

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

“*Shout It Out*,” Patrice Rushen as polyphonist and the sounding of black women's affectability and genius

Brittnay Proctor

Northwestern University

Abstract

This article considers how Patrice Rushen's jazz-funk album, *Shout It Out* (1977), implicitly works as a punctum that indexes the irreconcilable relationship between black women's affectability and black women musicians' transgressive sonic praxis. Consequently, I consider how Rushen's use of sound technologies (i.e., multitracking, the clavinet) on *Shout It Out* attempts to reorient black women's affective and material labor to the end of sounding black women musician's multifaceted genius. As polyphonist, Rushen speaks to the expropriation of black women's affective and material labor and the vexed relationship black women musicians have with musical traditions and industries.

“Jazz for a long time, ya know, was a very, very, very much a man's game and the women were singers.” –Patrice Rushen

“But neither her height nor the fact that she is a woman in a traditionally male oriented business has deterred her.” –Marsha Lynn Smith

Most famously known for her R&B grooves like “Forget Me Nots,” Patrice Rushen's musical career began when she won a solo piano competition at the Monterey Jazz Festival of 1972. By the age of 19, Rushen was offered record deal by jazz record label, Prestige Records. As a classically trained piano player, her earliest work housed itself in a straightforward jazz market. Indicative of her time while signed to Prestige, Rushen, “was gonna be allowed to do [her] own music. And [she] had all this creative control” (“Patrice Rushen”). Given such a rare opportunity, Rushen would become a bandleader for her albums released on Prestige and would master making a room full of jazzmen follow her lead. For example, jazz-funk heavyweights like Joe Henderson were featured on her first release on Prestige, titled *Prelude* (1974). Evolving as an artist by way of her creative control while signed to Prestige, she would feel free to begin to fuse the sounds of black popular music with the sounds of straightforward jazz. The amalgamation of these two sounds became known in the popular domain as jazz-funk. But ultimately, jazz purists critiqued Rushen's use of black popular music forms and styles in her music. She would eventually sign to popular record labels like Elektra in 1978 and Arista in the mid-1980s, but still found herself trapped by normative ideals about the role of black women musicians in the music industry. Facing the fate of many black women musicians, the US music market attempted to

“keep her in a cage” (“Patrice Rushen”). *The Rolling Stone Jazz Record Guide* remembers Patrice Rushen's work as moving away from jazz, but misunderstands the overwhelming pressures for black women artists to create music suitable for “airplay”:

Rushen began to move away from jazz and toward R&B on her third try, Shout It Out, on which she also made her debut as a vocalist. Since moving to Elektra Rushen has gone so far into R&B territory that her latest records have outsold most jazz LPs and, in fact, resemble disco more than jazz. Rushen can play, but her best instincts often seem muffled by the airplay-conscious homogeneity of her style. (Swenson, 1979, p. 173)

The critique again, of Rushen's use of black popular music styles, alongside straightforward jazz, is reminiscent of the misrecognition of black women musician's multifaceted labor. In this way, Rushen is a part of a tradition of black women musicians, particularly black women keyboardists, as evidenced in her classical training and eventual “betrayal” of that training. But Rushen departs from the tradition of black women pianists like Nina Simone and Aretha Franklin by using the black musical idiom of jazz-funk to attempt to retain black women musician's relationship between voice and instrument. The fraught discourse produced about the relationship between voice and instrument is best indicated by the insistence on divorcing Nina Simone's voice from her work and privileging her work as a pianist. Similarly, the privileging of Aretha Franklin's voice has erased her virtuosity as a piano player and composer. Respectively, the work of black women musicians has been often bounded by liminal conceptions of black women's musicianship.

Although Rushen does not describe her work in this way, we can think of her work as an act of, what Daphne Brook's terms as, “black feminist distancing”—meaning her work—“cross[es] the lines of musical genres as well as, on certain occasions, performative propriety,” as well as, “defamiliariz[es] cultural expectations of where black women can and should articulate their voices and musicianship aesthetically and politically” (Brooks, 2011, p. 179). *Shout It Out*, as a moment of “black feminist distancing,” simultaneously intervenes in the legacies of black women's affectability (the expropriation of black women's affective and material labor) and the conflation of black women's musicianship with voice.

By affectability I mean the ways that black women have been made into “affectable (subaltern) subjects,” that is subjects who are “subjected to both natural (in the science and lay sense) conditions and to others' power” (Ferreira da Silva, xv). Denise Ferreira da Silva reminds us:

neither the sociohistorical logic of exclusion nor the notion of patriarchy can account for...[black women's] social subjection. Because both assume that the black female's subjection is an effect of her substantive difference...the sociohistorical logic of exclusion and patriarchy fail to grasp how a double affectability locates the female of color before the moral...boundaries of femaleness and the rational...boundaries of whiteness. (Ferreira da Silva, p. 266)

Black women's affectability, that exceeds the “logic of exclusion” engendered by theories of whiteness and the analytic of patriarchy that maps onto a femaleness (read often as “women's work”) to which black women have been occluded from, enables the seizure of black women's affective and material labor. In this article, use the concept of “affectability” to think about the stakes of black women's performances of affective and material labor. Rushen's *Shout It Out* (1977) defamiliarizes listeners with the sounds and utility associated with black women's affective and material labor.

