

**STEFANO:** Yeah, that's right. So, it's sort of within that context that I think both of us pose the question that's important to us. In other circumstances, Fred and I have talked about this by thinking about a certain kind of song, a soul song that you might get in Curtis Mayfield or in Marvin Gaye, where something's going on, let's call it the experiment with/in the general antagonism, and then the song starts. You can hear the audience, you can hear the crowd, and then he begins to sing or music begins to start. So, the thing that I'm interested in is, without calling something to order, how can you still sing? In the sense that not calling something to order is different from saying that there's nothing that you want to do with others, there's nothing that you want to start with others. We have our own versions of insistence or persistence in study.

**FRED:** Form is not the eradication of the informal. Form is what emerges from the informal. So, the classic example of that kind of song that you're talking about, Stefano, is "What's Going On?" by Marvin Gaye – and of course the title is already letting you know: goddamn it, something's going on! This song emerges out of the fact that something already was going on. Then, from a certain limited perspective, we recognize, there are these people milling around and

talking and greeting one another – and then, something that we recognize as music emerges from that. But then, if you think about it for half-a-damn-second, you say, “but the music was already playing.” Music was already being made. So, what emerges is not music in some general way, as opposed to the non-musical. What emerges is a form, out of something that we call informality. The informal is not the absence of form. It’s the thing that gives form. The informal is not formlessness. And what those folks are engaging in at the beginning of “What’s Going On?” is study. Now, when Marvin Gaye starts singing, that’s study too. It’s not study that emerges out of the absence of study. It’s an extension of study. And black popular music – I’m most familiar with things from the 1960s on – is just replete with that. That thing becomes something more than just what you would call a device – and it’s also very much bound up with the notion of the live album. The point is that it’s more than just a device. It’s more than just a trope. It’s almost like everybody has to, say, comb that moment into their recording practices, just to remind themselves, and to let you know, that this is where it is that music comes from. It didn’t come from nowhere. If it came from nowhere, if it came from nothing, it is basically trying to let you know that you need a new theory of nothing and a new theory of nowhere.

**STEFANO:** Yeah, and this is also all over rap music, which is always about saying, ‘this is where we live and here’s this sound.’

**FRED:** I told you, “this is how we do it.” My kids listen to some shit, and I’m trying not to be that way, but sometimes I’m like, “let me play y’all some good music.” If you listen to the Staple Singers’ “I’ll Take You There,” it’s got one little chorus, one little four-line quatrain, and then the whole middle of the song is just Mavis Staples telling the band to start playing. “Little Davie [the bassist] we need you now.” Then, her father, the great guitarist Roebuck ‘Pops’ Staples: she’s like, “daddy, daddy.” Then, the verse was like, “somebody, play your piano.” That’s the whole middle of the song. That’s the heart of the song. Not the damn lyrics. It’s her just saying, “play,” and they’re already playing. And that’s not a call to order. It’s an acknowledgement, and a celebration, of what was already happening.