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### **Affect My Class!**

#### **Music, Embodiment, Empathy and Representation in BBC Television's *The Royle Family***

As Jim Royle's refrain in *The Royle Family* ('\_\_\_\_\_ my arse!') regularly reminds audio-viewers of the BBC's critically acclaimed but controversial television sitcom (1998-), the specifics of this fictional family's working class bodies are central to the series – and not merely as vehicles for the generation of scatological humour. Tabloid tirades against the show's warts and all depiction of family life in Manchester, however, were often blind to the political provocations of *The Royle Family*'s exceptionally sympathetic representation of British working class life. Presumably, such respondents were also deaf to the programme's subtle deployment of popular music, which generates affective and other embodied responses that assist the induction of culturally subversive experiences of interclass empathy. To engage analytically with these functions of music in *The Royle Family*, however, is also to engage with a key challenge facing critical musicologists seeking to enrich theoretically engaged close readings (of screen music or any other repertoire) with reflections on affect and embodiment: the ostensibly unbridgeable divide between theories of affect and cultural representation. Situated within, and contributing to, a discussion of those tensions, and drawing on the arguments of music and screen theorists concerned with affect, embodiment and subjectivity, but also authenticity, class, groove, untutored singing and vocality, this paper will discuss musical sequences from episodes of *The Royle Family*: the 'Mambo No. 5' decoration scene and the tripartite performance of popular songs at Anthony Royle's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday party. By demonstrating the integral role of musical affect in the programme's short circuiting of British class consciousness, the paper will argue in favour of critical strategies seeking, where appropriate, to short circuit the stand off between theorists of affect and embodiment, on the one side, and, on the other, of narrative and representation.