Released in February of 1977, *Shout It Out* strayed away from the straightforward jazz sound of *Prelude* (1974) and *Before the Dawn* (1975). The album, according to Rushen, was “a little on the funk side, what I liked to do” (DJ Soulswede). Providing more than the soul/funk and “crossover jazz” sound that dominated the end of the 1970s, *Shout It Out* showcases a range of styles that would come to be known as “fusion music,” but more particularly, jazz-funk. Between *Shout It Out*'s investment in the black music idiom of jazz-funk and the multitracking of her voice and instrumentation on songs like “Let Your Heart Be Free,” alongside the “spiky” sound of the clavinet proliferated throughout the album, *Shout It Out* implicitly works as a punctum that indexes the irreconcilable relationship between black women's affectability and black women musicians transgressive sonic praxis. Consequently, I consider how Rushen's use of the

noted sound technologies (i.e., multitracking, the clavinet) on *Shout It Out* attempts to reorient black women's affective and material labor to the end of sounding black women musician's multifaceted genius. As polyphonist, Rushen speaks to the expropriation of black women's affective and material labor and the vexed relationship black women musicians have with musical traditions and industries.¹

1 | BLACK WOMEN AND AFFECTIVE LABOR

Black women "regularly complained about being forced to labor as domestics. Domestic work carried the taint of slavery. While black women's physical and affective labors were central to the reproduction and security of the white household, their own lives and families remained at risk" —Saidiya Hartman

By turning to black women's affective labor, I mean to interrogate the conflation of black women's labor with material labor, which has disavowed critical considerations of the affective dimensions of black women's labor that exceed Marxist conceptions of the "worker" and of "labor." The conflation of black women's labor with material labor can be best understood as a consequence of the narration of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and western colonialism. The narration of these phenomena have often understood black women as problematically, reducible to their "bodies" and, therefore, best fit for material labor. This schema of understanding black women's labor has haunted how we understand black women's labor, occluding the importance of black women's performances of affective labor, parallel to their performances of material labor.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* theorizes affective labor along the axis of what they term "immaterial labor."² They define immaterial labor as "labor that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response" (Hardt and Negri, 2004, p. 108). As such, affective labor is "labor that produces or manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement or passion" (Hardt and Negri, 2004, p. 108). Affective labor, unlike emotions, affects "equally" both the body and mind. I turn to Hardt and Negri to deconstruct how their conceptualizations of affective labor do not account for the complexities of black women's relationship to labor. Hardt and Negri's theorization of affective labor not only fails to understand how industrial labor has always been antagonistic toward black subjects, but how the category of the worker overdetermines discussions of labor (i.e., the demonization and criminalization of black workers; the use of black workers to bust strikes, etc.).

Parallel to the mobilization of the category of "worker," the turn to theorizing the affective dimensions of "women's work" annihilates alternative genealogies of affective labor. Problematically, Hardt and Negri use white feminist conceptualizations of affective labor that normatively situate white domesticity as the place where "alienation" occurs for women, without accounting for the histories of black women being conscripted to become domestics in white homes (Hardt and Negri, 2004, pp. 110–11). In the case of "women's work," the affective components of black women's labor were contingent upon their feelings of alienation. But more importantly, performances of this labor were enacted by violent means to ensure the proliferation of white affects such as civility and superiority.

Black women scholars such as Susan Tucker, Tera Hunter, Thavolia Glymph, and Saidiya Hartman have written about the importance of black women's labor to burgeoning economies in the afterlife of slavery.³ The work of these scholars does not presume a bifurcation between black women's material and affective labor, as they recognize that these forms of labor have always worked in tandem to produce hostile and coercive working conditions for black women. They implicitly revise Hardt and Negri's claim that the "hegemony of immaterial labor," was only a phenomenon of the last decades of the twentieth century, but rather was an actuality of black women's lives in the afterlife of slavery.⁴

For example, black women domestics provided emotional support to white women and families in the realm of domesticity. Rather than conflate the "powerlessness" of white women and black women in the white domestic sphere, these authors are frank about the power white women possessed over black women. The cultural currency white women gained by having black women work in their homes is revelatory of the importance of black women's affective labor to maintaining antiblackness and white supremacy. Much of white women's reluctance to performing labor

in the domestic sphere had to do with the stringent ideas white women had about themselves, mostly as a byproduct of slavery. White women were simply not willing to accept the changing tide black women presented after “emancipation,” as they attempted to build their own sense of self, independent of white womanhood.

