

Understanding 'It':

Affective Authenticity, Space, and the Phish Scene

By

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Abstract

“Understanding *It*: Affective Authenticity, Space, and the Phish Scene” is an ethnographic study of “scene identity” around the contemporary rock band Phish. Utilizing data generated from six years of ethnographic fieldwork, including over one hundred and fifty interviews with Phish scene participants, this project explores how the production of space at Phish shows works to form a Phish scene identity. I contend that the identity of the Phish scene, what the band members and fans refer to as “it” and I call a spatial articulation of affective authenticity, is produced and formed by scene members themselves, drawing from the interrelations between the production of space (practices that create a specific environment) at shows and a white, middle and upper-middle class cultural memory of the Grateful Dead scene. I situate this process amidst a cultural backdrop of 1980s and 1990s identity politics and in particular, multiculturalism and suggest that Phish scene identity be analyzed as a middle class performance of resistance that achieves community and meaning without resisting class privilege. Following many American, cultural, and performance studies scholars as well as numerous anthropologists, sociologists, and both musicologists and ethnomusicologists, I treat performance as a ritual and posit Phish scene participants can be seen to achieve a social efficacy in their performance of resistance that although heightened from everyday life ultimately serves to replicate the structures of such life.

Research regarding the affective nature of “it” and its relationship to the process of cultural memory, collective remembering and forgetting, can be seen as an insightful and powerful theoretical and methodological tool in cultural studies, for it exposes information

pertaining not only to subject identity, but also to the discourses and contexts which help articulate such identities. This dissertation begins to examine what interdisciplinary scholars are to make of textual and spatial connections. How does one work to understand these affiliated, and oftentimes, affective relationships? And, in the case of Phish scene identity, how can one understand “it”?

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Given that I am the first in my family to earn a college degree I want to begin by thanking my parents, Michael and Victoria, for their continued love and support as I navigated my way through Gettysburg College, the University of Alabama, and the University of Kansas. To my mother, thank you for suggesting I enroll in a philosophy course as an undergraduate at Gettysburg. You taught me at an early age the importance of critical inquiry. To my father, thank you for showing me how music and culture are interrelated. You taught me the best way to live life requires finding a way to do what you love.

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This manuscript represents a spectrum of voices. Thank you to every individual who took the time to talk with me both in passing and in great detail about a part of your life you cherish and protect so much. To borrow a line from Trey, “This one is for you.”

Finally to my best friend and husband, Keith, thank you for always believing in me and, when necessary, for turning the music up and reminding me what it means to get *it*.

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Introduction

“Phish was where it was at”: Situating Place in Space¹

Never has a band touched so many so profoundly, while
leaving so many more so profoundly untouched.

Kelefa Sanneh²

I don't think that there's anything wrong with that and I
wouldn't make apologies for it. It just is what it is.

Peter Conners³

After more than twenty-five years and 1, 347 shows little academic or public scholarship pertaining to Phish exists. To date, only three dissertations incorporate research regarding Phish. Not one of these projects has been placed under contract or published in book form by a scholarly press. Aside from a few biographies sitting on the “Music” or “Culture” section shelves at a Barnes and Noble or a Borders Books, cultural studies scholarship relating to Phish in the public sphere most often reflects popular culture and music critic Kelefa Sanneh’s sentiments above: Phish’s cultural significance does not run nearly as wide as it does deep. Minus the occasional concert review (or concert preview in a publication’s “upcoming events” section) and a punctuated four-pronged barrage of biographical sketches and interviews when (1) the band took a hiatus in 2000, then (2) returned to the stage in 2003 only to (3) disband in 2004 and then (4) return once again in early 2009, mainstream press regarding any and all facets of the band and its fans is, for the most part, little more than a hiccup.

¹ Phish fan and music history doctoral student Jacob Cohen in conversation about Phish and 1990s American music, “Hip, Cool, and the Cultural Currency of the Grateful Dead,” (panel discussion at the 11th Annual Grateful Dead Caucus, February 14, 2008, Albuquerque, New Mexico).

² Kelefa Sanneh, “Critic’s Notebook: Some Small Pleasures, As Phish Dissolves,” *The New York Times*, June 21, 2004, E5.

³ Peter Conners, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 14, 2009, Rochester, New York.

While I am intrigued by the almost complete absence of and assumed reasoning behind cultural work regarding Phish, this dissertation is not my attempt to (re)locate “all things Phish” to either the academic or public scholarship spotlight. That said, I cannot help as both a Phish fan and an American studies scholar compelled by another American studies scholar Jay Mechling’s call to “listen to the silences.”⁴ What can we “learn...about the workings of culture” from the matter-of-fact contention (“is what it is”) that writer and fan Peter Connors made in conversation with me one Friday afternoon in August of 2009 as we pondered the implications of claims such as Sanneh’s?⁵ It is in this vein that I have chosen to begin “Understanding *‘It’*: Affective Authenticity, Space, and the Phish Scene” with Sanneh’s and Connors’ remarks for both their words and their silences touch on, tug at, and tease out the assumptions, experiences, conversations, and questions that propel this project.

In his review of one of Phish’s 2004 Coney Island KeySpan Park (now MCU Park) shows for *The New York Times* Sanneh explained how, unless you the reader were a part of the band’s “large but limited cult” of fans, you “probably d[idn]’t care” that the band had then-recently announced its plan to break up.⁶ In fact, Sanneh maintained that this event would go unnoticed by “most people.”⁷ Then, just before concluding that “Phish never really seemed like part of *our* pop culture”—but still clearly demarcating an undefined difference between “us” (Sanneh and the reader) and “them” (Phish fans)—Sanneh, as if to level with the reader, explained,

To love Phish you have to give up on a lot...on hit singles...on the singer as a character: a prophet, a lover, a sign of the times...on politics and demographics.

⁴ Jay Mechling, “Some [New] Elementary Axioms for an American Cultur[al] Studies,” *American Studies* 38, no. 2 (1997): 21.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Sanneh, “Critic’s Notebook.”

⁷ Ibid.

You have to give up on fashion and fads, controversy and choreography, hookups and haircuts. All that's left is four musicians. Some fans might be glad to be rid of these distractions, but for most of us they are a big part of why we love music.

These distractions are our pop culture: they help us attach meaning to songs; they help us connect all the fragments we hear every day, giving us reasons to swoon and rant and argue, years and decades later.⁸

Sanneh's comments, while relying on an assumed binary, are puzzling and beg for further clarification. Who is this Phish fan? Who is this person who gives up on so much? And, who is this collective "we" that refuses to give up on hit singles, politics, and controversy? Who are "we" and what is "our" popular culture? Sanneh is careful to make direct mention of all four band members in the article—Trey Anastasio plays "puddle-stomping guitar solos," Mike Gordon, "low, grunting bass," Page McConnell, "rainwater chords" on keys, all while drummer Jon Fishman keeps "a faint but steady pulse"—but is noticeably silent when it comes to identifying those 12,000 fans in attendance that June evening.⁹ Rather than paint a similarly detailed description of those looking up at the band members on the stage, it is assumed that "we" know who "they" are.

Self-identifying by silently "othering" touches on an practice that takes place both inside and outside the academy and as such it is a common thread the runs through this project both chapter by chapter and as a cohesive whole. In practice "ours"/"theirs" rhetoric does more than simply denote difference. Rather, it implies an unequal binary where power and difference intersect. Most often this is manifested in "what 'we' do is good while what 'they' do is bad" type scenarios. Cultural studies research, specifically popular culture and popular music

⁸ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁹ Ibid. Phish played and sold-out two nights at Brooklyn's KeySpan Park in June 2004: Thursday, June, 17th and Friday, June 18th. Sanneh's *New York Times* review is of the second night's performance. The first night, June 17th, was the first show of the Summer 2004 tour. It was also simulcast at movie theaters across the nation to thousands more fans.

scholarship is no exception to this practice. In fact, at one point scholarly work in these fields according to sociologist Sarah Thornton, “tended to embrace anthropological notions of culture as a *way of life*” while simultaneously “spurn[ing] art-oriented definitions...relat[ing] to *standards of excellence*.”¹⁰ Take for instance, early scholarship regarding fandom. Historically defined as deviant, fans were often perceived as over-emotional, obsessed, and hysterical individuals. As Joli Jenson points out, “the characterization of fandom as pathology is based in, supports, and justifies elitist and disrespectful beliefs about [people’s] common life.”¹¹ Exemplifying this high culture/low culture framework, Jenson explains fandom is “what ‘they’ do; ‘we’ on the other hand, have tastes and preferences, and select worthy people, beliefs and activities for our admiration and esteem....what ‘they’ do is deviant, and therefore dangerous, while what ‘we’ do is normal, and therefore safe.”¹²

Theodor Adorno, working out of the Frankfurt School’s understanding of culture theorized popular music as a way of life that also corresponded to the “styles of excellence” Thornton mentions. In particular, Adorno posited popular music fans were themselves, “products of the same mechanisms which determine[d] the production of popular music [and that] [t]heir spare time serve[d] only to reproduce their working capacity.”¹³ In this framework, the class distinction that stripped the masses of agency also, according to Adorno, marked the distinction between high culture and low culture that Thornton speaks of where power and difference intersect. Popular music was, in Adorno’s vision, for the masses while what he called more “serious” music was an art reserved solely for those who controlled the means of production.

¹⁰ Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 8.

¹¹ Joli Jenson, “Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization,” in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³ Theodor W. Adorno, “On Popular Music,” in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, ed. John Storey (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), 210.

Sanneh's claims complicate this base-superstructure framework. His possessive sense of "our pop culture" appears not once but twice in the article and when coupled with the multiple additional possessive pronouns—"we," "us," etc.—leads one to infer that he is talking to us, the masses themselves.¹⁴ "We" all revel in the politics and controversy that as "our pop culture" distracts us from our "working capacity" while at the same time simply reinforcing it as part of a vicious cycle. In this same vein the Phish fan, positioned as the other, exists outside of, or above, "us," the masses. He or she gives up on everything that is a distraction to "us" (the masses) and only cares about the four musicians left standing on the stage. Most importantly, Phish fans do this because they can. Phish fans, according to Sanneh, have agency while, "we," the masses do not. The Phish fans' social, economic, political, and cultural positioning provides them with this ability. In short, because the Phish fan is not a part of the masses, because he or she is part of the small number of those who control the means of production, he or she can appreciate the art of "serious" music rather than the distraction that is popular music.

However, even if this is the case (and a notion I address further in the first and third chapters of this project), one must still question Sanneh's frequent use of the possessive "our." Why seek to establish difference within an identity/entity (popular culture/music) whose only difference in this theoretical framework can be marked by the "other" "non-popular" culture? Why not, in Sanneh's case just omit the "our" and assert, as Adorno did, that said distractions are popular culture? Or, why not claim that the distractions are simply "our culture" if theory dictates that the masses are the only ones allowed to "have" popular culture? What if, to borrow from Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies ex-director Stuart Hall, "there is no whole,

¹⁴ This idea is also aided by the fact that the piece was printed in a source one could deem to be aimed at the masses, a national newspaper such as *The New York Times*.

authentic, autonomous ‘popular culture’ which lies outside the field of force of the relations of cultural power and domination?”¹⁵

I contend that Hall’s theorization of popular culture tugs at the flaws in traditional Frankfurt School social theory and ultimately provides a better suited lens through which Sanneh’s assumed multiple popular *cultures*—yours, mine, theirs—can be teased out. In particular, I am drawn to Hall’s claim that, “The meaning of a cultural symbol,” in this case Sanneh’s notion of “our popular culture,” “is given in part by the social field into which it is incorporated, the practices with which it articulates and is made to resonate.”¹⁶ However, while Hall’s theoretical framework may prove more helpful in unpacking the meaning embedded in Sanneh’s “our” popular culture it does not do so at the expense of Adorno’s more static class-bound understanding. Rather than disregarding class as an organizing force Hall recapitulates Adorno’s class-based analysis in a different light by granting agency to those Adorno did not. Hall repositions cultural producers as cultural consumers and cultural consumers as cultural producers and theorizes culture as well as the popular as a site of struggle: “What matters is not the intrinsic... fixed objects of culture, but the state of play in cultural relations: to put it bluntly and in an oversimplified form – what counts is the class struggle in and over culture.”¹⁷ As such, I believe Hall’s model helps tease out the classed silences in Sanneh’s argument.

At first glance Sanneh’s review in the *Times* may be said to appear “class-less” as he makes no explicit mention of class and/or class culture. However, as I’ve suggested that does not mean the topic is absent from his analysis. As anthropologist Sherry Ortner points out, “[A]lthough class goes largely unspoken in American social life, it is not actually discursively

¹⁵ Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘the Popular,’” in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, 460.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 462.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

absent. Rather it is displaced into culturally more salient discourses.”¹⁸ Under a more critical eye and after a closer reading Sanneh’s discussion of Phish and the band’s fans appears entrenched in references to class and class culture. By positioning popular culture as a distraction, Sanneh as I’ve already argued, *is* discussing class and class culture. On the one hand he implies the Phish fan is culturally in a position of power. The Phish fan has agency. The Phish fan can give up on and do without the distractions that constitute Sanneh’s pop culture. On the other hand he is careful not to establish a Phish fan/non-Phish fan exclusive binary where agency only rests with the former and not the latter. Phish fans may not need the distractions that are “our” (Sanneh and the presumed reader’s) pop culture but that is not to say they don’t need another set of distractions to constitute “their” pop culture. Theorized this way, class marks the undefined difference between Sanneh’s “us” and “them.”

In the introductory pages that follow I explain how and why I theorize Phish scene identity as a performance, as an effect of specific emplaced practices embodied and enacted by (although not exclusively) predominately white individuals through the privileged social and economic cultural positionings of the American middle and upper-middle class. Contextualized historically during the period of postmodernism and at the height of identity politics, many white middle and upper-middle class Americans, as the title of this Introduction, taken from a discussion I had with one Phish fan suggests, felt “Phish was where *it* was at.” This dissertation unpacks this white middle and upper-middle class pop music culture articulation. In the following chapters I contend that the identity of the Phish scene, what the band members and fans refer to as *it* and I call a spatial articulation of affective authenticity, is produced and formed by scene members themselves, drawing from the interrelations between practices that create a

¹⁸ Sherry B. Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 20.

specific environment at shows and a white, middle and upper-middle class construction of identity amidst a cultural backdrop of identity politics and in particular, multiculturalism. I present this process as part of the historical period known as postmodernism and argue that in this light Phish scene identity can be read as a middle class performance of resistance that although similar to, is ultimately different from other post-War countercultural performances of resistance.

“What’s in a Name?”: Phish with a “P”

In her 1998 Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, “What’s in a Name?” Janice Radway investigated the power and process of naming. Specifically, her concern rested with “an organization [that] foster[ed] specific forms of knowledge” that then reflected an “insistence on the importance of difference and division within American [culture].”¹⁹ She sought to explore “what the association [could] do at th[at] particular moment, on the brink of a new century, and at the edge of the so-called ‘American’ continent, to ensure that its very name d[id] not enforce the...search for the distinctively American ‘common ground.’”²⁰ While I am not looking to directly join this particular conversation per se, I am very much invested in Radway’s call for cultural work that uncovers and unpacks not simply meaning(s) but also the processes themselves that produce such meaning(s).

As a four piece band that formed on the University of Vermont’s Burlington campus twenty seven years ago Phish—Trey Anastasio (guitar), Page McConnell (keys), Mike Gordon

¹⁹ Janice Radway, “What’s in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 20 November, 1998,” *American Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (1999): 2.

²⁰ Radway, 3. The “common ground” Radway refers to is reminiscent of Gene Wise’s description of early American studies “myth and symbol” work that sought to establish and promote an essentializing, static, unified understanding of America such as an “American Mind.”

(bass) and Jon Fishman (drums)—writes, performs, and produces music that resists typical record industry genre placement. According to American history scholar, editor of *Jambands.com*, and author of *Jambands: The Complete Guide to the Players, Music & Scene* and *The Phishing Manual* Dean Budnick, Phish has a musical “penchant for bending and blending established genres.”²¹ In his words, “Phish isn’t a bluegrass band, a jazz band, a blues band, or a funk band, although at a given moment it may deliver any of these styles. Instead, Phish is a group that melds and intermingles these forms into its particular flow of music.”²² For instance, Phish fan Dan Purcell recalled being perplexed by the band’s music when he first heard them play at Amherst College in 1989:

It [was] a spooky little groove in E minor...[then] the band...sped up considerably. For eight bars the guitarist d[id] some crazy fast hammer-on exercise. Then eight bars of weird atonality. Then the hammer-on again. Then back into the spacey, freedom rhythmic canyon...[I] ha[d] trouble finding a point of reference.²³

After asking his friends what they thought the music sounded like Purcell explained,

To [his friend Ian] him they sound[ed] like early Genesis, with composed keyboard-and-guitar fugues, variable time signatures, a scavenged stylistic blend of excursionary jazz, high-toned conservatory minimalism, and classic rock. But to the guy next to Ian...they sound[ed] like Frank Zappa; mocking sub-referentially and periodic formal cuteness.²⁴

Later in the show Purcell recalled,

²¹ Dean Budnick, “Jam Band, Jam-Band, or Jamband?: How We Got There and Why It Still Matters (Somewhat),” in *Jambands: The Complete Guide to the Players, Music & Scene* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2003), 242.

²² Ibid.

²³ Dan Purcell, “4/20/89 Humphries House (The Zoo), Amherst College, Amherst, MA,” in *The Phish Companion: A Guide to the Band and their Music*, The Mockingbird Foundation (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2000), 404-6.

²⁴ Ibid.

they br[oke] into “Walk Away” by the James Gang, the kind of disaffected ‘70s romance that gives classic rock a bad name...[Then]someone...yell[ed] “Whipping Post!” and [I] th[ought], the Allman Brothers, that’s hardly a fashionable choice of cover, now is it? But these guys covered fucking James Gang a minute ago, which is well down the road toward Molly Hatchet in [my] own personal opinion. But they also played a Syd Barrett song...The last song of the night [wa]s the strangest: a half-sung, half-narrative epic about this nasty, mangy, evil dog.²⁵

These suggestions echo my own impression of Phish’s music the first time I heard it.

Unlike Purcell, I first heard the band over the P.A. system in my high school’s natatorium when a girl on my school’s swim team played a tape of their third album (the first released on Elektra records), *Picture of Nectar*, at an afternoon practice.²⁶ The first song (“Llama”) went by quickly and included fast drum beats, wailing chords on an electric keyboard, and the sort of fast-paced guitar shredding often associated with hard rock or heavy/power metal. I had no idea what the singer was saying beyond something that sounded like “taboot, taboot.” The next song (“Eliza”) was not so much different from music I’d heard before as it was a surprise change from the first song. This one contained no lyrics and was much slower, almost like a classical ballad. The next song (“Cavern”) instantly caught my attention as the flow, the groove, made me want to move my feet. The lyrics didn’t seem to make very much sense to me and the singer’s voice had reverberating echo-like quality to it—almost as if he was talking into a megaphone—but it also had a catchy drum and bass line beat that carried every lyric and a series of brief yet punctuated electric guitar and piano riffs.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Phish, *Picture of Nectar*, prod. Phish “with a lot of help from Kevin [Shapiro],” Elektra Records, 1992. “Discography: *Picture of Nectar*” in *The Phish Companion: A Guide to the Band and their Music*, 2d ed., by Mockingbird Foundation (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2004), 15-6.

To some music theorists, popular music, and cultural studies scholars this musical style can be categorized as a type of rock and roll where rock and roll is “characterized by musical and stylistic heterogeneity.”²⁷ Musicologist Katie Harvey, in her Master’s thesis on Grateful Dead fans’ tape trading and collecting practices, describes Phish as a “quartet [that] has explored their version of rock music through elaborate contrapuntal compositions (as well as forays into pop, country, jazz, funk, minimalism, & everything in between), free form improvisation, playful imagery, fanciful lyrics, and irresistible dance grooves.”²⁸

However, to the few social science and humanities scholars whose work directly addresses Phish and in the minds of many Phish fans Phish is a jamband. In her dissertation, “Theater of Jambands: Performance of Resistance,” performance studies scholar and Phish fan Christina Allaback classifies Phish, alongside other bands the Grateful Dead, the String Cheese Incident, and Widespread Panic as one the “four of the largest American arena jambands.”²⁹ Communication studies Professor and Phish fan Jnan Blau also refers to Phish as a jamband in his work.³⁰ Budnick suggests that “the defining component of a jamband is its musical variegation” and as such he also contends Phish is a jamband.³¹ Steve Bernstein, editor of *Relix* magazine, in the “Foreward” to *Jambands: The Complete Guide to the Players, Music & Scene* echoes all of these claims and explains that jambands represent a confluence of musical genres:

²⁷ Lawrence Grossberg, “Another Boring Day in Paradise,” *Popular Music* 4 (1984): 225.

²⁸ Katie A. Harvey, “Embalming the Dead: Taping, Trading, and Collecting the Aura of the Grateful Dead” (MA thesis, Tufts University, 2009), 20.

²⁹ Christina L. Allaback, “Theater of Jambands: Performance of Resistance” (Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 2009), v.

³⁰ Jnan Ananda Blau, “‘The trick was to surrender to the flow’: Phish, the Phish Phenomenon, and Improvisational Performance across Cultural and Communicative Contexts” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 2007).

³¹ Budnick, “Jam Band, Jam-Band, or Jamband?,” 242.

“[Their] influences are diverse: Electronica, blues, bluegrass, newgrass, reggae, jazz, [rock and roll] and funk.”³²

Building on blending established genres and having a diverse list of musical influences as jamband criteria, Butch Trucks, founding member and drummer of the Allman Brothers Band, quickly pointed out how his fellow bandmate, Gregg Allman, summed up their own inclusion in the category simply because the Allman Brother Band is “a band that jams.”³³ Referencing both musical hybridity and a deep-seated commitment to improvisation or jamming as jamband qualifiers, Budnick gives credence to this third defining component when described how the Dave Matthews Band, a band that is often in the world of popular music ascribed the label “jamband,” is in fact not a jamband but instead a first-rate pop-rock band:

When the Dave Matthews Band began gigging in 1991, its music had a pronounced element of improvisation. This is not surprising given that most of the band members were seasoned jazz players (even teenage bass player Stefan Lessard has such predilections). However, the primary motivation behind this approach was a limited amount of material...[T]he fact remains that the band, as it performs today, typically adheres to the arrangements...[While] certain guest performers...tend to instigate some collective improve...any given DMB [Dave Matthews Band] show most often retains a reasonable tight focus on the songs themselves, as presented by the euphonious voices of the five band members.³⁴

However, even given this specific differentiation, Budnick is, and as I would argue rightfully so, wary of the oversimplification that mere jamming and claims of improvisation often imply: a “slippery slope” type of qualifier that lead Christina Allaback to suggest that as such, “we might

³² Steve Bernstein, “Forward,” in *Jambands: The Complete Guide to the Players, Music & Scene*, ix.

³³ Butch Trucks, “Introduction,” in *Jambands: The Complete Guide to the Players, Music & Scene*, xii.

³⁴ Budnick, *Jambands: The Complete Guide to the Players, Music & Scene*, 38.

define any band playing today by [this] measure.”³⁵ Seeking out a more holistic explanation Budnick further develops his definition of a jamband to encompass more than genre formation and improvisation prowess. In other words, jambands do more than simply jam.

I want to suggest that a large part of what defines a jamband, to echo Budnick’s theorization, rests in the live concert experience. Pointing out that few jambands, if any, reach commercial radio chart-topping success, Budnick asserts that

[t]he jam prefix doesn’t mandate a disregard for songcraft. In fact, the best of these artists deliver commanding compositions that draw on a palette of varied sounds, which in turn are further embellished and animated in concert.³⁶

Commercially successful studio albums often represent a series of fine-tuned finished and complete songs. Jamband studio albums, on the other hand, tend to represent the skeletal, “bare bones” draft of a song – a form that “finds function through [the] context” in which it is performed.³⁷ For instance, Phish’s “You Enjoy Myself” (also known as “YEM”), a song that appears on the band’s commercially produced (Elektra) studio album, *Junta*, when played in its entirety consists of four distinct sections: 1) Intro; 2) Jam; 3) Bass and Drums; and 4) Lyrical Vocal Jam.³⁸ Clocking in at just less than ten minutes on *Junta* (9:47 to be exact), the song’s length varies from ten to over twenty-five minutes when performed live depending on the level of improvisation. Coincidentally, as I further discuss in Chapter Three, this type of improvisational jamming can also be situated as what Professor of Literature, Communication,

³⁵ Allaback, “Theater of Jambands,” 3.

³⁶ Budnick, “Jam Band, Jam-Band, or Jamband?,” 242.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Phish, *Junta*, prod. Phish, self-released, May 8, 1989. Phish, *Junta*, prod. Phish, Elektra Records, October 6, 1992.

and Culture Philip Auslander calls the “countercultural ethos of authenticity” in rock and roll.³⁹ In this theorization of authenticity and countercultural rock and roll “authenticity rests in the fact that live versions of songs are different from recorded versions.”⁴⁰

Keeping all of these definitions, examples, and explanations in mind, I am drawn to the ambiguously fluid nature the term “jamband” attempts to articulate. Like Radway, I too am interested in the power and processes of naming. And therefore I, like Budnick, am taken by the form “jambands” as a neologism.⁴¹ Like the music it references, the term “jamband,” to borrow again from Budnick, is “a form that finds function through context.”⁴² More than “jam band” or “jam-band,” “jamband” suggests a “flow, a fluidity that marks the music the terms tries to encapsulate.”⁴³

Getting *It*: Phish and the Grateful Dead

When I first heard Phish that afternoon at swim practice something aside from a few seemingly random “taboots” and the urge to get up and move my feet stuck with me. Almost ten years later in Hampton, Virginia, at the Hampton Coliseum at my first live Phish show experience, I felt as if something very similar was plucked from my inside my body and birthed in the hundreds of tiny goosebumps that ran up my spine, through back of my neck, and down my arms as Trey repeated the opening chords to “Tweezer.”

There standing shoulder to shoulder and chest to back with more than 13,799 of my closest friends and family I got *it*. Now to be clear, I was not literally with any of my biological

³⁹ Philip Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 82.

⁴⁰ Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 83.

⁴¹ Budnick, “Jam Band, Jam-Band, or Jamband?,” 242.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

family members. Nor was I surrounded by all of my closest friends (by no means do I maintain 14,000 intimate friendships). However, like so many other fans whose voices make-up the following pages and chapters, I had the distinct feeling that I was a part of *something*, that I was tuned in to the same *thing* as everyone else in that place and at that time.

Jamband fans, according to Steve Bernstein, “get it.”⁴⁴ Based on my research I contend Phish fans in particular are no exception to this claim. When writer, information architect, and digital designer Christian Crumlish, recalled helping The Mockingbird Foundation, a Phish fan-based non-profit organization, shop the first volume its encyclopedia of “all things Phish,” *The Phishing Companion*, around he explained, “The only hitch was convincing someone with decision-making authority at a publishing house that [Phish fans would buy the book]... What it’s going to come down to, I said, is finding someone on the inside who ‘gets it.’”⁴⁵ Jim Stinnett, Mike Gordon’s (the bass player in Phish) bass instructor once stated,

As a veteran teacher at Berklee College of Music, I have known countless young musicians who were inspired by Phish to pursue a career in music. Many of these students cannot say exactly what *it* is that moved them – but the Phish experience did move them.⁴⁶

One long-time Phish fan described “it” as “that indescribable place that we [as Phish fans] all know so well.”⁴⁷ Linking Phish, the band’s fans, and this idea of an affective “it” he explained,

IT is the reason we go on tour. IT is the reason we fly cross-country for three days or less. IT is the reason credit cards are abused for hotel rooms, rental cars,

⁴⁴ Bernstein, “Forward,” ix.

⁴⁵ Christian Crumlish, “In Memory of Jay Kahn,” in *The Phish Companion*, 2n ed., v.

⁴⁶ Jim Stinnett, “Foreword,” in *The Phish Companion*, 2n ed., viii. Emphasis added.

⁴⁷ “IT,” Mr. Minor’s Phish Thoughts, posted October 14, 2008, <http://mrminer.wordpress.com/tag/the-moment/> (accessed September 21, 2009).

airplane, and concert tickets. IT is the reason we have driven the path of each and every highway in this vast land.”⁴⁸

In a (p)historical context, IT is the name of a multi-day music festival Phish held in August of 2003 that drew over 70,000 devout fans to Limestone, Maine. After passing under a gigantic archway erected by that band reading “Our Intent Is All For Your Delight” Phish fans from locations across the country, set down their tarps and set up their campsites thereby assembling, if only temporarily, the second largest city in the state.⁴⁹

Andy Gadiel, the founder of jambase.com, a website advocating everyone “go see live music,” described “*it*” as “a common consciousness surrounding the music” that while extending beyond just Phish served to link Phish to the 1960s psychedelic and countercultural band, the Grateful Dead:

Inspired by the Grateful Dead, kept current by Phish, and progressing all the time by new and innovative bands, the music clearly had a link that would not only unite the bands themselves but also a very large community surrounding them.⁵⁰

Phish fan and music history doctoral student Jacob Cohen, in a discussion about Phish echoed these sentiments as well when he told me,

I remember...[at] a Phish show at the Gorge, summer of 2003, walking about 4 o'clock in the morning—I walked down to where the shakedown street kinda was and there was just a bunch of people all standing around, guitars—‘Wake up to find out that you are the eyes’ [in a singing voice] — and they’re just dancing and screaming. These are people who were either my age or younger and it’s this

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ The Mockingbird Foundation, *The Phishing Companion*, 2d ed., 659.

⁵⁰ Andy Gadiel, “The Genesis of Jambands.com,” in *Jambands: The Complete Guide to the Players, Music & Scene*, 243. The Grateful Dead refers to the iconic San Francisco based band formed amidst America’s 1960s psychedelic countercultural scene. While Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh, Bob Weir, Mickey Hart, and Bill Kreutzmann are often cited as the Grateful Dead, I also include Ron “Pigpen” McKernan, Donna Jean and Keith Godchaux, Vince Welnick, and Brent Mydland in my definition.

kinda sense of, um, this is something we've inherited, this is something we've taken directly and, um, you know, this is part of our kind of group consciousness.⁵¹

Christian Crumlish, in the same publishing memory mentioned earlier, revealed that Jay Kahn was the “insider” in the publishing world who, because he “got it,” ended up being instrumental in the production of *The Phishing Companion's* first volume:

Like me, Jay was an old Deadhead with an eclectic taste in music. He was a veteran of numerous Phish shows, a huge fan of New Orleans R&B, and a lover of adventurous and improvisatory music of all stripes. As a sales manager at Miller Freeman, he was also close to the folks at book distributor PGW (Publishers Group West), which numbered not a few jamband fans among their own staff. Jay met me for drinks in Berkeley one night so that he could look me in the eye and get a feel for the people involved in this project. After we talked for an hour or two, he pulled a contract out of his pocket and handed it over to me...With just a little more haggling over the next week or so, we had a deal that resulted in the massively successful first edition...It's fair to say that th[e] book may not have happened without Jay's support. He even helped us locate the cover art used.⁵²

In this case, “it” also involved a familiarity, a shared consciousness if you will, both of and with the Grateful Dead. That said, and as I further explore in Chapter One, narratives of a relationship linking Phish and the Grateful Dead—“The Grateful Dead was the first band in a genre it created, spawning countless musical children [such as Phish]” and “[Phish] started as a

⁵¹ Cohen, “Hip, Cool, and the Cultural Currency of the Grateful Dead.” Shakedown Street is a facet of both the Phish scene and the Grateful Dead scene that I examine further in Chapter Three. “Wake up to find out that you are the eyes” is a portion of lyrics from the Grateful Dead's song “Eyes of the World.” Robert Hunter and Jerry Garcia, “Eyes of the World,” *Wake of the Flood*, prod. Grateful Dead, Grateful Dead Records, 1973.

⁵² Christian Crumlish, “In Memory of Jay Kahn,” v.

[Grateful] Dead cover band”—permeate various commercial media outlets as well as Phish fan testimonies.⁵³

Moreover, this concept of an affective “it” also appears in both oral histories and ethnographies of Grateful Dead fans and scholarship pertaining to the interdisciplinary subfield of Grateful Dead Studies. For instance, American studies scholar and popular author, Tom Wolfe, in trying to “re-create the mental atmosphere” of Ken Kesey and his merry band of Pranksters, a group whose own collective identity is so historically woven into the identity of the Grateful Dead scene that some suggest, “the history of the Merry Pranksters is our history [and]...Kesey was, in many ways, the founding father of all Deadheads,” explains, “[A]ll the Pranksters were conscious of *it*, but none of them put *it* into words...Yet there *it* was!”⁵⁴

Thirty five years later, Phishheads at “IT” walked past a quote from Jack Kerouac’s *On The Road*, etched onto a massive communal chalkboard:

All of a sudden somewhere in the middle of the chorus he *gets it*—everybody looks up and knows; they listen; he picks it up and carries. Time stops. He’s filling empty space with the substance of our lives, confessions of his bellybottom strain, remembrances of ideas, rehashes of old blowing. He has to blow across bridges and come back and do it with such infinite feeling soul-exploratory for that tune of the moment that everybody knows it’s not the tune that counts but IT—’ Dean could go no further; he was sweating telling about it.⁵⁵

⁵³ Justin Jacobs, “Pearl Jamband: Is Pearl Jam a Modern Grateful Dead?” *pastemagazine.com*, September 18, 2009, <http://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2009/09/pearl-jamband-are-pearl-jam-a-modern-grateful-dead.html> (accessed November 30, 2009). Jesse Jarnow and Jacob Cohen, “Hip, Cool, and the Cultural Currency of the Grateful Dead.”

⁵⁴ Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1968), 415, 127. Emphasis added. Peter Connors, *Growing Up Dead* (Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2009), 125.

⁵⁵ These sorts of “public” or “communal” boards are prevalent at Phish festivals and, in most cases, are supplied by the band via their festival crew (often including the same installation artists Russ Bennett and Lars Fisk). The boards are typically left open at the start of the festival and are filled by the end of the event by personal messages (lost and found, graffiti, poems, etc.) It is not known whether the Kerouac quote stemmed from a band decision to place it on the wall or whether fans posted it there. However, it is worth noting fans react as if the band put it up.

The name of a multi-day festival and the particular catchphrase for a seemingly specific known-yet-unknown, spoken-yet-unspoken, collective-yet-individual quality, “it” brings people together and forms what Lawrence Grossberg calls “affective alliances.”⁵⁶ “It” provides common ground, gives meaning, and is filled with meaning. *It* is undeniably dynamic. *It* is a place, a feeling, a moment, a time-space location, a consciousness, and a reason. *It* is an experience and *it* is embodied. Keeping these definitions in mind as well as my aforementioned interest in and commitment to cultural work that pays attention to both the meanings and processes that work to produce such meanings I contend that “it” be thought of what philosopher Edward S. Casey refers to as an “emplaced experience.”⁵⁷

Setting the Scene: Mapping Time, Space, and Place

This dissertation marks my attempt to answer the call put forth by scholars across a variety of disciplines that academics pay particular attention to the production of space. Arguing that all too often in contemporary social science and cultural studies scholarship “space itself becomes a kind of neutral grid on which cultural difference, historical memory, and social organization is inscribed,” anthropologists Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson posit that “space functions as a central organizing principle [while] at the same time disappear[ing] from analytical purview.”⁵⁸ Cultural theorist Lawrence Grossberg and philosopher Edward Casey

Jack Kerouac, *On The Road*, with an introduction by Ann Charters (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 207-08. The sign with the quote is recalled by Phish fan, Mark Linnen, in his detailed review of his experience at the festival that he submitted and posted on www.phish.net, <http://www.phish.net/reviews/shows/8-2-03.html> (accessed April 26, 2009)

⁵⁶ Grossberg, “Another Boring Day in Paradise.”

⁵⁷ Edward S. Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time,” in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1997), 19.

⁵⁸ Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, “Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference,” in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Ethnography*, ed. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 34.

both echo this concern. Grossberg asserts that space, one of “the most ‘obvious’ features of our experience, ... [is] the least examined philosophically.”⁵⁹ Casey points out that this mythologized conception of space—“space as a neutral grid”—“entails that to begin with there is some empty and innocent spatial spread, waiting, as it were, for cultural configurations to render it placeful” and questions “when...does this ‘to begin with’ exist[s]? And where is it located?”⁶⁰

Rather than deconstruct Phish scene identity in search of its essence—what Casey would call the “blank environment” on which its identity is inscribed—I attempt to locate the identity of the Phish scene spatially. It is in this vein that I situate the Phish scene as one constructed by those who participate in it—both the band and the fans.⁶¹

As such, I follow both American studies scholar Barry Shank and popular music scholar Will Straw’s spatial move away from the field of subcultural studies and theorize the Phish scene as a scene and not a subculture or community.⁶² Scenes take into account “the different musical practices unfolding within a given geographical” location.⁶³ By doing so music scenes differ from other forms of collective identifiers such as musical communities or subcultures. As Straw explains, communities and subcultures “presume[] a population group whose composition is relatively stable – according to a wide range of sociological variables – and whose involvement in music takes the form of an ongoing exploration of one or more musical idioms said to be rooted within a geographically specific historical heritage.”⁶⁴ Complicating this point,

⁵⁹ Lawrence Grossberg, “The Space of Culture, The Power of Space,” in *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, ed. Ian Chambers and L. Curtis (London: Routledge, 1996), 171.

