, or somewhat more subdued in the newspapers. Furthermore, once the SEC investigation began, the tone of the newspaper articles shifted to a more sceptical one.

A first-level of gendering is evident in the publications given the fact that the authors of the articles are men, as are the Scopitone representatives interviewed. Though Debbie Reynolds was co-head of Harman-ee Productions, which produced most of the American clips, the articles never quote her, but rather mention her name and interview her counterpart Irving Briskin instead. The depiction of the use of Scopitones equally betrays highly conventional forms of gender specificity. One 1965 article explains what the Scopitone is in the following terms: "lumberjacks, off-shore oil well drilling crews in the Gulf of Mexico and guests at most of America's finest hotels now have a pastime in common: watching lively and frequently spicy musical soundfilms on coin-operated machines" (Brack, 1965-07-10, 45). The accompanying picture (see Appendix, Figure 3) shows a man and a woman in (presumably) a hotel lounge, watching a clip in which a fully clothed woman sings. However, another article in 1966 shows two pictures of singer Joi Lansing, the first one in which only her head and torso are visible (see Appendix, Figure 4). The caption to the second picture reads: "There's Joi in full, with the newly restored Scopitone machine" (Brack, 1966-02-05, 57). A previous article in 1964 says

"Decolletage was defined with a capital 'D' by Joi Lansing during her opening (no pun intended) at Gene Aubry's Sahara Inn last week" (1964-08-08, 28).

Two things emerge from these examples: firstly, we can safely assume that, with very few exceptions, the lumberjacks and drilling crews are comprised of males. The portrayal of the couple viewing a clip together effectively masks the 'spicy' aspects of the clips by showing a dressed woman on-screen, a clip not made for a specifically male audience. This separates the viewing spaces into masculine and masculine-feminine ones. The captions of the pictures and the quote in the second example above show that the language used in depicting the women reinforces the masculine gaze cast on the female performers, putting the emphasis on the depiction of the female body (another caption describes her as "Scopitone bombshell Joi Lansing" (1966-11-19, 84)). Furthermore, the use of the performer's first name contrasts with the use of the men's last names, according the men a higher authoritative status and making the woman seem like a girl.

This belittling of the female performers isn't limited to the trade press of the 1960s. Even the few existing modern analyses of the Scopitones reproduce these gender representations. Stevenson frequently refers to the female performers by their first names (whereas he uses last names for males) and relies on physical attributes to describe the clips. Writing about Joi Lansing, for example, he describes her as an "amply-endowed blonde actress" (39) and, a bit later, indicates that "Joi herself has a kind of exaggerated cartoon look that might represent the ideal cave girl to any prepubescent thirteen-year-old boy" (39). Still on the subject of Lansing, he also writes that "none of the topless [French] films, however, could match the

smouldering sexuality of an always decently if barely clad Joi Lansing" (41). When describing the background dancers he uses similar language, indicating that "you got more that just frosting for your loose change – you got a glimpse into an ever sunny world where male pop stars like James Darren, Vic Damone and Andy Russell lived on a high as they wandered through an exotic paradise of divinely stacked babes who were happy, willing, smiling and numerous" (40). He further objectifies the performers by using terms such as "well-built gal stars" to describe Lansing and January Jones, and "more modestly endowed balladeers," for Jody Miller and Gale Garnett, who were nonetheless "given the show-a-little-cleavage treatment by Harman-ee, with mixed results" (40). Finally, he characterizes the content of the videos as "charming rather that sleazy," since the "crotch shots were usually done with such disarming obviousness and choreographed so artfully" (41). He does, however, recognize that "the sex on display was almost always female – the outlook invariably male" (40), but it seems a poor attempt at compromise after his previous depictions of the clips and female performers.

And in the most comprehensive history, Scagnetti too lapses into similar uses of adjectives to describe the female Scopitone stars: "[January Jones] dévoila, sur une plage, ses atours en deux-pièces, accompagnée de quatre jeunes filles dansant frénétiquement. […] [Joi Lansing] réussit à imprimer une marque durable dans l'inconscient des consommateurs. Cette blonde peroxydée à la plastique généreuse n'hésita pas à jouer ouvertement de ses avantages pour pimenter ses films" (128-129). The use of the term "atours" is an obvious reference to her breasts and hips, just like the "plastique généreuse" and "avantages." In these two cases, the authors

perpetrate the gendering of the technology, using language that seems taken straight from the 1960s and is all the more surprising since their works only date from the past ten years.