For white women, “the help of a black domestic also meant the emotional support of a woman who was already symbolically cast as mother in southern culture” (Tucker, 1987, p. 8). Black women's affective labor as domestics gave whites, regardless of their class, feelings of self-worth and importance that black women domestics were occluded from. Black women domestics became “signifiers of status” that produced the material and affective labor that ensured the normativity of the white domestic sphere, at the expense of black women. The embodiment of “being seen and not heard,” alongside enduring sexual violence at the hands of white men, in white homes, and the overall nastiness of white women, engendered black women's production of white civility that was vital to the coherence of the white domestic sphere.⁵ White domesticity cohered around black women's affective labor, allowing white women and men to indulge in the niceties afforded by slave economies, as well as postwar economies.⁶

Black women's affective labor ensured the stability of white households, allowing black women's unwaged emotional labor to be expropriated to the end of maintaining white patriarchal structures that valorized white femininity and pathologized black femininity. The affective labor produced by black women domestics in the white domestic sphere can be understood as merely one example of black women's affective labor. Much like the exemplar case of black women domestics, black women musician's affective labor has been expropriated to the end of maintaining the hegemonic matrices of whiteness and black masculinity and disavows the convergence of blackness *and* womanhood. The black woman musician, like the black woman domestic, would become the receptacle for the production of feelings and emotions.

Featured in *Black Music*, Amiri Baraka's “The Dark Lady of the Sonnet,” epitomizes the ways that black women musicians become a repository for the production of external affects. Referring to Billie Holiday's voice as “a voice that grew from a singer's instrument to a woman's,” Baraka seemingly naturalizes the relationship between Holiday's production of material and affective labor via singing (Jones, 1967, p. 25). The bifurcation of voice and instrument is of course a faulty one due to the legacies of black women musician's enacting and using voice as an instrument, but the erasure of voice in relation to instrumentation is important. By way of voice, black women musician's become the epitome of the performance of “feelings”; intense, sorrowful feelings. This work eviscerates the affective and material elements of her labor that is used to create virtuosic work. The naturalization of her labor allows for her labor to be expropriated substantiating Baraka's feelings as a black man: “More than I have felt to say, she says always” (Jones, 1967, p. 25). The voice of the black woman musician creates affections that cohere around the feelings and emotional capacity of others. Conflating black women's use of voice in performance with black women's natural performance of emotions, black women musicians have been trapped the liminal understandings of what constitutes authentic black performance. The valorization of “tragedy” and “hopeless agony” is a byproduct of these trappings. Consequently, black women's intentions to feel and render their affectability sonically always run the risk of being used to maintain black women's subjection.

But, the black woman musician is more than a source of entertainment or site of consumption for black women to “escape” their realities; the black woman musician is the theorist that deconstructs universalized womanhood, femininity, and feminism that occludes discussions of black women's affective labor. The black woman musician reveals that the category of “woman” has been used over and against black women. Undoubtedly, there is an inextricable relationship between the black woman musician and articulations of black women's affectability, especially their performances of affective labor. Patrice Rushen, like many of the black women musicians who came before her, is an intellectual interlocutor with black women. Histories of black masculine approaches to understanding black life and consequently, black politics, have often deintellectualized the work of black women, especially the work of black women musicians. To make the claim that black women musicians are intellectual interlocutors with black women is to attenuate to the fact that while black popular music has been an alternative space for black political thought and praxis, its narration has failed to take up considerations for black women musicians intellectual labor and intellectual praxis. Black women have been excluded from and misrecognized in work on black popular music to the end of privileging the work of black men musicians.⁷ Moreover, black women have looked to black women musicians to better understand their predicament because of the accessibility of and proximity to the black woman musician. Listening to the work of black women

musicians, results in discussion and dialogue would produce a dialogic relationship between black women musicians and black women. It might be impossible to imagine the specificity of the exchange of ideas in black publics and spaces of black sociality among black women and black women musicians, but certainly this relationship has often called black women to “translate the [work of black women musicians]...into an apposite structure of terms that will articulate both [their] kinship to other women and the particular nuances of [their] own experience” (Spillers, 2003, p. 167). *Shout It Out*, with its investment in the genre of jazz-funk and Rushen’s use of multitracking, makes audible black women’s affectability.

In *If You Can’t Be Free, Be a Mystery: In Search of Billie Holiday*, Farah Jasmine Griffin warns of the dangers of using “mythology” when writing about the work of black women musicians. She disavows the mythological ways Billie Holiday has been written about and concerns her text with presenting Billie Holiday as a complex individual, rather than a victim who abused drugs and lacked the intellect and prowess to be considered an innovator in jazz. In many ways, Griffin’s text hopes to reorient the affective labor that a figure like Holiday performs. In excess of rendering Holiday as a tragic “junkie,” “victim,” or “Lady,” she positions Holiday’s genius as her contribution to the genre of jazz: Holiday’s unique approach to singing, her improvisation, the changes in time and key in her work, as well as her impeccable diction and clarity (Griffin, 2001, p. 73).⁸

Griffin’s work is instructive for how we should write about the work of black women musicians. For this article, the superimposed understandings of Rushen’s work, as a sellout by jazz purists or as a pop singer by major record labels, will take a backseat to a more accurate and nuanced rendition of her work that considers how she, like other black women musicians attempts to “steal” back their affective labor. As Griffin states, “it is the role and responsibility of the black woman artist to sing her own song, create her own body of work, as a means of giving voice to the legacy of her female ancestors” (Griffin, 2001, p. 129). We might think of Rushen’s work as attempting to redress the erasure of black women’s genius that arose from the use of voice and instrumentation. (Again, not to presume the two are mutually exclusive.)