⁶⁰ Casey, 14.

⁶¹ In this light I identify both Phish, the band, and Phishheads or Phish fans as participants in the Phish scene.

⁶² Barry Shank, *Dissonant Identities* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1994). Will Straw, “Systems of Articulation, Logics of change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music,” *Cultural Studies* 5, no. 3 (1991): 368-87.

⁶³ Straw, “Systems of Articulation, Logics of change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music,” 373.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

interdisciplinary scholar Sherrie Tucker questions this unifying and essentializing tendency that she claims often “plague[s] [so many] group identity projects.” According to Tucker,

Communities, like health clubs and long distance plans, have a maddening array of ever-changing membership policies all operating at once, some more broadly beneficial than others. Because communities are social, and societies are complex, it should not be surprising to find not only members and non-members, but affiliate members, unwelcome members, untenured members, unauthorized members, founding members, former members, aspiring members, rebellious members, substitute members, partial members, missing members, members in dispute, members in love, members who leave, and members who would rather belong somewhere else.⁶⁵

These essentializing tendencies within the term “subculture” and “community” and in the field of subcultural studies take for granted the very processes that Gupta and Ferguson ask scholars to pay particular attention to. Additionally, the term subculture is claimed by Milton Gordon to be “a logical extension of the concept of culture.”⁶⁶ Thought of spatially, Gordon’s theoretical framework proves to be problematic considering the traditional anthropological concept of culture—that culture is based on inherent notions of discontinuity—as then subcultures would in turn represent meta-cultures founded on the same innate premise of disjuncture. Therefore the same problems associated with anthropology’s long-established spatially-selective understanding of culture, how processes directly connected to issues of power and power relations are mythologically masked as natural, would also be connected to subcultural identities.

⁶⁵ Sherrie Tucker, “Bordering on Community: Improvising Women Improvising Women-in-Jazz,” in *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 249-50.

⁶⁶ Milton M. Gordon, “The Concept of the Sub-Culture and Its Application,” in *The Subcultures Reader*, ed. Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton (London: Routledge, 1997), 40.

I contend scene identity, on the other hand, highlights these processes by stressing the fluidity of both culture and identity. As Andy Bennett and Richard Peterson explain, while a “few [individuals] at the core of the scene may live that life entirely...most participants put on and take off the scene identity.”⁶⁷ In other words, Phish scene participants occupy a space that can, and at times is, located outside mainstream dominant society. However, these same people, both musicians and fans, often actively participate and locate themselves in dominant mainstream American culture. The scene, like the music itself, as I’ve previously outlined, resists genre-like-definition and instead serves as the location for collective difference. In terms of homogeneity, or community, and heterogeneity, difference, the Phish scene, serves as an identity/entity in which collective difference is deeply embedded. In this light, the scene exists at the intersection of difference *and* unity.

However, as applicable as the term scene may seem, no doubt in large part because of its acceptance and promotion of cultural multiplicity, fluidity, and the “temporal nature of group affiliation,” cultural theorist David Hesmondhalgh argues that there are “substantial reasons to think that [such a collective identifier] do[es] not offer useful ways forward.”⁶⁸ In particular, Hesmondhalgh cites discrepancies in the way scene is both theorized and applied when studying collective identity. On one hand he acknowledges scene advocates’ desire to reject both the fixity and rigidity of subculture, as well as its constant association and concern with class. But, on the other hand, Hesmondhalgh argues that the acceptance of a term that fails to negotiate any sense of “distinction and definition” and represents little theoretical progress. With this critique

⁶⁷ Andy Bennett and Richard A. Peterson, eds., *Music Scenes: Local Translocal, and Virtual* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 3.

⁶⁸ David Hesmondhalgh, “Recent Concepts in Youth Cultural Studies: Critical Reflections from the Sociology of Music,” in *Youth Cultures: Scenes, Subcultures, and Tribes*, ed. Paul Hodkinson and Wolfgang Deike (New York: Routledge, 2007), 38, 37.

in mind I contend that “Understanding *It*: Affective Authenticity, Space, and the Phish Scene” helps further develop the theorization of scene as a malleable and plausible identifier that, when incorporated in an interdisciplinary manner (in this case through a spatially informed cultural and performance studies lens) mirrors the complexity of cultural identity.

By linking the affective “it” expressed by so many Phish fans to a particular emplaced experience I also seek to explore the intersecting relationship of time, space, place, and consciousness in my definition of Phish scene identity. To do this I draw from Grossberg’s contention that,

[A]t the heart of modern thought is, I believe, the assumption of the difference between space and time, which plays itself out, for example, in the difference between structure and process...and the privileging of time over space...In fact, most of contemporary cultural theory – including cultural studies – continues to accept the difference and, even more importantly, continues to privilege time/history/process.⁶⁹

I also turn to the work of cultural theorist Jody Berland who stresses this point as well and calls attention to how “both positivist and Marxist historians and sociologists...have tended to privilege historical determinations in the interpretation of society and culture, and to render spatial determinants as both static and secondary.”⁷⁰ These existing theoretical foundations are not only “dependent on images of break, rupture, and disjunction” but in turn foster discourses based on what Gupta and Ferguson call the “bedrock of discontinuity” that resist hybridity and endorse essentialism.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Grossberg, “The Space of Culture, The Power of Space,” 178-79.

⁷⁰ Jody Berland. “Angels Dancing: Cultural Technologies and the Production of Space,” in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treuchler (London: Routledge, 1992), 39.

⁷¹ Gupta and Ferguson, 33.

Keeping the relationship between time, space, place, and consciousness and “it” to any discussion of the Phish scene in mind, this project follows English and drama Professor Una Chaudhuri’s attempts to keep research in-line with “the principle of space that inspires it” and therefore draws from cultural work that takes seriously a spatial approach that theorizes and analyzes both embedded *and* embodied—what I call emplaced—cultural practices.⁷² I am interested in establishing a theoretical framework in which re-conceptualizing the difference between time and space in a manner where the two are inherently interconnected alters the way we view identity.⁷³ In other words, I seek to specifically, as cultural geographer Nigel Thrift so vividly expressed, “lay down new casual pathways [where]...how [one] pay[s]... attention matters...[and where]...add[ing] or assembl[ing] is more important than subtraction.”⁷⁴ With this in mind I rely on: 1) Grossberg’s suggestions that “[t]he spatialisation of being involves a *spatial articulation* and deployment of the notion of transformation: space as the [location] of becoming, a scalar event”; and 2) Geographer Doreen Massey’s “commitment to anti-essentialism” that “takes the constitution of the identities themselves and the relations through which they are constructed to be...understood as embedded practices,” and contend Phish scene identity be theorized as not only a material place but as an effect of specific emplaced practices.⁷⁵

That said, I also recognize Casey’s assertion that “[r]ather than being one definite sort of thing—for example, physical, spiritual, cultural, social—a given place takes on the qualities of its occupants, reflecting these qualities in its own constitution and description and expressing

⁷² Una Chaudhuri, *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), xii.

⁷³ Nigel Thrift, “Space,” in *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2-3 (2006): 145.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Grossberg, “The Space of Culture, The Power of Space,” 171. Emphasis added. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2003), 10.

them in its occurrence as an event: places not only *are*, they *happen*,” and I further contend the scene be theorized as an event.⁷⁶ As an event, the place “Phish scene” happens. That is, “space and time come together in place” and “it” happens.⁷⁷ And, just as the theory of articulation I unpack in Chapter One “does not separate the focus from the background” I posit that as an event that happens, the Phish scene as a place “arise[s] from the experience of place.”⁷⁸ In this way it is not just an articulation of floating identities but rather a spatial articulation.

“I try to convey what you strive to condone”⁷⁹: Classed Performance, Rituals, and Resistance

Theorized as a performance, as an effect of specific emplaced practices that in turn foster the affective effect “it,” I further contend that the Phish scene may also be read as a middle and upper-middle class performance of resistance. Following many cultural and performance studies scholars such as Simon Frith, Wendy Fonarow, and Diana Taylor, I view performance as a ritual. Rituals, as Fonarow points out, “address cultural conflicts and contradictions” and also as Taylor explains “require[] bracketing or framing that differentiate[s] [them] from other social practices surrounding [them].”⁸⁰

Only a handful of academic studies currently exist that address either Phish or the Grateful Dead. Of these works, only a small number—one dissertation, one thesis, and less than

⁷⁶ Casey, 27.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 55. Casey, 36.

⁷⁹ Trey Anastasio and Tom Marshall, “NICU,” on *Hampton Comes Alive*, prod. Bryce Goggin, Elektra Records, November 23, 1999. The song “NICU” debuted in Portsmouth, New Hampshire on March 6, 1992 but did not appear on an album until *Hampton Comes Alive* in 1999. Craig DeLucia, “NICU,” in *The Phishing Companion*, 2d ed., 196.

⁸⁰ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 4. Wendy Fonarow, *Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 2.

half a dozen published articles incorporate analysis of performance as a ritual.⁸¹ While my claims follow in this vein my analysis marks one key point of divergence from this collection of research. Both geographer Daniel Culli and performance studies scholar Christina Allaback analyze the jamband phenomenon as a ritual. Culli places importance on introducing the varied avenues by which geography, as a field of study, can contribute to scholarly work regarding the Grateful Dead.⁸² Allaback's inquiry tackles the performed identities of fans of, as I stated earlier, what she calls "the largest American arena jambands: the Grateful Dead, Phish, The String Cheese Incident ["SCI"], and Widespread Panic."⁸³ Both Culli and Allaback contend that fans of the Grateful Dead (and in Allaback's case fans of Phish, SCI, and Widespread Panic as well) resist the cultural norms of mainstream American society. Like Culli and Allaback, I too contend that Phish scene participation should be investigated as a performance of resistance. However, unlike Culli and Allaback I rely heavily on the work of anthropologist Victor Turner instead of Mikhail Bakhtin.

Both Turner's concept of *communitas* and Bakhtin's theory of carnival analyze specific acts as rituals that speak to larger social and cultural issues.⁸⁴ Additionally, both theorists posit as Culli, Allaback, and I also do, that although certain ritual practices may challenge and resist particular cultural structures they often serve simply to reinforce said structures. Although there are several points of overlap between Turner's anthropological theory and Bakhtin's literary theory—one being their application by scholars from other disciplines—I believe Turner's

⁸¹ Daniel R. Culli, "“Never Could Read No Road Map”: Geographic Perspectives on the Grateful Dead" (MA thesis, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, 2004). Christina L. Allaback, "Theater of Jambands."

⁸² Culli.

⁸³ Allaback, "Theater of Jambands," v.

⁸⁴ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (New York: Aldine, 1995), 135.

ritualized understanding of *communitas* is better suited to a discussion seeking to explore the cultural significance of jambands, specifically Phish and their fans.

Victor Turner, in his discussion of *communitas*, calls particular attention to performance in a way analogous to cultural geographers' perception of performance as the "production of the now" by claiming that the understanding of society stems from the understanding of how humans both create and structure such a society. In Diana Taylor's words, "For Turner...performances revealed culture's deepest, truest, and most individual character."⁸⁵ However, although this idea of a ritual/performance as representing the "real" or the authentic rings true for Turner as well as many cultural geographers and performance studies scholars it is important to note that this belief is not universal amongst all performance studies scholars. For instance, Professor of Literature, Communication, and Culture Philip Auslander suggests performance studies' approach to understanding performance as a theoretical concept differs from cultural geography's notion of producing the now in regards to notions of authenticity.⁸⁶ Specifically, while "producing the now" is embedded in the spontaneous and the authentic, Auslander contends the idea of performance can also be used to imply an inauthentic act/identity/entity—to, as Diana Taylor states, "put on" an artificial act.⁸⁷ Placed in the context of Phish scene participants who achieve the affective effect "it" Turner's belief that performance taps into a deep and truly authentic reality proves promising as a potential theoretical framework.

⁸⁵ Taylor, 4.

⁸⁶ By "production of the now" I mean to invoke how many cultural geographers define the materiality of space as being somewhat akin to performance, specifically referencing "the art of producing the now." R.J. Johnston, et al., eds., "Performance," *The Dictionary of Human Geography* 4th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 577.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Turner's *communitas*, like carnival "celebrate[s] temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and established order."⁸⁸ However, unlike carnival, participation in *communitas*, according to Turner, is not predicated on one's social and cultural positioning. In his analysis of Bakhtin, carnival, and the Grateful Dead phenomenon Culli writes,

"[C]arnival is a tool for the less powerful people in society to run the show for awhile and to express their ideas, at least symbolically... While the carnivals of today, such as Mardi Gras in New Orleans and Carnival in Rio De Janeiro, are not exact representations of the medieval carnival, the carnival tradition continues to exist and thrive, as millions descend on both New Orleans and Rio during carnival season just before the beginning of the Christian Lent. The Grateful Dead phenomenon lends itself quite well to study from a carnivalesque point of view. Each concert was certainly a carnivalesque celebration, attended mainly by people with little power in society."⁸⁹

Keeping my analysis of class and class culture close in mind I diverge from Culli's thesis that the "Grateful Dead phenomenon lends itself quite well to study from a carnivalesque point of view" and in turn posit that Victor Turner's theorizing of *communitas* as a means by which individuals escape from a particular social structure and then reintegrate into and participate in such a structure is better suited to a study of Phish scene identity. Treated as a ritual I posit Phish scene participants can be seen to achieve a social efficacy in their performance of resistance that although heightened from everyday life ultimately serves to replicate the structures of such life.

"I'm showing my cards early"⁹⁰: (Ethno)graphic Tales

⁸⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helen Iswolsky (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984).

⁸⁹ Culli, 36.

⁹⁰ Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 16.

Theory and method, while not one in the same, are without a doubt interconnected and interrelated. In many ways theory dictates, or at least helps to narrow and define method. Given that the live performance is central to Phish scene identity—in fact, I posit that Phish scene identity is an *effect* of such a practice—it remains imperative that any study of the scene unpack (materially and contextually) the nature of the live performance or “the production of the now.” It is in this vein that, aside from establishing a theoretical framework rooted in this demand to illuminate and recontextualize current spatial constructions and applications, what Edward Casey calls the phenomenological relationship between place and time, my research regarding Phish scene identity engages a methodology that dialogues with and responds to these same concerns: ethnography. As an ethnography my project focuses on the actors whose experience, as a highly ritualized performance of the now, creates the Phish scene. As such, I draw from a wealth of ethnographic scholarship rooted in the separate but often intersecting and always interrelated fields of cultural anthropology, popular music studies, and both American and cultural studies.

Ethnography is both a process and a product. Simply put, it is “the particular practice of representing the social reality of others through the analysis of one’s own experience in the world of these others.”⁹¹ One can do ethnography (experience first-hand the world of others) and one can create an ethnography (produce what has traditionally been a written account representing such experiences). However, a discussion about ethnography—about experience—is anything but simple. After all, to borrow from anthropologist and ethnographer, Margery Wolf, “experience is messy.”⁹²

⁹¹ John Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), ix.

⁹² Margery Wolf, *A Thrice-Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 129.

I recognize, as anthropologist Renato Rosaldo points out in his much celebrated *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, that because ““human worlds [are] constructed though historical and political processes” ethnographers must move beyond work that focuses one-dimensional Geertzian “thick descriptions” to scholarship that addresses “force *as well as* thickness.”⁹³ Moreover, I share Marie “Keta” Miranda’s concerns that her work “would continue to demarcate [anthropology’s] disciplinary field as well as [the subjects in her research] from the rest of society.”⁹⁴ Rather than produce a “study of girls in gangs” and instead “a study of girls in gangs speaking on behalf of themselves” Miranda, in *Homegirls in the Public Sphere*, successfully revealed “how the girls resisted their localization and objectification.”⁹⁵

Following in this dialogic vein, my intention is not to provide a detailed historical account of Phish or its fans. This project does not mark my attempt to argue that Phish fandom is a unique type of fandom or that Phish is and/or offers a musical experience that is unlike any other artist or band in American music history. Rather, I am interested in how both Phish and its fans see themselves as actors who make meaning through the scene. Why do they participate in the scene? Why, to return again to my opening discussion, choose Phish? Why not another band or another artist? Why music?

In his book *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style* David Muggleton builds on Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies’ alum and cultural theorist, Dick Hebdige’s *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, attempting to understand a musical subculture in a way that he feels Hebdige’s work did not, or to put it more specifically, did so “inadequately.”⁹⁶ Muggleton places Hebdige’s work alongside those of three other CCCS postgraduate students: Paul Willis,

⁹³ Renato Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 39.

⁹⁴ Marie “Keta” Miranda, *Homegirls in the Public Sphere* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 3.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ David Muggleton, *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style* (New York: Berg, 2000), 3.

Tony Jefferson, and John Clarke, as well as the Centre's then-Director, Stuart Hall claiming that, combined, their work “display[s] many of the same methodological and theoretical inadequacies. The most serious, with the qualified exception of Willis' ethnographic study, [being] their failure to take seriously enough the subjective viewpoints of the youth subculturalists themselves.”⁹⁷

This lack of focused and direct attention and analysis of participants, the people involved in these practices, through which scholars often ascribe particular meanings and identities is a particular “inadequacy” that several scholars of popular culture have also highlighted. For instance, Charles Keil, in *Urban Blues*, noted that prior popular scholarship regarding “Negro culture” suffered gross oversight and misconceptions that very well may have been avoided if “the authors had [just] left their offices and gone out into the Negro community.”⁹⁸ Robin D. G. Kelley suggests that studies of popular culture often either lack the ability or the desire to “see what it all means to the participants and practitioners” while also pointing out that if scholars are to see culture, especially “popular culture as contested terrain, something to be struggled over between producers and consumer,” perhaps then such scholarship should focus on the actors themselves.⁹⁹

While this approach not only affords but more importantly, encourages the individuals I spoke with the ability to construct their own Phish scene narratives it also, at various times, exposes an internal struggle of meta-narratives within the scene. For instance, in the following exchange two Phish scene participants, Jesse Jarnow (“JJ”) and Jacob Cohen (“JC”), discuss and disagree on the specific details of song rotation:

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Charles Keil, *Urban Blues* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 14.

⁹⁹ Robin D. G. Kelley, *Yo Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 41. Robin D. G. Kelley, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Folk,’” *American Historical Review* 95, no. 5 (1992):1400.

JC: [T]he example that I want to make is the, ah, the kind of famous forgotten song which is called “Destiny Unbound.” And, this is a song that debuted in 1989, 1990, 1991, and—

JJ: 9/13/90

JC: Thank you—9/13/90. Oh, the Wetlands show. Yeah. OK, um, debuted 9/13/90 along with a number of other songs that have become staples in the Phish repertoire like “Stash,” um, and ah, “Tweezer” was debuted then I think—

JJ: No, “Tweezer”—

JC: Anyways, anyways the point being they stopped playing it sometime after, in mid-1991.¹⁰⁰

As Jesse and Jake’s dialogue demonstrates, scene meaning is often internally contested. Keeping Alessandro Portelli’s claim close in mind that, “discrepancies and...errors are themselves events,” I aim to represent Phish scene participant narratives both alongside and at times against one another. For instance, I want to uncover the processes that work to produce, in the example below, connections between the Grateful Dead scene and the Phish scene.

JJ: Even though they started as a Dead cover band—

JC: Right, even though they started as a Dead cover band—at their first show, at their first recorded show that exists, that ah remains, starts with “Scarlet Begonias” into Jimi Hendrix’s “Fire” into “Fire on the Mountain.”¹⁰¹

In this specific example, where does the idea that Phish started as a Grateful Dead cover band come from? The band members themselves suggest otherwise. Mike Gordon, Phish bassist, claimed the Talking Heads’ song “Pulled Up” and the Allman Brothers’ “Whipping

¹⁰⁰ Jarnow and Cohen, “Hip, Cool, and the Cultural Currency of the Grateful Dead.”

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Post” were the songs practiced at the band’s first rehearsal.¹⁰² Trey Anastasio, Phish guitarist, in *Bittersweet Motel*, addresses the claims of a critic who connects the band to the Grateful Dead, asserting that, “I’m not the Grateful Dead. I don’t care if the Grateful Dead had that.”¹⁰³ Early documentation of the band claims that when advertising through campus flyers in dormitories at the University of Vermont for a bassist founding members Trey, Jon “Fish” Fishman, and Jeff Holdsworth, listed their musical interests as including the Allman Brothers Band and Led Zeppelin.¹⁰⁴ Quantitative analysis of song rotation throughout the band’s history proves that the Grateful Dead is not the band who Phish has covered the most, either by sheer number of songs adapted (twelve Grateful Dead tunes to over twenty by The Beatles and The Who respectively) or number of times the songs were played (Grateful Dead songs have been played a grand total of sixteen times in twenty-one years).¹⁰⁵ In fact, the band’s “first recorded show that exists” does not start “with ‘Scarlet Begonias’” (a Grateful Dead song) into Jimi Hendrix’s “‘Fire’” into “‘Fire on the Mountain’” (another Grateful Dead song). While that song sequence was played, only once, on December 1, 1984 the band’s first recorded show on December 2, 1983 does include a “Scarlet Begonias” into Jimi Hendrix’s “Fire.”¹⁰⁶

Citing anthropologist Bruce Jackson, Alessandro Portelli describes how stories “generate their own boundaries of acceptable reality: nothing worth mentioning happens before the stories begin, and nothing happens after they end.”¹⁰⁷ While in general I am not looking to “prove” or

¹⁰² The Mockingbird Foundation, *The Phishing Companion*, 2d ed., 325.

¹⁰³ *Phish: Bittersweet Motel*, prod. and dir. Todd Phillips, 84 min., Image Entertainment, 2000, Videocassette.

¹⁰⁴ Dean Budnick, *The Phishing Manual* (New York: Hyperion, 1996), 3.

¹⁰⁵ All statistics can be found and corroborated in and between both volumes of *The Phishing Companion* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2000 & 2004) and through ZZZYX’s “Phishtistes” website. “ZZZYX’s Phish Stats,” The International House of ZZZYX, <http://www.ihoz.com/PhishStats.html> (accessed January 11, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ “Setlist: Friday, December 4, 1984,” *The Phishing Companion*, 2d ed., 329. “Setlist: Friday, December 2, 1983,” *The Phishing Companion*, 2d ed., 329.

¹⁰⁷ Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and the Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 12.

“disprove” any relationship between the Grateful Dead scene and the Phish scene, I want to try and understand why the Grateful Dead appear in the narratives of Phish fans.

Building on the works of scholars such as of Keil, Kelley, and Miranda and explaining Phish scene identity dialogically this project also serves as an example of the interdisciplinary research American studies scholar Faye Ginsberg references when she points out that today, many “researchers share the concerns and even identities of the people they are studying.”¹⁰⁸ That is, as media studies scholar Tara Brabazon contends in a tone quite similar to, yet ultimately different from David Muggleton earlier, “So much of Cultural Studies has told the story about how *they* got *there*.”¹⁰⁹ “Understanding *It*: Affective Authenticity, Space, and the Phish Scene” is, for lack of a better phrase, to borrow again from Brabazon, the story of “how *we* got *here*.”¹¹⁰ As the title to this subsection, taken from American studies and English Professor Josh Kun’s *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* proclaims, “I’m showing my cards early.” I am a Phish fan.

From August of 1992 until mid-June of 1996 I attended Joseph C. Wilson Magnet High School, an inner-city public school in Rochester, New York. Two months later I moved into Paul Hall, one of the then-three dormitories for first-year students at Gettysburg College, a small private liberal arts College in southeastern Pennsylvania about 10 miles north of the Maryland state line. By the time I graduated from Gettysburg and settled into my first apartment just

¹⁰⁸ Faye Ginsberg, “Ethnography and American Studies,” *Cultural Anthropology* 21, no. 3 (2006): 488.

¹⁰⁹ Tara Brabazon, *From Revolution to Revelation* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2005), 5.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5. In this context the terms “we” and “here” are meant to directly contradict the spatially disjointed nature of terms such as “they/them” and “there.” By “we” and “here” I mean, in borrowing from Brabazon, to reference and emphasize the personalized, positioned, and spatial nature of my work.

outside of Washington, DC, four years later in the fall of 2000 Phish had played at least two dozen shows within a two hours' drive of me.¹¹¹

I didn't see a single one.

I do however, as I earlier explained, remember listening to Phish's song "Cavern" from *Picture of Nectar* at swim team practices my freshman year of high school. In fact I can still picture a bunch of us standing atop the starting blocks singing in half-screams, half out-of-tune harmonies the nonsensical lyrics: "Give the director, a serpent deflector, a mudrat detector, a ribbon reflector, a cushion convector, a pitcher of nectar, a virile dissector, a hormone collector/ Whatever you do, take care of your shoes."¹¹² That said, I didn't actually experience the band live until ten years later on January 3, 2003 at the Hampton Coliseum in Hampton, Virginia.

The same week I accepted a job as a legal assistant at a DC law firm and signed my first lease Trey Anastasio, Page McConnell, Mike Gordon, and Jon "Fish" Fishman, the four members of Phish, announced the band's plan to take a hiatus. While the band made it clear that the hiatus "was not a permanent break" it was as candid with the fact that "there were no plans for future shows."¹¹³ However, as my experience proved: Absence *did* make the heart grow fonder.

In the two and half years leading up to my first show I became increasingly concerned with and interested in all things Phish. Thanks to modern technology advancements and the gaps of down time at my job I quickly became proficient at two activities frequently performed by Phish fans: 1) chatting online via message boards with other Phish fans about particular songs, shows, band member side projects, etc.; and 2) downloading and burning CDs of older Phish

¹¹¹ This total accounts for shows within a two hours' drive of both Rochester, New York, and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, from 1992-2000.

¹¹² Phish, "Cavern," *Picture of Nectar*. *Picture of Nectar* includes some of the bands most notable songs such as "Tweezer," "Chalkdust Torture," "Stash," "The Mango Song," "Cavern," "Glide," and "Guelah Papyrus."

¹¹³ Jeremy Goodwin, "Fall 2000 – The Last Time?" in *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., viii.

shows. I took advantage of my central location in DC and caught a number of band member side projects. I saw guitarist, Trey Anastasio, perform with his 10-piece afro-funk-cuban-jazz-big-band, TAB (the Trey Anastasio Band), on multiple occasions as well as keyboardist, Page McConnell, with his electro-funk-rock ensemble Vida Blue. Before I knew it, the three shelves in the main room of my tiny two-story walk-up that once housed row upon row of bootleg tapes grew to almost an entire four-foot bookcase of CDs containing nothing but recordings of live Phish shows. Over the years these discs made it into catalogued leather bound cases, each holding anywhere from 50 to 500 individual CDs. Today, these cases fill the top shelf of a bookcase in the living room of the house I share with my husband. He is also a Phish fan.

But back to work in a beige windowless office on K Street in DC. Just around about 11:15 in the morning I hit the refresh button on my email, hoping out of boredom that an attorney I worked for might have sent me a brief to cite-check. There, in my inbox, was *THE* announcement. Phish was returning. They would be playing a New Year's Eve show in New York at Madison Square Garden, take one day off, and then do a three night run, January 2, 3, and 4, 2003, at the Hampton Coliseum in Hampton, Virginia. A limited number of tickets would be made available via a lottery system set up by Phish Tickets By Mail (PTBM) and the rest would go on sale to the general public via Ticketmaster. My friend and I called everyone we knew to celebrate and spread the news. We each entered the lottery and got our family members and even co-workers to do the same, promising everyone that should they be lucky enough to score tickets we would cover the charges on their credit cards. Tickets for all four shows sold out in minutes. We ended up with two tickets for the January 3rd and 4th shows. Then ten years after I first wondered what the words "taboot, taboot" in the song "Llama" were all about, sometime a little after 8:30pm on January 3, 2003 mid-way through a funk-heavy "Tweezer," standing amidst

13,799 phriends and phamily I got *it*.

My own positioning as both a participant in the scene and the primary researcher affords me the opportunity to “pay attention to situations of cultural transformation ‘from below’” and to represent such situations not just in a dialogical manner but also in a dialectical, interdiscursive, multi-textual, and at times deeply personal vein.¹¹⁴ Oral historian, Valerie Yow’s, suggestion that the researcher reflect on individual “motives for doing the interview, feelings about the narrator, interviewer’s reaction to the narrator’s testimony, and the intrusion of the interviewer’s assumptions and of the interviewer’s self-schema” are especially important in my work as I must reflect on a variety of signifiers (the constructed insider/outsider binary) that are continuously at play as individual identities are constantly shifting.¹¹⁵

While my positioning as a Phish fan grants me “insider” access in some situations I am also considered an “outsider” by fans in other contexts. For instance, to some I am a fan but to others in the scene I am an academic. Moreover, my status in the scene as a “veteran,” someone who has seen Phish multiple times is constantly at play. When juxtaposed to a fan who began seeing the band in the early 1990s I am considered the “newb” and she or he the “veteran.”

My own experience becoming acquainted with Phish and the situated knowledge that accompanies it is of particular importance to my work. I too, like many of the Phish fans whose voices fill the pages of this dissertation, first heard Phish because someone older who already “got *it*” popped *Picture of Nectar* into the cassette player one afternoon at swim practice. But unlike many of the fans I talked with and many of the ones I now consider close friends I, as I carefully pointed out in my narrative, went to an inner-city high school. Inside those walls I, as a

¹¹⁴ Ginsberg, 488.

¹¹⁵ I refer to the constant negotiating and complication of the insider/outsider Kirin Narayan discusses in her article “How Native Is a ‘Native’ Anthropologist.” Kirin Narayan, “How Native Is a ‘Native’ Anthropologist,” *American Anthropologist* 95 (1993): 671-686.

white middle class female, was positioned as the minority. Phish was not the music I listened to at school dances and sporting events. It was not playing on the radio in my class homeroom every morning. It wasn't, to return to Sanneh's review, what I would have called a part of "my" pop music culture.

This all changed when I was awarded a generous grant by Gettysburg College. At Gettysburg I could hear Phish's music in any number of places. It emanated through dorm room walls, out fraternity house windows, and even over the PA system at the school's natatorium every Saturday morning where I was employed via a work-study job as a lifeguard. A number of people I befriended my first year there spent the summer "on tour" following Phish across the country watching them perform live routinely for two months. On Gettysburg's campus I, as a white, middle class, inner-city high school graduate, and first-generation college female, was positioned as the minority. Most everyone I knew came from either private or public suburban high schools. Several people in my first-year seminar graduated from boarding schools. Phish was by all means a part of the pop music culture as well as the cultural capital at Gettysburg.

Class visibility in the Phish scene mirrors Sanneh's treatment of it in his review. It is apparent by its candid absence in a number of discursive ways: a feeling of "culturelessness" that I explore in Chapter One as reaction to postmodern identity politics, specifically multiculturalism; amidst a backdrop of rising ticket prices, gas prices (and other travel planning related expenses), and an apparent lack of substitutive income which I examine in Chapter Two; and through multiple descriptions of authenticity, a reoccurring trope in the narratives of Phish

scene participants that I analyze in Chapter Three.¹¹⁶ In these instances, my positioning as an “outsider” helps me read common scene practices with a critical eye.

My research (including ethnographic fieldwork) regarding Phish scene identity commenced five hundred and ninety four days, thirteen shows, and seven states after my first Phish show in 2003 when the band announced, via a letter on the its website from Anastasio, they were finished:

For the sake of clarity, I should say this is not like the hiatus, which was our last attempt to revitalize ourselves. We’re done. It’s been an amazing and incredible journey. We thank you all for the love and support that you’ve shown us.¹¹⁷

With the band no longer playing shows I turned to supplementary avenues to gain access to participants. I began by reading as many formal and informal published testimonies of both fans and the band.¹¹⁸ Additionally, I traveled throughout the East Coast attending shows that I felt, based on information I found through many of these testimonies, would attract fans of Phish. This list should be noted to include Trey Anastasio side projects such as the Trey Anastasio Band, 70 Volt Parade and the Undectet, Page McConnell’s side project, Vida Blue, various incarnations of contemporary Grateful Dead related side projects such as Phil (Lesh) and Friends (both with and without Trey Anastasio), Ratdog, The Dead, and numerous contemporary jamband shows by Umphrey’s McGee, Gov’t Mule, Moe., and even touring Phish cover bands such as Phix and the Helping Phriendly Band. Until the Fall of 2008 these shows were limited to

¹¹⁶ This is especially poignant as one considers Phish’s success selling-out full tours in minutes (\$49.50 per ticket) in America’s current economic slump.

¹¹⁷ Message posted on Phish’s official website on May 24, 2004. The message was also delivered to the inboxes of Phish-list subscribers that same day.

¹¹⁸ By formal and informal published narratives I mean to decipher between written books, documentaries, and online internet postings (including chat/message boards, youtube videos, and both personal and communal fan blogs).

venues located along the East Coast and throughout the South and Central Midwest region of the United States.

Outside of reading and talking (both informally and in more formal settings for longer periods of time that were recorded) to people I met at shows I also turned towards my own personal network of friends and acquaintances in the scene and sought out those who were willing to talk both informally and formally (on tape) with me. Many of these conversations took place over holidays and on preplanned trips such as weddings, baptisms, and long-weekend vacations to see some of the shows listed above. While some discussions lasted only minutes, several lasted hours and took place in restaurants, bars, hotel rooms, front porches, decks, and in cars while driving from one city and show to another state and venue.

However, on October 1, 2008 my research took a very unexpected turn. In a time-lapse two minute internet video Phish announced its plan to reunify and play together again for three consecutive nights at the place where, for me, it had not only all began but coincidentally ended: the Hampton Coliseum.¹¹⁹ The sold-out “reunion run,” March 6, 7, and 8, 2009 at the Hampton Coliseum in Hampton, Virginia, was followed by a more extensive sold-out twenty-seven date cross-country two-leg summer tour, “Festival 8,” a three-day festival where “for the first time ever, Phish...combine[d] two of its most cherished traditions - a multi-day camping festival and performing on Halloween,” another sold-out thirteen-date Fall tour, and at the writing of this draft, a four-night New Year’s Run at the American Airlines Arena December 28-31, 2009 in Miami, Florida.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ The final pre-break up Phish show I witnessed was on August 9, 2004 at the Hampton Coliseum in Hampton, Virginia.

¹²⁰ Available at <http://www.phish.com/news/index.php?year=2009#story445> (accessed September 21, 2009).

Thanks in large part to a fellowship from the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at the University of Kansas I was fortunate enough to have attended twelve of the thirty-three shows the band performed between March 6 and November 1, 2009. While my earlier fieldwork remained grounded almost exclusively on the East Coast, South, and Midwest, these twelve shows helped bring my geographic Phish experience total to ten states, thirteen cities, thirteen venues, and three time zones. I have experienced Phish live all seven days of the week and in every month except for April, May, and September. I have witnessed Phish perform one hundred and twenty-six different songs. Of those one hundred and twenty-six songs eighty-five songs have only played once. At the writing of this draft (since 2004) I have held over one hundred and fifty conversations with participants in the scene. Roughly fifty of these are in-depth recorded conversations.

Style & Organization

In addition to the participant observation and both the informal and formal recorded interviews discussed above I have chosen to include a number of fan-produced forms of knowledge in this ethnography including hard-bound commercially available published essays and books, personal fan blogs, and show reviews posted on fan websites such as www.phish.net. Any views that appeared first in a published or copyrighted source (hard bound copy or the internet) I cite in full footnote form. Personal conversations (both recorded and taken in scratch notes form) are quoted and cited in footnote form and include as much information as possible. While a number of scholars list this information in chart or list form I have decided against the

exercise.¹²¹ First, I did not use surveys or questionnaires. Moreover, some fans I interacted with permitted me to use their given names while some fans wanted to remain anonymous. Several created a fictional name. Many preferred that I use initials. I have chosen to represent every individual as he or she wished and my citation style reflects these discrepancies. Most importantly, I am interested not just in “who says what” but also in examining how individuals talk about issues such as class and class culture.

Layering first-hand accounts of the Phish scene as well as the Grateful Dead scene with theoretical analysis, the chapters of my dissertation represent scene identity. In addition to cultural fluidity, the word “scene,” to borrow from performance studies and Spanish Professor Diana Taylor, “appropriately suggests both the material stage as a well as the highly codified environment that gives viewers pertinent information [such as]...class status or historical period.”¹²² To speak of a scene requires one address the materiality of space, the physical environment, as well as a larger cultural context.

Chapter One, **The New Counterculture: “Maybe So, Maybe Not,”** situates the Phish scene within the cultural context of postmodernism and identity politics, specifically multiculturalism. In this chapter I argue that Phish scene participation may be read as white middle and upper-middle class angst and frustration with the cultural changes brought about by postmodern identity politics by unpacking what I call affective authenticity. Specifically, I position affective authenticity as a commonality within the Phish Scene and the Grateful Dead

¹²¹ Here I am specifically thinking of Fonarow’s *Empire of Dirt*, Shanks’ *Dissonant Identities*, Daniel Cavicchi’s *Tramps Like Us*, Aaron Fox’s *Real Country*, and Rob Walser’s *Running with the Devil*. Fonarow, *Empire of Dirt*. Shank, *Dissonant Identities*. Daniel Cavicchi, *Tramps Like Us: Music and Meaning Among Springsteen Fans* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1998. Aaron Fox, *Real Country: Music and Language in Working Class Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2004. Rob Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover, N.H.: University of New England Press), 1993.