Writing from a feminist perspective, Herzog claims the performers in the Scopitone clips "exist completely outside the temporality of the song" (2007, 50). She offers a more critical take on the omnipresence of undressed women dancing, describing it as a "shameless, clumsy reliance on sexploitative visual material, regardless of the subject matter or tempo of the song" (2007, 46). Moreover, the dance choreographies, composed mostly of rapid jumping and hip movements, are evidence that "for the producers, eroticism is equated with jumping up and down as quickly as possible while completely ignoring the accompanying music" (2007, 50).

Further accentuating the division between women as performers and men as viewers in the press of the 1960s, an article on Scopitones in the *Los Angeles Times* is accompanied by an illustration showing a Scopitone with, on its screen, a line of women dancing, their bare legs kicked out (see Appendix, Figure 5). The leg of the woman closest to the viewer is actually kicking out from the screen, into the space of a clearly pleased man in a bar. The man, staring at the screen, is so engrossed by the women, that his hat is hovering several inches above his head, his eyes are popping out and one of his hands is shaking. Meanwhile, the barman nonchalantly wipes glasses in the background (Scott, C22). The crossover of the on-screen, virtual image into reality hints at what is perhaps another attraction of the Scopitone pictures; that somehow, these images could exist in the day to day as well. The illustration embodies the role of the press perfectly. Not only through the language used and the

masculine axis of the articles, but equally through the images shown, women are

excluded from the space of Scopitones except as objects to titillate men in public

spaces. This attitude even extends to the performers themselves in some cases. In a

1967 interview with Joi Lansing, the singer-performer perpetuates the conception of

herself as a body to be looked at and is quoted saying, speaking of her new night

club act, "'I have a very well-rounded night club act, please excuse the pun,' [...] 'At

first the act was very sexy. I wore extremely inviting, daring gowns. Now it's still

glamorous but not so daring. Glamorous but legit. Not too low-cut, but enough to

know I'm there'" (Champlin, D7). Further on, the author writes "[...] she received

plenty of exposure, please excuse the pun [...]" (D7). The last line of the article

indicates that "When she left the restaurant, everybody looked" (D7). Perhaps

Lansing has the last laugh in this situation, exploiting the demand for "well-

rounded" blondes in the entertainment industry to her advantage and making

money off the objectifying gaze of paying men. To what point does this remain

exploitation though, and to what extent would Lansing be the exception to the rule,

if this were indeed the case?

One of the earliest articles on Scopitones in *Variety* is titled, tellingly, "Two-

Bits Services Girl-Watching Stags" and reports on the unveiling of the machine at a

press party in Chicago. The author notes that "if the wiggly femme twisters on the

pilot films are any indication it will be a boon to indoor girl-watchers" (1964-06-10,

13). Two ads in the mid and late 60s, one in the weekly edition and one in the daily

one, make it clear what kind of content the film producers were looking for. The

1965 ad states: "Wanted: Female Dancers for Scopitone. Must be beautiful, age 18-

26" (1965-12-31, 10). The ad in 1968 is even more direct: "Wanted: Go Go Dancers and Topless Go Go Dancers. Both Types Needed for Scopitone Films, Night Clubs and Industrials" (1968-08-07, 50). The articles and ads merely bring to the light the gendering taking place sometimes very obviously and sometimes more subtly. Given all the examples from trade publications and newspapers, it is clear that the modes of representation in the press of the 1960s construct the technology and its surroundings as masculine. The content of the publications is in turn influenced by this construction, perpetuating the circular nature of representation.