2 | JAZZ-FUNK

“I started playing music on the piano that we were listening to on the radio. And we’re hearing Marvin Gaye and Stevie and all these different people and I’m playing the stuff, picking it out on the piano and suddenly, the piano had a different character for me.” –Patrice Rushen

“[Jazz-funk] is another idiom. It uses elements of jazz and elements of popular forms, but it established its own idiom.” –Herbie Hancock

During the early 1970s, jazz-funk emerged as a new black music form that was evocative of black artists’ relationship to popular music and the anxieties around the preservation of avant-garde black jazz. Black music of this time was moving away from the primacy of both avant-garde jazz and R&B and began to extend these sounds by using sound technologies that emphasized complex drum patterns and the use of the bass guitar. Rather than have instrumentation or vocal arrangements serve as the primary focus of this new music, it would be the intricate balance of the two that would make this emerging black music form particularly important. Additionally, jazz-funk would employ the funk bass in its sound. Funk bass is “the repetition of highly syncopated bass figures, often filled with staccato notes, that are played with a contagious feeling that moves people in a way peculiar to funk music” (Gridley, 2000, p. 355). Funk bass in jazz-funk is important because of its embodiment of funk rhythm sections. The use of the bass in this way emends the rhythm sections of avant-garde jazz bands, which primarily used drum sets for its rhythm sections, and purposed the bass guitar as an addition to rhythm sections. The “fusion” of these jazz and funk elements is often posed as an antagonism to “authentic” performances of these black music forms.

The work of jazz-funk musicians in literature on fusion music is often referred to as jazz-rock. Mark Gridley thinks alternatively about this designation in his work *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*:

During the late 1960s...many people were beginning to call this music "soul" and "funk" instead of R & B. However, this new pair of labels still served the same purpose: identifying a primarily African American form of popular music. It was the accompaniment style for this funk-soul category, more than rock, which influenced a number for jazz musicians during the 1970s. Therefore the jazz-rock label itself is not entirely appropriate for the music it identifies. 'Jazz-funk' might be a more accurate designation. (Gridley, 2000, p. 338)

One of the major failings in understanding jazz-funk as a "genre" of black music, is that it has allowed for its misrecognition in so far as its categorization, as either fusion music or as jazz-rock; deemphasizing the importance of funk music to the creation of this idiom. Herbie Hancock's use of "idiom" to describe jazz-funk can be used as a heuristic to better understand jazz-funk in particular, and black music, in general. Expanding upon Hancock's use of idiom, we can think concretely about the utility of using idiom, as opposed to the analytic of "genre" to account for the phenomena that is jazz-funk. Genre, in this case, presumes that the "wholeness" of an (art) object can be captured by the colonial practice of naming. Its use to understand jazz-funk presumes that jazz and funk are two discreet categories of black popular music, as opposed to discursive formations.

Jazz-funk's meaning cannot be divorced from how we understand funk and as such, I will not privilege jazz as the dominant mode for which we understand jazz-funk; or as an aberration of the genre, but rather I am invested in working through understanding jazz-funk as an idiom of funk that amalgamates funk *and* jazz. In doing this, we can better understand how the genre of funk profanes avant-garde black jazz, making jazz and funk amalgamative forces that disarticulate hegemonic notions of blackness and black gender, particularly black masculinity. The importance of the genre of jazz-funk is its willingness to take the "high" sounds of avant-garde black jazz and associate them with the "low" sounds funk, particularly the use of the funk bass.

Moreover, the politics of jazz-funk are at odds with heterosexist notions of black masculinity that call for the use of black women solely for their presumed materiality or that positions black women as outsiders to the production of the idiom. The idiom of jazz-funk is also not concerned with performing a black authenticity that fails to quell the "co-constitutive production of blackness and queerness" (Snorton, 2014, p. 3). It does not treat black womanhood as a contaminant to blackness and black performance, but understands the multiplicity embodied in the subject position of blackness and black performance. For example, black women musicians such as Patrice Rushen, were not only jazz-funk artists in their own right, but were frequent collaborators with black men jazz-funk musicians. By oscillating between two different black music forms, the idiom of jazz-funk reimagines the relationship between blackness and maleness, to think about the contingencies of black people's precarious relationship to their gender. The emblematic black, heterosexual jazzman that revolves around avant-garde black jazz, sees his identity as implicated by black women's presumed heterosexuality, as well as queer black men's subject position as black and queer; both of which are understood by their proximity to "femaleness."