¹²² Taylor, 29.

scene and also as the means to contrast the cultural context in which Phish and the Phish scene emerged to the cultural context in which the Grateful Dead scene developed.

In Chapters Two, Three, and Four I transition from a contextual description of the Phish scene to one that approaches the scene materially (action as well as physical environment). These three chapters are divided into the three main processes that embody scene identity: pre-show, show, and post-show practices. Each chapter focuses on specific processes that embody practices of the Grateful Dead as a means to highlight how the historical memory of the Grateful Dead is evoked, embodied, and enacted in the Phish scene. The transitional section entitled, **“Segue→March 6, 2009, It’s all hamptoning!”** is intended to read as my account of my formal entry into “the field.” The March 6, 2009 Hampton Coliseum show was the first time I conducted fieldwork at a Phish show. Although this portion of the dissertation focuses on Hampton, Virginia, and the Hampton Coliseum the practices outlined therein represent ones typically enacted in other scene places as well.

Rather than attempt to tackle every possible pre-show practice I have chosen in Chapter Two, **Getting (Back) on the Train: Pre-Show**, to focus on two specific ones that are central to the scene: obtaining tickets to shows (tickets-by-mail, Ticketmaster, scalping, and trading) and making travel arrangements as these specific processes speak directly to discourses of middle class identity and historical memory of the Grateful Dead. In Chapter Three, **“I Feel the Feeling I Forgot”**: Show, I describe and analyze the practices and processes that together work to create the “show” experience in the Phish scene. Following in true Phish form I begin the show experience not inside a venue when the lights go out, the band walks on stage, and the music begins but rather with the traffic jam outside the venue because “the traffic jam was merely the

start...It meant you had arrived.”¹²³ In some instances the traffic jam is so long and so slow (standstill) that it begins to morph into the lot scene. Analyzed processes in this chapter include the parking lot “scene” and the musical performance (when the lights go down, the band walks on stage, and the music begins). While deeply rooted in a spatial framework, these practices also incorporate ideas of middle class identity and evoke the history of the Grateful Dead. The parking lot, often referred to as “the lot” represents a space where people begin to “shed” middle-class identities gained through work (doctor, teacher, accountant, etc.) and become part of, what I will later borrow from Victor Turner’s theory of *communitas*, the “we.”

In Chapter Four, “**This has all been wonderful, Now I’m on my way**”: **Post-Show**, I focus on processes which take place following the “show” experience such as returning “home” (this could be one’s campsite, hotel, car—one’s temporary, or perhaps permanent home), discussing the show with friends, and preparing for departure (traveling onward to another show, a vacation, back to work, etc.).¹²⁴ I then reflect on how these processes appear similar to those embodied in the Grateful Dead scene but when analyzed critically must be viewed differently. Furthermore, I build on this idea of “home” and apply Victor’s Turner’s idea of *communitas* as a way to explain why and how, as a spatial articulation of affective authenticity, the Phish scene, when theorized as a social drama can be understood as a middle class performance of resistance. In the end, I conclude with a brief reflection on my research, findings, and discuss possible future research.

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¹²³ Conners, *Growing Up Dead*, 156.

In August of 2003, Phish and its fans traveled in search of “it.” As Kerouac’s protagonist Dean explains when you get “it,” “Time stops...[and] empty spaces [are filled] with the substance of our lives.” As one musicologist explained to me, “[I]n my rock ‘n’ roll class, there is no more important moment than the discussion of ‘getting it.’”¹²⁵ Although in this dissertation I explore “it” as a defining component both of and between Phish scene identity and the identity of the Grateful Dead scene I do not mean to suggest the idea of “it” is either unique to these scenes or to music-related scenes in general. Without being reductive I want to insinuate that “it” exists in the multiple arenas of human experiences. As a “liminal, processual, [and] multireal quality” *it*, to borrow from performance studies scholar Richard Schechner, “reveals both the glory and the abyss of [the] human [experience].”¹²⁶ I recognize and as my prior remarks explain, a popular sentiment regarding Phish and Phish fans that public scholars such as Sanneh touch on—that the scene is monolithic, exclusive, and simply an irrelevant case of supposed rich kids trying to act poor. I would hate to think that this project be taken as yet another one of these works.

Research regarding the affective nature of “it” and its relationship to the process of cultural memory, collective remembering and forgetting, can be seen as an insightful and powerful theoretical and methodological tool in cultural studies, for it exposes information pertaining not only to subject identity, but also to the discourses and contexts which help articulate such identities. “Understanding *It*: Affective Authenticity, Space, and the Phish Scene,” begins to examine what interdisciplinary scholars are to make of textual and spatial connections. How does one work to understand these affiliated, and oftentimes, affective

¹²⁵ Email sent to members of the Deadwood list-serv on April 13, 2009.

¹²⁶ Richard Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology*, with a foreword by Victor Turner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 123.

relationships? And, in the case of Phish scene identity, how can one understand “it”? I hope that my analysis of “it” adds on and contributes to both academic and popular scholarship that seeks to describe the particular affective moments in time and space that give meaning to so many of all of our lives.

Chapter One

The New Counterculture?: “Maybe So, Maybe Not”¹²⁷

Two days before Woodstock '99, the 30th anniversary celebration of the original Woodstock music and arts festival in White Lake, New York, *The New York Times* published a piece about a “major underground force in pop” entitled, “A New Variety of Flower Child in Full Bloom: Music and the Internet Nourish a Counterculture.”¹²⁸ The article, written by Ann Powers, now the chief pop critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, loosely mapped out (through individual narratives) the cultural geography of the jamband scene, and in particular, the Phish scene. At one point Powers described what she saw as an aesthetic connection between the Phish scene and the Grateful Dead scene: “With their-natural fiber clothing, vegetarian diets, and predilection for trippy music, the members of the [Phish] scene *seem* to carry on the legacy of their hippie forbearers [the Grateful Dead].”¹²⁹ By no means is this observance superfluous.

Linkages between Phish and the Grateful Dead, their respective fans, and the scene identities that, in tandem, the two construct, are scattered throughout the consciousness of many Americans. Mainstream media, music, and culture critics and also a small number of academics connected to the interdisciplinary subfield of Grateful Dead Studies frequently reiterate Powers’ comments with such statements as, “Phish inherited the legacy of the Grateful Dead.”¹³⁰ In an article on PopMatters.com American cultural studies scholar Iain Ellis, surveyed popular music’s soundscape after the death of Grateful Dead lead guitarist, Jerry Garcia, and anointed Phish the

¹²⁷ Phish, “Stash,” *Picture of Nectar*.

¹²⁸ Ann Powers, “A New Variety of Flower Child in Full Bloom: Music and the Internet Nourish a Counterculture,” *The New York Times*, July 21, 1999, E3.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, Emphasis added.

¹³⁰ Trey Anastasio quoted reading a critic’s review in *Bittersweet Motel*. *Phish: Bittersweet Motel*.

Grateful Dead's "heir-apparent."¹³¹ One critic explained this "obvious" relationship when he (albeit perhaps unknowingly) expanded on Powers' claims of similar aesthetics and stated, "There is no question that the two bands and their fans share a musical and cultural lineage."¹³² Neil Paumgarten of *The New Yorker* propelled this ancestral-like relation when he christened Phish "descendants" of the Grateful Dead.¹³³

As I theorized in my introductory remarks, the Phish scene is not and should not be positioned as an entity lacking any type of agency whose identity has been created by and through academic and non-academic cultural critics. I argue the Phish scene is constructed by both the band and the fans. In Todd Philips' 2000 documentary, *Bittersweet Motel*, Trey Anastasio is filmed reading a review in which the critic asserts that this "legacy" includes similarities such as "playing a different set every night, constantly jamming and experimenting, and being trailed across country by an adoring fan base"—all practices enacted and performed by both the band itself and its fans.¹³⁴ Broadcast journalist Charlie Rose, in the lead-in to a 2004 interview with Anastasio, reflected on a similarity between fans of the bands that assumed agency and stated, "[Phish] [s]lowly developed a devoted fan base much like the Grateful Dead had done a generation before."¹³⁵ Musician, author, and host of the nationally syndicated radio show *The Grateful Dead Hour* David Gans furthered my contention regarding agency when he explained that,

¹³¹ Iain Ellis, "Dead But Not Buried or, When the '90s Took a '60s Turn," *PopMatters.com*, May 23, 2008, <http://www.popmatters.com/pm/column/dead-but-not-buried-or-when-the-90s-took-a-60s-turn/> (accessed August 18, 2010).

¹³² Seth Schiesel, "Phish Returns to Hampton to Feed Its Hungry Fans," *The New York Times*, March 9, 2009, C5.

¹³³ Neil Paumgarten, "Jam Off," in *The New Yorker* 80, no. 6 (2004): 36.

¹³⁴ *Phish: Bittersweet Motel*.

¹³⁵ Trey Anastasio, interview by Charlie Rose, *Charlie Rose*, prod. Charlie Rose and Yvette Vega, PBS, May 26, 2004.

Rebecca Adams [Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill] will tell you [in her opinion] that Phish, very consciously, modeled their whole style and presentation on the Grateful Dead while denying the musical connection...[that] they modeled their marketing and their audience building on what the Grateful Dead did.¹³⁶

After a few minutes David elaborated on Adams' personal opinion and told me that he believed,

The rise of the internet also made it easier: collective mailing lists, email addresses. They're [Phish] building communities, they're sharing tapes, they're encouraging people to pass their tapes around. All those things were taken from the Grateful Dead. The thing the Grateful Dead did organically was done intentionally by all of these people as a way of building their audience. So I think that's the—the emulation of the Grateful Dead.¹³⁷

While the following three chapters analyze the relations between Phish scene identity practices and those embedded in the Grateful Dead scene—what Adams and Gans both allude to above—this chapter, as the title suggests, investigates what Barthes' would call the “mythological” relationship between today's contemporary Phish scene and the countercultural psychedelic-seeking Grateful Dead scene born in the 1960s as it is constructed by scene participants themselves. In this chapter I investigate the notion of Phish scene participants as “new flower child[ren]” and the idea that Phish scene identity be read as a countercultural identity. Grounded in a spatial and postmodern framework while also acknowledging, as Marita

¹³⁶ David Gans, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, March 19, 2010, Oakland, California. Rebecca G. Adams is one of the founding and leading scholars on the Grateful Dead. While her early academic work explored notions of friendship (particularly among elderly women), once tenured she expanded her inquiry to include analysis of the Grateful Dead and its fans. In 1989 she took the students in her “Field Research Methods and Applied Social Theory” class on the Grateful Dead's summer tour. After researching the scene at nine summer shows, Adams co-edited a book with her then class assistant, Robert Sardiello, called *Deadhead Social Science: You Ain't Gonna Learn What You Don't Want To Know*. The book contains essays written by Adams and Sardiello as well as the students in the class and was one of the first scholarly works published exclusively on the Grateful Dead. Rebecca G. Adams and Robert Sardiello, eds., *Deadhead Social Science: You Ain't Gonna Learn What You Don't Want To Know* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press), 2000.

¹³⁷ Gans, conversation, March 19, 2010.

Sturken asserts, that “memory provides the very core for identity,” I posit that Phish and its fans are constructing a scene identity based on a particular predominately white middle and upper-middle class cultural memory of the Dead scene.¹³⁸ However, rather than “turning on, tuning in, and dropping out” attempting to create “a new world that...[runs] parallel to the old world but has as little to do with it as possible,” I contend Phish scene participants as white middle and upper-middle classed Americans, employing similar countercultural practices of escapism, ultimately seek to locate themselves within mainstream American culture.¹³⁹

“What’s the Use?”¹⁴⁰: Spatializing Articulation

The identity of each scene, the common consciousness I call the spatial articulation of affective authenticity, extends over the passage of time, existing between and across generational groups. However, while the Phish scene appears to resemble the earlier Grateful Dead scene, I contend it occurs within a different historical period, postmodernism, amidst a distinctive socio-cultural climate marked by identity politics and in particular, multiculturalism. Given this location I allege the Phish scene be understood not historically as a modernist narrative but rather spatially as an articulation.

In We Gotta Get Out Of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture

Lawrence Grossberg builds on Stuart Hall’s notion of articulation I discussed in the Introduction and suggests that “The concept of articulation provides a useful starting point for describing the process of forging connections between practices and effects...this meaning to that reality, this

¹³⁸ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1.

¹³⁹ Barry Melton quoted in Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 17.

¹⁴⁰ Phish, “What’s the Use?” *The Siket Disc*, prod. Phish, Elektra Records, November 7, 2000.

experience to those politics.”¹⁴¹ “Articulation,” according to Grossberg, “offers a theory of contexts [whereby] [u]nderstanding a practice involves theoretically and historically (re)constructing its context...[T]he practice of articulation does not separate the focus from the background; instead, it is the background that actually articulates the focus.”¹⁴²

Popular music studies as an interdisciplinary field of study has embraced this approach. George Lipsitz, Dick Hebdige, David Muggleton, Sara Cohen, Keith Negus, Charles Keil, Will Straw, John Shepherd, and Peter Wicke are just a select number of scholars who work to produce such scholarship. For example, musicologist, Keith Negus, asserts that, “Songs and musical styles do not simply ‘reflect,’ ‘speak to,’ or ‘express’ the lives of audience members or musicians.”¹⁴³ Instead, according to Negus, “A sense of identity is created out of and across the processes whereby people are connected together through and with music.”¹⁴⁴ Negus builds on both Hall and Grossberg’s notion of “articulation” by claiming the study of popular music should “entail examining processes of ‘articulation’ in which particular sounds have to seek out, be sought out by and connect with particular audiences.”¹⁴⁵ Negus explains,

In this way, processes of production and consumption can be approached less as discrete, fixed and bounded moments and more as a web of mediated connections. During such a complex social process, the meaning of music and its relationship to cultural identity and any social affects that it may generate arise out of a process in which performer, industry and audience ‘articulate’ with each other and with the surrounding cultural and social-political system.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place*, 54.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁴³ Keith Negus, *Popular Music in Theory* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 133.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 134-35.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Moreover, John Shepherd and Peter Wicke in *Music and Cultural Theory* argue that because of these reciprocal processes of production and consumption the study and analysis of popular music is not only similar to but also in conversation with the study of culture I outline in the Introduction that scholars such as Radway and Hall call for. Specifically, Shepherd and Wicke explain that “the analysis of popular music reveals that there are in fact many levels of meaning having to do with music, lyrics, images and movement as negotiated by individuals with specific social and cultural biographies.”¹⁴⁷

Keeping these reasons close in mind, I draw from both Hall and Grossberg’s conceptualization of articulation as well as George Lipsitz’s assertion that “[m]usical forms have meaning only as they can be interpreted by knowing subjects” and begin my analysis of the affective “it” that links the Phish scene to the Grateful Dead scene with a discussion of the historical moments that work/ed to articulate their very existence: the 1960s and the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁴⁸ Reconstructing these moments will help me identify the knowing subjects that in turn form, to borrow again from Grossberg, the “affective alliances” between the participants in and the identities of both scenes.¹⁴⁹

Haight-Ashbury, San Francisco, California – Fall 1966

In the official biography of the Grateful Dead, American history scholar and Grateful Dead publicist Dennis McNally recalls:

Seven-ten [Ashbury Street] was a creative center for what was in the fall of 1966 a charming neighborhood. In the early 1950s, urban renewal had razed much of

¹⁴⁷ John Shepherd and Peter Wicke, *Music and Cultural Theory* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1997), 9.

¹⁴⁸ George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 109.

¹⁴⁹ Lawrence Grossberg, “Another Boring Day in Paradise,” 227.

the nearby Western Addition, and the mostly black evictees had spread into the Haight, which also had a sizeable Russian immigrant population. The result was an integrated community that in the late fifties welcomed refugees from North Beach fleeing too much media and tourist attention. The Haight was inexpensive, and the combination of older Beats and San Francisco State students, who had good transit service to school, added up to a very hip community...Something special was brewing there, a new attitude. There was a “fantastic universal sense that whatever we were doing was *right*,” wrote the journalist Hunter S. Thompson, “that...our energy would simply *prevail*.” America had once been about freedom and possibility, and now it was chocked in bureaucracy. Dropping out had become a most reasonable social statement...A day or two after [the Grateful Dead] got to 710 in late September, Phil Lesh was walking down Haight Street when a jeep filled with National Guardsmen armed with loaded, bayonet-tipped rifles roared past and a police sergeant said to him, “You guys, get the fuck out of here.” A police officer in the black neighborhood of Hunter’s Point had shot a young man, and the black men of San Francisco had had enough. The result was six days of curfews and the guard in the streets.”¹⁵⁰

McNally’s official depiction of the band’s home from the fall of 1966 to the spring of 1968 as a “creative center” in a “charming neighborhood” during “such times” is rich with the types of kernels that pop up throughout numerous 1960s narratives relevant to scholarship that seeks to “historically (re)contextualize [the] context” of Grateful Dead scene.¹⁵¹ By McNally’s account, San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury District was the archetype of countercultural ideology—that which challenged the cultural practices of America society at the time—in 1966. In his narrative, the evolution of Norman Mailer’s white negroes, the Beatniks, become “refugees” from Long Beach who make their homes alongside college students and a small

¹⁵⁰ Dennis McNally, *A Long Strange Trip: The Inside History of the Grateful Dead* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), 159-62.

¹⁵¹ Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place*, 55.

number of African-Americans to form a “hip,” “integrated” neighborhood.¹⁵² An overwhelming sense of optimism and hope exudes from the inhabitants of the Haight as if to reaffirm that subscribing to Timothy Leary’s mantra “turn on, tune in, and drop out” was the “most reasonable social statement” one could make. Yet, by the end of the description—with McNally’s mention of “such times” and a riot across town in Hunter’s Point, where due to the city’s history of racially segregated ordinances for homeowners the majority of African-Americans in San Francisco at that time lived—one can’t help but get the feeling that the counterculture, in both ideology and practice may not have been as cohesively “integrated” as first explained.

By 1967 American youth (all those twenty-five years old and younger) composed one-half of the nation’s population.¹⁵³ That said, claims such as McNally’s above that suggest the cohort shared a monolithic countercultural consciousness are false. That is not to say Hunter S. Thompson’s comments of a “fantastic universal sense that whatever we were doing was *right*” and “that...our energy would simply *prevail*” is either unfounded or untrue. In fact, Peter Connors pointed out to me in conversation,

[I]t’s interesting because [very early on in the 1960s] there used to be this idea of the Movement...and it sort of encapsulated everything that was at that time counterculture and you actually could put everything together under the umbrella The Movement or Counterculture Movement, however you want to say it—all the people who weren’t going along with mainstream values...it was under one umbrella [but] as the Sixties go on...you have...splinters.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Norman Mailer, “The White Negro,” *Dissent* (Fall 1957), <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/online.php?id=26> (accessed November 1, 2010).

¹⁵³ Edward K. Spann, *Democracy’s Children: The Young Rebels of the 1960s and the Power of Ideals* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2003), 101.

¹⁵⁴ Connors, conversation, August 14, 2009.

Thompson's beliefs, like those revealed by McNally in his narrative, represent specific emplaced experiences and emotions that stem from particular class and race based positionings.

Thompson himself expressed this in a 1996 interview:

I was more a part of the [Free Speech] Movement than I was of the Acid Club...Keseay was a leader of the psychedelic movement. Berkeley was a whole different thing. The music was another thing. There was the Matrix [club], Ralph Gleason, everything.¹⁵⁵

Although numerous teens and college-aged youth found themselves upset with, and in some instances, disillusioned by American society, believing that as ex-Digger Peter Coyote once explained, "the real problem was the culture," their means and methods for thinking and acting counterculturally remained quite diverse, thereby articulating a countercultural ideology differently.¹⁵⁶

McNally's descriptive account of the Haight-Ashbury District in San Francisco during the pivotal year of 1966 provides a lens through which one can tease apart the diversity of 1960s countercultural articulations and begin to historically locate one such articulation, "it," amidst the early Grateful Dead scene. By no means do the organizations and communities I consider in the following sub-sections represent all of the countercultural movements in the 1960s. My inclusion of the following collectives, communities, and cultural organizations is not meant to be read as a sweeping biography of 1960s counterculture. In an attempt to unpack the historical moment in which the Grateful Dead scene was first articulated I analyze the groups and movements mentioned in the narrative of someone involved with the scene: McNally. That said, the following three sections revolve around the student and Free Speech Movements (McNally's

¹⁵⁵ Hunter S. Thompson, "Dr. Hunter S. Thompson," interview by P.J. O'Rourke, November 28, 1996, in *The Rolling Stone Interviews*, ed. Jann S. Wenner and Joe Levy (New York: Back Bay Books, 2007), 388.

¹⁵⁶ Peter Coyote quoted in McNally, 162.

inclusion of the Hunter S. Thompson quote from *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream*), the politics of “tuning in, turning on, and dropping out,” and a sampling of critiques of this attempt to withdraw from society.

Countercultural Students: SNCC, SDS, and the Free Speech Movement

The Sixties was about the Free Speech Movement long before it was about the flower children.

Hunter S. Thompson ¹⁵⁷

Between 1960 and 1964 students on college campuses across America raised on the principles of progressive education advocated by a post-War victory culture, and employing correlating ideas of participatory democracy, took an active stand against government, authority, and cultural normalcy. With the heightened economic prosperity following World War II and a push for students to both understand and support the values and practices of American democracy, public schooling in the 1950s provided an environment that “encourage[d] independence and the means [by which youth could] participat[e] in ...decisions affecting their lives.”¹⁵⁸ However while these students often acted in countercultural ways, it is important to note that such actions were not always motivated by countercultural values. Student movements and organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the Free Speech Movement espoused values just as “American” as those their parents held. With this in mind, the “countercultural” actions of SNCC, SDS, and student movements such as the Free Speech Movement may be read as such because they represented open resistance to what the youth saw as society’s failure to uphold

¹⁵⁷ Hunter S. Thompson interview, *Rolling Stone Interviews*, 388.

¹⁵⁸ Spann, 66.

many fundamental American values outlined in the *Declaration of Independence*, the *U.S. Constitution*, and the *Bill of Rights*.

In *Democracy's Children* Edward K. Spann describes this important distinction noting, “Even though some youthful activists took pride in going beyond what they thought was the timidity and inertia of their parents, most came from democratic households whose values they espoused.”¹⁵⁹ Kenneth Keniston, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Human Development, Emeritus, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology details this as well in his 1966 essay, “The Faces in the Lecture Room”:

[The student's] activism is more often premised upon the liberal values of his parents and the creedal values of American society than opposed to them. Indeed if there is any psychological thread that runs through student activism today, it is this identification with parental values. When parents and their offspring disagree, it is usually not over principle but practice.¹⁶⁰

One need not look beyond the “Port Huron Statement,” the 1962 manifesto of SDS to spot a feeling of disillusionment and a schism between American “principle” values and American cultural practices:

[W]e began to see complicated and disturbing paradoxes in our surrounding America. The declaration that “all men are created equal...” rang hollow before the facts of Negro life in the South and the big cities of the North. The proclaimed peaceful intentions of the United States contradicted its economic and military investments in the Cold War status quo. We witnessed, and continue to witness, other paradoxes. With nuclear energy whole cities can easily be powered, yet the dominant nation-states seem more likely to unleash destruction... While

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 42. For instance, similar values were evident in such university traditions as participation in collegiate athletics. Involvement in football, baseball, basketball, and track all grew on college campuses in the 1960s. Spann, 102-03.

¹⁶⁰ Kenneth Keniston, “The Face in the Lecture Room,” in *The Contemporary University: U.S.A.*, ed. Robert S. Morison (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), 337-38.

two-thirds of mankind suffers undernourishment, our own upper classes revel amidst superfluous abundance... America rests in national stalemate, its goals ambiguous and tradition-bound instead of informed and clear, its democratic system apathetic and manipulated rather than "of, by, and for the people."¹⁶¹

Here, students pointed to what they saw as discrepancies between American values and practices. For instance, socio-political agendas of containment during the Cold War complicated economic and military relations both abroad and at home and issues pertaining to civil rights and equality seemingly crumbled under economic greed and power.

Additionally, aside from helping to contextualize the meaning of the term “counterculture” within the early student movements of the 1960s, the marking of the difference between “principle and practice” also helps to illuminate the race and class-based positionings of those participating in such movements. While many argue that with federal programs such as the G.I. Bill and more intimate trends regarding family child-rearing practices such as the democratic education of women, attending college in the 1960s became a realistic possibility for more Americans regardless of race, class, or gender, the power of students within the academy was, as Spann points out “strongest among those nearest the center of that order, the children of the middle and upper-middle classes.”¹⁶² The opening lines of the “Port Huron Statement” reflect a candid acknowledgement of this: “We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities.”¹⁶³ Mention of the G.I. Bill also speaks to the race, class, and gender implications embedded in a political awareness of the escalating war in Vietnam and to some, the very real life or death implications of a military draft.

¹⁶¹ Tom Hayden and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), *The Port Huron Statement*, 1962, <http://www.h-net.org/~hst306/documents/huron.html> (accessed November 21, 2010).

¹⁶² Spann, 106.

¹⁶³ *The Port Huron Statement*.

Through various actions counter to those of their parents' generation (the Silent Generation) college students and the organizations they formed set out to "search for truly democratic alternatives to the present."¹⁶⁴ Such action, according to the authors of the "Port Huron Statement," "is a worthy and fulfilling enterprise, one which moves us and, we hope, others today."¹⁶⁵ While the members of SDS located the University and its students as the nucleus best suited for instituting change, the students of SNCC, who drafted their Founding Statement two years earlier, left their statement of purpose and plan of action more general:

"The redemptive community supersedes immoral social systems. By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities. Although each local group...must diligently work out the clear meaning of this statement...each act...of our...effort must reflect a genuine spirit of love and good will."¹⁶⁶

Others, such as activist and SNCC supporter, Mario Savio pushed the envelope further to suggest that "such times" as McNally dubbed them, required actions much more intense and dire than the nonviolent ones advocated by organizations such as the then-racially integrated SNCC. In his now-famous December 1964 speech on the steps of the University of California—Berkeley's Sproul Hall Savio proclaimed, "There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part...you've got to put your bodies upon the gears...the apparatus...to make it stop."¹⁶⁷ Regardless of method, whether peaceful or

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, *Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Founding Statement*, 1960, http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SNCC_founding.html (accessed November 21, 2010).

¹⁶⁷ Mario Savio Speech given before the Free Speech Sit-In on the steps of the University of California—Berkeley's Sproul Hall, 2 December 1964, <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/saviotranscript.html> (accessed August 10, 2010).

forceful, college students in the 1960s enacted countercultural practices in hopes of achieving ones that reflected the American values they believed in.

A Rejection of Culture: Turning on, tuning in, and dropping out

Genetic wisdom...suggests that social structures long established should not be discarded for frivolous reasons and transient causes. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, all pursuing invariably the same destructive goals, threaten the very fabric of organic life and the serene harmony of the planet, it is the right, it is the organic duty to drop out of such morbid covenants and to evolve new loving social structures.

Timothy Leary¹⁶⁸

Whereas the student movement and free-speech oriented counterculturalists believed in the existing principles of America but questioned the corresponding cultural practices, Dr. Timothy Leary found the very principles on which America was founded to be inherently flawed. Leary, an American counterculture icon best known for creating the mantra “turn on, tune in, and drop out” asked people to become aware of their surroundings and the institutions of which they were a part and then to question such surroundings and institutions. For Leary turning on and tuning in was made possible through the use of the drug Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD). Ultimately, Leary called on those with this new consciousness to drop out and remove themselves from said environments.

Specifically, in his own *Declaration of Evolution* Leary took aim at the *Declaration of Independence* pointing out what he felt to be human constructed injustices by altering the phrasing of the original document. For instance, rather than beginning with “When in the course of human events” like the *Declaration of Independence* Leary’s declaration proclaims, “When in the course of organic evolution.” His statement continues this pattern asserting,

¹⁶⁸ Timothy Leary, *The Declaration of Human Evolution*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/leary-decevo.html> (accessed August 20, 2010).

We hold these truths to be self evident: That all species are created equal; That they are endowed, each one, with certain inalienable rights; That among them are Freedom to Live, Freedom to Grow, and Freedom to pursue Happiness in their own style; That to protect these God-given rights, social structures naturally emerge, basing their authority on the principles of love of God and respect for all forms of life; That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of life, liberty, and harmony, it is the organic duty of the young members of that species to mutate, to drop out, to initiate a new social structure, laying its foundations on such principles and organizing its power in such form as seems likely to produce the safety, happiness, and harmony of all sentient beings.¹⁶⁹

Interchanging and replacing many terms such as “men” with “species” and “instituted” with the phrase “naturally emerge” Leary recognizes a postmodern world where truths are constructed and seeks to replace it with a modern understanding of reality where “organic” order is restored.

Author, prankster, LSD promoter, countercultural leader, and, according to author Peter Conners “the founding father of all Deadheads,” Ken Kesey is another advocate of “turning on, tuning in, and dropping out.”¹⁷⁰ As Tom Wolfe explains in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Kesey viewed American culture as a struggle over power where he who held the power could set the rules (construct the cultural values and practices). In one scene in the book Kesey attends an anti-war rally at UC—Berkeley and to the surprise of the event’s organizers Kesey yells out to the audience, “There’s only one thing to do...there’s only one thing’s gonna do any good at all...And that’s everybody just look at it, look at the war, and turn your backs and say...Fuck it.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Conners, *Growing Up Dead*, 125.

¹⁷¹ Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, 224.

However romantic the “going back to the way nature intended” idea is and however easy the “I don’t like your game so I’m taking my toys and going home” theory may seem they both speak to trends in 1960s counterculture ideology that are indicative of class if not both class and race. First and foremost, both imply a rejection of what exists already. Claiming that the reality in which you live is either wrong, immoral, or just not fair and then asserting that you will simply live another reality depends on privilege. It acknowledges the underlying fact that: 1) you are a part of the current construction; and 2) that it is in your power to simply reject such a construction. This very agency is based on existing socio-economic and political constructions and therefore only accessible to those in a particular racial and class-based positionings. To borrow from and recontextualize McNally’s earlier account, “dropping out became a most reasonable social statement” for those who were white and middle-class.

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised¹⁷²: Positions on Black Power

According to the latter portion of McNally’s account of the Grateful Dead’s home in the Haight, bassist Phil Lesh is told by a National Guardsmen to “get the fuck out of here” after he encounters a jeep filled with Guardsmen rolling down Haight Street enforcing the city’s curfew put in place because of rioting. McNally alludes to the Hunter’s Point Race Riot in September of 1966 but does not elaborate on the event’s historical place in what he coins as “such times.” In fact, the riot in Hunter’s Point (San Francisco) was the third riot in the state of California following the 1965 Watts Riots (Los Angeles) and the August 1966 Compton’s Cafeteria Riot (San Francisco). If the above two descriptions of countercultural enactment outline what “such times” may have meant to many middle and upper-middle class whites living in San Francisco

¹⁷² Gil Scott-Heron, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised,” *Pieces of a Man*, prod. Bob Thiele, Flying Dutchman Records/RCA, 1971.

around 1966, McNally's mention of Hunter's Point suggests that, to many African-Americans in San Francisco and in America at that same time "such times" referenced a much different view of American values and cultural practices. Where Compton's Cafeteria Riot tackled concerns of San Francisco's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered community, the six days of rioting in Watts, a predominately black neighborhood in Los Angeles, spoke to longstanding institutionalized forms of racism such as job and housing discrimination that many African-Americans dealt with on a regular basis. The Watts Riots, which occurred just five days after the signing of the Voting Rights Act, claimed over thirty lives, left more than one thousand injured, and led to almost three and a half thousand arrests. That said, although the riots in Watts, as Nicholas Lemann suggests, may have "instantly convinced the whole country that there was a severe crisis in the black slums," they were by no means indiscriminatory.¹⁷³ The Watts Riots of 1965 point to feelings of overwhelming discontent and frustration on behalf of African-Americans regarding American oppression, specifically the intersecting point of racism and classism.¹⁷⁴

At the same time that many white middle and upper-middle class youth fought for cultural practices that reflected specific principles and/or attempted to drop out of participating in the practices that embodied existing values, African-Americans across the country banded together to gain the rights and privileges afforded to those included in the culture. In the fall of 1966 SNCC announced that it would no longer be a racially integrated organization and that from that point forward membership would only be open to African-Americans. In the

¹⁷³ Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 171-72.

¹⁷⁴ Moreover, similar and interrelated uprisings occurred across the nation at this time as well that addressed additional forms of oppression. For instance, Chicago had already witnessed a number of riots stemming from race related housing discrimination. Lemann, *The Promised Land*. Also, in 1969 The Young Lords burned trash in the streets of New York in protest of racially related poor sanitation services.

organization's *Position Paper: The Basis of Black Power* members explain, "The white people should go into white communities where the whites have created power for the express purpose of denying blacks human dignity and self-determination."¹⁷⁵ Additionally, at that same time Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale returned to Oakland, California, just across the Bay from San Francisco, from participating in Civil Rights work in the South, and established The Black Panther Party. Both organizations sought to independently address the inequalities in both American values and cultural practices.

Much like Leary's *Declaration of Human Evolution* the Black Panther Party's *Ten Point Plan* (TPP) includes mention of the *Declaration of Independence*. After a list of ten demands such as the freedom "to control all the institutions which exist in our communities," "decent housing for the shelter of human beings," and "decent education" the Panthers include the first paragraph (beginning with "We hold these truths to be self-evident") from the *Declaration of Independence* as if to point out the sensibility of such a list.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, poet, author, and musician, Gil Scott-Heron, as the sub-title for the section states, pointed out the difference that race and class based social positioning played in 1960s countercultural movements. In one portion of the poem Scott-Heron states, "You will not be able to plug in, turn on, and cop out," to highlight the inherent class and race based politics of "tuning in, turning on, and dropping out."¹⁷⁷ Peter Conners clarified this exact difference in conversation with me: "[I]t's like if you say somebody dropped out they have to drop out of something and if you're in a class where

¹⁷⁵ Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, *Position Paper: The Basis of Black Power*, 1966, http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SNCC_black_power.html (accessed August 20, 2010).

¹⁷⁶ Black Panther Party, *Ten Point Plan*, 1966, <http://www.blackpanther.org/TenPoint.htm> (accessed August 20, 2010).

¹⁷⁷ Scott-Heron.

you're trying to survive then you can't really drop out."¹⁷⁸ Moreover, class and race differences translated directly into the distinction between "dropping out" as a form of countercultural protest and "dropping out" as a lifestyle choice. To borrow again from that same discussion with Conners: "Take it back to Vietnam, you know if you had money and you were in school you weren't getting sent over to Vietnam, you could defer. That's the life and death reality of the economic situation."¹⁷⁹ While it is important to note, as Conners does point out, "You can't pick the way you're born" and that such circumstances "don't change the fact that you're questioning things" it is equally as imperative to establish a clear distinction between the various underpinnings of dropping out.¹⁸⁰ This distinction highlights the complex and interrelated processes by which these various countercultural practices often come to be seen as one unified Movement.

"Please don't dominate the rap, jack, if you've got nothing new to say."¹⁸¹

Just as McNally's depiction of the Haight in 1966 and the Grateful Dead's cultural geography at the time exposes one particular social positioning it is important to note that such a narrative is common to hear from participants within the Grateful Dead scene around that time. For instance, David Gans echoed a similar positioning when he recalled the band's early years in the Haight-Asbury District:

The San Francisco music scene began as a neighborhood thing. People rented flats in the Haight because you could get nine people in there for a hundred bucks

¹⁷⁸ Conners, conversation, August 14, 2009.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Robert Hunter, "New Speedway Boogie," *Workingman's Dead*, prod. The Grateful Dead, Warner Bros. Records, June 1970.

a month and San Francisco State students and people who just wanted to sit around a paint all day found cheap places to live and then formed a neighborhood and then the LSD thing happened and started and people got creative and started jamming.¹⁸²

Michael Yeager lived two blocks up from Haight Street on Ashbury Street around that time and remembered a similar experience with cost of living:

San Francisco was expensive. I mean where we lived was only a one bedroom. I forget what he [the leasee/rentee] paid for it but, like I was sleeping on the floor in a sleeping bag.¹⁸³

Whereas he recalled the city being expensive, Michael, like David, recognized that the larger price of rent was often split between those living in the apartments. In Michael's situation, his friend signed a lease for a one bedroom apartment and three individuals actually lived there, splitting the rent three ways.

Furthermore, while living costs in the Haight may have been relatively inexpensive it is important to note that housing was not necessary an equal-opportunity program. Due to racially segregated city ordinances the majority of San Francisco's African-Americans resided across town in the Hunter's Point area.¹⁸⁴ In Peter Conners' words, "the scene in the Haight [that] the Dead came out of was...really white—really white middle class."¹⁸⁵ However, that is not to say the Haight lacked any diversity. Michael recalled a geographic diversity when he explained to me,

¹⁸² Gans, conversation, March 19, 2010.

¹⁸³ Michael Yeager, conversation Elizabeth Yeager, August 8, 2010. Rochester, New York.

¹⁸⁴ Scholars such as George Lipsitz and Kenneth Jackson have analyzed the racialized housing policies that prohibited African Americans from residing in particular zones within cities such as San Francisco. In many instances, once legally repealed from city ordinances these rules merely resurfaced as the guidelines in private homeowners and real estate associations and thus maintained racial segregation. George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006). Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹⁸⁵ Conners, conversation, August 14, 2009.