The gendering of space and technology through written media is evidently not limited to Scopitones. Anna McCarthy, writing on televisions in taverns, indicates that "[...] trade discussions of television tended to foreground the tavern's cultural status as a space of male-oriented comfort, a status referenced in patrons' descriptions of the space as a lodge, a club, or a 'home away from home.' Such characterizations of the televisual bar fostered an ideology of 'masculine domesticity' [...]" (41). This also occurred with the hi-fi systems described by Keightley as seen earlier, where the press was firmly on one side of the debate, as evidenced in the advertisements he cites, one of which "shows a wife attempting to light an electronics schematic diagram on fire, unbeknownst to her smiling husband, who is immersed in the plans for his new hi-fi. The representation of the wife's face as a caricature of malicious mischievousness emphasises that hi-fi is an enemy of women in the battle of the sexes, and is best defeated *before* the husband acquires sonic capability" (1996, 161). A parallel can be drawn here between this type of advertising aimed specifically towards men and the illustration accompanying the

article in the *Los Angeles Times* article cited above, or the "Wanted" ads, for example,

in which both the article and the Scopitone clips are intended for a male audience

(though the ads are aimed towards women, their content necessarily serves as an

advertisement for the final product).

Having a medium in a public space was an advantage for the clip producers

as it allowed for further targeting of the audience: "Whereas in the home time was,

and is, one of the central means of distinguishing viewer identities (for example, the

assumed female viewer of daytime tv), the gendered geography of everyday life

outside the home made it possible to classify viewer identities in spatial terms as

well" (McCarthy, 61). The descriptions of Scopitones as being placed "anywhere men

might hanker to see images of pretty women" (Stevenson, 34) or the articles cited

above referencing the "indoor girl-watchers" (*Billboard,* 1964-06-10, 13) and

"lumberjacks, off-shore oil well drilling crews in the Gulf of Mexico" (Brack, 1965-

07-10, 45) demonstrate this gendering and targeting of the audience. A notable

difference between the televisions in taverns McCarthy focuses on and the

Scopitones and other jukebox machines concerns the freedom of choice awarded the

user of the latter. She explains that the location of the televisions, in hard to reach

places, ensured that only the owner or someone with authority could change the

channels, which endowed the television with "some of the status of institutional

speech; its inaccessibility communicates to the users of the space that the right to

make a decision about what channel the screen is tuned to is reserved for its

proprietor alone" (122). As touched-upon earlier, in the case of the Scopitone and

jukeboxes, anyone can effect a change in programming. Anyone, that is, who has the

money to pay for this privilege, and the right social status and gender to be in the

space with the machines in the first place.

This freedom would have been restricted to a specific portion of the

population, especially since there were indeed ways of controlling who had access

to the taverns, even if they weren't always clearly enunciated (McCarthy, 34). This

limiting of the access to public spaces such as taverns, what Massey terms "spatial

control," impacts the construction of gender, seeing as "spatial control, whether

enforced through the power of convention or symbolism, or through the

straightforward threat of violence, can be a fundamental element in the constitution

of gender in its (highly varied) forms" (180). Massey explains that the gendering of

these spaces "both reflects *and has effects back on* the ways in which gender is

constructed and understood in the societies in which we live" (186), just like the

representation of women on screen is reciprocal, both at once constructed by and

constructing the ideological apparatus of which it is a part.

This constant construction, production and reception of gendered spaces

(and technologies) has a direct impact on women, according to Massey:

> The limitation of women's mobility, in terms of both identity and
>
> space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination.
>
> Moreover the two things – the limitation on mobility in space, the attempted
>
> consignment/confinement to particular places on the one hand, and the
>
> limitation on identity on the other – have been crucially related […] One of
>
> the most evident aspects of this joint control of spatiality and identity has
>
> been in the West related to the culturally specific distinction between public

and private. The attempt to confine women to the domestic sphere was both

a specifically spatial control, and, through that, a social control on identity

(179).