Jazz-funk allows for a different kind of sociality that is in contradistinction to the spectatorship of jazz. The singularity and individualization of the jazzman was essential to avant-garde black jazz, whereas jazz-funk was tied to a new sociality that sought to reinvigorate black youth's relationship to jazz. Jazz-funk, during the 1970s "seemed to signal an important reconnection of jazz and youth culture—black youth culture—through dance" (Pond, 2013, pp. 126–27). The formal aspects of avant-garde black jazz spectatorship were traded in for the playing of this new idiom in social spaces that encouraged dance and intimacy. The one-to-one ratio of jazzman and spectator would not suffice for jazz-funk because of its relationship to the dancing black body. Thus, while jazz scholars have commented on the role of the laboring black body in relationship to performance, jazz-funk presents avant-garde black jazz with anxieties around the dancing black body because of its investment in polyrhythm.

Outside of vocal performance, black women were excluded from participation in the black avant-garde jazz band, but they were crucial to the reconstitution of this homosocial space in the idiom of jazz-funk, that sought to rethink black collectivity and the space of black genius by positioning black women as partners to the creation of the idiom of jazz-funk instead of as outliers. The importance of Rushen's jazz-funk album *Shout It Out* is that it showcases the full range and capacity of black women musician's that has been hidden. To employ voice *and* instrumentation, engendered by the black musical idiom of jazz-funk, retains Rushen's affective and material labor to the end of cultivating her own

genius. The album insists that we listen to black women play and sing and simultaneously disentangles the masculinist approaches to jazz and funk that reduce black women musician's labor to vocal performance.

3 | SHOUT IT OUT (1977)

"Until the recent celebrations of Nobel Prize Toni Morrison, few were willing to grant black women the title genius. Since the earliest days of our nation, black women were thought to be incapable of possessing genius; their achievements were considered the very opposite of intellectual accomplishment. All persons of African descent were thought to be unfit for advanced intellectual endeavor. Black women in particular were body, feeling, emotion and sexuality. This holds true even in comparison to white women; if white women's abilities were questioned and debated, their humanity was not." –Farah Jasmine Griffin (Emphasis Added)

The site of the recording studio has always been privileged as a masculinist domain of virtuosity and "mastery." Rushen subverts this tradition by composing; arranging and producing, *Shout It Out*, but also by playing five instruments on the album. Additionally, she uses the clavinet alongside the masculine space of the studio to create black femme sounds, most notably heard on the track "Let Your Heart Be Free." Multitracking, like the use of the idiom of jazz-funk, becomes a strategy for theorizing the multivalent affections of being black *and* woman. Multitracking becomes a strategy for Rushen to sound black womanhood because it was one of the first technologies that allowed for multiple parts of a song to be recorded individually, but to also have these distinct parts be looped for the full duration of the track. It would enable Rushen to hold in tandem the multiple feelings and aspects of a track.

Shout It Out also employs the clavinet for its rhythm section. The clavinet, an electrically amplified clavichord, was born out of the need to recreate early colonial keyboard instruments to enhance the capacities of the clavichord. Designed in 1964 by Ernst Zacharias and manufactured by the Hohner Company, it both solved the problem of the clavichord not being loud enough for staged performance, as well as modified elements of the clavichord such as its "sweetness" in sound. Zacharias intended to "modernize and electrify a whole battery of baroque keyboard instruments" (Colbeck, 2001, p. 38). The instrument is mostly famously heard in Stevie Wonder's 1972 hit "Superstition," generates a "spiky, funky sound" due to its sensitive keys (Colbeck, 2001, p. 38). With its bright and staccato sound, the clavinet is often used to mitigate the dominance of other instruments on sounds recordings, in most cases vocal performances and the acoustic or electric piano. The clavinet has an ability to bend sounds, and amplifies sound more loudly the harder the keys are stroked. There is little known about how the clavinet came to be frequently used by black funk and jazz-funk musicians, but what is known is that black music of this time was moving away from the primacy of both avant-garde black jazz and R&B and began to extend these sounds by using music technologies that emphasized complex drum patterns and the use of the bass guitar.

The clavinet mitigates Rushen's sultry, soulful voice on *Shout It Out*. The specific use of the clavinet, by Rushen, sounds black women's affectability because it provides a sonic uplift that is dissonant with the subject matters of struggle, undesirability, and heartbreak on tracks like "The Hump" and "Let Your Heart Be Free." "The Hump" that Rushen calls for her listeners to try to "get over" is less of a call for black women to pick themselves up by their bootstraps, but more so an articulation of the troubles black women face to sustain their livelihood. They have to "get over" to prevent from going under. Rather than aspirational, songs like "The Hump" and "Roll With the Punches," mark the shared experiences of black women. While this articulation of shared experience is mobilized via a politics of hope, which encourages its listener to "rise above," it also marks the conflictual and disharmonious ways black women are forced to deal with their affectability. Rushen's use of multitracking, that is, the "technique by which recordings are made separately and then combined," most significantly indexes this incongruity ("Multitracking"). The creation of the three-track tape machine by the Ampex Corporation in 1955 would change audio recording for forever. Marked as the first multitrack tape record, the machine offered three independent tracks that would allow instruments or vocals to be assigned to a single track and would be later mixed with other tracks to produce a master recording. As a result, "engineers no

longer had to make real-time mixing decisions, but could unhurriedly obtain just the right blend of tracks whenever convenient" (Mc Daniel, Shriver, and Collins, 2008, p. 225). Also crucial to this innovation was the emergence of over-dubbing. Over-dubbing enabled the adding of audio material to pre-recorded tracks. This innovation would be key in allowing vocalists to add ("overdub") lead vocals once instrumentals had already been "laid down" on a track (Mc Daniel, Shriver, and Collins, 2008, p. 226).