The people I met out there—I didn't meet anybody from California. I met 'em from Philadelphia, Detroit, Dallas—from Texas—from all over the place.¹⁸⁶

David Gans' suggestion that people who lived in the area just wanted to “sit around and paint” points to an ability of not having to worry incessantly about finances. Somehow, perhaps by parents, trust funds, hard work and saving, or casual employment, some individuals had the access to funds that afforded them the opportunity to remain unemployed. Although Michael worked while he lived there, he echoed a similar social positioning as David when he talked about his cultural awareness—or lack thereof—regarding what many people in the city dealt with on a daily basis. While the below memory highlights much more than simply a difference in situated knowledges and contextualized realities it does nonetheless point to the relevance of one's social location.¹⁸⁷ Referencing the abduction and murder of California Supreme Court Judge Harold Haley, Michael recalled,

When I picked [the newspaper] up at the grocery store...I looked at th[e image] and...thought, holy smokes where is this? Cause you know it was a picture of him [Judge Harold Haley] with a belt around the shotgun all taped down to his neck and I thought, geez where's this going on, cause I wasn't aware that that stuff was going out there at the time. You were—It was—You could drive anyway you wanted pretty much you could go through red lights and the police didn't bother you cause...so many other things were happening. You know, they were dealing with so many different types of situations...I wasn't aware that that stuff was going on. That really caught me by surprise—with the [Black] Panthers. I mean I knew they were there but I didn't realize it was so graphic right there.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Yeager, conversation, August 8, 2010.

¹⁸⁷ Here I mean to suggest that the news coverage of Judge Haley's abduction and murder points to a number of conversations and arguments such as fear-mongering in and by the press, as a way to divert attention from other larger topics of concern (calls for equal rights by organizations such as the Black Panthers, etc.).

¹⁸⁸ Yeager, conversation, August 8, 2010.

To Yeager, a high-school graduate, Vietnam veteran, and employed carpenter “you” in this context signified white, middle-class, and male. And as David Gans candidly explained that “you” also served as an accurate description of Phil Lesh, Bob Weir, Mickey Hart, Bill Kreutzmann, and Ron “Pigpen” McKernan, five of the six founding members of the Grateful Dead. Guitarist Jerry Garcia was perhaps the one exception to this fact. As David Gans explained,

Jerry Garcia was a latchkey kid who grew up in a bar in San Francisco in a broken home...Bob Weir [wa]s an upper-middle class kid, the rest were pretty middle class... Jerry was like a Beat but he didn't wanna be a nihilist and a resin of the darkness like that. He wanted to be part of th[e] flowering instead.¹⁸⁹

According to Gans, these predominately white middle and upper-middle class youth that wanted to be a part of “the flowering” were hippies.

The hippies came along and thought, “Well we don't have to be so fucking grim [as opposed to the Beats] about it. Lets, you know, lets dress up”...Part of it had to do with there was all this crap in the thrift stores. It was like making something creative with the materials available to you. And the LSD thing—If you're [the Beats] protest was coffee and cigarettes and Beat poetry and jazz music in dark clubs—then along comes LSD and you could go outside and sniff a flower in the sunshine instead, and live this nice colorful life—that was much more attractive I think.¹⁹⁰

Whether one's protest involved sitting in dark clubs, reading poetry and listening to jazz music or going “outside and sniff[ing] a flower in the sunshine” such actions set amidst the countercultural ideologies outlined above serve as a reminder of two certainties regarding the 1960s counterculture, and in particular the principles and practices of 1960s Bay area

¹⁸⁹ Gans, conversation, March 19, 2010.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

counterculture. First, it was not nearly, especially by 1966, as “integrated” as McNally suggests. In fact, McNally’s account is relevant and valuable to my research for just that reason and because of that is tied heavily to my second point. In McNally’s story of the Haight-Ashbury District kernels of a particular social positioning that threads through other narratives such David Gans’ and my own father’s exists. “You,” (even used unknowingly and meant as inclusive) as an all-encompassing term was not, as the Black Panthers and Gil Scott-Heron assert, representative of all communities, individuals, and countercultural movements. Reading poetry and listening to jazz in dark clubs and taking LSD in order to live a colorful life were choices and even more importantly, choices that many at that time did not have.

Burlington, Vermont - 1983

Fishman: The first time we played together?

Interviewer: For people, for an audience...

Fishman: [to Trey] Was the very first one Slade or was the very first one the Rots-zee dance?

Trey: The Rots-zee

Fishman: I remember the rots, the Rots-zee—We played this ROTC dance at Marsh/Austin/Tupper Hall at UVM. We were using hockey sticks for microphone stands and, uh we ran outta songs in like an hour [people in the background laughing] and started repeating the songs. At one point some girl came up and asked if we could do any Flock of Seagulls (everyone laughs) and that was the beginning of the end. We, we, we took a break and they brought down a stereo from somebody’s room and started cranking Michael Jackson and stuff and weren’t really encouraging us to go back on but we did. We played our second set and the uh—

Trey: Which was the same songs as the first set—

- Fishman: Which was the same songs as the first, right, we just started repeating—
- Page: You played “Proud Mary” twice
- Fishman: Right, that’s what it was, “Proud Mary.” And “Long Cool Woman.” “Long Cool Woman” and “Proud Mary” were both played a couple times [smiling and eating a doughnut]. Yeah.
- Interviewer: Did the people like it?
- Trey & Fishman: [Shaking heads in unison] No—
- Trey: —they hated it.
- Fishman: We were ignored. Basically.
- Trey: I remember it culminated in the end with me screaming into the microphone at, they were like trying to turn Michael Jackson louder than us (turning to Fishman) and I was (holding hands up in the air) holding up the check cause they—
- Fishman: [laughing boisterously out loud] Oh right—
- Trey: They paid us. [mock yelling and sneering] You paid us!
- Fishman: [in the same mock yelling and sneering tone while laughing] You paid us! You paid us! Hahaha, You paid us! [gesturing air guitar] “Proud Mary”—
- Trey: And it was like [in a higher pitched singing voice] “this is thriller”/“Proud Mary keep on turnin”¹⁹¹

Phish played its first show in the Harris-Millis Cafeteria on the University of Vermont’s campus in Burlington, Vermont, on December 2, 1983. With a hockey stick for a microphone stand the band covered a variety of songs by artists such as The Hollies, Creedence Clearwater Revival (“CCR”), Wilson Pickett, The Doors, The Who, the Grateful Dead, and Jimi Hendrix.¹⁹² By the time the band launched in Hendrix’s “Fire,” members of the audience seized control of

¹⁹¹ *Phish: Bittersweet Motel*.

¹⁹² According to records the full setlist for this show is: “Set I: Long Cool Woman in a Black Dress, Proud Mary, In the Midnight Hour, Squeeze Box, Roadhouse Blues, Happy Birthday Set II: Scarlet Begonias → Fire” The Mockingbird Foundation, *The Phishing Companion*, 256.

the house music system and attempted to drown out the band with Michael Jackson's "Thriller."¹⁹³

Although the "Thriller" show, as it is now remembered by both the band and fans, proves not everyone at UVM held a particular affinity for earlier American rhythm and blues and rock and roll (a point of discussion I explore in much greater detail in Chapter Three), it does point to a larger trend in American music culture and more importantly in American culture in general.¹⁹⁴ While 1980s music culture (record sales, radio, and music television) was on one hand dominated by the success of the hit single and music chart success, the decade saw on the other hand, the formation of the single's antithesis, "album oriented rock" or what is now called "classic rock." Alongside this particular musical reversal of the clocks, where what was once called "acid rock" became "classic rock" and a number of radio stations founded their playlists on the music of 1960s rock and roll bands such as The Rolling Stones, The Doors, The Who, and the Grateful Dead, other genres of music such as rap and disco also took a lyrical and aural look back sampling pieces from numerous 1960s and 1970s songs.

Music journalist and critic Lester Bangs, in a 1981 article for the now defunct *Musician* magazine, made note of this trend citing the younger brother of a girlfriend who, after being asked to list his favorite artists at the time named off the Yardbirds, Cream, and the Doors.¹⁹⁵ The younger brother was about to enter college. That same year Phish's keyboardist, Page McConnell, entered Goddard College. A year later Trey Anastasio graduated from The Taft

¹⁹³ December 2, 1983 also marks the date the music video for "Thriller" debuted

¹⁹⁴ I make only slight mention of popular music culture here in Chapter One as I am more concerned with mapping out and unpacking larger cultural shift during the 1980s and 1990s at this point in the dissertation. I then address the effects these larger cultural shifts have on popular music in Chapter Three. Specifically, I investigate how such shifts interconnect with the musical tastes of white middle and upper middle class participants in the Phish scene—how they help to "articulate" Phish scene identity.

¹⁹⁵ Lester Bangs, "Jim Morrison: Bozo Dionysus a Decade Later," in *Mainlines, Blood Feasts, and Bad Taste: A Lester Bangs Reader*, ed. John Morthand (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), 214.

School, a century old elite Northeastern Boarding School in Western Connecticut, and enrolled in the University of Vermont.¹⁹⁶

To borrow from Bangs, “Think about that for a minute.”¹⁹⁷ As he so poignantly explains, The Doors broke up ten years [ago]...[Jim] Morrison died then, and if you want to call the trio that went on after his death the Doors you can, but no one else did—and Cream and the Yardbirds have been dead since ’68-’69. Sure all three of them were great groups, but were they that epochal that somebody who was in elementary school when they scored their greatest triumphs should look back to them like this, to be holding on to them after that many years?¹⁹⁸

Jerry Garcia, in a 1991 interview with *Rolling Stone* alluded to a similar trend in American culture during the 1980s and 1990s. When asked how it felt to turn fifty Garcia referenced his band and the continued interest it seemed to hold to the youth of the time:

I mean, here we are, we’re getting into our fifties, and where are these people who keep coming to our shows coming from? What do they find so fascinating about these middle-aged bastards playing basically the same thing we’ve always played? I mean, what do seventeen-year olds find fascinating about this? I can’t believe it’s just because they’re interested in picking up on the Sixties, which they missed. Come on, hey, the Sixties were fun, but shit, it’s fun being young you know, nobody really misses out on that. So what is it about the Nineties in America? There must be a dearth of fun out there in America. Or adventure. Maybe that’s it, maybe we’re just one of the last adventures in America. I don’t know.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ It worth briefly noting here that The Taft School’s motto is “Not to be served but to serve.” The Taft School website, <http://www.taftschoool.org> (accessed June 4, 2009).

¹⁹⁷ Bangs, 214-15.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Jerry Garcia, “Jerry Garcia,” interview by James Henke, October 31, 1991, in *The Rolling Stone Interviews*, ed. Jann S. Wenner and Joe Levy (New York: Back Bay Books, 2007), 303

Answering his own question Bangs insists that this look backwards to earlier music, was “not just Sixties nostalgia” and I agree with this claim.²⁰⁰ I do not assert that American youth in the 1980s and 1990s simply yearned for a time or for the memory of a time which they were not witness to. Trey Anastasio once explained that he felt Phish’s appeal was directly related to “something bigger going on culturally” and that in specific “it was a response to what was happening in the Eighties culturally.”²⁰¹ I want to suggest that during the 1980s and 1990s white middle and upper-middle class individuals, as Phish scene participants, construct/ed a scene identity based on a particular predominately white middle and upper-middle class cultural memory of the Dead scene not as a means to reject mainstream American culture but rather as a way to feel as if they were a part of the culture.

I use the term postmodern to symbolize a certain historical period. Specifically, I borrow from Fredric Jameson’s theorizing of the postmodern as “a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order—what is often euphemistically called modernization, postindustrial or consumer society.”²⁰² As such, I too am particularly careful to separate the 1960s as a “transitional period” where “the new international order (neo-colonialism, the Green Revolution, computerization, and electronic information) is at one and the same time set in place and is swept

²⁰⁰ Bangs, 214-15.

²⁰¹ “Phish Festivalography Part I,” *Jam On*, Sirius Satellite Radio, October 15, 2009, <http://thebutterroom.com/post/225577005/phish-festivalography-pt-1-4-i-often-find-it> (accessed January 11, 2011).

²⁰² Frederic Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” in *Everyday Theory: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Becky McLaughlin and Bob Coleman (New York: Pearson, 2005), 203. It is keeping this definition in mind that I take this period, postmodernism and late capitalism, as marking the erasure of the line between high culture and mass culture. Tom Wolfe also addresses the erasure and the reconfiguration of class identity and class culture in his essay, “Hooking Up What Life Was Like at the Turn of the Second Millennium: An America’s World.” Tom Wolfe, “Hooking Up What Life Was Like at the Turn of the Second Millennium: An America’s World,” in *Hooking Up* (New York: Picador USA, 2003), 3-13.

and shaken by its own internal contradictions and external resistance.”²⁰³ By situating the 1960s as a transitional phase within the historical period of postmodernism I mean to suggest that the effects of changes set in play during the years the Grateful Dead first came together had not yet fully developed into social and cultural fruition.

By the 1980s and 1990s the diverse countercultures of the 1960s I previously outlined and the ideologies they advocated, in the words of Peter Connors, “splintered.” As Tom Wolfe plainly explained after analyzing American culture on the dawn of a new century,

In the year 2000...there was the curious case of American philosophy—which...began with the hyperdilation of a pronouncement of Nietzsche’s to the effect that there can be no absolute truth, merely many “truths,” which are the tools of various groups, classes, or forces...The philosopher’s duty was to deconstruct the language, expose its hidden agendas, and help save the victims of the American “Establishment”: women, the poor, nonwhites, homosexuals, and hardwood trees.²⁰⁴

With grand narratives being displaced by meta-narratives identity politics took center stage. Everywhere one looked attention was focused on the politics of difference and exposing how, as I alluded to in my introductory remarks, difference intersected both institutionally and culturally with forms of power. As African-American studies scholar Barbara Christian explains in her essay, “The Race for Theory,” “The nature of our context today is such that an approach which desires power single-mindedly must of necessity become like that which it wishes to destroy. Rather than wanting to change the whole model, many of us want to be at the center.”²⁰⁵

Jameson’s proclamation regarding the “death of the subject” proved problematic for those whose own recognition was being theoretically disqualified at the exact moment it was granted

²⁰³ Jameson, 203.

²⁰⁴ Wolfe, *Hooking Up*, 13.

²⁰⁵ Barbara Christian, “The Race for Theory,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 6 (Spring 1987): 51-63.

recognition. At the same time that more people sought recognition as subjects in a society that has subjugated them, the theoretical concept “subject” was devalued.

Multiculturalism, a buzz word in the 1980s stood in to signify a variety of cultural and institutional attempts to expose this relationship. At its most basic fundamental level multiculturalism, to borrow from ethnomusicologist Eric Usner, “challenged the implicit racial identities operating in the ‘melting pot’ model of America—the white American.”²⁰⁶ On one hand the term represented an activist agenda that promoted inclusion of multiple subjects. It was used frequently in school curriculums to mark institutional attempts to include multiple voices and experiences into classroom materials. In other contexts, the term became a public celebration of cultural diversity that branded itself in hyphenated identities and embraced multiple holidays and rituals. I contend this breakdown of grand narratives, of white middle class culture as American culture, left many white middle and upper-middle class individuals in the 1980s and 1990s feeling “cultureless.” Given this feeling, many of these same people imagined a period in time before this loss of power, before this perceived splintering occurred, as a means by which they could feel a part of American culture.

Prep School Hippies and Hip School Preppies²⁰⁷: Generation X and the Postmodern Turn

The children of the babyboom generation have been dubbed by demographers, marketing analysts, and advertising executives a variety of terms ranging from Generation X and Slackers, to Thirteeners and the baby bust generation. Some studies situate these individuals as being “the

²⁰⁶ Eric Martin Usner, “Dancing in the Past, Living in the Present: Nostalgia and Race in Southern California Neo-Swing Dance Culture,” *Dance Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (2001-2002): 95.

²⁰⁷ The phrases “prep school hippie” and hip school preppie” are lyrics to Phish’s song “Prep School Hippie.” “Prep School Hippie” was never released on an album. The song was first played on September 27, 1985 in Slade Hall at University of Vermont in Burlington, Vermont.

clean-up crew” citing claims that they see their role in history as “sacrificial.”²⁰⁸ Some point out that these are the youth who “believe it will be much harder for them to get ahead than it was for their parents.”²⁰⁹ According to many media and cultural critics they are cynics.²¹⁰ As teenagers many Gen-Xers spent their afternoons wandering booming suburban shopping malls.²¹¹ They were also, according to one source, as an entire generation, more “ethnically diverse” and “more comfortable with diversity than the previous generation.”²¹²

My attention to Generation X does not mark another attempt in what Alex Ross has deemed “the nation’s ongoing symposium on generational identity.”²¹³ Like anthropologist Sherry Ortner, I also find the “idea of a single generational consciousness...highly implausible, especially in an era as conscious as this one about social difference.”²¹⁴ As the survey of Gen-X definitions above illustrates its characteristics are a far cry from those defining a monolithic generation or its supposed collective consciousness. However, I believe stretching this critique to dismiss the very *idea* of a Generation X would be a tremendous mistake. Reflecting on existing scholarship and my own ethnographic work, leads me to posit that “it really is out there in some part(s) of social space,” and like Ortner I suggest, “the question is one of locating it correctly rather than denying its existence.”²¹⁵

To do this I begin with the acknowledgement that Gen-X was, as Jason Cohen and Michael Krugman point out in their book *Generation ECCH!*, “a media creation, devised by demographic-driven advertisers desperate to pick the pockets of a group with a small—but fully

²⁰⁸ Neil Howe and William Strauss, “The New Generation Gap,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 270, no. 6 (1992): 75.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Laura Zinn et al., “Move Over, Boomers: A Portrait of Generation X,” *Business Week*, December 14, 1992, 75.

²¹³ Alex Ross, “Generation Exit: Kurt Cobain,” *The New Yorker*, April 25, 1994, 102.

²¹⁴ Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory*, 87.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 87-88.

disposable—income.”²¹⁶ Gen-Xers were seen as consumers and perhaps more importantly, as profitable consumers. Echoing the market-driven design of Gen-X I am particularly drawn to Ortner’s claim that,

[W]hile...economic issues affect[] everyone in this [American] society, it seems fairly clear that both the source and the target of the Generation X imagery is the middle class. That is, although poor people, mostly minorities, have actually been hit even harder than the middle class, the whiteness of the Gen-X imagery...indicates that these are not the people referenced in public discussion of Gen-X.²¹⁷

Interestingly enough, despite these commercially motivated origins that targeted white middle and upper-middle class youth as early as the 1980s, the idea of Gen-X began to develop a reality propelled by that very same group. While the label may have stemmed from advertising and marketing campaigns at some point between the presidencies of Regan and Clinton, for many middle and upper-middle class white Americans the idea of Generation X became, and perhaps still is, very real.

In the self-reflexive bestseller *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, Douglas Coupland details the lives of three fictional white middle class twenty-somethings Andy, Dag, and Claire, who, in seeking out a cultural identity of their own, leave their homes, families, and jobs and head into the desert “tell stories and attempt to make [their] own lives worthwhile tales in the process.”²¹⁸ He dubbed his fellow Gen-Xers as those who worked what he called McJobs, “low-pay[ing], low-prestige, low-dignity, low-benefit[s], no future job[s] in the service

²¹⁶ Jason Cohen and Michael Krugman, *Generation ECCH!* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 10.

²¹⁷ Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory*, 89.

²¹⁸ Douglas Coupland, *Generation X* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 8.

sector.”²¹⁹ According to Coupland, Gen-Xers often suffer from what he calls “historical underdosing,” “liv[ing] in a period of time when nothing seems to happen,” even though much *is* happening.²²⁰ The sense of having no culture, of “historical underdosing,” and of being sacrificial in history, threads through most, if not all Gen-X representations.

Following in this vein, my use of these terms builds on Ortner’s suggestion that scholars situate the *idea* of Generation X as white middle class Americans’ “attempt to deal with [the] profound [cultural] changes in the late twentieth [and early twenty-first] century.”²²¹ I contend that this idea of a Generation X be thought of as white middle and upper-middle class American attempts to deal with the effects of identity politics, and in specific the idea of multiculturalism. For the purposes of my research, Generation X signifies both the public and academic discussion as well as the personal feelings of predominately white American middle and upper-middle class youth who, in feeling like they were not a part of American culture participated in the production of the Phish scene.²²²

Reflecting on his earlier conversation with the younger brother of a friend, rock critic and journalist Lester Bangs turned the table on his readers and asked, “[C]an you imagine being a teenager in the 1980s and having absolutely no culture you could call your own?”²²³ Reacting to then-commonplace discussions of political correctness as well as claims that as a marketable group of consumers Gen-Xers were “diverse,” Bangs’ question speaks directly to the interrelations between individuality and the eroticization of the culture concept. First, conflating the meaning of culture to that of difference, Bangs’ theoretical framework represents what Akhil

²¹⁹ Ibid., 5, 7.

²²⁰ Ibid., 7

²²¹ Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory*, 87-88.

²²² Ibid., 80-106.

²²³ Bangs, 215.

Gupta and James Ferguson outline as specific “images of break, rupture, and disjunction” in anthropological discourse that inherently create and establish the “other.”²²⁴ According to Bangs it’s not that 1980s Americans lacked culture but rather that some Americans in the 1980s lacked, or at the very least felt like they lacked, culture. Second, ideas of lacking culture when placed within a postmodern historical framework as defined earlier, can be seen as classed and raced responses to Jameson’s “death of the subject” where,

[N]ot only is the bourgeois individual subject a thing of the past, it is also a myth; it never really existed in the first place; there have never been autonomous subjects of that type. Rather, this construct is merely a philosophical and cultural mystification which sought to persuade people that they ‘had’ individual subjects and possessed some unique personal identity.²²⁵

More than two decades later Phishhead and columnist for *Jambands.com*, David Steinberg hinted at a similar cultural ambiguity and lack of collective currency when, thinking back on his earlier years, he observed, “Few people ever [ask] anyone, ‘Wow, what was it like to be a college student in the mid-1980s?’”²²⁶ Taken in historical context, specifically within a historical moment where identity politics and multiculturalism dominate, Steinberg’s comments echo Bangs’ assumption and claims of who is with and without culture as well as not only the theoretical de-centering of the subject but the death of the subject.

Aside from feelings of having no culture, or being cultureless, I’ve also suggested that Gen-Xers suffer/ed from what Coupland calls “historical underdosing,” “liv[ing] in a period of

²²⁴ Gupta and Ferguson, 33.

²²⁵ Jameson, 205.

²²⁶ David Steinberg, “What Happened to the Jambands Community?” *Jambands.com*, April 4, 2005, http://www.jambands.com/Columns/Zzyzx/content_2005_04_04.00.phtml (accessed June 1, 2009). It should also be noted here that Steinberg is referencing his own teenage and college experience in the 1980s.

time when nothing seems to happen,” even though much *is* happening.²²⁷ For instance, standing outside of a Phish show in Holmdel, New Jersey, in 1998 fan Benjy Eisen explained,

I don't know what a hippie was...I'm a kid of the '90s. In our generation we don't have Vietnam stories, we have Lollapalooza tales. Our war stories are about the car breaking down on the way to a show.²²⁸

Interestingly enough is that at that point in time (1998) many “kids” of the '90s did have war stories.²²⁹ In this case, who “we” are can be closely connected to Bangs' teen “without culture” and Steinberg's feeling that his college experience was forgettable.

Moreover, when situated within a postmodern framework, this particular temporal disjuncture may also be read as what Jameson coined “The Nostalgia Mode” where pastiche replaces parody and memory and history become, as Marita Sturken suggests, “entangled” with one another.²³⁰ Just as parody is no longer possible as “the feeling that there is a...norm [or truth]” that can be mocked no longer remains, historical awareness becomes confined to the understanding of various, albeit oftentimes competing constructions.²³¹ That is, “what if,” as historian Susan Crane ponders,

we consider the possibility that each self-expression of historical consciousness is an expression of collective memory, not because it is exactly shared by all of the other members of the collective but because that collective makes its articulation possible, because historical consciousness has itself become an element of collective memory?²³²

²²⁷ Ibid., 7

²²⁸ Benjy Eisen quoted in Powers, “A New Variety of Flower Child,” 1.

²²⁹ By this I mean that many individuals in the same peer group as Eisen, in their late teens and twenties, fought in the Gulf War.

²³⁰ Jameson, 203-8. Sturken, 5.

²³¹ Jameson, 204.

²³² Susan A. Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory,” *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1383.

In fact, if culture is “not [a] fixed and static thing[] that get[s] passed through...generations in unchanging form” and is instead a construction “that constantly undergoe[s] reworking, redefinition and reformulation such that, the image[s] of the past can often be understood in terms of the political and other agendas of the present” analysis focusing on how and why such reformulations take place is called for.²³³

By attempting to avoid what Avery Gordon calls the “twin pitfalls of subjectivism and positivism” I build on anthropological research regarding the invention of tradition as a way to examine Eisen’s sentiments alongside the relation between postmodern identity politics such as multiculturalism and Phish scene identity, or in other words, the relationship between memory, history, and identity.²³⁴ Anthropologists Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin suggest that,

When we insist that the past is always constructed in the present, we are not suggesting that present-day acts and ideas have no correspondence to the past...[rather] we argue that the relation of prior to unfolding representations can be equally well termed discontinuous as continuous. Ongoing cultural representations refer to or take into account of prior representations, and in this sense the present has continuity with the past. But this continuity of reference is constructed in the present.²³⁵

That is, I do not take Eisen’s comments about how he cannot relate to a “hippie” and to Vietnam war stories as a complete disconnect from America’s past. Like Handler and Linnekin, Crane,

²³³ F. Allan Hanson, “Empirical Anthropology, Postmodernism, and the Invention of Tradition,” in *Present is Past: Some Uses of Tradition in Native Societies*, ed. Marie Mauze (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997), 195.

²³⁴ Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 19. Portelli, 5. The Popular Memory Group echoes these sentiments arguing that these processes are “one means by which...social group[s] [can] acquire[] a wider transformative role in society.” Popular Memory Group, “Popular Memory: Theory Politics, Method,” in *The Oral History Reader*, 2d ed., ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2006), 43.

²³⁵ Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, “Tradition, Genuine or Spurious.” *Journal of American Folklore* 97, no. 384 (1984): 286.

and Sturken, I too do not want to contest a connection between memory and history. Rather, I want to explore the motivations underlying these relations. As such, I posit that the “historical underdosing” felt by many white middle and upper-middle class Phish scene participants in the 1980s and 1990s be understood an effect of postmodernity, specifically as a reaction to the social and cultural changes brought about by multiculturalism.²³⁶ Rather than reject the culture of which they acknowledge they are or were a part—as Grateful Dead scene participants did by “turning on, tuning in, and dropping out”—Phish scene participants “are...engaged in a struggle to define a distinctive cultural heritage with which they may identify.”²³⁷ Trey Anastasio highlighted these facets of the relationship between the classed identity of Gen-X and the effects of postmodern identity politics such as multiculturalism when, in response to one critic’s claim that “Phish were not the Grateful Dead,” he proclaimed, “I’m a child of the ‘70s and that’s kinda the point...in 8th grade I was in New Jersey going to the mall...and listening to what was on at the mall...the suburban white kid is a part of history.”²³⁸ Taken as a reactionary response, Anastasio comments reveal an attempt at inclusion.

In his memoir, *Growing Up Dead*, Peter Connors acknowledges the “classed” public perception of Deadheads and writes,

One common reaction I received when I told people I was writing a book about being a Deadhead was, essentially, ‘Aren’t Deadheads just a bunch of middle-class white kids?’ This reaction was usually coupled with a disdain for what the observer considered Deadhead phoniness: why would a bunch of middle-class

²³⁶ Edward M. Bruner, “Abraham Lincoln as Authentic Reproduction: A Critique of Postmodernism,” *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 2 (1994): 397-414. Specifically, Bruner suggests that the meaning-making at New Salem may stem from the tourists there “(1) learning about their past, (2) playing with time frames and enjoying the encounters, (3) consuming nostalgia for a simpler bygone era... (4) buying the idea of progress, of how far we have advanced... and (5) celebrating America.” Bruner, 398

²³⁷ Hanson, 212.

²³⁸ Trey Anastasio quoted in *Phish: Bittersweet Motel*.

white kids want to ‘act poor’ (an actual quote) and scrounge around the country in crappy cars and even crappier clothes?²³⁹

Conners was candid with me in the fact that, “I mean you can just look around and see that’s what it is...all you have to do is look at concert footage, go look at pictures of the scene...It’s a bunch of white people.”²⁴⁰ However, as I pointed out earlier and as a Grateful Dead scholar has suggested “Not having anything when you have upper middle class social and cultural capital is simply not the same as not having anything when you don’t.”²⁴¹

Just as the earlier narratives about the Grateful Dead and San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury District expose particular class and race based social positionings so too do the stories and emotions of Phish scene participants such as David Steinberg, Benjy Eisen, and Trey Anastasio. However, recontextualizing each scene in its respective historical context complicates the assumption that both articulations can be read as countercultural. Whereas many middle and upper-middle class white youth connected to the Grateful Dead scene rejected the culture of the 1960s in which they both were and saw themselves as a part many middle and upper-middle class white youth in the 1980s and 1990s felt as if they had no culture. When Phish fan David Steinberg claims, “Phish didn’t come out of a culture of resistance – ranging from the violent to the surrealistic – to a military draft for an inscrutable war,” he is right.²⁴² The Gulf War did not include a draft. If you were, like Eisen, Steinberg, and even Anastasio—white and middle or upper-middle class in the final decades of the 20th century—there didn’t appear much out there culturally for you to resist. Rather you more than likely just wanted to

²³⁹ Conners, *Growing Up Dead*, 4.

²⁴⁰ Conners, conversation, August 14, 2009.

²⁴¹ Email sent to members of the Deadwood list-serv on Dec. 10, 2007.

²⁴² Steinberg, “What Happened to the Jamband Community?” Aside from being a longtime Phish fan (seeing his first Phish show in 1988), a columnist at *Jambands.com*, and a member of The Netspace Foundation’s board of directors, Steinberg is most well known among Phish fans for the creation of ZZYZZ’s “Phishtistics” website, <http://www.ihoz.com/PhishStats.html>.

feel a part of it all. In the following three chapters I transition from a contextual description of the Phish scene to one that approaches the scene materially (action as well as physical environment). These chapters are divided into the three main processes that embody scene identity: pre-show, show, and post-show practices. Each chapter focuses on specific processes that embody practices of the Grateful Dead as a means to highlight how the historical memory of the Grateful Dead is evoked, embodied, and enacted in the Phish scene.

Chapter Two

Pre-Show: Getting (Back) on the Train

Phish scene identity, much like the identity of the earlier Grateful Dead scene, is an effect of specific emplaced practices. Although the two appear similar in form they remain distinctly different in function. The title of this chapter, a play on the name of a popular Phish song, “Back on the Train,” depicts the most basic practice of Phish scene identity, the first articulation of getting *it*:

When I jumped off, I had a bucket full of thoughts/When I first jumped off, I held
that bucket in my hand/Ideas that would take me all around the world/I stood and
watched the smoke behind the mountain curl/It took me a long time to get back on
the train/Now I'm gone and I'll never look back again/I'm gone and I'll never look
back at all/You know I'll never look back again/I turn my face into the howlin'
wind/It took me a long time to get back on the train.²⁴³

Written by Anastasio and his close friend and fellow alumni of the Princeton Day School, Tom Marshall, “Back on the Train” tells the tale of a personal awakening and the subsequent decision to embark on a corresponding new path. Moreover, both the song title and its lyrics, whether intentional or not, evoke the fundamental practice of Grateful Dead scene identity of “getting on the bus” as it is represented in the Grateful Dead’s song “That’s It For the Other One.”²⁴⁴ Filling the second side of the band’s seventh album *Grateful Dead*, the live double-album most commonly known as *Skull and Roses* or *Skull Fuck*, “That’s It For the Other One,” describes a similar awakening: “The bus came by and I got on/That’s when it all began/There was cowboy

²⁴³ Trey Anastasio and Tom Marshall, “Back on the Train,” *Farmhouse*, prod. Bryce Goggin, Elektra Records, May 6, 2000.

²⁴⁴ Jerry Garcia, Bob Weir, and Bill Kreutzmann, “That’s It For the Other One,” *Grateful Dead*, prod. Grateful Dead, Warner Bros. Records, October 4, 1971.

Neal/At the wheel.”²⁴⁵ Although Garcia, Weir, and Kreutzmann’s lyrics link their own experiences of getting it to Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, their 1939 International Harvester school bus, Furthur, and the drug LSD, the phrase “getting on the bus” is now frequently uttered by members of both scenes as a means to locate the primary process of scene identity.

Peter Connors dedicated his book *Growing Up Dead: The Hallucinated Confessions of a Teenage Deadhead* to “everyone who got on the bus.”²⁴⁶ Asking someone when they got on the bus was a question I often posed in both formal (recorded) and informal conversations. It is a common way of inquiring when scene participants first “got it” and also a way of performing scene language or scene communication proficiency.²⁴⁷ Responses to this question typically yielded answers that fit into one of two categories. First, there were the fans who located “getting on the bus” as a practice that involved listening to their first show as a recording: “My sister gave me a [Phish] tape she didn’t like,” “My one really cool camp counselor used to play Phish non-stop...It was great,” and “I was at my buddy’s house when his older brother from college let us hang out with him one afternoon in the basement. It was a recording of the 12/7/97 Tube. Dayton, Ohio.”²⁴⁸ Second, there was another group of fans that situated their processual experience of “getting on the bus” as the date of their first show: “eight, seven, ‘ninety-three

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Connors, *Growing Up Dead*.

²⁴⁷ I take the fact I was never asked what this meant or to rephrase the question as an affirmation of my own proficiency (in this example) of scene vernacular. Natalie Dollar, Associate Professor of Speech Communication, has written extensively about the relationship between speech and community building among Deadheads. N.J. Dollar, “A chronological account of Deadheads’ cultural communication code,” in *The Grateful Dead in Concert: Essays on Live Improvisation*, ed. Jim Tuedio and Stan Spector (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland Press, 2010), 279-93. N. J. Dollar, “‘Songs of our own’: The Deadhead cultural communication code,” in *All Graceful Instruments*, ed. Nicholas G. Meriwether, (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007), 176-195. N. J. Dollar, “Understanding ‘show’ as a Deadhead speech event,” in *Writings on the Grateful Dead*, ed. R. G. Weiner and D. D. Dodd (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007), 89-100.

²⁴⁸ Kevin Taylor, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 8, 2009, The Gorge, George, Washington. Jake, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 16, 2009, Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Saratoga Springs, New York. Sam, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 12, 2010, Deer Creek, Noblesville, Indiana.

[8/7/93],” “New Year’s 2002 [12/31/02],” “March 3, nineteen-ninety,” and “twelve, fourteen, ‘ninety-five [12/14/95].”²⁴⁹ Sometimes people recalled a date and a city, state, or venue: “Eight, twenty-nine, ‘ninety-two [8/28/92], Shoreline [California],” “Deer Creek, August 10th ‘ninety-seven,” and “New Year’s Eve [12/31/95], MSG [Madison Square Garden in New York City].”²⁵⁰ In both circumstances—either hearing the band for the first time on a recording or experiencing the band’s music for the first time live at a show—fans located “getting on the bus” as a specific emplaced experience. In this light, “getting on the bus” represents an experience in a specific time-space location. Moreover, some of the responses that fit into the first category (those who heard a recording) highlight certain social positions that reflect economic/class/privileged practices such as summer camp.

This chapter builds on these initial practices of getting “back on the train/bus” to analyze the one pre-show practice all Phish scene participants take part in: procuring tickets. By purchasing tickets through the corporate monopoly, Live Nation Entertainment, as well as through Phish Tickets By Mail (PTBM) or by bartering for goods, services, or hugs, Phish scene participants obtain tickets to shows through conventional methods as well as ways that resist such mainstream systems. I begin with a discussion of what I call the rock concert experience and outline the practices enacted by the participants within each scene whereby the rock concert as an event intersects with the commercialization and consumer-driven economy of the post-War era. I then expand from this framework to explore the pre-show practices Phish scene participants partake in as a means to obtain tickets within this system.

²⁴⁹ Four anonymous male Phish fans, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 12, 2010, Deer Creek, Noblesville, Indiana.

²⁵⁰ Three anonymous male Phish fans, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 12, 2010, Deer Creek, Noblesville, Indiana.

The Rock Concert Experience Business

In a 2008 conversation about the relationship between the Phish scene and the Grateful Dead scene Los Angeles high school English teacher, KPFK radio host of “The Music Never Stops” and participant in East LA’s underground art-pop scene by night, Barry Smolin commented, “I think it ha[s] to do with the format of [the] concerts... a physical... structural... there [a]re structural connections.”²⁵¹ Setting aside the different historical moments that work/ed to articulate each scene in Chapter One, it is important to sketch out and detail the overlapping ways in which both scenes evolved as sites of live experiences producing “the now” where the bands and their music shifted from the shadows to the spotlight.