Just as women are identified with the private sphere and men with the public one,

Mulvey indicates that passive looking is tied to women, versus the active looking

associated with men. This causes women to be "simultaneously looked at and

displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that

they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (19). The traditional "looked-at-

ness" of women means that the gendering of the clips is effected even in the clips

where a female performer stars, a situation that on the surface would seem to have

the potential to be an empowering affirmative action. As seen in the analysis of the

clips in the previous chapter, this is not the case. Though recognising that the fact

that a solo female performer is the lead character of a clip is in itself an achievement,

Kaplan sees the masculine gaze exacerbated in these cases (her analysis focuses on

video clips of the 80s, but the conclusions she reaches are easily extended to the

Scopitone clips): "While structurally it is significant that female stars in these videos

are positioned at the center, their enunciating faces calling up the world of the text

and in control of the images, the traditional embodiment of male desire for the

female body is daunting" (10). A similar dynamic is observable in the James Bond

films of the era: "Whereas 'the girl' was the subject of a 'free and independent

sexuality, liberated from the constraints of family, marriage and domesticity' – and

clearly no housewife – she was also fashioned according to the formula 'equal but

yet subordinate.' Her excessive independence or beyond-the-pale status needed to

be 'adjusted' by Bond (through sexual conquest), and needed to be realigned to its proper place within the patriarchal order" (D'Acci, 77). In the same sense, even though Lansing or any other female performers may have the lead role in their clip, this position is "adjusted" in various ways, for example in the Jody Miller clip for "Queen of the House," wherein Miller is confined to the domestic sphere, walking around aimlessly, effectively becoming a passive actor in her own clip. Furthermore, the language used when writing about women and their portrayal in both the press and the recent analyses also serves to "adjust" their status and cement the Scopitone and its locations as masculine.

As touched-upon in the previous chapter, the use of close-ups serves to isolate the subject, a notion that Mulvey pushes even further. Drawing on the work of video artist Allen Jones, she describes the effect of his work on the spectator: "The spectator is stripped of normal perceptual defences (perspective, normal size relationships) and exposed to illusion and fantasy on the screen. As sections of the female body are isolated from the whole and shown in close-up, or as the whole body shrinks in size and is superimposed on a blown-up section, Allen Jones develops even further the symbolic references of woman to man and subjects her form to further masculinisation" (9). We can draw the same implications from the Scopitone clips and the press. By focusing attention on a fraction of the women performers, via framing and editing in the clips and via vocabulary and imagery in the written press, and the accompanying photographs, the performers become two-dimensional reflections of masculine desire.

Finally, if the trade press was also promoting, in a way, the technology, as I have shown it was, it would have been in everyone's interests to attempt to sell the technology to as wide a range of potential customers as possible. Yet the sometimes unwritten, sometimes blatant sexist bias of the articles effectively excludes a wide swath of the population. As I have demonstrated, women are excluded from the spaces in which Scopitones are placed, from the press coverage, from the technology (or at least aren't included in a way that is accessible to most women) and from the target audience (as would have been other minority groups). Meanwhile, women's buying and spending power was expanding. A 1965 Harvard School of Business study on the single and LP buying habits of Americans summarized in *Daily Variety* indicates that "the average age of singles buyers is 13.6 years, and 80% of them are female" (Price, 216). Despite these increasing buying habits, the clip producing industry hadn't yet caught up to the average American consumer's tastes. As Gendron demonstrates, the cultural accreditation of rock'n'roll didn't begin until the mid to late 1960s, when the work of the Beatles started being recognised as a legitimate art form in the "high-middlebrow press" (184). Gendron quotes the reviews of *A Hard Day's Night* from *Variety, The New York Times* and the *Saturday Review*, all of them positive (to the surprise of the critics themselves) (168).

The frequent reminders of Scopitone's use of established artists, for a mature audience merely underlines Gendron's findings and what Keightley terms the "mainstream recognition of separate, age-graded taste cultures for teens and adults" (2002, 113), sparked by the success of Bill Haley and the Comets' "Rock Around the Clock" in 1955. A 1965 *Billboard* article, for example, stated that "most of the artists

signed by Harman are performers with established track records and most of the

repertoire is standard. Programming is based on the theory that the machines will

be placed in adult locations and that grown-ups want to hear familiar artists singing

familiar songs" (1965-07-10, 46). Furthermore, adult music was being taken more

seriously and "performers like Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald were increasingly

received as serious artists, and the vehicle for their artistry was the high-profit,

long-play album, where mature and sophisticated themes could be explored in

depth" (Keightley, 2002, 116).