The technology of multitracking is taken for granted in the contemporary moment, but its existence is key to understanding the significance of Rushen's ability to hold the multiplicity of her labor. What makes Rushen's work significant is her ability to retain the relationship between her vocal performance and use of keyboard. (Although, this relationship would be, in the popular context, erased.) As noted earlier, black women musicians, who have played piano, have had their relationship to instruments: either piano or voice, erased. Their work as polyphonists is positioned outside of the virtuosic work and labor mapped onto black jazzmen and more generally, black men musicians. Rushen's particular iteration of multitracking enables her to hold in tandem her talent as a piano player and her capacity as a vocalist. Multitracking engenders Rushen's capacity to produce voice via her relationship to keyboard instruments.

The layering of Rushen's voice, via multitrack recording, "simultaneously combin[ed] a number of parts," holds in tension multiplicity, encouraged by the improvisational impulse of jazz and the presumed sonic singularity of keyboard instruments. Rushen's gentile, yet sultry voice, swelters and hugs the instrumentals on tracks like "Shout It Out." Her voice does not drown out instrumentals, but finds its way into the nooks and corners of arrangement, demonstrated by her use of falsetto on "Let Your Heart Be Free." The youthfulness of her voice is most apparent on "Let Your Heart Be Free" and resembles a sprightly enthusiasm affiliated with youth culture. The velvety quality of her voice is not as much "soft" as it is enthusiastic and warm. Rushen, in her early 20s when recording this album, has remarked on her enthusiasm about finally getting the opportunity and resources to make an album that was, in part, invested in funk music. She labors to have her voice work in tandem with her instrumentals, which is important if we keep in mind that she (often) composed and recorded both. Rushen's voice differs from the iconic melismatic singer that dominated black popular music during the 1970s, in that it doesn't pack the power and strength of "traditional" melismatic singers, but her voice is still melodic and achieves a unique black femme sound.

The most explicit of Rushen's polyphonic techniques, her use of multitracking attests to the fact that, "polyphonic music is not a material whole, but rather an ideally coordinated multitude" (Mahnkopf, Cox, & Schurig, 2002, p. 44). On "Let Your Heart Be Free" Rushen sings lead and background vocals; plays both electric bass and electric piano, as well as provides the "handclaps" on the track. These various elements of Rushen's multitracking on "Let Your Heart Be Free" sounds the dimensionality of black women's affective and material labor. And yet, if Rushen's "Let Your Heart Be Free" of *Shout It Out* explicates black (heterosexual) women's desires to find love by an external subject/object, then "Sojourn" marks the frequent failings of this optimism that force black women to travel forward and look to the future as a postponement of many promises yet to be fulfilled. The looping of a hard-hitting funk groove, combined with the use of a mini-moog monophonic analog synthesizer, on tracks like "Let There Be Funk" also creates an inaudible audibility that disrupts the logocentrism embodied by the songs lyrical content, once again connoting that black sound is a discursive formation that produces discourse that is not always tied to the written word. Therefore, Rushen creates sound that cannot be captured solely by the lyrics or written words of her music.

Outside of using Patrice Rushen's work as a representation of the erasure of black women's labor, specifically the erasure of their affective labor, my article turns to her work to think concretely about the lasting impact that she has had in cultivating the jazz and arts scenes of Los Angeles, California, during the 1970s. In part, the article implicitly revises the genealogy of jazz on the West Coast to include a musician like Rushen, especially considering how Los Angeles is once again emerging as a space of innovation for creating "new" and "fresh" sounds in black popular music. Many young artists from Los Angeles are once again creating collectives and ensuring that the black artists they have come up with are given a chance to create their work.⁹

In a 1976 interview with Marsha Lynn Smith in *Newworld*, a Los Angeles-based magazine published by the Inner City Culture Center, Patrice Rushen remarks on her commitment to helping other [black] artists: "When I was in a position to help others musically, that was when I knew I had climbed a certain rung. I don't feel they are going to have any

problems because somebody has given them a chance just as somebody gave me a chance" (Smith, 1976, p. 50). Early on in her career, Rushen was dedicated to giving black musicians an opportunity to thrive musically.¹⁰ We can think of Patrice Rushen's work as fundamentally changing how we understand the work of black jazz and "fusion" artists on the West Coast during the 1970s and beyond. Rushen's sound also challenges what we consider to be black music in the West Coast during the 1970s. *Shout It Out* (1977) set a precedent for an innovation of sound during the 1970s and beyond that would have a lasting impact. For example, "The Hump" of Rushen's *Shout It Out* is sampled in the hook/riff of Maxwell's "Sumthin' Sumthin'" (1996), as well as Shabba Ranks' "Respect" (1993), where it is sampled throughout.