Just as Phish’s first show, the aforementioned “Thriller” show, was for a student dance in a dormitory which consisted primarily of ROTC students at the University of Vermont, the Grateful Dead’s first show was not played before an audience interested wholly in the band or their music. In fact, the Grateful Dead were only one of the artistic acts performing on the evening of December 4, 1965. That night in San Jose, California, marked Ken Kesey and the Merry Prankster’s second Acid Test (the first having taken place the prior week on November 27th in Santa Cruz). Earlier in the day the Pranksters handed out flyers outside the Rolling Stones concert at the San Francisco Civic Auditorium on 8½ x 11 inch paper asking “CAN YOU PASS THE ACID TEST?” By nighttime people wandered through the house of a local known as Big Nig while the band played their instruments alongside Kesey rapping, the Pranksters improvising on an assortment of horns and string instruments, and strobe lights flashing intensely. Tom Wolfe illustrated the frenzied scene best in a portion of his book, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*:

²⁵¹ Barry Smolin, “Hip, Cool, Cultural Currency of the Grateful Dead.”

[The Grateful Dead] could just play, do their thing...[they] had an organist called Pig Pen, who had a Hammond electric organ, and [the band and the Pranksters] move the electric organ into Big Nig's ancient house, plus all the Grateful Dead's electrified guitars and basses and the Pranksters' electrified guitars and basses and flutes and horns and the light machines and the movies projectors and the tapes and the mics and the hi-fis, all of which pile up in insane coils of wires and gleams of stainless steel and winking amplifier dials before Big Nig's unbelieving eyes. His house is old and has wiring that would hardly hold a toaster...They came piling into Big Nig's, and suddenly acid and the worldcraze were everywhere, the electric organ vibrating through every belly in the place, kids dancing not *rock* dances...but dancing *ecstasy*... leaping, dervishing, throwing their hands over their head's like Daddy Grace's own stroked out inner courtiers—yes—Roy Seburn's lights washing past every head, Cassady rapping...²⁵²

Grateful Dead bassist, Phil Lesh, described a similar environment in his memoir *Searching for the Sound*:

Let's walk (or should I say dance? crawl?) through a "typical" Acid Test layout. Entering, we find ourselves in darkness, relieved only by the blinding flashes of strobe lights (carefully timed to be out of sync with one another *and* the music). What seems like several hundred people are variously milling about, dancing strenuously, or puddled in the corners, against the walls, and on the floor, all clad in colorful and exotic clothing...Several projection screens are showing vastly different sequences of images, film clips, or full-color quasi-protoplasmic blobs moving in time or not) to the music. The music itself is manifesting not from silence, but from a bed of ambient sounds created by the...loops of microphones and speakers, and is enhanced by interjections of what...loud, incomprehensible,

²⁵² Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, 236-7. "Daddy Grace" is a reference to Charles Manuel "Sweet Daddy" Grace Bishop with the United House of Prayer For All People. Wolfe also makes mention of him in the book *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*. Tom Wolfe, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965).

jagged, and not exactly lyrical...moans, expostulations, cries, murmurs, and laughter.²⁵³

People were everywhere as was their attention. At the Acid Tests there was no nucleus, no main point of reference. Lesh recalled this spatial production being strategic:

We set up our equipment on the other side of the room from the Pranksters, an orientation that would later prove very productive. Kesey's avowed goal was to "defuse the pyramid of attention" so that people weren't focused solely on the stage; we were after a more *rounded* experience, where many types of stimuli were occurring simultaneously.²⁵⁴

At the acid tests one's experience was rounded because there was no constructed center focal point of the event. Rather people were encourage to do their own thing, to "freak freely" as Kesey would often say. Although practices that contribute to the show component of Phish scene identity are the focus of the following chapter, I feel it necessary to outline here in my discussion of pre-show practices those that birthed the show as an event in and of itself (and of course one that, with the exception of free concerts, requires a ticket).

While the Grateful Dead was the house band at the Acid Tests the Acid Test space was not the Grateful Dead scene. Rather, the production of space at the early Acid Tests reveals a kernel that in the upcoming months and years would develop into the rock concert experience and rock-concert business that the Grateful Dead scene and the Phish scene both represent/ed and simultaneously resist/ed. In the upcoming months rock concerts would transform from a concert where audience members showed up, watched a band perform, and then left the venue to an active experience where the event focused on a rounded experience, where the audience took the band's performance in, the band responded to the audience, and audience members interacted

²⁵³ Phil Lesh, *Searching for the Sound* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 68-9.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

with one another. As I further discuss in Chapter Four this emplaced experience represents an event where the lines between the performer and the audience become blurred.

The Acid Tests were to the Grateful Dead what gigs at Nectar's were to Phish. Both places were environments where the bands could practice, begin to experiment, and slowly develop public interest. This positioning, according to David Gans, for the Grateful Dead was only temporary.

I mean the Grateful Dead and their brethren had to invent concerts...It was their guy Owsley who said, "Man we don't have sound systems. People can't hear the fucking band." And [he] started bringing theater speakers in and started building sound systems so people could actually hear. They had to invent the rock and roll—rock concert form and so everything happened literally invented out of dust...the acid tests, and Bill Graham's fundraisers for the Mime Troupe...what they had done was put together this event [the Trips Festival in January 1966] for musicians, filmmakers, dancers, light show artists—all these people who were living in San Francisco and doing this creative shit...And that was the moment when it began. These people began to realize that they could interact with each other, collaborate with each other, sell tickets to each other and that started the nucleus of this incredibly creative scene. And then, of course, it started marketing itself...and this is true of *every* creative endeavor that has any kind of economic component to it. You begin—and I can tell you this from personal experience and from observation—you begin by attracting an audience that appreciates what you're doing and you're communicating with them and you're exchanging a tremendous amount of information and value with each other. And those people come and turn around and bring their friends and that's how you build an audience.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵ Gans, conversation, March 19, 2010.

Historian and American studies scholar Michael J. Kramer, detailed this process by which “[t]hrough musical performances...[and] other activities” the “hippie underground” seemed to tak[e] over [the] public spaces in San Francisco” in his 2006 dissertation, “The Civics of Rock: Sixties Countercultural Music and the Transformation of the Public Sphere.”²⁵⁶ Echoing many of the central components made by Thomas Frank in *The Conquest of Cool*, Kramer analyzes countercultural forces including Kesey, the Acid Tests, The Trips Festival, the Grateful Dead, radio disc-jockey Tom Donahue, and among several others, rock impresario Bill Graham, to argue that such forces developed in public venues such as the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco “not against, but rather through, consumer market processes.”²⁵⁷ That is, rather than working against what so many counterculturalists tried to fix, alter, or remove themselves from—a capitalistic consumer driven culture—many counterculturalists worked with it, or at least alongside it, while simultaneously trying to resist or subvert it.

While Gans’ comments suggest this transition took place following the January 1966 Trips Festival and Kramer locates the process amidst numerous rock music acts and public spaces in mid-1960s San Francisco, cultural critic and author of *Nobrow: The Culture of Marketing—The Marketing of Culture*, John Seabrook narrowed down the site to an event both Gans and Kramer mention, Bill Graham’s fundraiser for the San Francisco Mime Troupe on November 6, 1965. According to Seabrook, at that particular moment Graham realized the practice of selling tickets to these types of happenings to be “the business of the future.”²⁵⁸ Seabrook is quick to point out the rock concert was, at that time, not a new idea. After all, the Pranksters handed out flyers to the second Acid Test that same month at a Rolling Stones

²⁵⁶ Michael J. Kramer, “The Civics of Rock: Sixties Countercultural Music and the Transformation of the Public Sphere” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 2006), 98.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁵⁸ Bill Graham quote in John Seabrook, “The Price of the Ticket,” *The New Yorker* 85, no. 24 (2009): 34.

concert. That said, Seabrook is careful to differentiate between the two citing Graham's own claim that events such as the Mime Troupe fundraiser and the Acid Tests represented "instant courtship" between the music, artist, and audience of fans.²⁵⁹ As Gans described, everyone involved in these happenings—artists and audiences alike—were "interacting" and "collaborating" with one another.²⁶⁰ Lesh explained it as a place where multiple "stimuli...occur[] simultaneously" and emphasis is placed on "the experience of the group" as one and not of two distinct entities, the performer and the audience.²⁶¹

Additionally, where non-participants name these events concerts and distinguish them as the product of specific cultural forces (countercultural) during a particular historical and economic moment (early Cold War consumerism), it is important to note that "insiders," those partaking in the actual processes, refer to the event or experience as a show and not a concert. Author and Deadhead, Peter Connors made clear,

Even the term...*show*, illustrates the importance of the crowd. You would have never heard never heard Deadheads [or Phishheads] calling a concert a concert, e.g., "Did you go to Greensboro? Killer concert!" Never. That phrasing would have been completely suspect. Instead it was, "Did you go to Greensboro? Killer show!"...referring to a Dead [or Phish] concert as a show certainly had little to do with the band members or their stage show. No, a Dead *concert* [or Phish concert] was a...*show* because Deadheads [or Phishheads] made it into one.²⁶²

While this idea of a group experience is one I explore in further detail in both the following chapter and the final chapter, it is necessary to mention it now, if only briefly, to elaborate on and highlight the economic shift where small free gatherings are molded by both those

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Gans, conversation, March 19, 2010.

²⁶¹ Lesh, *Searching for the Sound*, 69.

²⁶² Connors, *Growing Up Dead*, 30.

participating in the gatherings and those from the mainstream culture into consumer-based capitalistic economies where goods or services are bought sold and experiences consumed. For instance, Bill Graham once hung a Grateful Dead promotional sign outside the now demolished Winterland arena/theater in San Francisco. Under the Grateful Dead “stealie” symbol bordered by a chainlink of roses read the phrase, “They’re not the best at what they do, they’re the only ones that do what they do.”²⁶³ In an interview years later Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir explained Graham’s ad strategy:

You know that’s his way of hedging his bets. ‘Cause that’s to say that what we were doing was good so he’s not offending anybody, you know, the Led Zeppelin fans or anything like that. [Laughs and smiles] Clever guy.²⁶⁴

Graham was after all involved in the music business. By Mickey Hart’s (Grateful Dead percussionist) account Graham had no problems selling tickets to the Grateful Dead show experience that evening at Winterland.

I think it held maybe four, five, six thousand people and Bill would put like nine thousand people in there and we caught him. One time we had people at the door doing the clicker and that’s when we caught Bill selling the tickets twice.²⁶⁵

Although many Grateful Dead fans may not openly acknowledge both the band and the show experience as a strategic business model the remaining members of the band have made no qualms about this detail. In 2002 a sticker was found stuck to a roadcase amidst the equipment

²⁶³ Grateful Dead, *The Closing of Winterland - December 31, 1978*, prod. Jeffrey Norman and David Lemieux, 375 min., Monterey Video, 1978 & 2003, DVD.

²⁶⁴ Bob Weir quoted in *The Closing of Winterland*.

²⁶⁵ Mickey Hart quoted in *The Closing of Winterland*.

for The Dead that read, “It doesn’t take a miracle, it just takes \$49.50.”²⁶⁶ The same sticker resurfaced a few years later on a roadcase backstage at a Ratdog show in Greensboro, North Carolina.²⁶⁷ “Miracling,” a practice I further explore in Chapter Three, is the act of obtaining a free ticket to a show. The presence of the sticker suggests either the band or, at the very least, one member’s (perhaps Weir’s) distaste for the act. Rather than gain admittance for free you, the audience member, should purchase a ticket. In short, the price of a ticket comes to represent the material value of what many fans would consider to be an invaluable experience.

(802)860-1111

Phish and the Grateful Dead are businesses. In the past two years the subfield of Grateful Dead Studies has increasingly received both academic and media attention. In large part this is due to the Fall 2008 announcement that the University of California-Santa Cruz would house the yet-to-open Grateful Dead Archive. While the Grateful Dead Caucus, an annual conference held in conjunction with the Southwest Texas Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association’s annual meetings, has provided an academic setting for scholarly inquiries regarding the Grateful Dead phenomenon for over a decade, the Unbroken Chain Conference at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in the late-Fall of 2008 brought a heightened academic and popular awareness of the field via coverage in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The New York Times*, CNN, MSNBC, FOX News, and even the *Jon Stewart Show*. Among literary, psychological, philosophical, anthropological, and legal studies relating to the band the study of

²⁶⁶ Jerry Garcia’s death in August of 1995 marked the end of the Grateful Dead. The Dead was the name give to group that continued to perform after his death. The Dead contained all remaining members of the band. Ratdog is one of several “Dead- related” side projects that carry on to this day. It is lead by guitarist Bob Weir.

²⁶⁷ These observations were confirmed to me in multiple interviews and conversations.

the band's business management, business plan, and marketing approach is perhaps the most popular.²⁶⁸

Like thousands of other contemporary performing acts, both Phish and the Grateful Dead sell, and allow others to sell, tickets in exchange for experiences. However, while this parallel links Phish scene identity and the practices that create it to a much earlier Grateful Dead scene, it does not exclusively isolate this relationship as the only one of its kind. One participant, K., narrowed down these relations when she told me, "They [Phish] put out a newsletter. They [Phish] had a mail order that was much easier than the Grateful Dead's."²⁶⁹ Echoing Barry Smolin's earlier claims that there is a structural similarity between the practices and processes of Phish and Grateful Dead scene identity, K. explained to me that, in her opinion this stems from the way that Phish's ticketing system (through 2000) replicated the Grateful Dead's own in-house ticketing operation.

Although cultural critics such as Michael Lewis suggest that contemporary, intimate band-fan relations stem from the internet, I contend, and my research suggests otherwise. While the internet helped ease the ways in which bands could connect with fans and vice versa it by no means birthed this concept. In fact, close analysis of Phish's now defunct hotline and newsletter (they now appear online) shows how bands and fans communicated on a close and personal level long before the rise in popularity and accessibility of the internet. Aside from word-of-mouth,

²⁶⁸ Barry Barnes, Professor of Leadership in the H. Wayne Huizenga School of Business and Entrepreneurship at NOVA Southeastern University explores the Grateful Dead's business model in his research. See Barry Barnes, "A Balanced Objective: A Look Inside the Organization Behind the Grateful Dead" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture American Culture Association, Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 27, 2008). Barry Barnes, "Strategic Improvisation: Management Lessons from the Dead," in *The Grateful Dead in Concert: Essays on Live Improvisation*, ed. Jim Tuedio and Stan Spector (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Company, 2010), 267-78. Barry Barnes, *Everything I Know About Business I Learned From the Grateful Dead: Ten Lessons in Innovation from a Long Strange Trip* (New York: Business Plus, forthcoming November 2011). Joshua Green, "Management Secrets of the Grateful Dead," *The Atlantic Monthly* 305, no. 2 (2010): 64-67. David Meerman Scott and Brian Halligan, *Marketing Lessons from the Grateful Dead: What Every Business Can Learn from the Most Iconic Band in History* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, 2010).

²⁶⁹ K., conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, February 2008.

Phish fans in the early to mid-1990s obtained information such as upcoming show dates, venue details, band member messages and updates, and even at times the answers to fan questions mailed to the band via two possible routes. On one hand, fans dialed the Burlington phone number above (802-860-1111) to hear longtime fan and Dionysian Productions employee, Shelly Culberton's pre-recorded voice list off a plethora of Phish essentials. In addition to the Hotline, some 15,000 fans who requested to be put on the band's mailing list (this could be done via a letter to Dionysian Productions) received the band's Newsletter anywhere from three to four times a year in the mail.



Originally called *The Phish Newsletter*, the publication was later renamed the *Döniac Schvice: From the Tongue to the Schvice*. The first issues were created by Anastasio's sister, Kristy, and McConnell's sister, Katie. Printed on 8½ x 11 inch paper in color and extending anywhere from four to eight double-sided pages, the mailing represented a direct line of communication between the band members and the fans. Whereas the hotline often provided information from band members it was transmitted via the voice of Culberton. This feeling of personal connection did not go unnoticed. For example, one fan made clear,

The *Schvice* made the entire Phish experience more personal; you were a part of this special community who got these crazy newsletters delivered right to your door. And each time you got one, you were psyched!²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ Image taken from an online downloadable collection of old *Döniac Schvice* issues, <http://www.livemusicblog.com/tag/doniac-schvice/> (accessed September 15, 2010).

²⁷¹ "Before the Internet Age," Mr. Minor's Phish Thoughts, posted January 6, 2009, <http://phishthoughts.com/2009/01/06/before-the-internet-age/> (accessed September 9, 2010).

The Döniac Schvice contained columns where some of the band members and even fans asked and answered questions (1993 editions cite at least two dozen questions regarding the lyrics in the song “You Enjoy Myself”), cracked jokes, and at one point updated fans on a game of chess.²⁷² Mike Gordon responded to a number of inquiries regarding the newsletter’s name change in 1995 and explained to fans in the *Schvice*’s “Tiny Edition Volume I” (an insert to the band’s first live double-album *A Live One*) that “Döniac Schvice is the feeling you get when you’re fidgeting with your keys to get in your house, and the phone rings, and then stops ringing.”²⁷³ According to early unofficial “official” band historian Dean Budnick, “The Fall 1994 edition of the [newsletter] reported the dramatic conclusion to the McConnell-Fishman [chess] series in which Page captured the twenty-third and decisive game after three consecutive tournament victories by Fish[man].”²⁷⁴

The primary purpose of the newsletter was however to circulate a cohesive list of upcoming shows and provide any and all necessary information regarding venues and ticketing. As one fan put it,

The [Döniac] Schvice got us where we needed to go... There was nothing like looking at the upcoming tour mapped on the centerfold of the newsletter as you plotted and schemed your personal course of action.²⁷⁵

²⁷² Budnick, *The Phishing Manual*, 108.

²⁷³ “Döniac Schvice,” *The Phishing Companion*, 2d ed., 872.

²⁷⁴ Budnick, *The Phishing Manual*, 163.

²⁷⁵ “Before the Internet Age.”

PHISH SUMMER 99 TOUR

JUNE				JULY		
			30 Sandstone Amphitheatre Bonner Springs, KS	01 First American Music Center Annoch, TN	02	03 Lakewood Amphitheatre Atlanta, GA
04 Lakewood Amphitheatre Atlanta, GA	05	06	07 Blockbuster Pavilion Charlotte, NC	08 Virginia Beach Amphitheatre Virginia Beach, VA	09 Merriweather Post Pavilion Columbia, MD	10 E Centre Camden, NJ
11	12 Great Woods Mansfield, MA	13 Great Woods Mansfield, MA	14	15 PNC Bank Arts Center Holmdel, NJ	16 PNC Bank Arts Center Holmdel, NJ	17 Oswego County Airport Volney, NY
18 Oswego County Airport Volney, NY	19	20 Molson Amphitheatre Toronto, Ontario	21 Star Lake Amphitheatre Burgellstown, PA	22	23 Polaris Amphitheatre Columbus, OH	24 Alpine Valley East Troy, WI
25 Deer Creek Noblesville, IN	26 Deer Creek Noblesville, IN	27	28	29		
				AUG		
				30 Fuji Rock Festival Naeba, Niigata, Japan	31 Fuji Rock Festival Naeba, Niigata, Japan	01 Fuji Rock Festival Naeba, Niigata, Japan

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²⁷⁶ Image taken from an online downloadable collection of old *Döniac Schvice* issues, <http://www.livemusicblog.com/tag/doniac-schvice/> (accessed September 15, 2010).

JAPAN

FUJI ROCK FESTIVAL

VENUE INFO

Sandstone Amphitheatre (6/30)
Route K7 Exit 224, Bonner Springs KS
<http://www.sandstonekc.com>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 816.931.3330
ON SALE 5/15

First American Music Center (7/1)
Interstate 24 Exit 62 or 64, Antioch, TN
<http://www.firstamericanmusic.com>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 615.255.9600
ON SALE 5/15

Lakewood Amphitheatre (7/3 & 4)
Interstate 75 Exit 88, Atlanta GA
<http://www.lakewoodamp.com>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 404.249.6400
ON SALE 5/15

Charlotte Blockbuster Pavilion (7/7)
Interstate 85 Exits 46/49, Charlotte NC
<http://www.blockconcerts.com>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 704.522.6500
ON SALE 5/21

Virginia Beach Amphitheatre (7/8)
I-64, Exit 286B, Virginia Beach VA
<http://www.cellardoor.com/vba>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 757.671.8100
ON SALE 5/22

Merrifweather Post Pavilion (7/9)
Route 29 Exit 18B(N)/South Entrance Road(S), Columbia MD
<http://www.mppconcerts.com>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and ProTix: 800.955.5546
ON SALE 5/23

E Centre (7/10)
Route 676 Exit 5A, Camden NJ
<http://www.ecentre.com>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 609.338.9000
ON SALE 5/22

Great Woods (7/12 & 13)
Route 495 Exit 11, Mansfield MA
<http://www.greatwoods.com>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 617.931.2000
ON SALE 5/23

PNC Bank Arts Center (7/15 & 16)
Garden State Parkway Exit 116, Holmdel NJ
<http://www.artscenter.com>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 609.520.8383
ON SALE 5/15

Oswego County Airport (7/17 & 18)
Route 176, Volney NY
<http://www.greatnortheast.com/volney>
[we are not currently planning to offer single day tickets for this event - tickets include both day's performances plus camping and parking]
general admission - tix @ Landmark Theatre box office (342 S. Salina, Syracuse*) 315.474.2737 and Ticketmaster: 315.472.0700
ON SALE 5/14

Molson Amphitheatre (7/20)
Lakeshore Boulevard West at Ontario Place, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
<http://www.universalconcerts.ca/amphi>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 416.879.8000
ON SALE 6/5

Star Lake Amphitheatre (7/21)
Route 18 at Route 22 West, Burggettstown PA
<http://www.starlakeamp.com>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 412.323.1900
ON SALE 6/4

Naeba, Niigata, Japan (7/30, 7/31 & 8/01)
<http://smash-jpn.com/fr/>

Polaris Amphitheatre (7/23)
I-71 Exit 121, Columbus OH
<http://www.polarisconcerts.com>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 614.431.3400
ON SALE 6/12

Alpine Valley (7/24)
Route 120 & Highway D, East Troy WI
<http://www.alpinevalleymusictheatre.com>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 414.276.4545
ON SALE 6/12

Deer Creek (7/25 & 26)
I-69 Exit 10, Noblesville IN
<http://www.deer-creek.com>
reserved pavilion, g.a. lawn - tix @ box office* and Ticketmaster: 317.239.5151
ON SALE 6/12

*No Service Charge for tickets in person at this location.

As the above two images reveal, all shows for the appropriate tour appeared in conjunction with the ticketing information relevant to each venue. This included venue names, show times, ticket on-sale dates, times, and fees.



TICKETS-BY-MAIL

- 1) Tickets to the shows announced in this newsletter will be offered by mail order. You may use either the original form on this page or a photocopy of it to place your order. You do not need to send the entire page, you may send only the order form. Please retain the instructions for future reference.
- 2) Print the complete address where you wish to have your tickets sent, and your phone numbers, on the lines of the form for the shows you are requesting. Tickets will be mailed from September 20th through September 30th, so please be sure to provide the address and phone numbers where you will be during that time.
- 3) Circle the type of tickets desired. Only one type of ticket may be selected for all of the shows in your order. Your order will be returned unfiled if you select "Taper seats only" and taper seats are sold out. Your order will be included in the lobby for regular seats if you select "Taper seats preferred" and taper seats are sold out. Taper seats are located behind the soundboard and the view from them may be obstructed. At shows where there are not reserved seats around the soundboard, tapers' tickets are not required in order to tape and therefore none will be issued.
- 4) We cannot be responsible for tickets that are lost or delayed in the mail; if you wish to have your tickets sent to you by Federal Express, indicate this on your order form and send a separate \$7.00

- payment for this service. FedEx service is offered primarily for security rather than speed. If you choose this option, you must provide us with a street address where your order can be delivered to you, not a P. O. Box. (International/Canadian orders: we cannot Fed Ex your tickets to you, but if you wish to have your order insured, please enclose a money order for \$7.00 to cover the costs of registered mail.)
- 5) Indicate the number of tickets (either 1 or 2) that you want for each show desired by circling the corresponding ticket price. Send only one order form for as many shows from each set as you wish to order; do not send a separate order form for each show requested. Each person may send only one order, and must fill out their own order. All duplicate orders will be rejected. The ticket prices listed already include a \$2.50 per ticket handling fee (do not add this amount to your money orders).
- 6) All orders must be paid by postal money order(s) or American Express money order(s) ONLY, payable in U.S. dollars. Cash, personal checks, or other types of money orders will not be accepted. Make all money orders payable to PHISH. You must enclose a separate money order for each show ordered, plus a separate money order for the Fed Ex fee if you select this service. Please write which show you are ordering on each money order you send.
- 7) Keep the receipts for your money orders. Do not put the carbons from the money orders in your envelope. If any portion of your order is not filled, we will return the corresponding money order(s) to you, and you will need your receipts to get a refund.
- 8) Please send your order to us in a #10 legal size - 9.5" x 4" envelope; put your return address on the envelope and list on the bottom left front edge the

- date of every show you are ordering tickets for. Everyone (Fed Ex requested or not) must enclose a stamped, self-addressed legal size return envelope with .32 postage for 1-8 tickets and .55 postage for 9 or more tickets. For your own security, do not write "Phish tickets enclosed", etc. on the outside of your return envelope. International orders, including Canada, must enclose two (2) international postal reply coupons, instead of putting US postage on the return envelope.
- 9) Orders will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis by postmark. All orders must be postmarked September 16 - September 18; orders postmarked before September 16 or after September 18 will not be filled. Our allotment of tickets for each show is limited, so we may not be able to fill every order that we receive; we will make every effort to have all return orders in the mail, filled or unfilled, before the tickets go on sale through regular outlets, but we cannot guarantee this.
- 10) If there are any problems with your Third Set order, you may call the Tickets-by-Mail problem line at (802) 499-9999 between 10 am and 5 pm Eastern time Monday through Friday after September 30th, and no later than one week prior to the show in question. Do not call any other number regarding your order. Please keep a copy of your order form. Thank you.

Mail your order to: Phish Tickets-By-Mail
Third Set
PO Box
Burlington, VT

Orders sent to other addresses will not be processed. **No orders sent to us by Express Mail, Fed Ex, certified mail, registered mail, or "return receipt requested" will be accepted.**

order form

NAME _____				
PHONE (day) _____	(night) _____			
ADDRESS _____				
CITY _____				
STATE _____	ZIP _____			
Ticket Type	<input type="radio"/> REGULAR	<input type="radio"/> TAPER ONLY	<input type="radio"/> TAPER PREFERRED	
Return Tickets by	<input type="radio"/> DOMESTIC FEDEX (ENCLOSE \$7)	<input type="radio"/> INT'L REGISTERED (ENCLOSE \$7)	<input type="radio"/> US MAIL (NO CHARGE)	
	PH0718	PH0719	PH0722	PH0723
	PH0724	PH0727	PH0729	PH0730
	PH0701	PH0700	PH0704	PH0706
	Mid-South Coliseum	Municipal Auditorium	Spokane Arena	Pacific Coliseum
	Memorial Coliseum	Key Arena	Cow Palace	ARCO Arena
	Pauley Pavilion	America West Arena	Sports Arena	Aladdin
	11/18	11/19	11/22	11/23
	11/24	11/27	11/29	11/30
	12/1	12/2	12/4	12/6
	1 TICKET	2 TICKETS		
	\$25.00	\$50.00	\$25.00	\$50.00
	\$25.00	\$50.00	\$25.00	\$50.00
	\$27.50	\$55.00	\$27.50	\$55.00
	\$25.00	\$50.00	\$25.00	\$50.00
	\$27.50	\$55.00	\$25.00	\$50.00
	\$25.00	\$50.00	\$25.00	\$50.00
	\$25.00	\$50.00	\$25.00	\$50.00

Although some fans purchased tickets through venue box offices, most fans preferred Phish's mail-order system (shown above), Phish Tickets By Mail, (PTBM) that K. referenced earlier as being more "user-friendly" than the Grateful Dead's system, Grateful Dead Ticket Sales – The Other Ones (GDTS TOO). Originally designed as a means by which fans could purchase tickets for shows directly from the band, mail order ticketing for both the Grateful Dead and Phish required fans send in money orders for amounts matching the specific shows they wanted to attend. This system was used as a way to curb what has now become one in which tickets prices are highly inflated with venue and ticketing surcharges. It also worked well as a way to maintain an intimate relationship with fans.²⁷⁹

Phish fans viewed PTBM as another way to personally engage with the band and often, like Grateful Dead fans, sought out ways to individualize and pay tribute to the band through the mail-order process by creatively designing the order envelopes. The effort put forth and the individual creativity in mail-order ticket envelopes shows a particular amount of vested interested and commitment fans felt in relation to the bands.²⁸⁰ For instance, one fan recalled,

One of the primary shots of adrenaline that came from the *Schvice* was the Tickets-By-Mail order form. Having to follow exact specifications to ensure your request was both received and filled, the ordering process became a quarterly ritual for fans. A separate postal money order for each show and one for the seven dollar Fed Ex fee, a self-addressed stamped envelope, the correct postmark, a properly labeled envelope with the dates of the requested shows in the lower left hand corner; these were the facets of the game. Then there were those who decorated their envelopes meticulously, hoping to dazzle the eyes of the ticket

²⁷⁹ The band-fan relationship is one I explore more in Chapters Three and Four.

²⁸⁰ This format of PTBM ended in 2000 when the band took the hiatus.

fillers. The beauty of this paper-heavy system was that everyone nearly always got their tickets!²⁸¹

Phish made ticket request specifications very detailed and at the same time managed to keep them as simple as possible. Whether or not this was intentional remains to be proven but, given the band's penchant for creating a comfortable experience for fans and archival notes that claim Culbertson sought out and received "input and advice from Grateful Dead Ticket Sales" when creating PTBM suggests a desire to make fans happy and to learn and perhaps even evolve from established practices.²⁸²

Anastasio, on more than one occasion has talked openly about "wanting to make the [show] experience comfortable for people."²⁸³ In one instance he recalled the logistics of planning an outdoor festival:

We just wanted everybody to have a good time and I remember long conversations in the office: how can we make people more comfortable? We had meetings about how many port-o-lets to have and we got estimates about how many we would need and then we added an extra fifty percent—I don't know—however many extra pot-o-let you needed. But we actually sat around tables and discussed that stuff.²⁸⁴

Moreover, Anastasio and drummer, Jon Fishman both hinted at this sentiment when they discussed their 1999 summer festival, "Camp Oswego," in upstate New York in relation to another outdoor festival in the area, the thirtieth anniversary of Woodstock in Rome, New York:

²⁸¹ "Before the Internet Age."

²⁸² "Mail Order," *The Phishing Companion*, 2d ed., 879-80.

²⁸³ Trey Anastasio, "Phish Festivalography Part II," *Jam On*, Sirius Satellite Radio, October 19, 2009, <http://thebutterroom.com/post/226187112/trappedintime-phish-festivalography-pt-2-4> (accessed November 14, 2010).

²⁸⁴ Trey Anastasio, "Phish Festivalography Part I."

Trey: Woodstock 2 from what I saw was just an attempt to take people's money and everybody' knew it and that didn't have anything to do with the bands, that way I could see it, you know? Primus was there and they might be my favorite band ever and so [laughs] um it was more, more, more money, we'll cram on extra—Just, the sensibility was almost like the last thing on the list was how comfortable the people we're gonna be that came to the thing and I think that's probably what happened without—I'm certainly not pointing fingers or anything but we really actually put a lot of care into...hours, months, months, hours of talking about how we can make the experience comfortable for people and hopefully that translated.²⁸⁵

Fishman: I remember Woodstock '99 happening right down the road either two weeks before or two weeks after I can't remember which, but it was like an hour down the road and it was such a horrible affair, it was, you know people burning things down and the crowd being juked for every dollar they could get out of 'em and all these things and the word was that you know that the age of festivals has really gone down the tubes and no one can do it right and no one can, you know, these don't work anymore, people get violent and there was just all kinds of negativity surrounding the whole idea of the festival and I just remember hearing that on the news and seeing that on the news and thinking, you know that's funny because either we're completely under the radar no one's paying any attention to like the Phish festival—Probably 'cause it's just one band and I can understand that.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ Anastasio, "Phish Festivalography Part II."

²⁸⁶ Jon Fishman, "Phish Festivalography Part II."

While explaining how the comfort level of fans is something the band members themselves appear concerned about in the above quotes it is equally as interesting how both Anastasio and Fishman work to decipher Phish's festival from another festival (Woodstock '99) down the road. Just as Bill Graham billed his show experiences as being unlike any other, Anastasio and Fishman also work to bill and narrate their own production as different from the other live music festivals at the time. Furthermore, as I explain in Chapter Three, this distinction, even as a constructed narrative, is definitely not a facet of Phish that is overlooked by fans. In fact, it is an example of a way that fans argue on behalf of Phish's authenticity.

Whereas GDTS TOO had multiple varied steps fans must complete, PTBM tapered the process down to ten steps that centered on using the form in the newsletter to fill out your return mailing information, the types of tickets you wanted (taper, general, etc.), which shows you wanted tickets for, the number of tickets, and your money order. The Grateful Dead's system served the same function but included several additional specifications that often tripped people up. For instance, each show required a separate request (money order as well). Requests were to be mailed in a #10 sized envelope and there was an additional process involving 3-inch index cards with return mailing addresses. Both PTBM and GDTS TOO allocated tickets on a first come-first serve basis.

Culbertson's involvement in the newsletter and PTBM is particularly noteworthy as it represents Phish's attempt to run a business independent of their record label at the time, Elektra. Furthermore, the PTBM practice speaks to the middle and upper-middle class identity of many fans. While some venues sold tickets on site via credit, Phish's mail-order system required an access to funds that not every American had. With ticket prices averaging twenty-five dollars

apiece and tours averaging anywhere from twenty to thirty shows seeing a few Phish shows quickly added up. Acknowledging that most fans attended multiple shows, it is no surprise that Phish consistently landed on *Rolling Stone* magazine's annual list of top grossing musical acts in the 1990s.²⁸⁷

The Business of Live Music

As some scholars and many cultural critics such as John Seabrook are now pointing out, what I earlier called the “Rock Concert Experience Business” is currently struggling, if not dying a painful death. If the advent of SoundScan technology in the 1990s helped to usher out Billboard's economic strong-hold on artist success the legalities of internet piracy have lead to “the business of selling live music...becom[ing] the main source of revenue for the popular-music industry.”²⁸⁸ And while this shift may not have decreased Phish's revenues—critic Rob Sheffield suggested the shift actually helped bands like Phish succeed—it has forced them to change to way they approached ticket sales.²⁸⁹

In 2010 Live Nation, the world's largest concert promoter, and Ticketmaster Entertainment, the world larger ticketing agency, officially became one entity. Now called Live Nation Entertainment, the company controls the majority of performance venues in the country as well as the means by which one can gain entry to those venues. If a band wants to perform

²⁸⁷ The band grossed \$5.6 million in 1993 and \$10.3 million in 1994. By the close of 1995, ticket sales alone reached \$27 million. Budnick, *The Phishing Manual*, 21, 26. In a 2003 cover story for *Rolling Stone* the band's earnings in tickets sales alone is listed at more than \$61 million in 1999 and 2000. David Fricke, “Phish Resurface,” *Rolling Stone*, March 6, 2003, 42.

²⁸⁸ Seabrook, “The Price of a Ticket.”

²⁸⁹ Sheffield stated, “Love ‘em or hate ‘em, [Phish] took the most outrageous advantage of the new freedoms that the Nineties opened up.” Rob Sheffield, “The Nineties,” in *Rolling Stone: The Decades of Rock and Roll*, ed. Holly George-Warren (San Francisco: The Rolling Stone Press, 2001), 237.

somewhere of considerable size in America chances are it will have to deal, whether it wants to or not, with Live Nation Entertainment.

Phish's new post-2000 mail-order system reflects these changes. No longer able to provide as many tickets via PTBM (due to contracting tickets via Live Nation at Live Nation venues) Phish now offers what they call a "limited" number of tickets-by-mail.²⁹⁰ Following the decision to move all correspondence such as the newsletter and Hotline to the internet—both filtered into multiple on-line list and email services—Phish's tickets-by-mail shifted to an "online lottery" through Music Today, a ticketing agency not related to Ticketmaster. The system now works more like a lottery where one credit card gets you one ticket request (usually to as many shows as you want). The more credit cards one has to her name the more chances she has in the lottery. Usually one can enter the lottery over a week-long period and request as many tickets as the band allows per show. In most cases tickets are limited to between two and four per credit card. Notifications are sent out to both the "winners" and the "losers" in time for those who do not get tickets through the lotto to try for tickets through Live Nation/Ticketmaster. As, the stories below illustrate this time is often a frantic waiting game for most fans.