     This particular situation meant that "socially and culturally, then, teenage

girls and their peculiar, ever changing tastes were deemed incomprehensible,

unpredictable, and potentially unrepresentable. Yet, at the same time, these girls

were a source of media fascination due to their unprecedented spending power and

their new role as trendsetters" (Luckett, 100). Despite this power, young girls would

have felt alienated from the content of the clips, while access to the clips would have

been difficult anyways. This led to a vast section of the spending population being

excluded by the framing of the technology, its content and its placement in the press,

and therefore also in the actual content and locations. Indeed, this constant

gendering of the technology and the places where Scopitones were installed in the

trade press and newspapers can only have served to alienate a large swath of a

potential market, effectively contributing to the eventual bankruptcy of Scopitone

Inc. and loss of interest in Scopitones more generally.

Conclusion: *After The Halcyon Days*, or "My Teenage Fallout Queen"

(George McKelvey)

As early as 1966, Scopitones were being derided in the trade press. On May 15, the *Los Angeles Times* ran a piece on the new term being thrown about: camp. Not surprisingly, a list of what Susan Sontag considers to be camp was provided, in which Scopitones figured (Haber, B2). In August of the same year, the *New York Times* published a tongue-in-cheek guide on "How to Succeed as a Film Festival Bum," in which, on the subject of clothes, the author wrote "This can be terribly important at some festivals, not so at others. At Cannes, bikinis (female and male) are worn everywhere except, perhaps, at the Palais du Festival, where the films are shown, and at the Casino. However, true festival bums can't afford to gamble and seldom see a film, except Scopitone" (Canby, 109). In November 1966, a restaurant critic for the *Los Angeles Times* gave a glowing review of a French restaurant, adding "I only object to the Scopitone in the bar" (Dwan, B40). Just as the press had played a role in legitimating the new technology in the early sixties, only a few years later it played a role in delegitimizing the Scopitones. The shift was also present in one of the clips produced by Harman-ee in 1965; George McKelvey's "My Teenage Fallout Queen," which not only parodies the nuclear fears of the time, but also the whole Scopitone genre, as he and his back-up dancer make exaggerated Scopitone-esque moves, their faces clearly indicating how ridiculous it all is. The set is intentionally bright and obviously constructed (plastic trees, a bright blue backdrop for the sky) while the camera shows this artificialness, as the singer stands on one side of a wall

while his teenage fallout queen stands on the other, the wall ending where the camera is stationed. The fact that this clip was produced for and available on Scopitone machines only raises questions about the company's awareness of itself and of the popular culture milieu.

A few years later, in 1969, only a year after Scopitone Inc.'s bankruptcy and eventual folding, the *New York Times* had an article on a museum exhibit which included a "display of musical instruments," showcasing "the historical gamut from a 1960 Scopitone through a 1940's jukebox to a turn-of-the-century Edison Gram-O-Phone that rapidly reproduces Edison cylinders" (1969-03-07, 26). This inclusion of Scopitones with other forms of out dated media is telling of its status as a relic, relegated to museums already. In 1971, a fashion column in the *Los Angeles Times* indicated that "The Hollywood Garment District, the shop that started resurrecting the 40s two years ago, recently added a Scopitone to its décor. The Parisian company which manufactured the machines went bankrupt in the early 60s. But for $600, store owner Janet Charlton was able to save one of them for her customers. And with Neil Sedaka singing 'Calendar Girl' and Gary Lewis and the Playboys serving up 'Little Miss Go Go,' the thing's become as attention-getting as her stock" (1971-08-09, E6). Thus in 1971, less than ten years after its American debut, the Scopitone was already considered a novelty item, having gone from cool to uncool, and back to cool again. Also interesting is the lack of mention of the American company in the article, citing its French counterpart (but American clips). Scopitone Inc. had entirely faded from the collective memory.

Indeed, just as Scopitones quickly rose in popularity, they also quickly lost their fan base, for the various reasons elaborated in previous chapters. Among these, the lack of material in English, featuring local popular artists is one that also resonates in the larger scheme of transnational spread of popular culture and technologies and still holds relevance today. In the hegemonic relationship of the English speaking world to the non-English speaking one, local bands and cultural exports from the latter get limited exposure, whereas the English ones can benefit from worldwide promotion. This language barrier can be said to contribute to a homogenizing of genres and styles, spreading the conventions of one segment of cultural production around the world. The impact of press coverage on popular culture would therefore resonate much further than the immediate distribution of a magazine or newspaper.

