***Feature Story: How to Play The Strokes’ “Last Nite”***

National Standards: 1-9

NYC-based band The Strokes were active from 1998 through 2006 and singer Julian Casablancas wrote “Last Nite,” a break-up song featuring slightly distorted guitars and vocals, and a driving rock beat.

The song is uncomplicated in its construction and even novice players should be able to pull it off. Key to the song is replicating the sound of the guitars, but also a drummer paying attention to the playing – and not playing - of a crash cymbal. A short and simple guitar solo rounds out the tune.

**Prepare**

Have students listen to the Strokes’ recording and identify each of the instruments and parts. Listen for the different guitars, how flat sounding (rather than boomy) the bass part is, and also how the use of cymbals dials the song’s energy up and down.

**Key points in the article:**

• Guitar distortion effects can be found and applied via amplifier or pedal settings.

• Vocal distortion is accomplished by the singer limiting his distance from the mic, sometimes “overloading” it to produce the effect.

• A splashy crash cymbal sound increases in intensity at times.

• The singer attaches a measure of attitude or “swagger” to phrases, accentuating his disdain for his relationship.

**Begin**

Review vocabulary words from the article below:

• DISTORTION – Alteration of an audio or video signal caused by change in the wave form of the original signal.

• NONSENSICAL: language, conduct, or an idea that is absurd or contrary to good sense

• PANACHE: dash or exaggeration in style and action.

• PEDALBOARD: a flat frame placed on the floor, with mounted and connected guitar effects boxes, each of which is trigger by a foot switch.

• UNADORNED: plain and without frills

**Discuss**

How important is it to play rock music at high volume, and what are the issues with doing so?

• What role does mixing or balance play in the music of a small ensemble?

• What are the options for sound reinforcement or amplification in terms of mic’ing and monitoring?

Select a sampling of distortion sounds on manufacturer websites and play the sound of a tremelo effect, a chorus effect, a flanger effect and three types of distortion effects.

**Play the song and listen for how the crash cymbal starts, builds, stops and re-enters.**

**Ask**

• Each student to find and recommend a song that features a guitar played through a distortion box.

• Play Jimi Hendrix version of the national anthem.

**Expand**

How important were electronic effects to the development of the rock music of the ‘50s and early 60’s to the versions of rock played by bands like Led Zeppelin, The Who, Santana and what changes in rock and rock culture occurred as the music changed?