D.S.: It's 1 AM in the morning on a Wednesday. In 5 hours I have to be at work. Yet somehow I am not asleep. I'm typing away in order to try to work my way through the rush. I just placed a request for Phish tickets! Five years. Five long years...A few days ago when the rumor first surfaced, I expressed some distance. Yes, I'd like to see Phish back but I don't know if I'd jump right back in again. I've kind of moved on a little. Heh, yeah right. I've already done the run around the room screaming thing, followed by putting in a request seconds after discovering the link, followed by about 30 minutes of sheer stress over whether the order will be fulfilled. I sure am over it all right!...After spending the last

²⁹⁰ Available at <http://phish.portals.musictoday.com/> (accessed September 10, 2010).

week focusing on an economic collapse, I'll now be thinking about that for a while. We may be headed straight into winter but the world just became a much brighter place.²⁹¹

J.C.: I put in my request already :). Yeah, I got my first text message at 5am today, and about 12 more in the following 2 hours. Mind you, that was all prior to me waking up at 7am to my wife saying "I think Phish is getting back together because you got 12 text messages from these people..." Can't wait.²⁹²

M.P.: I am praying we get tickets. C and I have a couple friends putting their names in for us! We are going though, whether or not we have tickets. We're strapped for cash...But we ARE going to be at Hampton regardless of this fact...experience is more important than money.²⁹³

K.C.: We were lucky and well, we kinda think it's 'cause of my email. You know, we both put in for two tickets each night—Separate names, separate credit cards but same address. So I got all worried that we'd broken the rules and emailed the Phish/Music Today people. I gave them my name, explained what I did, and said I wasn't sure if it was "legal" to have two requests from the same mailing address, regardless of the fact that the requests were placed under different names with different credit cards. I asked them that if this was in fact "illegal" to please pull the request associated with my name. I got the nicest email back reassuring me that my order was completely legit and a sort of "best wishes" in the lotto statement. Then a few weeks later I got the congratulations email confirming that I got two tickets for each night!²⁹⁴

Fan emotions above regarding the lotto all acknowledge a sort of "it's out of my hands" mentality but a close examination of the same narratives also complicates the assumption that

²⁹¹ David Steinberg, "They're BACK!" *Jambands.com*, October 1, 2008, <http://www.jambands.com/columns/david-steinberg-some-are-mathematicians/2008/10/01/they-re-back> (accessed September 1, 2010).

²⁹² J.C., email conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, October 1, 2008.

²⁹³ M.P., email conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, October 4, 2008.

²⁹⁴ K.C., conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, Alpine Valley, East Troy, Wisconsin.

every fan reacts the same way to this post-2000 mail-order system. For instance, in the first account D.S. acknowledges the fact that his order may not be filled while in the second email exchange with me J.C. does not even let on to that idea. M.P. on the other hand exemplifies a completely different reaction. First, she admits to “playing the system” by having friends put in requests for herself and her husband. Then she reveals a sort of indifference at the lotto’s outcome and proclaims “we ARE going to be at Hampton regardless of this fact...experience is more important than money” (a signal that something Anastasio and Fishman allude to earlier may be perhaps be quite effective). Finally, in the last vignette K.C. admits to a worry much like that expressed in D.S.’s prior panic that he might not be a “winner.” However, in her case K.C. tries to take an active role in the system that inherently attempts to strip fans of a certain amount of agency and contacts the ticketing administrators in order to make sure she is not breaking “the rules” (a care M.P. does not seem to share). Many fans experience this fear of “losing” and an overwhelming majority of people I spoke with talked about trying to exert some personal agency (regardless if it had no way of altering their lottery outcomes) by monitoring their credit card accounts either online or by phone in the time period after their requests were submitted.

If you are not a lotto winner like K.C. and you still want to obtain face-value legitimate tickets you are then forced to turn to Live Nation/Ticketmaster. In fact J.C. and M.P. both shared this practice a few weeks after they received their rejection email notifications. As fans of many bands and not just Phishheads will explain, purchasing tickets through Live Nation/Ticketmaster is nothing short of a nightmare. Again, in the online ticketing system of today the consumer is stripped of any agency other than internet access and a credit card. And while credit cards and credit card accessibility is very much a reflection of class positioning, access to the internet today

is hardly the sign of economic status it was fifteen years ago. Today, most people with a mailing address (and in some cases even without) can obtain a library card and use the internet there.

First, one logs on to the Live Nation/Ticketmaster website and clicks his or her way to the appropriate page. Once there, one sits patiently as he or she watches the clock on the computer click down to the exact time tickets are set to go on sale. Quick note: If you are particularly savvy you will have coordinated your clock with the governments (via the www.time.gov website).²⁹⁵ Then, not immediately as the clock ticks up to ten, or eleven o'clock (or whatever specific time you are waiting for) count to three (I've been told this helps one's chances of not getting "booted" from the system immediately) and then click "buy tickets."²⁹⁶ The next few steps should be done as quickly as humanly possible. Choose how many tickets you want to purchase but do not waste time selecting a specific section; just go with the best available option already listed. Then click "purchase tickets." Once you see the jumbled word-phrase on the next screen appear type as if your life depended on it. Don't worry about any numbers or symbols (apparently those do not matter).²⁹⁷ Hit enter. Wait. If you are lucky the little countdown clock that is now in front of you is counting down from two minutes. Chances are if it reads something like ten or more minutes to purchase you will end up ticketless. Typically one of two things happens next. One, you are lucky and you've just scored tickets! Two, you got caught in the "waiting room" countdown phase and as the screen will finally inform you "there are no tickets currently available." It's been one hundred and eight seconds since you first clicked "buy tickets."

²⁹⁵ A number of fans reported doing this.

²⁹⁶ John, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, September, 2010, Lawrence, Kansas.

²⁹⁷ This was another tactic several fans explained to me.

My husband, Keith, and I got lucky. In fact, that he contends that because we got so lucky that we'll never get a lottery order filled of the Hampton caliber ever again. And, while I'd like to think (or at least hope) differently, all subsequent attempts have turned up as either complete failures (shut out of the Summer '09 Red Rocks run and the Summer 2010 week-long Berkeley and Telluride stretch of shows) or leaving much to be desired (partially filled orders yielding general admission lawn seats). That said and thus far, Hampton was our "golden ticket." Unlike M.P. and J.C., Keith and I scored two tickets to each of the three Hampton shows via the updated credit-card-style mail order lottery. We placed, with the assistance of both our parents and sisters, six separate requests and received one hit. Whereas the fan above, K.C., attributes her and her husband's luck with the lotto to an email exchange with the people at Phish/Music Today, Keith and I are willing to accept my mother's assertion that Phish must just "like her credit card number." Between the two of us, neither Keith nor I knew of any friend or friend of a friend as lucky as us.²⁹⁸ And, after touching ground in Richmond, Virginia, around noon on Friday March 6, 2009 I began to wonder who actually did score tickets via either the lotto or Ticketbastard.²⁹⁹

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Much like the earlier Grateful Dead scene, contemporary Phish scene identity is an *effect* of certain emplaced practices that evoke those enacted by earlier countercultural Grateful Dead scene participants. In the case of ticket sales, PTBM can be seen as a contemporary cultural practice dealing with capital, and access to capital that, while based on a cultural practice or process embodied in the Grateful Dead scene remains quite different. While Phish changed its

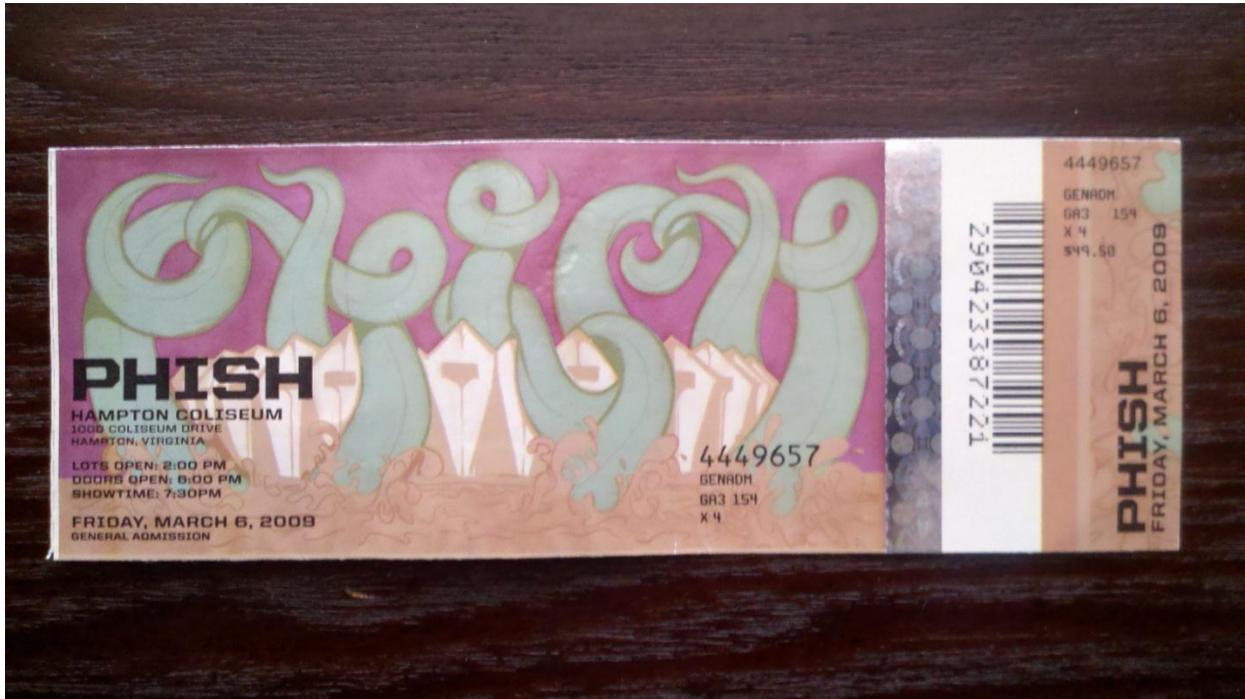
²⁹⁸ We met K.C. and her husband the first night in line outside the Coliseum around 5:30pm.

²⁹⁹ Instead of calling Ticketmaster "Ticketmaster" many fans refer to it as "Ticketbastard" as a way to denote its lofty surcharges and alleged inside relationship to ticket brokers, ticket scalpers, and the websites that make up the secondary ticket market (StubHub, Ticketsnow, etc.)

mail-order ticketing system the Grateful Dead opted to stick with its own slightly denser process. Phish scene participants today obtain tickets to shows through the conventional methods outlined thus far (PTBM and Live Nation/Ticketmaster) as well as ways discussed in the following pages that resist such mainstream systems.

Segue→

March 6, 2009, It's all Hamptoning!



Phish Hampton Ticket 2009
Photo by Elizabeth A. Yeager

The drive from Richmond to Hampton is fairly short and if moving at a relatively quick (yet safe) clip should take no more than an hour and change. However, due to a heightened presence of Virginia state troopers along I-64 and my own need for food (I skipped breakfast in lieu of sleep on the plane) Keith and I didn't arrive and check in to our hotel until almost quarter to two that afternoon. According to our magenta, jade, and bronze-toned tickets (above) the lots were just about to open (2pm), but we took the abundance of cars with out-of-state east coast license plates in the parking lot and number of fans in the hotel lobby as a sign that we probably had time to take a short nap before going on a food and beverage run and heading over to the Coliseum's parking lot.

We must have been a bit more tired than we thought because our brief power naps turned into full-length siestas and an hour and a half later we were scavenging through the picked over, half-empty beer selection at the local Food Lion. As I rushed through the store looking for one of those styrofoam disposable coolers stopping here and there to ask employees if they knew whether or not their store stocked the little insulated disposable boxes a combination of fear and anxiety began to take over my body. I worried that the lots would be full. Word on popular fan internet message boards such as Phantasy Tour was that a lot of people without tickets would be making the trip in hopes of scoring a miracle or above-face value scalped ticket outside the venue. One of my own friends made the trip from the west coast with her husband and they still did not have tickets for the second night. The band even anticipated this and included a statement in the mail-order packages asking those who did not get tickets to please stay clear of the area that weekend. Rather than take a brutish, “stay away” stand the band couched its plea in a gentle reminder that fans would have the opportunity to see them perform on their upcoming summer tour (tickets were slated to go on sale after the Hampton shows). Phish.net was anticipating that for every person in Hampton that weekend with a ticket there would be upwards of two to three people without one. With just under 14,000 legitimate tickets sold for each night (the Coliseum’s capacity for a concert is 13,800) there were going to be a lot of people converging on “The Mothership” over the course of the next seventy-two hours.³⁰⁰ While it is hard to calculate the total number of people that traveled to Hampton that weekend The Associated Press estimates that the number is somewhere around 75,000.³⁰¹

³⁰⁰ Phish fans often use the term “The Mothership” interchangeably with and in reference to the Hampton Coliseum. The moniker is meant to suggest that the Coliseum’s architecture resembles a spaceship.

³⁰¹ Schiesel, “Phish Returns to Hampton to Feed Its Hungry Fans.”

Although ticketless fans still travel to shows the excess of fans that infiltrate cities like Hampton during Phish performances often are defying band wishes. Moreover, this facet of scene identity although not the focus of my project, is nonetheless a part of it, and therefore deserves mention—especially as it an emplaced practice that resembles those embedded in the earlier Grateful Dead scene.³⁰² For instance, during the Grateful Dead’s 1995 summer tour fans crashed the gates at Deer Creek in Noblesville, Indiana. Tear gas and police dogs were brought in to control the crowd. In wake if the incident, Grateful Dead band members and their management issued an open letter, much harsher than the aforementioned note Phish included with mail-order tickets, to the fans:

Dear Deadheads,

This is the way it looks to us from the stage. At Deer Creek we watched many of you cheer on and help a thousand fools kick down the fence and break into the show. We can’t play music and watch plywood flying around endangering people. The security and police whom those people endangered represent us. They work for us. Think of them as us. You can’t expect mellow security if you’re throwing things at them. The saboteurs who did this can only do it if all Deadheads allow them to. Your reputation is at stake. Don’t you get it? Over the past thirty years we’ve come up with the fewest possible rules to make the difficult act of bringing tons of people together work well and a few thousand so-called Deadheads ignore those simple rules and screw it up for you, us, and everybody. We never before had to cancel a show because of you. Think about it. If you don’t have a ticket, don’t come. This is real. This is first a music concert, not a free-for-all party. Secondly, don’t vend. Vending attracts people without tickets. Many of the people without tickets have no responsibility or obligation to our scene. They don’t give a shit. They act like idiots. It’s up to you as Deadheads to educate these people and to pressure them into acting like

³⁰² Here I am taking about the Grateful Dead scene post-1987. That was when the band had its only top-ten hit, “Touch of Grey.” With that success came an influx of people to the scene interested in hearing that specific song.

Deadheads instead of maniacs. Want to end the touring life of the Grateful Dead? Allow bottle-throwing, gate crashers to keep thinking they're cool anarchists instead of the creeps they are. Want to continue it? Listen to the rules. Pressure others to do so. A few more scenes like Sunday night and we'll quite simply be unable to play. The spirit of the Grateful Dead is at stake and we'll do what we have to do to protect it. And, when you hear somebody say "Fuck you, we'll do what we want," remember something: That applies to us too.³⁰³

In this letter Grateful Dead fans are treated as contributors to the scene and at the same time reminded that this is a concert where tickets are bought and sold. Much like the roadcase ticket sticker pointing out the price of a ticket that made the rounds in the mid-2000s Grateful Dead fans are sternly told that such practices, if continued, would mean the end of the scene.

While Hampton, Virginia, is not exactly a metropolis along the likes of a New York City, Chicago, or Boston, it's definitely not the rural, quasi-isolated sort-of-place that played host to Phish's prior farewell show four-and-a-half years ago in Coventry, Vermont. Hampton is an urban, interconnected, Mid-Atlantic port-city that houses an ethnically, racially, and economically diverse population of people. Roughly seventy-seven miles southeast of Richmond, the Virginia state capitol, Hampton is part of the Hampton Roads region (the other cities being Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Newport News, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Suffolk, Poquoson, and Williamsburg). Governmental agencies such as the US Navy, Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard all have offices and personnel both working and residing in the area. The region is home to a variety of colleges and universities such as William and Mary and Old Dominion (public state universities), Hampton University (private historically black university), Virginia Wesleyan (private liberal arts college), and Regent University (private Christian college

³⁰³ *The End of the Road*, prod. and dir. Brent Meeske, 85 min., Monterey Media, 2005, DVD.

founded by televangelist Pat Robertson) as well as a diversity of both in-state and out-of-state students. Hampton can be accessed by car, truck, or bus via Interstate 95, the main east coast north-south highway stretching from Maine to Florida, and by train via multiple Amtrak stations. There are commercial airports in Norfolk and Williamsburg/Newport News although many travelers opt to save their money on airfare and fly in and out of nearby cities such as Richmond like Keith and I did (over a hundred dollars in savings—more than enough to cover a rental car for the weekend). Carnival and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines both dock ships in the harbor. In short, Hampton, Virginia, is urban, well connected, and populous.

However, unlike the multifaceted transportation hubs of NYC, Chicago, and Boston, Hampton and the surrounding Hampton Roads area does not have a mass transit system. Having a car or quick access to one is essential in the Hampton Roads vicinity. Being familiar with the area both Keith and I knew this and used the money we saved by flying in and out of Richmond to secure a rental car for the long weekend. That said, in addition to my fear that the Coliseum's parking lots may have already reached capacity I also was nervous about traffic. Parking our rented Dodge Caliber wouldn't even matter if we ended up sitting in standstill traffic waiting to get off the interstate's Mercury Boulevard exit so long that we missed the moment when the band took the stage for the first time in almost five years.

Traffic surrounding Phish shows can be brutal. Education Professor Anne L. Slonaker made note of the traffic problems at Phish shows and highlighted the intricate routes and advance planning fans often take in hopes of avoiding the gridlock in her 2004 dissertation "Literacy as a Centerpiece for Public Democracy: A Critical Autoethnographic Perspective."³⁰⁴ As Slonaker argues, the size of traffic outside Phish shows grew as the band's popularity increased: "Phish

³⁰⁴ Anne L. Slonaker, "Literacy as a Centerpiece for Public Democracy: A Critical Autoethnographic Perspective" (Ph.D. diss. Penn State University, 2004), 30-32.

fans who had followed the band since the 1980s when Phish was a bar band were already [in 1999] complaining that the crowd was getting too big.”³⁰⁵

In addition to Slonaker’s claims that the mushrooming crowd be attributed to the band’s heightened popularity, it is also important to note that an insurgence of people with no desire in the music or even to attend the show occurred over time as well. Slonaker alludes to this somewhat when she writes, “What I didn’t anticipate—nor understand how to consider expansively—was that not everybody who traveled to Phish shows were going with the music as their central experience.”³⁰⁶ Here Slonaker highlights what I argue is a central component to “it” and what I theorize as affective authenticity. That is, as one fan explained to me, “*It* is not the same for everyone who [claims to] “get it.””³⁰⁷ Rather “getting it” becomes a signifier or vehicle for theorizing a particular named collective identity which in this case is the Phish scene.

Moreover, and in particular regard to crowd size outside of a show and the traffic it produces, many who began participating in the Phish scene by the end of the 1990s (specifically outside the venues) had no interest in the band or their music. Various individuals saw the place outside Phish shows as a market where money (albeit many times illegally) could be made. Not the only example but rather one of the most frequent and noticeable instances of this type of scene participation exists in the individuals who migrate from show to show selling both legal and illegal drugs.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 31.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Anonymous fan, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, March 7, 2009, Hampton, Virginia.

³⁰⁸ Here I use “legal” drugs to classify the increasingly popular secondary and illegal market for prescription medication such as Vicodin, Percocet, and Oxycodone /OxyContin often referred to as “pharmies,” at shows. My use of the “illegal” is meant to include drugs found at Phish shows that are classified as illegal by the U.S. government and therefore criminalized (examples include marijuana, LSD, MDMA/ecstasy/“molly”). I also combine legal and illegal in an attempt to situate the statutory location of one drug at Phish shows: nitrous oxide.

The Nitrous Mafia is perhaps one of the most expansive and notorious examples of such organizations. It has even garnered a recent multi-page write-up in *The Village Voice*.³⁰⁹ While the mere mention to some (who most likely know nothing about the group and/or the extensive and lucrative economy of nitrous oxide) provokes smirks, snickering, and sarcastic comments to those “in the know,” reference of the Nitrous Mafia will get you a range of responses running the gamut from ““It has a negative impact on the entire scene,” and “It's a sore on the scene,” to as one fans told me “It’s soooo much fun,” and “You take a little and just need more, more, more.”³¹⁰ Known in the scene as “hippie crack,” nitrous oxide balloons, well clearly illegal to some, are in many circumstances actually “legal” and therefore create legal enforcement and criminal indictment catch-22s.³¹¹ Pro or anti-nitrous, the balloons that, as one *Village Voice* reporter claimed can be found strewn across empty parking lots or fields after a show “like bullet shells on a battlefield,” are sold for five or ten dollars apiece—a price that adds up quickly and can yield a seller upwards of \$500 a night.³¹²

As I stood facing Food Lion’s cooler selection—what amounted to about eight or so identical fire engine red and cobalt blue plastic Coleman coolers—thoughts of these transportation logistics just about paralyzed me. This was my first attempt to conduct fieldwork at a Phish show!³¹³ I had my recorder in my back pocket and I needed time outside the venue to talk with people. Leaving the \$29.95 Colemans behind I picked up my power-walk pace and

³⁰⁹ John H. Tucker, “Tales of Hippie Crack: The Nitrous Mafia’s Ballooning Business Comes to a Music Fest Near You,” *The Village Voice* IV, no. 27 (2010), <http://www.villagevoice.com/2010-07-06/music/hippie-crack-nitrous-mafia-boston/> (accessed September 22, 2010).

³¹⁰ John H. Tucker, “Tales of Hippie Crack.” John, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 13, 2010, Deer Creek, Noblesville, Indiana. Kara, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 13, 2010, Deer Creek, Noblesville, Indiana.

³¹¹ In many states it is legal to buy or rent a tank of nitrous given you can produce the necessary paperwork or just cause. Resale of the drug in balloon form is illegal. John H. Tucker, “Tales of Hippie Crack.”

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ As I outlined in my introductory remarks much of my fieldwork regarding the scene until 2009 took place at Phish-related shows such as side-projects.

broke out into a full-on jog towards the front of the store, where, through the large glass windows, I spotted a 7-Eleven across the street.

“Just pay for the beer here. I’m *sure* the mini-mart over there will have one!” I hollered to my husband who was standing next to the check-out line.

Within eight minutes we were purchasing our very own no-name Styrofoam cooler along with a seven-pound bag of ice from the kind man behind the 7-Eleven counter.

“You here for the Phish concert?” he asked.

“Yes, sir,” I replied as Keith pulled out his wallet. I’m so glad you have these coolers.”

“It’s always nice when the Phish play here. Nice folks. Good for business—especially now.”

After the three of us shared a short-lived laugh—all of us about how this type of tourist activity will help stimulate the local economy and Keith and I in response to the clerk’s use of the phrase “the Phish”—we finished our transaction and exited the store. If not necessarily funny, this exchange provides a brief, yet telling glimpse into my assertion that the Phish scene, much like the Grateful Dead scene, is an effect of middle and upper-middle class actions. As one fan, D.S., mentioned in his earlier account of navigating the mail order process for the Hampton shows, “we” (both Phish fans and Americans) were in, March 2009, the early stages of an “economic collapse.” At the time, home foreclosures and unemployment numbers were rising while credit lines were tightening up and in many cases ceasing to exist anymore. But amidst all of the “save what we have” and “vacations are now called Saturday and Sunday” talk across the nation, Phish fans, and those interested in making money off Phish fans tapped into readily available cash or accessible credit and exercised their inner consumer by ordering mail order and/or Ticketmaster tickets for the three Hampton shows at the cost of \$49.50 a piece. Phish’s

manager, Coran Capshaw, equated the ten million requests (for 41,400 tickets) that bombarded and almost overloaded Live Nation's website to a tsunami.³¹⁴ Many fans that I talked with explained that before their clocks turned to 10:01am EST the day tickets went on sale they were already getting message prompts that read "sorry there are no available tickets."

The conspicuous consumption did not end there. Hotels within a twenty mile radius of Hampton were booked solid. The local daily newspaper anticipated that Phish's three-day run would bring in roughly five million dollars to the area.³¹⁵ In hindsight that estimate proved naive in regards to the economic power of Phishheads. Local officials declared that in all actuality the tourism added somewhere between seven to eight million dollars to local revenue.³¹⁶

Economic misconceptions like this were also commonly made of Deadheads. As English Professor, David L. Pelovitz, reveals through the close dissection of an article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Deadheads are often characterized by the press as communally embracing "ideas of laziness and drug use" when in reality, close analysis of these fans and the band itself suggests that "[i]t is nearly an economic impossibility that an audience composed [entirely] of nomadic, unwashed drug users could also have access to the millions of dollars they would need to be spending to make this a [highly] profitable business for the band."³¹⁷ As Pelovitz further explained, "The ticket sales for Grateful Dead concerts and the continuing interest in Dead-related products show that the band's fans [are] indeed spending millions of dollars."³¹⁸

³¹⁴ John Pareles, "Phish's Breakup? That Was Then. But Tough Times Call for a Reunion," *The New York Times*, March 5, 2009, C1.

³¹⁵ "Phish Fans Bring Big Business, Big Busts," *DailyPress.com*, March 10, 2009, http://www.dailypress.com/news/dp-local_phishwrap_0310mar10,0,6235186.story (accessed September 25, 2010).

³¹⁶ Matthew Sturdevant, "Phish concert brought in \$7 million or more to Hampton," *DailyPress.com*, March 10, 2009, http://www.dailypress.com/news/dp-local_phishbump_0310mar10,0,6960677.story (accessed September 25, 2010).

³¹⁷ David L. Pelovitz, "'No, but I've Been to Shows': Accepting the Dead and rejecting the Deadheads," in *Perspectives on the Grateful Dead*, ed. Robert G. Weiner (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 58-9.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

According to *The New York Times* chief pop music critic John Pareles, Anastasio “ha[d] been thinking about Phish’s role in the current recession” and believed that, “For people in hard times, we can play long shows of pure physical pleasure [where] [t]hey come to dance and forget their troubles. It’s like a service commitment.”³¹⁹ Here it is important to consider how the troubles that those dancing needed to forget perhaps compared to the troubles of those waiting on and serving them that long weekend as they danced.

But let us return to Keith and myself, sitting in our Dodge Caliber waiting to make a right out of the 7-Eleven parking lot. Panic set in again as we surveyed what was clearly the preemptive Friday rush hour traffic. Thankfully this time it only lasted for the thirty seconds it took for the streetlight to turn green. Before we knew it we’d hopped on I-64, traveled the six miles to our exit (#263), hung a left onto Mercury Boulevard, covered an eighth or so of a mile, and were directed right, off Mercury and onto Coliseum Drive, or as its more commonly referred to, “the strip.” Off in the not-too-distant distance, amidst the hundreds of people literally everywhere I could just barely make out the grayish-white concrete triangular tips of the Coliseum.

³¹⁹ Pareles. Trey Anastasio quoted in Pareles.



Top of the Hampton Coliseum lit up at night
Photo by Ryan Little. Printed with permission.

Chapter Three

Show: “I Feel the Feeling I Forgot”

[T]he show started well before the band ever took that stage.
It started in the parking lot.

Peter Conners³²⁰

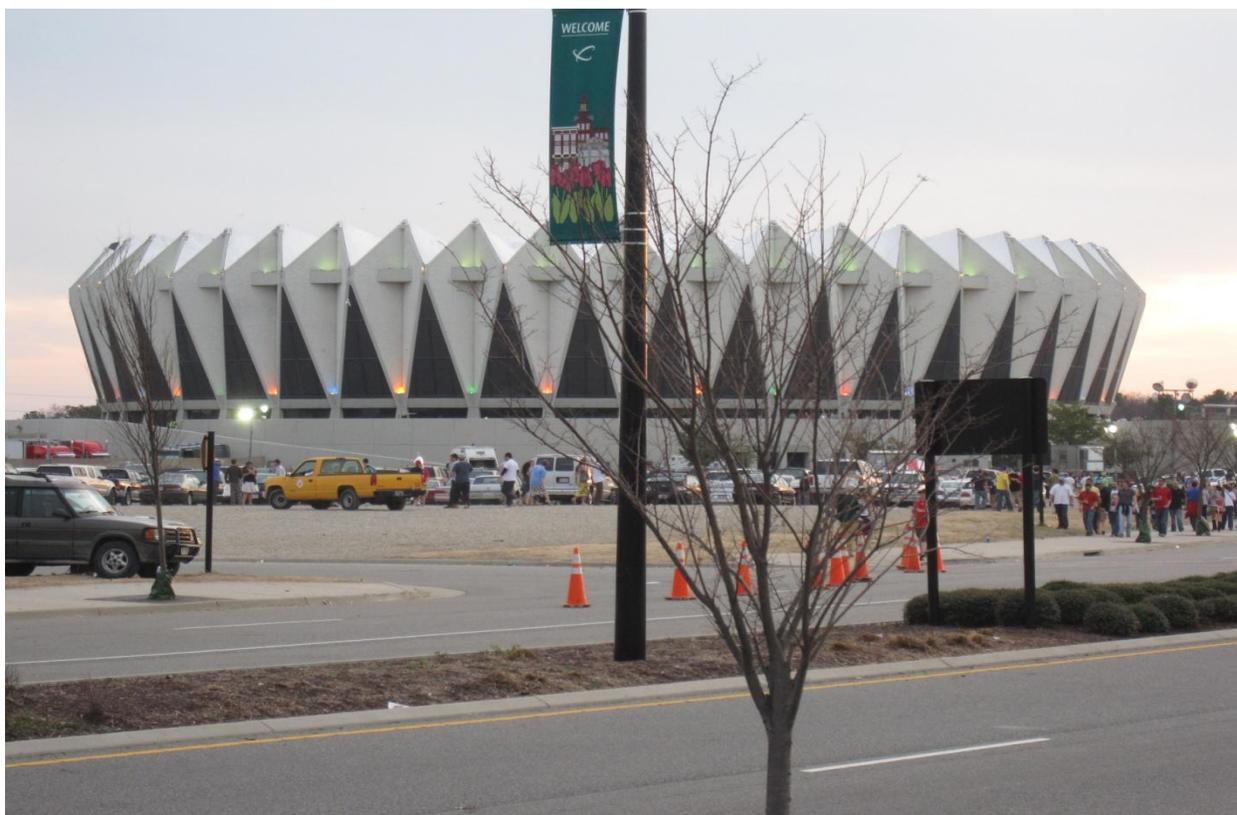
As this chapter’s opening epigraph attests “[t]he parking lot was an important part of the [show] experience” because it marked its start.³²¹ This chapter investigates Phish “show practices” by first examining the practices of those who come to shows without tickets. To do this I analyze the space around the venues, particularly “Shakedown Street,” as a middle and upper-middle class space imbued with the memory of the Grateful Dead scene. I then suggest that the practices enacted inside the venue are deeply interrelated to the cultural moment outlined Chapter One. As such, I contextualize these acts as ones that fans perform in search of what I call affective authenticity. During the Phish show experience scene participants take part in specific practices with the hopes that they will get and feel a part of “it.” Here, in Chapter Three I demonstrate how these processes may be read as participants’ way of achieving an affective effect that is rooted in three corresponding understandings of authenticity: 1) authenticity as different from the constructed “reality” of mainstream American music; 2) authenticity as “the live” state; and 3) authenticity as the spontaneous. Finally, I suggest how, although many of these embedded process may be mapped throughout the Grateful Dead scene as well as the Phish scene, they are distinct from one another.

Some venues are automatically “special” purely because of their geographical location (Boston Garden [in Boston], Shoreline Amphitheatre [in the San

³²⁰ Conners, *Growing Up Dead*, 30.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

Francisco Bay Area], Thomas & Mack Center [in Las Vegas]) while others are distinguished by their natural setting (Red Rocks [in Colorado], The Gorge [in Washington]). Hampton doesn't stand out remarkable in either category; nevertheless, it is one of those places that has earned an endearing place in Phish lore through the intrinsic quality of the place itself. It's small (for an arena), fully general admission, and indeed seems to resemble an otherworldly vehicle from outside (thus the Spaceship Hampton nickname). It is bordered by several hotels, which string together into one large encampment, punctuated by a nice little wooded area (right behind The Red Roof Inn)...Fans weary of the craziness on "the strip," or simply shut out of available hotel rooms, can perch at the Hampton outpost of Newport News, which includes an Omni Hotel that [oftentimes] offers a late-night show...Plus, the blue/green fountain in front is cool to look at, and serves as a meeting place and energy nexus.³²²



"Spaceship Hampton" – Hampton Coliseum
Photo by Ryan Little. Printed with permission.

³²² Jeremy D. Goodwin, "Hampton Coliseum (Hampton, VA)," *The Phish Companion*, 2nd ed., 776.

As the first large-scale multi-purpose arena built in the state of Virginia, the Hampton Coliseum, houses a variety of histories.³²³ While it meets the general guidelines of a coliseum in both form and function—it is a large oval structure with tiers of seats where events take place—the chain of giant concrete inverted triangles that form its outer barrier walls makes it structurally unique. As the Phish fan description above demonstrates, this particular design lends itself to Unidentified Flying Saucer (UFO), spaceship, and *Close Encounters*-themed nicknames that among Phish scene participants include Spaceship Hampton, The Spaceship, and the ever popular, The Mothership (as in “Phish is playing Hampton” meaning “the Mothership has landed”).³²⁴ Although Hampton is deemed a “special” place by Phish fans for reasons relating to intimacy, fluid and democratic general admissions (GA) policies, crystal clear acoustics, and an ideal geographic “encampment,” it does not represent a place where unusual or unique show practices take place. The “show” processes practiced in Hampton are standard to Phish scene identity.

As Keith and I slowly inched our car down Coliseum Drive towards the Coliseum, the parking lots (there are multiple connected lots), and the centrally located fountain we were greeted by people smiling, waving, and cheering. In an attempt to enjoy the mild, sunny, early spring weather (a sharp contrast to the cold and wet Lawrence, Kansas, weather we’d left behind) we had the front driver and passenger door windows rolled down. This made it not only easy to talk to people walking by but in retrospect helped welcome the conversation. In the time we sat in the dense-but-slowing-moving traffic we encountered people from over two dozen states that ranged in age from newly born babies (one was just over a month old and, according

³²³ Construction on the Coliseum began in 1968 and ended in 1970. It has hosted profession and collegiate athletic events, multiple concerts, holiday festivals, conferences, etc.

³²⁴ These are all monikers I heard fans use as I traveled through the parking lot outside the Hampton Coliseum.

to her parents, would not be making the trip “inside”) to a man who said he was seventy-three.³²⁵ People were excited to see Phish perform, to be “back in the scene” as one fan proclaimed, to be with, as another fan stated, “phamily,” and, according to fan Katie’s “Since Coventry _____” sticker, “believe again.”³²⁶

Recalling his first Grateful Dead parking lot experience in 1987, Peter Conners stated, One of the first things that struck me upon pulling into [the] Kingswood [Amphitheatre] was the people we didn’t know randomly smiling, waving, and welcoming us in as we slowly navigated the lot looking for a parking space. These people didn’t work for the venue, nor did they work for the band. They were just people. Deadheads. And they were happy to see that we had made it safely to the show.³²⁷

While it is noteworthy that the size of the “lot scene” at Grateful Dead shows historically varied, the presence of kind fans welcoming other fans to the venue in the immediate vicinity surrounding the venue is a constant practice at both Grateful Dead and Phish shows. As one Phish fan explained,

Upon arrival in Hampton, I was overjoyed to find my hotel to be within easy walking distance of the venue, as billed. The lobby of the Holiday Inn was packed with heads checking in late Friday afternoon, and I found that my room was right in the heart of the cluster of hotels that make up the Hampton Encampment. It is like a compound: five or so hotels all spilling into the same series of parking lots, basically within sight of the Coliseum itself. While walking around the lots, visiting other hotels, and hanging out in the small wooded area

³²⁵ Anonymous couple with child, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, March 6, 2009, Hampton, Virginia. Anonymous male fan, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, March 6, 2009, Hampton, Virginia.

³²⁶ Stickers reading “Since Coventry _____” seemed to be in the hands and on the shirts of many fans that weekend, especially the first night. Styled after the standard “My name is _____” orientation-type stickers, fans were encouraging one another to fill in the blank and to wear their personal “travels” openly. Katie, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, March 2009.

³²⁷ Conners, *Growing Up Dead*, 31.

that is tucked in for good measure, there is a palpable feeling of being on the front lines. Frisbees fly, acoustic guitars are strummed and people wait to see Phish make history.³²⁸

Additionally, Volkswagens still figure prominently in the parking lot geography of Phish shows as they did in the lots outside Grateful Dead shows. In Peter Conners' book he explains that,

[S]hitty vans were the norm...[and] [a]nother common vehicle in Dead show parking lots was the self-modified [VW] van. People would [also] take regular Econolines or similar basic Ford or Chevy vans and trick them out for camping—they'd cut holes in the roof; add a "widow's walk."³²⁹

However, the lots at Hampton, like the lots at the overwhelming majority of shows in which I conducted fieldwork, also contained more than a fair share of newer, what car companies call "luxury" sedans such as VW Passats, CCs, the revamped Jetta and VW Beetles, BMWs, and Lexuses. Also worth mentioning is the ever present and sprawling collection of Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs) that included the likes of both Chevys and Dodges as well as Volvos, VWs (again), and Land/Range Rovers. Here notions of class are again silent but visibly present. While as Conners points out "VW campers were cheap" in the 1970s and 1980s contemporary models of the vehicle cost anywhere from twenty-five thousand dollars and up.³³⁰

Something's Shakin' on Shakedown Street: Miracles and Other Acts of Commerce

³²⁸ Jeremy D. Goodwin, "11/21/97; Hampton Coliseum; Hampton, VA," *The Phish Companion*, 2n ed., 596.