Additionally, Patrice Rushen was the first woman to serve as musical director of the 46th, 47th, and 48th Annual Grammy Awards and the first woman in 43 years to serve as Head Composer/Musical Director for the Emmy Awards and the NAACP Image Awards, a position she held for 12 years ("Bio and Credits"). She also served as Musical Director for Janet Jackson's World Tour "janet" (November 1993–April 1995). As one of the only black women composers for television and film, for example, she was composer for the 1989 "Brewster Place" miniseries, Rushen has made a way for black women artists and composers like Meshell Ndegeocello. Ndegeocello, a songwriter, producer, bassist, rapper, and vocalist, is currently the composer for the OWN network's drama "Queen Sugar" (Newman, 2017).

Often, in an attempt to write about and codify the "firsts" of black music, the specter of black women's affectability (that is, to be acted upon, and have their labor expropriated) is rendered obscure and insignificant. Patrice Rushen's work reminds us of the ways that popular music, musical composition, and performance are indebted to the labor of black women. By retrieving the full genius of black women musician's, like Rushen, we might be able to consider how it is that black women use modern technologies to sound their predicament and produce discourses that decolonize how we conceive of black womanhood. *Shout it Out* is able to articulate black women's affective labor that is often exploited, undervalued; if valued at all. This type of labor becomes one of the hallmarks of black women's affectability. Black women, as affected subjects, are often not granted the intellectual, political, or social capital that is required for their survival. The work of Rushen and other black women musician's is so critical for this reason. Rushen's affective and material labor that produced *Shout It Out* embodies the legacies of black women's affective labor to which theorists of affective labor must take seriously.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

An earlier version of this article was presented at the 2016 EMP Pop Conference "From a Whisper to a Scream: The Voice in Music," on April 16th, 2017. Many thanks to Ryan Habil, Cecilio Cooper, Alexander Weheliye, Joshua Chambers-Letson, Meghan Drury, Meaghan Fritz, and the reviewers of the article. The article is dedicated to my grandmothers Bernice Louise Thomas and Ola Mae Williams. Any limitations of this article are mine and mine alone.

ENDNOTES

¹ In its earlier forms, the essay attempted to address the following inquiry: If we understand sound is a discursive formation that produces discourse, what might it mean for a modernized colonial keyboard instrument, that in its prior instantiation was used to sound Eurocentric bourgeoisie and theological sensibilities, to be used by a "post"-colonial black subject, particularly a black woman? My inability to access archives that would help me to think critically about the sonic legacies of colonial keyboard instruments foreclosed my discussion of black women's relationships to colonial keyboard instruments. Future research hopes to adequately address this line of inquiry.

² "Affective labor" is initially theorized in: Hardt, Michael. "Affective Labor." *Boundary 2* 26.2 (1999): 89–100.

³ See: Glymph, Thavolia. *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008; Hartman, Saidiya. "The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women's Labors." *Souls* 18.1 (2016): 166–73; Hunter, Tera W. *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997, and Tucker, Susan. "A Complex Bond: Southern Black Domestic Workers and Their White Employers." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 9.3 (1987): 6–13.

⁴ Karen Tucker Anderson's "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II" makes clear the "hegemony" of black women's labor in the afterlife of slavery, but specifically in the aftermath of World War II: "To a greater extent than white women, black women were victimized by the postwar eviction of women from jobs in durable goods industries...in other work categories black women fared somewhat better in the postwar years. Although some apparently lost

employment in service, sales, and clerical work as a result of competition from displaced white women, most managed to maintain their hold on lower-level jobs in the female work force. Despite attempts by USES officials in some local offices to force black women to return to domestic service work by threatening to withhold unemployment compensation benefits, enough job opportunities in other categories remained available to prevent a massive return to household work. Even so, domestic service remained the primary occupation of black women, providing employment to 782,520 in 1950, 40 percent of the black female work force." (Anderson, 95–96) See: Anderson, Karen Tucker. "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II." *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 1 (1982): 82–97.

⁵ See Thavolia Glymph's *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*: "As white women set about teaching black women how to clean their homes, cook their meals, nurse their children, set their tables, launder their silk clothes, and use electrical appliances, they reminded their black servants [often through violence] that segregation extended to the domestic sphere" (Glymph 233).

⁶ Black women's affective labor is not constituted out of "agency," but is often enacted by their subjection. One might argue that black women's ontological positioning in the world allows them to have their affective labor expropriated to the end of producing others' affections. Indeed, the expropriation of black women's affective labors is merely a facet of their affectability.