My aim was to examine to what extent the trade press and newspapers of the sixties contributed to the gendering of Scopitones and the spaces where these were placed, and how this could have contributed to their lack of long-term success. Using discourse analysis, I demonstrated how the trade press did in fact, through the use of sometimes subtle and sometimes blatant gendered language, exclude women from the spaces and technology. This in turn was one of the contributing factors of the loss of popularity of the Scopitone, in addition to some of the other more business related elements, such as the lack of material for a younger public, the lack of English material at first, the lack of established efficient relations between the film production and the record industry, the difficulties in classifying the Scopitone as a medium, and finally, the bad reputation of Scopitone Inc.

Given this widespread attitude of the press and producers of the clips, the transformation of Scopitones into peep-show machines after Scopitone Inc.'s bankruptcy only serves to exacerbate the gendering that occurred with regards to the technology. In a way it seems like the only logical incarnation they could assume. McCarthy writes that "Television may indeed be 'just an appliance,' but appliances, like all commodities, are complicated discursive objects. In their design and placement, to say nothing of their sanctioned patterns of use, everyday machines, gadgets, and apparatuses speak volumes about the social structure, and power relations, of the environment they inhabit" (118), a statement that can be extended to all media, including Scopitones. Indeed, by examining the machines' use, placement, historical context and portrayal in the press, much can (and has) been learned about the power structures it perpetuated and incarnated.

Analysing the trade press and newspaper material from the 1960s as forms of discourse in their own right provides the advantage of dealing with first level sources, which are therefore not affected by hindsight and thus represent somewhat more faithfully what was being written and said at the time. However, as I mentioned in the first chapters, the risk of imposing linear narratives on the source material is one that must be consciously checked. In terms of the implications of this analysis for gender and space representation, the way in which the press covers representation-based media can be just as revealing in terms of analysis material as the representation itself. Indeed, how the press represents the representation, by both inclusions and omissions, as demonstrated above is extremely telling of the time period being studied. The lack of depth accorded the female performers in the

press, the focus on the male executives of the company, the pictures and captions

accompanying the articles and the gendered portrayal of space all combine to paint

a revealing portrait of the entertainment milieu in which the Scopitones were

produced and distributed. Were it not for the analysis of the press material directly,

the final conclusions would no doubt be different and somewhat incomplete.

This form of analysis also makes it easier to conceive of the coexistence of the

Scopitone clips and the experimental clips of the Beatles, both being produced

during the same years, in the popular music industry and extremely similar milieus.

At first glance, comparing the Scopitone clips and the Beatles' ones, they seem to be

so different as to be on completely different planes. After studying them further

however, certain similarities can be identified. Using the "Strawberry Fields"

promotional clip as an example, the presence of certain stylistic elements common

to Scopitones is discerned. The use of bright, punchy colours, so typical of the

Technicolor of the Scopitone clips is also found in the "Strawberry Fields" clip, as are

the incongruous settings (in the Beatles clip they are in the middle of a field with a

piano or in a tree), the unconventional framing and the use of close-ups (the camera

zooms in to each band member's facial features, especially their eyes). Despite these

shared characteristics, the Beatles clips still appear innovative whereas the

Scopitone ones seem retrograde. To a modern eye, and probably to most viewers of

the 1960s as well, the lack of Scopitone-style back-up dancers seems to grant the

Beatles a greater artistic legitimacy, encouraging the viewer to consider them as

artists rather than performers. The use of experimental techniques not found in

most Scopitone clips, such as reversing the film footage, night-time shooting and

double exposures, also contributes to this impression. In the wake of the Beatles'

cultural legitimation in the middle to highbrow press, as seen in Gendron's work, to

what extent were these experimentations a result of this newly acquired

accreditation? Though The Beatles managed to successfully combine both artistic

merit and economic success, ultimately this was a balance that the producers of

Scopitone clips would never attain.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1: Scopitone ST-16 model.
(http://www.scopitonearchive.com/scopitones/a_series.2.html)

Figure 2: Scopitone 450 model.
(http://www.jukebox-world.de/Forum/Archiv/USA/Scopitone.htm)

RESTYLED SCOPITONE unit is viewed by patrons in cocktail lounge at the Sheraton Blackstone Hotel in Chicago. The firm has located the machines in most of the country's big hotels.