³²⁹ Conners, *Growing Up Dead*, 31.

³³⁰ The base-line starting price for a VW bus/van today starts at \$25,900. Volkswagen website, <http://www.vw.com/en/models.html> (accessed November 15, 2010).

As I noted in my introductory remarks and again in the Segue section of this dissertation, the place outside Phish shows almost always contains what scene participants call “Shakedown Street.” Taken from the name of the Grateful Dead song (and album of the same title) Shakedown Street is an area outside both Grateful Dead and Phish shows “for reunions, conversations, listening to and trading tapes, music, dancing, drumming, [the sale/exchange of] drugs, and to attempt to get a ticket for the show.”³³¹ A great deal of existing scholarship pertaining to both bands addresses this market.



Shakedown Street at the Gorge 2009
Photo by Ryan Little. Printed with permission.

³³¹ Culli, 61. Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter, “Shakedown Street,” on *Shakedown Street*, prod. , prod. George Lowell, Arista Records, November 5, 1978.

In his dissertation, “Never Could Read No Road Map”: Geographic Perspectives on the Grateful Dead,” geographer Daniel Culli theoretically situates Shakedown Street amidst Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of carnival and argues that the economy on Shakedown Street was “essentially carnival reinforcing and reproducing carnival.”³³² In Culli’s research vendors sold goods, typically handmade clothing, crafts, and in some cases both legal and illegal drugs with the sole purpose of making enough money to travel to and experience the next show on any given tour.

Christina Allaback echoes this claim and further elaborates from it to assert that Shakedown Street represents scene participants’ resistance to the capitalism of corporate America.³³³ For example, she references hearing fans yell “keep your money in the lot where it belongs” often in the vicinity of Shakedown Street.³³⁴ However, Allaback complicates Culli’s understanding of Shakedown Street when she explains that scene participants there “replicate consumerist society by creating their own economy.”³³⁵

Analyzed critically, my experiences in the field on Shakedown Street both reflect and challenge these findings. I assert that Shakedown Street is, like both Culli and Allaback contend, a place where scene participants create a market where particular proceeds are undoubtedly used to help individuals both continue on to another show and to obtain tickets to either that night’s show or an upcoming one. For instance, the act of “miracling” is a practice that takes place outside the venue, most frequently on Shakedown Street, where fans who arrive at a show without tickets obtain tickets.³³⁶ In most cases this occurs either for free or for less than “face-value” through cash purchase or the bartering of goods and sometimes services. These

³³² Ibid., 62.

³³³ Allaback, “Theater of Jambands,” 38.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Miracling as an act plays off the Grateful Dead’s song, “I Need a Miracle.” John Perry Barlow and Bob Weir, “I Need a Miracle,” *Shakedown Street*.

individuals can be easily recognized by enacting the miracle seeking practice of placing one index finger in the air. In some cases this silent act is accompanied by cries of “I need a miracle” or with the announcement of what that person has to offer (“Hugs for your extra!”). In this way Shakedown Street provides a space where one can go if he or she needs a ticket or has one to sell or trade.



Searching for a ticket in the lots.
Photo by Ryan Little. Printed with permission.

“Miracling” is another practice where class is made visible via a certain discursive practice or process. Like the middle or upper-middle class counterculturalists in Chapter One

who could decided to “drop out” trying to “get a miracle” is a lifestyle choice. Although this “choice” could be viewed as an act of protest against the business of live music entertainment that I outlined in Chapter Two it nevertheless reveals the privileged ability to choose to reject buying a ticket via Ticketmaster/Live Nation Entertainment.³³⁷ The very term itself, “miracle,” exposes a sense of particular social, economic, and cultural privilege whereby a “miracle” entails entrance to a concert.



Purchasing a ticket in the lot.
Photo by Ryan Little. Printed with permission.

Moreover, my analysis of class as a facet of scene identity that reveals itself through discursive practices suggests that Phish scene participants (and perhaps Grateful Dead scene participants as well) are not in actuality resisting corporate capitalism. That is, Shakedown Street is a market. Additionally, although fan testimonies often outline how one can buy a ticket

³³⁷ I do not mean to imply that every act of “miracling” involves someone who chooses not to buy a ticket from Ticketmaster/Live Nation as some fans cannot afford tickets. Rather, I mean to point to the use of the term “miracle.”

to the next night's show and sell enough grilled cheese sandwiches to afford gas money there, a great deal of information still exists in the shadows. For instance, these narratives do not account for the ability to buy, own, or rent a vehicle. Inherent in these claims is an assumed level of privilege or access to particular funds or cultural capital to begin with.

Getting In

Admission to the Coliseum itself is both similar to and different from that at other venues. Especially now in a post-9/11 America, gaining entrance to virtually any public or private ticketed event these days requires that one submit to a two-pronged process involving both a security check—what Phish fans refer to as a “pat down”—and a ticket check. At Hampton, like numerous venues across the country such as Alpine Valley (East Troy, Wisconsin), the aforementioned Deer Creek (Noblesville, Indiana), and The Gorge (George, Washington), the first part of this process, the pat down, takes place about a hundred yards or so before the actual ticket check. While local police can and sometimes do perform this task one will most often find private security/event staff and/or venue staff carrying out the routine job. Divided by gender (men are only allowed to search men and women only allowed to interact with other women) each attendee must empty any bags, water bottles, etc. and then allow the staff to physically “pat” her down from her shoulders to her ankles. If any prohibited items are found on you, you must either forfeit the item or leave the line, place the item elsewhere, and then return to the back of the line.³³⁸ If you are deemed “ok” you are allowed to then proceed to

³³⁸ This is of course assuming that the prohibited item is legal. If you are found with an illegal item, depending on the individual conducting the search, the event staff, and the local laws, a variety of other actions are taken (seizure of the item, arrest, fine, ejection, etc.).

the ticket checkpoint, where, after handing your ticket to the staff, it is either scanned or ripped in half and then you are finally allowed to enter the venue premises. If your ticket is found to be counterfeit you are denied entrance.

Aside from reasons already stated, the separation between these two checkpoints also helps keep large crowds in control by reducing the number of people that at one time approach the staff ticket takers. When large numbers of people swarm in on the ticket scanners/takers it becomes easier for people with counterfeit tickets and even with no tickets to gain entrance. For instance, on February 15, 2003 Phish played the first of a two night run at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas. It was the second show of the Winter 2003 tour and one of only four “west coast” shows.³³⁹ Fans formed a long line similar to that at Hampton once the grounds to the Thomas and Mack Center opened in the afternoon. The security and venue staff at the Center had also set up a two-part entry process where the pat down and ticket scan were to take place in separate places and stages. However staff workers at the first checkpoint, the pat down area, did not coordinate the flow of fans passing through that stage successfully. Instead of sending an orderly, manageable, and consistent number of fans on to the next checkpoint, the ticket scanning area, the staff running the pat down zone for one reason or another sent too many people through en masse at a time. As a result, ticket takers working at the Center’s doors were forced to forfeit the use of their scanners and simply “look” at tickets and let fans into the venue. Fans picked up on the situation and already-used tickets quickly found their way into the hands of ticketless fans in the lot and back inside the venue for a second time.

³³⁹ The Winter 2003 tour opened on February 14th in Inglewood, California. The second and third shows took place the following two nights in Las Vegas, Nevada and the fourth and final “west coast” show occurred after a day’s rest on February 18, 2003 in Denver, Colorado at the Pepsi Center. After those four shows the band moved on to play three shows in the Midwest (one in outside of Chicago and two in Cincinnati).

At Hampton there is another stage added to this entry process. People are moved, usually five or so at a time, ahead to the pat down area. Once those people are given the “ok” to proceed on to the ticket scanner at the door to the Coliseum (or amphitheatre) the next five or six individuals are taken from the front of the general line and admitted to the pat down area. In this situation those towards the front of the general line can observe how lenient or aggressive the pat down is and pass this information back on through the line. Many fans report placing small amounts of drugs (both legal and illegal: alcohol, marijuana, tablets/caplets, etc.) inside sneakers, empty cigarette containers, and hidden or obscured in pant pockets. These actions are not unique to Phish shows. For instance, at collegiate athletic events girls often tape flasks filled with liquor to their inner thighs. If wearing a dress or skirt, this is an area of the body that will not be patted down. In some cases these practices are intricate. In Hampton, one fan explained to me how he placed a small amount of marijuana and a pipe inside an empty cigarette case.³⁴⁰ When he entered the pat down area he emptied his pockets and kept his cigarette case in his hand with his phone and then placed his hands up in the air so he could be patted down.³⁴¹ He then picked up his belongings and proceeded on into the Coliseum.³⁴² Additionally, this visualization allows those in line to view those ahead of them pass through the building and in turn helps build crowd excitement. On this Friday, the first to cross the Coliseum’s threshold were cheered on by the crowds as exuberant screams of “woo hoo” filled the cooling air.

Once Keith, C.A., C.T. and I all got successfully into the building we broke out into gym class sprints through the closest opening to the floor. C.A.’s friend K.C., her husband, and a few of their friends had already claimed a prime piece of floor real estate: a full sheet size square area

³⁴⁰ Anonymous fan, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, March 6, 2009, Hampton, Virginia.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

about fifteen feet back from the stage in between where Trey and Page's equipment was set up. We immediately all sat down. Our legs were tired from standing outside in line and we knew that once the music started we'd be back up on them dancing for at least an hour and a half or so straight.



Horizontal Lineup

Photo by Sean Dolan. Printed with permission.

A quick reassessment of our spatial location yielded two immediate observations. First, C.A. pointed out how it appeared the band had reverted to their old stage set up where all four members were situated alongside one another equally in a horizontal line (looking at the stage from left to right: Page (keys), Trey (guitar), Mike (bass), and Fishman (drums)).³⁴³ This differed from the late 1990s and early 2000s stage topography where, looking from the audience

³⁴³ Sometimes this order changed in the older setup where the band lined up from left to right: Page (keys), Mike (bass), Fishman (drums), and Trey (guitar). However, regardless of order the older setup always positioned the members horizontally next to one another.

the band formed a squared off diamond shape with Fishman's drum kit at the top, Trey front and center forward, and Mike and Page midway between Fishman and Trey to the right and left respectively.

Later in the weekend another fan, J.C., made note of this setup and told me he thought it showed that the band was committed to working both musically and hopefully administratively in a more democratic matter, a aspect of Phish that Anastasio was very articulate about in a 2001 interview:

Everything that Phish did, we always talked about creating an atmosphere where the four of us would have an equal voice, a place where we could play music where everyone was free to express their own voice.³⁴⁴

However, while Anastasio has always claimed Phish to be an equal, open, and democratic entity fans challenged this assumption when the 2004 announcement that the band was breaking up came from only him.

Last Friday night, I got together with Mike, Page and Fish to talk openly about the strong feelings I've been having that Phish has run its course and that we should end it now while it's still on a high note. Once we started talking, it quickly became apparent that the other guy's feelings, while not all the same as mine, were similar in many ways—most importantly, that we all love and respect Phish and the Phish audience far too much to stand by and allow it to drag on beyond the point of vibrancy and health. We don't want to become caricatures of ourselves, or worse yet, a nostalgia act. By the end of the meeting, we realized that after almost twenty-one years together we were faced with the opportunity to graciously step away in unison, as a group, united in our friendship and our

³⁴⁴ Trey Anastasio, "Panel Discussion with Trey Anastasio, Bob Weir, Nicholas Payton, and Beverly Sills," The Forum Channel, November 29, 2001, <http://www.theforumchannel.tv/player.aspx?forumid=8&vidid=237&vidtype=Clip&&cliptag=anastasio&lit=the%20search%20term:%20%27anastasio%27&panelist=&pname=> (accessed November 20, 2010). J.C., conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, March 7, 2009, Hampton, Virginia.

feelings of gratitude. So Coventry will be our final show. We are proud and thrilled that it will be in our home state of Vermont. We're also excited for the June and August shows, our last tour together. For sake of clarity, I should say that this is not like the hiatus, which was our last attempt to revitalize ourselves. We're done. It's been an amazing and incredible journey. We thank you all for the love and support you've shown us.³⁴⁵

This “break-up” letter arrived in fan inboxes and was posted on the band’s website in May of 2004. It was signed only by Anastasio. In addition to signing this letter, Anastasio went on to do a two-part interview with Charlie Rose where he addressed the break up. These actions only added to fan and media speculation that other members wanted to keep the band together and/or that Anastasio’s then-rumored drug problem was tearing the band apart. In the Rose interview Anastasio talked about how difficult it had been to come up with a cover design for what was then the band’s most recent album, *Undermind*, while trying to maintain a democratic process:

We spent a week deciding whether to put that square box around the word Phish on the cover. And it was about 20 different people chiming in and going to the meeting in the office. In contrast, when that album came out [his independent album], I made the cover, it was easy, fun.³⁴⁶

To some in Hampton, the return to the older linear stage set-up seemed to be an advance sign that one facet of Phish they held dear was back.

Secondly, a glance above our own heads paved the way for what ended up being a lengthy three-day discussion. Hanging from the ceiling rafters were at least a dozen giant white orbs. We couldn’t tell what they may have been made out of—if they were solid or filled with air, like massive balloons—but over the course of the long weekend they provided a canvas on

³⁴⁵ Trey Anastasio, “Preface,” in *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed.

³⁴⁶ Anastasio, interview by Charlie Rose, 26 May 2004.

which Chris Kuroda, the band's lightning designer and director, worked what many fans refer to as "his magic."



Hampton Orbs
Photo by Andy Gadiel. Printed with permission.

Like the acid tests and the rock concert experience shows Bill Graham and the Grateful Dead help create, Phish also used lights and lighting shows as a way to help achieve a more rounded experience for both the performers and the audience where multiple senses were engaged. While as Peter Connors points out in reference to the Grateful Dead, and I would second in reference to Phish, "There were no [regular] pyrotechnics...no cage dancers, no

absurdly oversized stage props,” there were (and still are) lights—many, many lights.³⁴⁷ David Gans echoed these sentiments when he told me,

[T]he [Grateful] Dead..did a lot of really cool things but they didn’t do it on the monumental scale that Phish did where they put together these huge things.³⁴⁸

In the words of one Phish fan, “It honestly felt like I was watching a play, or some other planned spectacle.”³⁴⁹



Halloween Lights 2010
Photo by Rose Chaffee-Cohen. Printed with permission.

Chris Kuroda is considered by both fans and the band as the band’s fifth member. The band’s original ad for a lightening director stated just this: “[Seeking a] creative light person to run new light show for PHISH on a salaried, permanent basis. This very valuable partner will travel with the band as a 5th member.”³⁵⁰ As such, Kuroda sat in at band practices. According to

³⁴⁷ Conners, *Growing Up Dead*, 29-30.

³⁴⁸ Gans, conversation, March 19, 2010.

³⁴⁹ Jeremy D. Goodwin, “4/2/98 Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, NY,” *The Phish Companion* 2d ed., 497.

³⁵⁰ “Kuroda, Chris,” in *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 878.

Phish biographer Parke Putebaugh, “He would... ‘jam’ with them on lights [at practices].”³⁵¹

Kuroda, according to Putebaugh,

believes that a certain element of synesthesia—a blurring of the senses, as in “hearing” color and “seeing” sound—comes into play at Phish concerts. “Music affects many senses, and with lightening you can add the visual sense,” he said. “More than just watching musicians play, you see a visual mood... You can tune in people in yet another sense, so to speak.”³⁵²



Madison Square Garden Lights December 4, 2009
Photo by Rose Chaffee-Cohen. Printed with permission.

Many fans’ own accounts detail the importance of Kuroda on the Phish experience and echo Putebaugh’s assertion that his “ability to fuse lightening with music and his uncanny sense of timing lends an added dimension to [the] Phish show[] [experience].”³⁵³ For instance, one of the largest fan criticisms of Phish’s April 2004 four-night Las Vegas run aside from what one fan called “Trey’s sloppy playing” was that the lights, to echo multiple fan descriptions,

³⁵¹ Parke Putebaugh, *Phish: The Biography* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2009), 87.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 87.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 86.

“sucked.”³⁵⁴ Kuroda was unable to do the light show that run and Phish recruited the lighteing director from the Dave Matthews Band’s crew to run Kuroda’s rigs for the four nights.

Additionally, one fan explained to me that he first “got it”—he first “got on the bus”—when he listened to Phish’s song “You Enjoy Myself” (“YEM”) over a stereo system at a friend’s house that was hooked to a television. He explained to me how every note coresponded to a particular color and wave-like movement on the television scenen and how the music, in his words, “came alive,” on the t.v. in from of him.³⁵⁵



Madison Square Garden Lights December 4, 2009.
Photo by Rose Chaffee-Cohen. Printed with permission.

Also worth breif mention is the lighting that Phish fans actively participate in creating themselves through the use of glow sticks. As Christina Allaback explains, “*The Phish Net*, a fan website, cites the first glowstick war as happening in November of 1994 during a ‘Harpua’ jam. Guitarist Trey Anastasio asked his light technician [Kuroda] to turn the lights off so

³⁵⁴ Jason, in conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 7, 2009, The Gorge, George Washington.

³⁵⁵ Anonymous fan, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, October 30, 2009, Indio, California.

everyone could watch the glowsticks get tossed around the audience.”³⁵⁶ In these instances, fans contribute to the visual element of the show and help create a “rounded” multi-focused event where control of the lights is open to anyone with a glowstick. Here fans can become an active participant in the show experience, to feel like they have a place in a given time space, by releasing an arch of light in and when the moments moves them.

That said, at Hampton there were numerous questions buzzing through the crowd as we all waited for the lights to go out was: Were the white orbs holding balloons? Were they part of a prank or gag? What did the band have planned?

In Phish tradition show spectacles often move beyond the lighting of Chris Kuroda and fan-induced glowstick wars. For instance, New Year’s Eve shows typically involve a massive ball drop at the stroke of midnight. On most occasions when playing “YEM” both Anastasio and Gordon perform a synchronized trampoline routine while playing their instruments. Historically, Halloween shows involve a “musical costume.” In these instances, the band “dresses up” as another band and performs one of said band’s albums in its entirety. In the past Phish has performed the Beatles’ *White Album* (in 1994), the Who’s *Quadrophenia* (in 1995), Talking Heads’ *Remain in Light* (in 1996), the Velvet Underground’s *Loaded* (in 1998), the Rolling Stones’ *Exile on Main Street* (in 2009), and most recently Little Feat’s *Waiting for Columbus* (in 2010).

Some spectacles are performed by only the band and others are enacted and constructed by both the band and the fans. One of the more famous of the former involves a giant hot dog prop that was created for the band by Chris McGregor. The hot dog made its first appearance on New Year’s Eve 1994 when the band “rode across the Boston Garden, above the audience,

³⁵⁶ Allaback, “Theater of Jambands,” 93.

playing ‘Auld Lang Syne’ and throwing out goodies while [the Captain Beefheart song] ‘Tropical Hot Dog Night’ played over the P.A.”³⁵⁷ Then on the eve of the new millennium, December 31, 1999, the band “rode the hot dog on the back of a truck from the back left of the crowd to the stage while [the band’s song] ‘Meatstick’ played over the P.A.”³⁵⁸ In an attempt to construct a spectacle involving both the band and the fans the band erected a giant size chess board and participated in a match with its fans, alternating band and fan moves at each concert during the 1995 fall tour.³⁵⁹ Mirroring a chess match between two close friends, fans traveled to multiple shows throughout various cities, going on tour themselves, continuously matching the band move by move.

~

“What time is it?” I asked Keith.

“Seven fifty nine.”

Before I could even contemplate negotiating my way the forty some odd feet to the exit to my left so I could relieve my nearly full bladder, the lights went off. And then in two quick seconds while nearly deafened by excited “woo-hoos” and the roar of shrilling screams I was pushed forward a good four feet from where I’d just been standing and elevated so that my feet were no longer touching the ground. I was being held up in perfect place by the bodies of the 13,799 Phish fans surrounding me. One second later everyone and everything around me was bathed in the bright cobalt hue radiating from the lights above the stage. Then it got louder. While this was not my first time on the floor at a GA Phish show this was the first time I’d been this close.

³⁵⁷ “Hot Dog,” *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 877.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ The Mockingbird Foundation, ed., *The Phish Companion*, 4.

“Are they on stage?!” I yelled up to Keith

I assumed that the combined second crescendo of cheer and blue lighting meant the band had walked out on stage. Another second passed. A stunted note on a guitar. Tuning? Then it got so loud again that I could barely hear the initial chords of the first song, “Fluffhead” on Trey’s guitar. As the band settled in to the opening groove of one of its most intricate songs, I looked at the faces around me and spotted ear-to-ear grins coupled with tears of joy. One fan compared the minutes immediately following 7:59pm that night as “one of the most dreamlike moments in the band’s history, the entire crowd was whisked away within two notes.”³⁶⁰

This was “it.” However, I recognize that my description does not even come close to doing “it” justice. As Anastasio once explained,

We [the band members] wanted Phish—we wanted it to be the center of everything. And when it is it's so incredible...The experience of the concerts, when we spent 5 hours a day practicing, when we lived and breathed Phish, was beyond intimate. It really was. *And I don't know that the people who didn't see Phish really could understand that. But I know the people who did go see Phish do.*³⁶¹

That said, it is my aim in this project, and in this chapter in specific, to listen to how those who do see Phish and experience the band live explain it and to try and help those who have never witnessed the band live understand what “it” means to those who have. I should also note that this “it,” the feeling of being a part of something is only achieved by first being hip to “it.” Both of these theorizations of “it” are related to reading Phish scene identity as a middle and upper-middle class performance of resistance. Getting “it” in a particular moment, feeling a part of

³⁶⁰ “Like a Dream,” Mr. Minor’s Phish Thoughts, posted March 7, 2009, <http://phishthoughts.com/2009/03/07/like-a-dream/> (accessed September 20, 2010).

³⁶¹ Anastasio, interview by Charlie Rose, May 24, 2004. Emphasis added.

“it,” achieving an affectively authentic effect, helps middle and upper-middle class individuals feel as if they are not “cultureless.” At the same time achieving this particular effect is reliant on suffering from the shared “historical underdosing” and sense of culturelessness outlined Chapter One that stems from being white and middle/upper-middle class in America in the final decades of the 20th century.

Borrowing from one Phish fan’s claim that “there’s no such thing as a bit of Phish...[explaining] without mentioning the Dead” I begin my discussion of the relationship of “it,” Phish’s music, and the Phish show experience with a poignant explanation made by Ken Kesey of Deadheads and their relationship to “it,” the Grateful Dead’s music, and the Grateful Dead show experience.³⁶²

They’re [Deadheads] looking for magic. When I did my writing class I started the writing class by showing the people this [Kesey stands up, flips a coin in the air from his left hand to his right, then waves his right hand by his left hand while releasing the coin back into his left hand. He then closes both hands into two separate fists and upon opening them back up the coin appears to have vanished] because there’s a moment when you see something like that—there’s a crack in your mind and you know it’s a trick but you can’t figure it out and that crack lets in all the light. It opens up all the possibilities. When that little split second happens—When the Dead are playing and everybody in the audience goes “Wow, did you see that?!” That is—that’s the moment. And kids will watch five hours of mediocre music to have that one click happen because that puts them in touch with the invisible.³⁶³

³⁶² Cohen, “Hip, Cool, and the Cultural Currency of the Grateful Dead.”

³⁶³ Ken Kesey, interview, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D19gIZ5YruY> (accessed September 29, 2010).

As tempting as it may be taken by Kesey's descriptive account of this moment (and as someone who has born witness to this magic), I also sympathize with Philip Auslander's frustration of such descriptions:

I quickly became impatient with what I consider to be traditional, unreflective assumptions that fail to get much further in their attempts to explicate the value of "liveness" than invoking clichés and mystifications like "the magic of live theatre," the "energy" that supposedly exists between performers and spectators in a live event and the "community" that live performance is often said to create among performers and spectators.³⁶⁴

Aside from suggesting that Auslander perhaps reconsider who he calls "spectators" in these events to perhaps actors who participate in the event as other, slightly different "performers" I offer the following analysis regarding the "authentic."

First, entangled in these types of show related descriptions of "it" is the assumption that "it" is something different and at the same time also disconnected from that which fills one's day-to-day life. To many Phish and Grateful Dead fans both band's music was seen in this light. Moreover, this memory of "it" as a moment where a person achieves an affectively authentic effect works to perpetuate the desire to achieve "it" again.

David Gans suggested that many Grateful Dead fans viewed the band's music as a "colorful alternative to what was going on around...at the time."³⁶⁵ Phish fan Dave McGuriman echoed this idea of Phish's music as an alternative form (although not necessarily "colorful") to mainstream popular music and explained,

Most of what I saw was a disappointment. I came from the classic rock school of thought. My favorite bands at the time were Yes and Genesis, and no one could

³⁶⁴ Auslander, *Liveness*, 2.

³⁶⁵ David Gans, "Discussion with David Gans, Gary Lambert, and Peter Connors," *Tales from the Golden Road*, Sirius Satellite Radio, April 26, 2009.

touch them as far as I was concerned. This was mainly because they were so *different* from everything else out there.³⁶⁶

These types of sentiments are far from new in the study of popular music. As I mentioned in my introductory remarks, much cultural studies work regarding popular music represents this idea of difference where the “mainstream” or the “inauthentic” becomes the “Other.” As Richard Middleton points out this happens when “the nature of popular music is established through comparison with something else, an absent Other.”³⁶⁷ However as the following narrative shows, this process of “othering” depicts a hierarchical intersection of power and difference. As McGuriman further explained,

But I kept an open mind. The '80s were bereft of quality music and I had had about enough of it, but that quickly changed on night at The Lodge...After some typical preshow preparations, I went down to the Lodge, which was part of the student center...The room couldn't hold much more than maybe a couple hundred, and on this night there was less than that...I noticed there were a few hippie-looking outsiders who had made the trip for the show. This is itself was pretty new to me. JSC [Johnson State College in Vermont] has a large Dead following, but I hadn't been a part of that so this Philly boy was in a new world.³⁶⁸

In this particular example McGuriman explains that, aside from a limited number of what he calls “classic rock” acts, namely Genesis and Yes, the 1980s lacked “quality music.” To McGuriman “quality” music was different from mainstream popular music. Mainstream popular music (perhaps what Sanneh, in the opening of this dissertation meant when he claimed Phish was not a part of “our” popular culture) in the 1980s, as music and cultural critic Robert

³⁶⁶ Dave McGuriman, “3/11/88 The Base Lodge, Johnson State College, Johnson, VT,” *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 538.

³⁶⁷ Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1990), 6.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Emphasis added.

Christgau has often argued ran counter to the album oriented rock I discussed in Chapter One that Phish was then-embracing in a way that mirrored rock fans' anti-disco sentiments in the 1970s.³⁶⁹ Album oriented rock and what Christgau deemed the “manipulatively racist assumptions” it represented worked to perpetuate the longstanding popular construct of rock and roll as a white man’s genre of music.³⁷⁰

The suggestion that Phish and/or the Grateful Dead played “quality” music, a characteristic apparently (in the eyes of the Phish fans) not valued by a variety of other musical acts at a given time is a common claim in the narratives of Phish and Grateful Dead scene participants. The following three accounts, through different theorizations, all illustrate this sentiment. First Richard Wright, the author of two Phish songs (“Halley’s Comet” and “I Didn’t Know”) said,

I was just so glad that there was actually a band like that during the ‘80s because all through the ‘80s I was pretty much a progressive rock fan, and because of that there wasn’t too much ‘80s music that I liked. Progressive rock was kind of looked down upon in the ‘80s. It’s been a little less looked down on in the ‘90s, since the ‘70s have kind of become fashionable again, but in the ‘80s, prog-rock was totally looked down on. So, Phish were kind of a refreshing contrast to the sort of *anti-music* that was going on in the ‘80s. Like, the whole idea of a stoner band or psychedelic band was not a ‘80s thing. So for this local band to actually have four fantastic musicians with roots in prog-rock and actually daring to play that publically and writing their own sort of prog-rock...And I liked their

³⁶⁹ Here I also mean to evoke Alice Echols’ scholarship about white heterosexual Americans resistance to urban multicultural disco music. Prior to disco’s pop-crossover following the success of the film *Saturday Night Fever* disco was primarily (although not exclusively) embraced by urban, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered people of color. White heterosexual production and consumption of the music skyrocketed after the now iconic film *Saturday Night Fever*. Alice Echols, *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010).

³⁷⁰ Robert Christgau, “Rock ‘N’ Roller Coaster: The Music Biz on a Joyride,” in *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates*, ed. David Brackett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 386-96. Maureen Mahon, *Right to Rock: The Black Rock Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

influences too, you know. When I first heard them, they sounded a little bit to me like Yes. And then I also picked up on the Zappa influence and the Allman Brothers influence so it was something that I felt very comfortable with.³⁷¹

While Wright shares McGuriman's interest in the band Yes (although unlike McGuriman who locates Yes as a classic rock band, Wright suggests Yes is a progressive-rock band), he explains that Phish's music was different from most bands at the time because it was "anti-music" and not "quality" music as McGuriman explained. That said, I am not implying Wright meant to suggest Phish's music was of a bad quality. Rather I am positing a parallel in the way both McGuriman and Wright described Phish's music as their answer to the "other" music at the time.

Building on both his own claim of Phish representing "quality" music and Wright's sentiments about "anti-music," McGuliman further explained that the first time he saw Phish,

They opened with 'The Chicken,' followed by 'Funky Bitch,' both songs I had never heard before. The performance didn't impress too much upon me, but it was rocking, garage band-type entertainment so I wasn't ready to leave just yet. Next came 'Sneakin' Sally.' I was a huge fan of this song at the time and they didn't disappoint me by playing it. That sealed the fact that I wouldn't be wondering back to my dorm room anytime soon. Following this they played 'Take the A Train.' I didn't know jazz from a hole in the ground, but I did understand enough to know that this was not your ordinary band.³⁷²

Here, McGuliman, like Dan Purcell in the Introduction (where he discussed Phish covering the James Gang's "Walk Away"), picks out examples of music he did like and details how Phish was still able to make the music uniquely their own by performing such songs. That said, McGuliman also stressed the difference of Phish's own music and how it embodied a unique originality:

³⁷¹ Richard Wright, "Interview: Richard Wright," *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 323-24. Emphasis added.

³⁷² McGuliman, 538.

It was the next tune that changed my life forever. When I first heard ‘YEM’ I knew it was the end of an era. The lack of originality that marked the ‘80s had come to a screeching halt. This was the first Phish original I ever heard, and I was dumbfounded! This is the Phish sound. It’s what differentiates them from other bands. It was incredibly refreshing to hear something so different. And (for me) new. The way it kept intricately building into near noise until it exploded into a tight groove wasn’t necessarily new to music, but the way the band did it was new to me. And such a distinct overall sound. Somehow it came from a band that came from the ‘80s... song after song of composition and improvisation with sick jamming continually bombarded me. I’ll be honest that the only other thing I recall after twelve years is ‘Lizards.’ ‘But I’m never going back there/and I couldn’t if I tried/cause I come from the land of Lizards/and the Lizards they have died/they Lizards they have died/the Lizards they have died!’ After this I wanted nothing but Phish in my ears. I knew there was finally hope in the world...musically, anyway.³⁷³

In speaking about the Grateful Dead Peter Connors also hinted at a type of musical originality while listening to the band’s music on bootleg tapes.

I knew that something different was going on in this music that was maybe gonna help me find some different things and lo and behold the bootlegs started accumulating and finally I got a chance to go to a show and again, it was so different. I was so wide-eyed and pie-eyed sometimes and interested in what was going on.³⁷⁴

For Connors, this musical quality was replicated in the experience of seeing the Grateful Dead live. Additionally, according to Connors there was something similar about the Grateful Dead and Phish show practice that was relatable to him and to other fans as well. While the “other” music at the time as we know through existing popular music research did appeal to “others” my

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Peter Connors, “Discussion with David Gans, Gary Lambert, and Peter Connors.”

task as an ethnographer dealing with Phish fans demands I tease out the positioning and situated knowledge of the Phish fans' "other." I posit this relate-ability stemmed from a collective positioning within America's middle and upper middle class.

In a conversation between David Gans, Grateful Dead historian Gary Lambert, and Peter Conners the following exchange occurred:

Conners: When I think about the music that was coming out in the eighties—I know there is sort of a nostalgia for eighties music now but you know there was nothing nostalgic about it and you know it was music made by machines for machines and I wasn't having any of it.

Lambert: Well, uh, I will seek up for the eighties to the extent that there was a lot of great underground music in the eighties. It was when college music—college radio emerged as a force. It just wasn't the stuff that the mainstream was selling you but on the other hand in 1967 the mainstream was selling you the strawberry alarm clock—

Gans: —yeah.

Lambert: So you weren't getting the real psychedelia you were getting the cosmetic psychedelia.

Gans: So, you just gotta poke around, you know

Lambert: Yeah, there are parallels. You had to look for the good stuff in the sixties, you had to look for the good stuff in the eighties and I heard a lot of good music—I liked the eighties.

Conners: Yeah, of course...I mention this [in the book]. I had my one Sex Pistols friend.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

Here in this talk supposed “good” music is still positioned in relation to the “other.” Specifically “good” music is “underground music” like the Sex Pistols while the “other” music is the apparent mainstream, popular, MTV music that, according to Conners, was “made by machines for machines.” In his book Conners comments on the Sex Pistols in particular and states,

The Sex Pistols were a band burning alive in poverty and rebellion at the end of the world. But at fourteen, I had no idea what the Sex Pistols or, really, any nonmainstream contemporary band were all about. The suburbs are not exactly a breeding ground for the contemplation for urban social unrest.³⁷⁶

In this instance, “good” and “bad” music is based on relations of access and awareness that stem from particular middle and upper-middle class economic and social positionings.

Additionally, many descriptive accounts of “it” point in the direction of the live event.

Anastasio once explained,

[W]hat’s tying this all together, and why people are making some Grateful Dead comparisons probably is that there’s been a—to me, to my ears—there’s been a real lack of bands that their focus is playing live. Most bands through the Eighties their focus was making albums and they toured to support the albums.³⁷⁷

Anastasio is not shy about admitting that “[t]he idea is never to do the same show twice” and fans frequently recall this facet of Phish when they describe the band’s “uniqueness.” When I asked one fan “Why Phish?” he told me, “They bring something different every night and they’re a great live band.”³⁷⁸ When I countered with the claim, “But so do other people,” he cut me off abruptly as if to correct me and stated, “Most bands do not bring something different *every* night. Every night you don’t know what you’re gonna get at a Phish show and they’re

³⁷⁶ Conners, *Growing Up Dead*, 24.

³⁷⁷ Trey Anastasio, “MTV interview with Trey Anastasio and Mike Gordon,” 1992, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7U_7z5YDyUU&feature=related (accessed July 7, 2010).

³⁷⁸ Taylor, conversation, August 8, 2009.

great musicians.”³⁷⁹ A conversation I taped with two Phish fans at the Gorge in Washington state echoed Anastasio’s claims above about touring, or not touring for that matter, to support albums:

E.R.: But what makes them [Phish] different?

C.A.: Well, they don’t play to their albums. You know what I mean? You know, sometimes a band will put out an album and then tour and they’ll play all the songs on the album to sell the album

E.R.: Right

C.A.: That’s one thing.³⁸⁰

In the words of another fan “they’re versatile.”³⁸¹

However, as a vast amount of philosophy, anthropology, and cultural studies scholarship argues and explains the term “live” is a loaded expression. For example, performance studies’ approach to understanding performance as a theoretical concept differs from cultural geography’s notion of producing the now in regards to notions of authenticity. Specifically, while “producing the now” is embedded in the spontaneous and the authentic, the idea of performance can also be used to imply an inauthentic act/identity/entity. I posit that Phish scene participants often locate “it” in a relation between liveness, to borrow from Auslander, and “the real” as the production of “the now,” to borrow from cultural geography scholars. I draw from Walter Benjamin’s understanding of aura as the affective effect participants feel when they are in

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ E.R. and C.A., conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 8, 2009, the Gorge, George, Washington.

³⁸¹ Anonymous male fan, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 16, 2009, Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Saratoga Springs, New York.

close contact with an original performance, regardless of technological advancements—something of great importance to both Benjamin and Auslander.³⁸²

One “thing” that differentiates Phish from other bands is, as the above account illustrates, their penchant to improvise. Phish fans do not come to shows in hopes of hearing one song played one specific way. Although fans may hope to hear a particular song they do so out of the desire to see the band “do something new with it.” In a conversation with three Phish fans I mentioned that some friends and I “were saying *Farmhouse* was actually a really good album,” to which the three fans replied,

C., C.A., & R.: Oh it is a great—

K.T.: It’s a great album it’s the worst version of “Piper” ever

R.: Well, right, but—

C.: I’ll agree with that

R.: Some other good version of songs

C.: “Piper” [is] really just a vehicle to rock³⁸³

Although people may enjoy Phish albums and specific songs as they were recorded most fans value Phish’s ability to take the song to, as a sixteen year old male in Saratoga, New York told me, “a whole ‘nother place.”³⁸⁴

Before I move on to my concluding remarks I want to briefly expand on Phish’s improvisational capability and the high esteem in which Phish fans regard the band’s commitment to spontaneity. In the first published history of the band, *The Phishing Manual*,

³⁸² Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings by Walter Benjamin*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, et. al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 19-55.