⁷ Black women scholars like Daphne Duval Harrison and Angela Davis have done tremendous work to attend to the omission of black women musicians from historiographies on blues music. Moreover, there has been a plethora of new research that hopes to rewrite black women into these archives. But rather than rely on a politics of recognition and solely do the labor of rewriting black women jazz-funk musicians like Patrice Rushen into the archive, the essay considers how the work of black women musicians attempt to re-orient their labor to theorize black womanhood that exceeds the colonial notions of black womanhood that conflates the black "body" with being black and woman.

⁸ Zadie Smith's "Crazy They Call Me" uses literary prose to do similar work of rescuing Holiday from mythology. See: Smith, Zadie. "Crazy They Call Me." *The New Yorker*. 6 March 2017.

⁹ What might be deemed as a black musical renaissance has emerged in Los Angeles, CA. "Jazz fusion" artists like Kamasi Washington and Thundercat, as well as rap collectives like Odd Future (Tyler the Creator, Frank Ocean, The Internet, Syd, etc.) and Black Hippy (Kendrick Lamar, Ab-Soul, Jay Rock, and ScHoolboy Q) use an array of black sounds in their work. Artists like SZA and Jhene Aiko, break from traditional R&B and Soul sounds of the West Coast. See: "LA jazz: How Kamasi Washington and Thundercat are breathing new life into the west coast scene," Eric Ducker (<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/jul/22/kamasi-washington-jazz-fusion-distils-musical-diversity-los-angeles>) and "West Coast Renaissance: The New Generation of Los Angeles Rappers," Joshua Ramos (<http://www.thejuicedaily.com/west-coast-renaissance-the-new-generation-of-los-angeles-rappers/>).

¹⁰ Marsha Lynn Smith details that Rushen, "chose to work with singers and musicians who were potentially fine performers but who hadn't been given the opportunity to prove their talents. As a result of her hit album, young talented artists like vocalist Josie James and bassist Charles Meeks got a chance to be heard. Now their careers have taken on new perspectives (Josie is singing on Stevie Wonder's new album and Charles recently finished nationwide tours with Bill Withers and Freddie Hubbard—not to mention numerous recording dates." (p. 50)

WORKS CITED

- "Bio and Credits." *Patrice Rushen*. Babyfingers, Inc., 2008. Web. 25 June 2017.
- Brooks, D. A. (2011). Nina Simone's Triple Play. *Callaloo*, 34(1), 176–197.
- Colbeck, J. (2001). Hohner Clavinet. *Electronic Musician*, 17(3), 38.
- DJ Soulswede. Interview with Patrice Rushen. *Soulinterviews.com*. August 5, 2012.
- Ferreira da Silva, D. (2007). *Toward a global idea of race*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gridley, M. (2000). *Jazz styles: History and analysis* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.
- Griffin, Farah Jasmine. (2001). *If you can't be free, be a mystery: In search of Billie Holiday*. New York: Free Press.
- Hardt, Michael, & Antonio, Negri. (2004). *Multitude: War and democracy in the age of empire*. New York: Penguin.
- Jones, Leroi. (1967). *Black music*. New York: William Morrow and Company.
- Mahnkopf, Claus-Steffen, Cox, Frank, & Schurig, Wolfram. (2002). In Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, Frank Cox, & Wolfram Schurig (Eds.), *Polyphony & complexity* (1st ed.). Hofheim: Wolke.
- McDaniel, Drew O., Shriver, Rick C., & Collins, Kenneth Ray. (2008). *Fundamentals of audio production*. Boston: Pearson/A&B. (2006). Multitracking. In Griffiths Paul. (Ed.), *The new penguin dictionary of music*. London: Penguin.

- Newman, Melinda. (2017). *Billboard*. "Meshell Ndegeocello on Scoring Ava Duverney's New OWN Series 'Queen Sugar' and Revising Her Past," 6 September 2016. Web. June 25.
- Patrice Rushen. (1977). *Shout It Out*. Prestige Records.
- "Patrice Rushen." *Unsung*. TvOne. 17 February 2016. Television.
- Pond, Steven F. (2013). 'Chameleon' Meets Soul Train: Herbie, James, Michael, Damita Jo, and Jazz Funk. In Tony Bolden (Ed.), *American Studies* (Vol. 52, no. 4, pp. 125–140). The Funk Issue.
- Smith, Marsha Lynn. (1976). Patrice Rushen: Changing the face of music. *Newworld*, 3(1), 22–24; 50.
- Spillers, Hortense. (2003). *Black, white, and in color: Essays on American literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tucker, Susan. (1987). A complex bond: Southern black domestic workers and their white employers. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 9(3), 6–13.
- Snorton, C. Riley. (2014). *Nobody's suppose to know: Black sexuality on the down low*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Swenson, John. (1979). Patrice Rushen. In John Swenson (Ed.), *The rolling stone jazz record guide* (pp. 173). New York: Random House/Rolling Stone Press, 1985.

How to cite this article: Proctor B. "Shout It Out:" Patrice Rushen as polyphonist and the sounding of black women's affectability and genius. *J. Pop. Music Stud.* 2017;29:e12243. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpms.12243>