Figure 3: 1965 picture of Scopitone viewers.
(Brack, Ray (1965) "Cinema Juke Box: Just a Novelty?" *Billboard*, 10 July: 45.)

FILM STAR JOI LANSING warmly welcomes Atlas Music Co.'s Stan Levin to the Scopitone distributor family. Levin is sales director of Atlas' newly formed Scopitone division.

HERE'S JOI, IN FULL, with the newly restyled Scopitone machine that is beginning to capture the interest of traditional coin machine distributors and operators.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2: Joi Lansing promoting Scopitone machines.
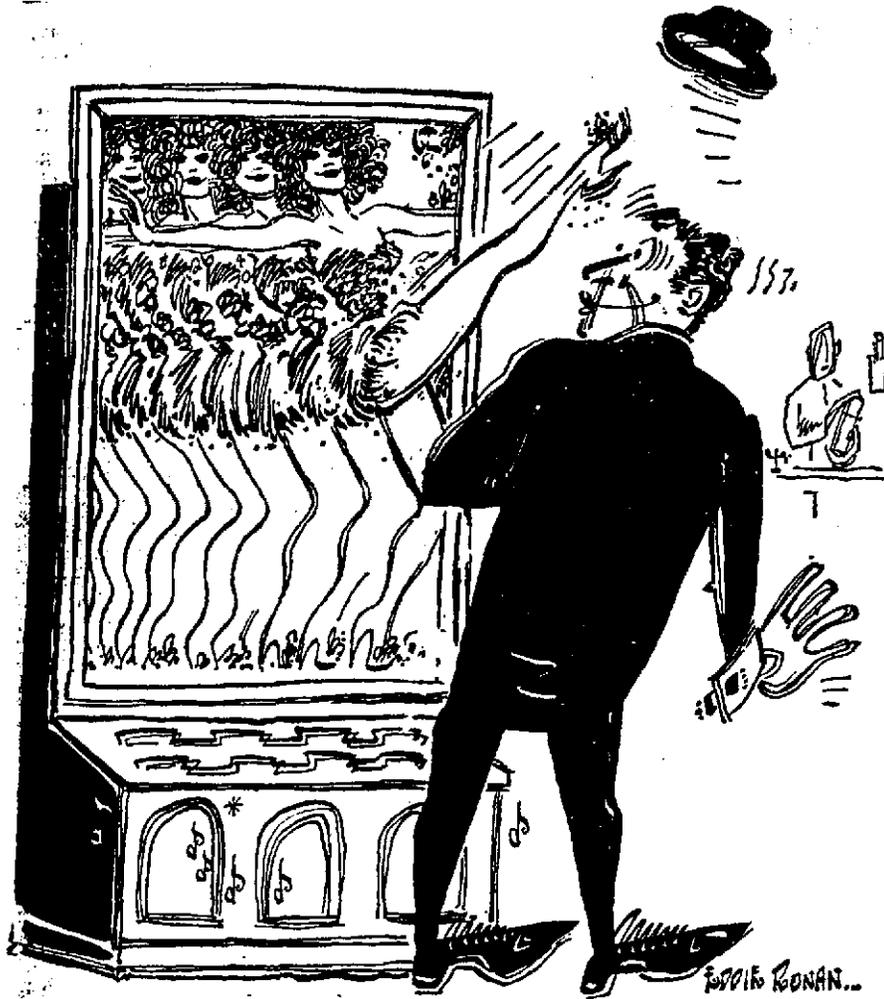(Brack, Ray (1966) "Here's Why Atlas Took on Scopitone" *Billboard*, 5 Feb.: 57.)

Figure 5: Illustration of Scopitones' effect on male viewers.
(Scott, John L. (1965) "Push-Button Entertainment" *Los Angeles Times*, 23 Aug.: C22.)