³⁸³ C.A., K.T., R, and C, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 8, 2009, the Gorge, George, Washington.

³⁸⁴ John, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 16, 2009, Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Saratoga Springs, New York.

Dean Budnick writes about the numerous exercises Phish used to practice its improvisational techniques. One such activity was called “including your own hey.”³⁸⁵

This begins with one person presenting a melody. The other three band members then perform a complementary melody of their own. When the three have finally achieved this complementary melody, all four band members say “hey.” Then the adjacent person alters his melody a bit, and the three remaining band members are required to modify their own melodies in a corresponding manner. Once this is done, everyone says “hey” and the next band member makes an adjustment. This exercise teaches each of them to become unconsciousness of his own performance while simultaneously listening to the performance of the three others.³⁸⁶

Chris, a long-time Phish fan of over a decade and a drummer himself confided in me,

“Hey” is a great exercise...As a musician I listen—I mean you plan shit out. A lot of their jams are totally off the cuff, clearly improvisational but I mean they rehearse transitions, like jam transitions.³⁸⁷

Moreover, this recognition of improvisational commitment spread beyond fan-musicians to other fans. In 2008 Jesse Jarnow explained how this was a facet of Phish he held particularly dear:

What made Phish special to me was that they were extremely rigorous about what they did. What they did happened to be—the goal was fun but it was this very rigorous aesthetic towards fun where there was intense amounts of rehearsal and it was all—a lot of it was all planned out.³⁸⁸

And, this appreciation does not seem lost on the band. Anastasio is aware of it and cites it as motivation. In this sense this is a reciprocity that motivates both the band and the fans to achieve “it.”

³⁸⁵ Budnick, *The Phishing Manual*, 10.

³⁸⁶ Ibid. 10-11.

³⁸⁷ Chris, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, November 1, 2003, Indio, California.

³⁸⁸ Jarnow and Cohen, “Hip, Cool, and the Cultural Currency of the Grateful Dead.”

[Bootleg tapes]...keep us on our toes because knowing that the tapes are gonna be out there means that every night you've gotta do something new, something exciting happens. You know the easiest step would be you know, let's rest on our laurels and do the same thing again but you can't do that because you know that everyone's gonna know that it's been done before so you really wanna be moving forward—something different, something different...When they [the fans] come to the concert and something genuine happens, they are a part, the fan is a part of a genuine event that's happening right at that moment and that feeling—I don't think they ever shake it. When they come to a concert and something spur-of-the-moment—this incredibly exciting thing happens and they're a part of it because they, you know, we're feeding off their energy, and they're sitting in the same room—We're all in one room doing this thing together, whatever it may be and you can't shake that. That stays with you.³⁸⁹

~

The[] [Grateful Dead] weren't just playing what was on the music sheets they were playing what was in the air. When the Dead are at their best the vibrations that are stirred up by the audience is the music that they play...[in]LA you'd get one kind of thing...[in]Portland, Oregon, you'd get a completely other kind of music. And that means that the band has to be supple enough to really read the notes written on the wall and then—that they're changing all the time.

Ken Kesey³⁹⁰

According to fan testimonies, Grateful Dead scene participants and Phish scene participants find comfort in music that speaks to their individual social positionings. As such, Phish fans in particular seek out music that they can relate to. Although perhaps not in every case, in many situations this “comfort” stemmed from a feeling of belonging that was rooted in, if even only temporarily, a middle and upper-middle class feeling of culturelessness in the final decades of the 20th century. Moreover, Phish scene participants, like earlier Grateful scene participants valued liveness in the form of spontaneity and improvisation—a trait embedded in

³⁸⁹ Anastasio, “MTV interview with Trey Anastasio and Mike Gordon.”

³⁹⁰ Ken Kesey, interview, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D19gIZ5YruY> (last visited September 29, 2010).

the musical practices of both bands. Through these practices they sought to achieve an “authentic” affective effect. However, as I explained in Chapter One, Phish and the Grateful Dead represent different historical moments and as such must be viewed although parallel to one another, ultimately, and in this case musically, different from each other.

Chapter Four

Post-Show: “This has all been wonderful, now I’m on my way”³⁹¹

Once the band completes the encore and exits the stage a series of bright overhead white lights typically kick on.³⁹² At indoor venues these are often referred to as house lights and they illuminate the area surrounding the stage. At outdoor concert sites the immediate post-show lighting is akin to the intense brightness one experiences while driving through a highway construction site in the early morning hours. In both of these post-show scene situations what mere seconds ago could only be sensed, touched, or seen faintly by the slight glow of a lighter or cell phone is now as clear as day. The warmth of Kuroda’s rainbow hues on your body have been replaced by a sterile coolness of white light. The show is over and, as the title of this chapter (taken from the lyrics of a popular Phish song) explains, Phish fans are now on their way. But where to exactly? As Phish scene participants make their way towards the exits, acknowledging that the show processes of scene identity have concluded they simultaneously set in motion the third and final grouping of processes that embody Phish scene identity: the post-show practices.

This chapter investigates the above question by exploring where Phish fans go and what they do once the stage goes dark. In my introductory remarks I suggested that Phish scene identity may be thought of as a performance, as an effect of specific emplaced practices embodied and enacted by individuals through particular social and economic positionings. It is in this vein that I assemble my fourth chapter. When placed in the cultural context outlined in

³⁹¹ Trey Anastasio and Tom Marshall, “Down With Disease,” *Hoist*, prod. Paul Fox, Elektra Records, March 29, 1994.

³⁹² This occurs at every Phish show with the exception of festival daytime sets. At festivals fans will return to the concert site hours later for another set. This set typically ends late at night in the dark.

Chapter One, the processes outlined in Chapters Two and Three combined, represent both why and how the Phish scene—what the band and fans call “it” and I call a spatial articulation of affective authenticity—can be read as an American middle and upper-middle class performance of resistance to late 20th and early 21st century multiculturalism.

I begin this analysis of post-show practices with an extended three part descriptive discussion of the processes that take place immediately following the show experience: 1) returning home or to a home-base (this could be one’s campsite, hotel room, and/or car as well as one’s temporary, or perhaps permanent residence); 2) discussing the show with friends; and 3) departing the site (traveling onwards to another show, a vacation, back to work, etc.). Participants’ various conceptions of home, the individual and communal time they spend reflecting on the show, and their various routes of departure are processes that often reveal distaste, if not only resistance, to the realities of their day-to-day lives. I then build on these descriptions by critically engaging anthropologist Victor Turner’s theory of *communitas* through a performance and cultural studies lens and argue that Phish scene identity represents a liminal yet repetitively longstanding and reoccurring time-space where cultural resistance is both embedded and, through specific emplaced practices, embodied. Various notions of home as well as what exactly returning home means to Phish fans exposes a vivid difference between the countercultural Grateful Dead scene and the more contemporary Phish scene. While Phish fans may seem uneasy or even remorseful about returning to the “real world” of their middle and upper-middle class lifestyle, they, unlike Grateful Dead scene participants, openly acknowledge that the ability to participate in and ultimately the life of the scene depends on such a “return.”

The Old Home Place

In Phish scene vernacular the term “home” is an ambiguous place holder. After talking with over one hundred and fifty participants in the scene I learned that at any given moment the utterance of the word “home” could signify a myriad of both geographic places and emotional spaces. When posed with the question “Where are you going now [that the show is over]?” the majority of fans included the word home in their immediate responses. Further inquiry yielded a range of contextualized locations I have grouped into three categories below:³⁹³

“My tent.”	“The Castle.”	“My car.”
“To the pirate flag.”	“The Holiday Inn Express.”	“Lawrence, Kansas.”
“Kid A.”	“My hotel room.”	“Arlington.”
“Lee’s.”	“The Suites.”	“My parents’ place.”

The responses in the column on the far left refer to either specific campgrounds—“Kid A” at Festival 8 in Indio, California, and “Lee’s” near the Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC) in Saratoga Springs, New York—or individual campsites—the pirate flag being the flag perched on top of one’s tent.³⁹⁴ Those responses grouped in the middle column (some more obvious than others) all locate home as a hotel or hotel room—“the Suites” being the Embassy Suites next to the Hampton Coliseum and “the Castle” being the Marriott Courtyard.³⁹⁵ The final column on the right contains responses that broaden the definition of the term “home” to include a permanent place of residence rather than the temporary residence of a hotel or campsite. The first answer in this column, “my car,” signifies this shift. In some instances fans parked their cars at their campsites or used their cars to drive to their hotels. However, the other three

³⁹³ These examples represent an organized sampling of responses I received when posing questions to scene participants pertaining to home.

³⁹⁴ It is common for fans to “accessorize” their campsites with different flags, tapestries, and other ornaments as a way to distinguish their own area from other sites. These decorations often serve as signposts along the way to and from the stage area at festivals and outdoor summer shows.

³⁹⁵ One male fan jokingly talked about “Storming the castle” in Hampton, Virginia. Anonymous male fan, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, March 7, 2009, Hampton, Virginia.

responses in this grouping (“Arlington,” and “Lawrence, Kansas,” and “my parents’ place”) all denote a place that the person talking to me viewed as permanent. “Arlington” was where one male I spoke with at the March 2009 run of shows owned an apartment.³⁹⁶ The two young males who called Lawrence, Kansas, home were tentatively camping at The Gorge in George, Washington.³⁹⁷ I found “my parents place” to be a fairly common reply that represented where the individual currently lived, received mail, etc., or where the individual may not physically live either anymore or for the duration of the calendar year but still felt to be their permanent residence.³⁹⁸

In addition to providing a geographical explanation of the term “home” each of the above nine sample definitions also suggests an emotional component to the meaning of the term. While this is a topic I pursue more thoroughly later in this chapter in the subsection, **The Old Home Place Revisited**, it is worth touching on now as I seek to establish what the concept of home means to Phish scene participants. By suggesting that the term “home” carries with it an emotional space I mean to imply that to some Phish scene participants “home” is located in their physical participation and geographical location in the scene itself. One participant, Katie, explained to me that she felt more at home “on tour” (participating in the scene) than she did back in both her rented apartment in Boston where she currently lived and the house in Virginia in which she grew up.³⁹⁹ This emotional space of home is also evoked when Phish scene

³⁹⁶ Anonymous male fan, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, March 8, 2009, Hampton Coliseum Parking Lot, Hampton, Virginia.

³⁹⁷ Anonymous male fans, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 8, 2009, The Gorge, George, Washington.

³⁹⁸ These typically included individuals who had just recently moved away from their parents’/childhood house and college students who live at school, away from their parents’ house.

³⁹⁹ Katie, phone conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, February 2009.

participants talk about their fellow participants as “phamily.”⁴⁰⁰ Through participation in the Phish scene individuals fill the cultureless void I detailed in Chapter One as a middle and upper-middle class response to the identity politics of the late 20th and early 21st century and in particular to multiculturalism.



Campground at Telluride (Colorado) 2010
Photo by John Hayford Photography. Printed with permission.

⁴⁰⁰ My spelling of family with a “ph” instead of a “f” is done purposefully. Scene participants frequently interchange the letters as a way to reject and simultaneously accept a new signifier for the culturally mainstream understanding of the term “family.”



Campsite at The Gorge (with fish flag) 2009
Photo by Christina Allaback. Printed with permission.

When attending a show or a run of shows (including multi-day festivals) what qualifies as a home to Phish scene participants is often the temporary geographic place of a campsite. At larger venues and festival sites the land immediately surrounding the performance area is often partitioned off by access roads (sometimes dirt and sometimes loose stones or even paved concrete) into different zones. Aside from being the name of a Radiohead album, the “Kid A” campground at Festival 8 was one of eight such areas in the immediate vicinity of the Empire Polo Grounds (the performance area). Venues such as The Gorge in George, Washington, and Deer Creek in Noblesville, Indiana, also provide similar sites. Fan Charlie Dirksen explained

that The Gorge “has on-site camping complete with a coffee stand, a General Store, and showers.”⁴⁰¹ Deer Creek (officially the Verizon Wireless Music Center Indianapolis), although comparable in size to The Gorge is not as provisionally well stocked. The campgrounds there push up against neighboring cornfields and, despite missing a General Store and coffee stand, do provide showers.⁴⁰² These types of campsites are typically within walking distance of the stage/performance area (although sometimes a considerably long walk upwards of a mile or two). In these conditions it is common for fans to partake in post-show practices that, in other circumstances, remain bound to pre-show and/or show processes. For instance, at shows with camping, Shakedown Street, as detailed in Chapter Three, becomes a local “strip shopping mall” of sorts where a variety of goods and provisions are exchanged on close to a constant 24 hour basis.

At festivals where the band does not have to relinquish control to corporately-owned venues (Deer Creek and The Gorge are both Live Nation venues) this proximity to the performance area fosters a particularly unique set of post-show practices that are not possible in other circumstances. In these situations, although the band may have completed the final notes of its encore and the stage lights have darkened, one specific festival post-show practice replicates a practice enacted earlier during the show experience in a different context.

[A]ll night, the fires burned, the drums beat, and the people danced...Serendipitously, this was...one of those points along the line of Phish’s history where both the band and the audience simultaneously *got* something, and realized that things were changing at that very moment. Sometimes this happens through the music...Sometimes it happens through the event...On these occasions we all...achieve a shared consciousness...The Clifford Ball was the most obvious

⁴⁰¹ Charlie Dirksen, “The Gorge Amphitheatre (George, WA)” *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 776.

⁴⁰² Of course, all of these campsites provide portable toilets.

of these occasions. It felt like the summation of everything that had happened in the Phish world until then...an enormously exuberant birthday party for the Phish phenomenon as a historical whole. It exploded all concepts of limitation and brought both the band and fans to the profound and crucial conclusion that we didn't know what this thing might become.⁴⁰³

Around 3:30am on August 17, 1996 fans on the campgrounds at The Clifford Ball in Plattsburg, New York, awoke to the sounds of Phish playing live music again as the band traveled amongst them on a flatbed truck. According to Anastasio,

We decided to—that it would be fun to play music while we were moving—that it would be very dreamlike and we wanted to—we often talked about how we could get as close to the people in the audience as possible... We got on this flatbed truck and started playing, just improvising, very very slowly. I think there were horses and candle lights in the campground. We wanted to wake people up. People would be sleeping and they'd hear this gentle music and they'd wake up and we'd be right in front of their tent.⁴⁰⁴

Here in this instance, a typical show practice, interacting with the band musically, morphed into one post-show process of Phish scene identity at The Clifford Ball. In drummer, Jon Fishman's words:

[T]his is great cause normally the crowd comes to you and you're stationary and the crowd is moving around...wouldn't it be great if the band were moving around and the crowd was stationary and we're driving you know, past them...It was something you know we couldn't do at a normal concert necessarily and also was you know, like bands have been doing since the beginning of time—trying to reach the audience in different ways.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³ Jeremy D. Goodwin, "8/16/96 and 8/17/96; The Clifford Ball; Plattsburgh, NY," *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 579.

⁴⁰⁴ Anastasio, "Phish Festivalography Part I."

⁴⁰⁵ Jon Fishman, "Phish Festivalography Part I."

This particular situation blends the intimacy inherent in the type of liveness discussed in Chapter Three with the band and fans' joint desire for the spontaneity also analyzed in Chapter Three. Combined, these practices help provide all participants with an “authentically” affective effect.

Fishman's suggestion that this type of practice remain unique to the festival space was perhaps one that left a lasting impression on both the band and the fans as the practice of intimate post-show sets became somewhat of a staple throughout Phish festivals following The Clifford Ball. Almost exactly six years later to the day, in the very early hours of August 4, 2003 Phish, again with the inclusion of all in attendance at their 7th festival IT, replicated a show practice, in a different post-show context. As one fan recalled,

After leaving the show, I managed to get lost on the way back to lot F. All the tents do look alike after a while. I finally got back to the campsite and was able to relax for a few minutes...At about 2:00 a.m. the strangest alarm-like sound began emanating from every radio tuned in to the Bunny [the Phish controlled local FM radio station]. The sound was coming from everywhere. Something was going on, and I wondered back out to the runway to have a look. In the distance I could see the most amazing air traffic control tower conceived of by man. Bathed in purple light, with rotating red lights on top, it served as a kaleidoscopic night light for the camp. I quickly realized I would never get over to the tower before the music ended, so I settled into a sleeping bag and listened to Phish play the most amazing hour of music of the festival. Day one was closed out in a grand fashion.⁴⁰⁶

In the case of the “Tower Jam” at IT, participants in the scene—both the band and fans—created an intimate feeling in an untraditionally intimate setting. Drummer Jon Fishman explained,

⁴⁰⁶ Andrew Rose, “8/3/03; IT; Loring Commerce Center; Limestone, ME,” *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 660-61.

Even though we were so high up and everything I actually felt very connected to people because being on the tower you had this sense—you know this far-reaching ability that people way in the back of the parking lot in their cars who, you know weren't expecting anything to happen, can still hear this humming weird and see this glowing weird thing humming off in the distance and they can very quickly make their way up there if they wanted to but I actually felt more connected to the overall grounds—overall festival grounds than I did from the stage... From the stage you could see all this sea of people and their faces but from up there it was like you really felt—you know you're on a control tower and you felt like you could reach every little corner there. And since it was such an amorphous type of musical jam than approach—we weren't playing songs or anything it was just this thing and I felt like more a part of just like a sonic art installation, you know than being part of a band. I felt like we were part of this weird, glowing, moving, undulating, tall art installation that made this weird noise. [laughs] It was great—getting to turn that control tower into a sonic sculpture.⁴⁰⁷

The “Tower Jam,” while allowing the band members to physically distance themselves from the festival-goers and fans, provided a new element as a conduit linking themselves to the audience. While the standard show practice of scene identity involves the band, the music it creates (via the technology of the amps, speakers, sound board controls, etc.), the fans or audience participants, and Chris Kuroda's lightening, IT's improvisational tower experience included dancers repelling from the tower's upper deck near the band members down to the ground near the fans with large pieces of fabric. According to Anastasio,

IT had my favorite of the traditional extra sets...IT had the tower—the Tower Jam and that to me was the best of 'em, or the most successful of the special sets...That tower jam was probably the best example of that. Early on somebody

⁴⁰⁷ Jon Fishman, “Phish Festivalography Part III” *Jam On*, Sirius Satellite Radio, October 23, 2009, http://mog.com/blog_posts/1560371/mogbar (accessed October 2, 2010).

said, “Oh, maybe you guys should play on the tower.” And then a month before the event we decided that we would sneak on to the tower right in the middle of the night and wake everybody up. And then we started putting strange little lights. And then Chris McGregor, who has done a lot of art installations with Phish...had this idea of smoke coming out of it like it was this giant tube and then lighting the insides of the windows and then a week later he thought of dropping rolled fabric cloths. And we were on tour. I heard through this yoga teacher about this repelling dance troupe that would repel off tall buildings. It’s supposed to be beautiful. [I] got in touch with them—asked if they would come and now it’s days before the festival—we add these repellents. So this tower was just changing and changing and changing right up until we hit the stage. Backstage the night before we were gonna do it we still hadn’t figured out a way to improvise with the repellents. And what we did was—I remember talking to our production manager and coming up with this idea where we would put video cameras on the ground facing the repellents and then we would have tiny little TVs which we—which is what we ended up doing and it worked very very well. Better than we had hoped. This came together hours before we got up on the thing so they—and they didn’t even know what was going to happen. The repellents were pushing off the wall and we were doing the bendy notes on the guitar—“waaaaooooooooaaaaa”—and they told us later that it was incredible because they didn’t know this was going to happen.⁴⁰⁸

Moreover, this feeling of intimacy or access and its relationship to notions of authenticity that I analyzed amidst particular show practices in Chapter Three, appears again in the post-show practices that this time are not exclusive to festival sites. Whether one is at an outdoor venue in the warmer months like Alpine Valley in Wisconsin, a camping festival such as The Clifford Ball in upstate New York, a large indoor venue along the lines of Madison Square Garden in New York, or a small club like Nectar’s in Burlington, Vermont, one may, as the below fan

⁴⁰⁸ Trey Anastasio, “Phish Festivalography Part III”

experience describes, take part in the emplaced process of meeting and interacting with the band following the show.

After the show I went out one of the side exits. Their [Phish's] buses were parked right in front of me. As I stood there I looked at the guy standing outside the bus, his pants rolled up like knickers, big hair, drinking a mimosa. He looked familiar. Then I realized it was Mike Gordon. I walked over to him, introduced myself and told him what a great show it was. He said, "thanks."⁴⁰⁹

These types of interactions, although by no means considered standard post-show practices, occur frequently enough to deserve brief mention now in a discussion of where scene members go and what they do in immediately following the show. While fans may feel one with the band during the show experience or as one fan, C.T., in Chapter Three explained, "like the band is a separate unit and then the audience is a unit and Trey is sort of the bridge between the audience," the direct post-show environment is oftentimes one where band members and fans verbally and physically interact.⁴¹⁰ For example, C.T. further told to me,

I think...even though they are rock stars I always—I just think of them as average, like kind of average in a way. I know that's kinda like ridiculous but...They're such geeky guys...I kinda feel like their persona—They are...they put on an identity of—like they're just average nerdy guys that are just great musicians that you could probably hang out with and it'd be cool—like they'd be cool. That's the way I feel.⁴¹¹

Feelings of personal connections to bands and band members are not new to popular music scholarship. For instance Susan D. Crafts, Daniel Cavicchi, and Charles Keil's *My Music*

⁴⁰⁹ Andy Clawson, "4/14/93; American Theater; St. Louis, MO," *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 544.

⁴¹⁰ C.T., conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, November 1, 2009, Indio, California.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

explores the variety of intimate relations fans feel towards their favorite artists and bands.⁴¹² That said, these types of sentiments bubble up in many facets of the Phish-member/Phish-fan reciprocal relationship. Fans refer to band members on a first name basis. As I mentioned earlier, when the band broke-up in 2004, Trey issued a letter to the fans. Although mass produced, the letter made its way into every Phish list-serv subscriber's inbox, helping to create a personal effect. More recently, a group of fans used the internet to get together and raise money to buy Anastasio a new guitar pedal. Anastasio responded by posting pictures of himself with the pedal online as well as a scanned photograph of his own hand-written than you letter.⁴¹³

Every fan I spoke with acknowledged a routine post-show practice of discussing the show with friends. In fact, some of the material I've transcribed and included in this project originated in these types of conversations immediately following the show. In instances such as the one below fans return to their "home"—a campsite, hotel, car, etc.—and comment on the night's show while listening to a recording.

I almost left the venue without my tape deck. I got the deck, gathered the troops, and walked back home to listen to the tapes (we were still mentally flying at this point).⁴¹⁴

Here, in these moments Phish fans talk about what they liked from the show and what they found flawed. For instance, in the following two conversations, both of which took place at Festival 8 in Indio, California, the former after the second day of music, in the early hours of Sunday November 1, 2009, and the latter, immediately following the final set on the last day of the weekend, in the final hours of the same day, fans openly provide examples of these themes.

⁴¹² Susan D. Crafts, Daniel Cavicchi, and Charles Keil, *My Music* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).

⁴¹³ Images can be accessed at <http://www.glidemagazine.com/hiddentrack/im-so-compressed-trey-responds/> (accessed March 14, 2010).

⁴¹⁴ Adam Jerugim, "4/19/92; The Catalyst, Santa Cruz, CA," *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 538.

Conversation 1:

K.R.: I'd be very interested to see if they did "Sweet Black Angel" again.

C.T.: "Sweet Black Angel"?

K.R.: Exile song.

C.T.: Yeah, I totally forgot they covered that album. It seems like so long ago.⁴¹⁵

Conversation 2:

E.R.: He [Trey] was on tonight—

C.T.: Yeah, he was pretty on. There was a few times when he was in a weird place.

K.R.: Yeah.

C.T.: There were a few times rhythmically he was in an odd place. I think—I actually think the Jon fuckups—'cause he was a little shaky on a few parts

E.R.: Yeah. Changes—

C.T.: He had that one change where he just blew it in "Reba." It was in "Reba" right?

All: Yeah.

C.T.: I think those problems were actually Trey problems. I think they were problems with the Trey-Jon connection cause Trey was a little—on some of the parts—especially "Esther"—I thought that was kind of a rough "Esther." It was good but—

K.R.: I thought it was rough too. He seemed to be lagging behind.

C.T.: Yeah.⁴¹⁶

In the first conversation K.R. expressed his interest in hearing the band play The Rolling Stones' song "Sweet Black Angel" again at another show. Although Phish's cover of the Stones'

⁴¹⁵ For the second set on October 31, 2009 (3 were played) Phish put on a "musical costume" and covered another band's album. This year they played *Exile on Main Street* by The Rolling Stones. K.R. and C.T., conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, November 1, 2009, Indio, California.

⁴¹⁶ E.R., C.T., and K.R., conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, November 1, 2009, Indio, California.

album *Exile on Main Street* for Halloween allowed the band to perform Stones songs currently in its song rotation such as “Loving Cup” the event served as the first time the band played this specific song. Past Halloween shows debuted songs by other artists and bands such as the Beatles, The Who, and the Talking Heads that eventually made their way into Phish’s repertoire. “A Day in the Life” by the Beatles, “Drowned” by The Who, and “Crosseyed and Painless” by the Talking Heads are examples of such songs.

In the second conversation between three fans, the tightness of the band’s performance is the topic at hand. While all three seem to agree that Anastasio “was on” that night they all also concur that the performance left room for improvement. Specifically, the three believe that an apparent botched transition was not in fact the drummer, Jon Fishman’s fault, but rather due to a miscalculation or cue passed to him from Anastasio.

Furthermore, as I argued in Chapter Three regarding practice and improvisation, these practices of critique do not go unnoticed by the band members. First, the band is aware that these post-show discussion practices take place. According to Anastasio,

Even a group of friends who come and split off...have all these adventures and then at the end of the night sit around the campfire and...tell stories about all the crazy stuff.⁴¹⁷

Second, the band both encourages and considers the criticism. In the documentary *Bittersweet Motel*, director Todd Phillips asks Anastasio what he thinks about a critic’s claim that “Phish could urinate in their fans’ ears and tell them it’s music” and that “[t]he fans in turn would be

⁴¹⁷ Trey Anastasio, quoted in *Phish: IT*, prod. and dir. Mary Wharton, 269 min., Elektra Entertainment Group, 2004, DVD.

there with tape recorders to capture the moment.”⁴¹⁸ Responding Anastasio looks up from the magazine review, stares directly into the camera and counters with,

Um, I think there’s a lot of truth to that. If you’re gonna take a risk sometimes you’re gonna play shit, ya’ know? And somebody comes and they pay their twenty dollars and you play shit that one time and then they’re like “well you know this is terrible—these’s guys are urinating in the ears of the listeners and they’re happily lapping it up.” But I don’t think our fans do happily lap it up. I think what happens is they get on the internet and talk about how it was a bad show.⁴¹⁹

Time to Go

Finally, after the show concludes and participants have enacted other post-show practices they take part in the final act of Phish scene identity by removing themselves from the geographic location of the campground/site, hotel, or parking lot. Although participants may take different routes departing the scene—some travel on to another venue or show, some begin or continue on a vacation, and some return home to their permanent geographical residence—all departing paths exude a distaste and/or resistance to a middle and upper-middle class lifestyle which leave them feeling interestingly enough “away from home.”

The first and most obvious way participants resist their middle and upper-middle class identities and lifestyles is by continuing on and participating in the Phish scene. Many fans, such as the one quoted below “go on tour” meaning they follow the band from city to city and state to state repeating the pre-show, show, and post-show practices as long as either the band continues to perform or as their own individual circumstances allow.

⁴¹⁸ *Bittersweet Motel*.

⁴¹⁹ Anastasio, quoted in *Bittersweet Motel*.

People were pretty out of it when the show ended, so I did what I could to find people and say “Bye” before running out of the auditorium and driving to L.A. I was exhausted after five shows in eight days, but some of my friends were just starting tour and planned on doing the S.F.>Vancouver run, in addition to Santa Cruz.⁴²⁰

Most fans’ return to their middle and upper-middle class identities and lifestyles is not necessarily a choice made from a decision or feeling that they have participated in the scene too long but rather that, for one reason or another, they simply cannot continue to participate. Aside from there being no band to experience live the most common reasons for not being able to continue “on tour” I found when talking to fans stemmed from money. In most cases, fans that stopped tour did so because they either ran out of money or ran out of vacation time (and in the cases of college students it was often a combination of funding and when school was in session).⁴²¹

To those fans, like Adam below, who plan to see Phish the following night or the night after that, leaving the site of the show often happens quickly and although somewhat a moment of sadness (one show is over) it is usually overcome, as in the examples below, with feelings of anticipation.

We drove the four hours back to Santa Cruz after the show, getting very excited to see Phish play at the Warfield the next night.⁴²²

I had driven back from Santa Barbara to Santa Cruz after the Anaconda show [4/16/92], and only got a few hours of sleep before getting up to “rally the

⁴²⁰ Adam Jerugim, “3/25/93; Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium, Santa Cruz, CA,” *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 543.

⁴²¹ Although in many cases school took a back seat to funding. If a college student could afford to tour and miss classes he or she often admitted to skipping classes. Some fans explained that because of this “Phish” put them on the five, six, or seven-year college plan. In a few of these cases, individuals attributed their commitment to Phish as the reason they either dropped out or were asking not to return to college.

⁴²² Adam Jerugim, “4/16/92; Anaconda Theatre; Isla Vista, CA,” *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 537.

troops.” After the Anaconda show, I was anxious to get everyone on the bus, so I packed my car with heads and drove up to the city [San Francisco] for the show. Not one of the five of us has tickets, but the show was far from sold out so we were all able to score tickets at the box office... We went back to Santa Cruz that night, brains still fried, to get ready for the next night: free show at Stanford.⁴²³

In the first of these explanations, the fan’s anticipation is one of excitement. He and his friends are energized for the next night’s show. In this case, sticking around the site, prolonging post-show practices such as discussing the show with friends in the lot may have adverse effects on the following evening’s plans. Doing this could result in a later arrival home followed by a poor night of sleep and in turn might make one feel tired or not “on top of one’s game” for the next show the following night. Or, a prolonged departure could alter prior sleeping plans. As one female fan explained to me, “You may end up going to a friend’s house to listen to her tapes of the show and then fall asleep there. Then, in the morning you have to go back to your own home, gather the belongings you need and make to the next venue in time [to begin the pre-show practices all over again].”⁴²⁴ Remember, the miles of gridlocked traffic in Chapter Two? In the second anecdote above the fan reveals a similar concern. Rather than be concerned with traffic or missing the start of the show this fan explains sacrificing sleep and alludes to only briefly participating in post-show practices under the guise of the ability to procure tickets for the following night’s show.

Fans on tour establish support networks through such actions as involvement in parking lot circulated Zines and communal meet ups at highway rest stops. They take seriously the health strains that constant traveling may put on an individual (“Yoga For Long Car Rides” and

⁴²³ Adam Jerugim, “4/17/92; The Warfield, San Francisco, CA,” *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 537.

⁴²⁴ These are not hypothetical situations but rather examples of reasons given to me by fans on tour looking to get out of one site in order to be on time to another. Sarah, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 7, 2009, The Gorge, George, Washington.

“The Tour Diet” are Zine columns) and seek to take care of their bodies, both physically and mentally, while away from their ambiguous homes.⁴²⁵ And, while I only mention this here in passing, as a way to highlight the number of fans who do tour and the popularity of touring, I believe further research into this area could provide valuable information about class as an operating force within the Phish scene.

In other situations stopping post-show practices signals a transition back to one’s middle and upper-middle class identity and lifestyle. In some circumstances, I encountered fans that slowed this transition by either beginning or continuing on a vacation.⁴²⁶ That is, when one fan told me about himself he explained that he was an electrical engineer and that the three days he was then spending experiencing Phish at The Gorge served as his vacation.⁴²⁷ He went on to explain that most all of the vacation time he’d taken thus far in 2009 was to see Phish.⁴²⁸ He was excited to travel to see the band later that fall in California and was hoping that they would add more tour dates for the fall and winter months.⁴²⁹ He spent much of the past five years when Phish was broken up working non-stop and had more than enough vacation days saved up for such a possibility.⁴³⁰ Additionally, when talking with a group of three male fans I witnessed a younger, newer fan of the band—a freshman in college—ask a more veteran fan in his mid-30s how he, clearly not a student with a fall break from school, could afford to see the entire East Coast Fall Tour if he held a full-time job.⁴³¹ “Planning,” he responded.⁴³² “Gotta get time off,

⁴²⁵ “Yoga for Long Car Rides” and “The Tour Diet” are two examples of columns that appear in fan Zines that are circulated in parking lots after shows. These two particular examples can be found in the late summer 2010 edition of the Zine “Surrender to the Flow.”

⁴²⁶ Taylor, conversation, August 8, 2009.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Adam and Eric, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 7, 2009, The Gorge, George, Washington.

⁴³² Eric, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 7, 2009, The Gorge, George, Washington.

someone to cover for me if need be, and make sure I've taken care of everything I needed to."⁴³³

Then as if he was offering his older, wiser, two cents of wisdom, the veteran fan told the younger man to "always get you work done on time" and to "be a stellar employee" signaling a "work hard, play hard" mentality.⁴³⁴

However, for those who conclude their post-show practices with no pre-show ones on the immediate horizon the transition back to their "original" lifestyles can be awkward and at times unsettling. Anastasio spoke of this adjustment period in an interview he did on Sirius satellite radio in which he talked about returning to his family's home in Vermont on New Year's Day only hours after performing from midnight to sunrise in Big Cypress, Florida.

The most bizarre thing was that my wife and kids were at home, they didn't come. And we were having a little New Year's party with like three or four of our friends at home and we got off stage and we hoped on a plane and we were home in like three hours. So I had just been through this crazy, crazy night and I walked in the living room and it was like family cocktail party with neighbors who didn't know anything about Phish, you know [chuckling]. I just remember sitting there, chatting with people and un-un-unable to explain what just happened. I mean how are you going to explain that?⁴³⁵

Various notions of home as well as what exactly returning home means to Phish fans also exposes a vivid difference between the countercultural Grateful Dead scene and the contemporary Phish scene. While Phish fans may seem uneasy or even remorseful about returning to the "real world" of their middle and upper-middle class lifestyle, they, unlike Grateful Dead scene participants, openly acknowledge that the ability to participate in and ultimately, that the life of the scene depends on such a "return."

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Anastasio, "Phish Festivalography Part III."

The Old Home Place Revisited

As I pointed out earlier, the concept of home is of particular importance to anyone seeking to understand the identity of the Phish scene. To scene participants, “home” signifies a multitude of varied meanings. In some instances, “home” was the term evoked to denote where one stayed—where he slept, showered, and/or resided, either permanently or temporarily—while in other conversations, “home” was the term used to imply a feeling of safety, comfort, and/or belonging. As I worked through my data, listening and re-listening to digital file after digital file and reading and rereading every email, letter, and personal story, a common thread running through the myriad of places participants referred to as “home” emerged. To almost all participants I talked with “home” existed in a dichotomous place.

As I’ve explained, in Phish scene vernacular, “home” is a culturally institutionalized place that participants both reject yet at the same time conversely accept. No one I spoke with questioned me about what I meant when I used the term “home.” Everyone could locate a home. Those individuals who referenced home as the place where they lived growing up, where their parents lived, or their mailing address—these would be the “Lawrence, Kansas,” “My parents’ place,” and “Arlington” responses listed earlier—viewed home in the same manner as those who told me home was either a tent on a nearby campground or a hotel—“The Castle” in or “Kid A.”

The former group of responses always preceded a conversation about how that specific location left the individual emotionally unsettled. For instance, the person living in Arlington did so because he worked nearby.⁴³⁶ While his job left him financially secure he found it to be unfulfilling in every other facet of his life. “I hate the place...everyone’s just climbing the

⁴³⁶ Anonymous male fan, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, March 8, 2009, Hampton Coliseum Parking Lot, Hampton, Virginia.

corporate ladder,” he confided in me.⁴³⁷ One twenty-one year old woman who told me home was her parents’ place explained that “well yeah, I live there but my family just doesn’t get me.”⁴³⁸ The two college-aged men camping at The Gorge in George, Washington, that called Lawrence, Kansas, home did indeed live there but, according to them, “that’s where we go to school.”⁴³⁹

Each and every one of these individuals articulated in one way or another that while they accepted some sort of culturally normative idea of home, they rejected what they counted as their current home. When asked “Why see Phish?/What participate in the scene?/Why go on tour?” all of these individuals explained that the scene was where they felt fulfilled, around people with similar values, likes, and dislikes, amidst people who both looked out for them and who they looked out for as well. One twenty-seven year old woman, smiling with a grin from ear to ear reiterated the common claim, “this is my phamily,” as she spun around arms stretched outward from her shoulders suggesting that those attending the show were her (non-biological) family.⁴⁴⁰ These individuals may not see themselves as immersed in the scene as other participants who locate home directly within the scene (the campgrounds and hotels in the vicinity of a show) but they do express a closer affinity to the scene than they do to what they call but also discredit as a home.

I mention the dichotomous placeholder “home” now a means to pull together the various practices of Phish scene identity outlined in the previous chapters under what I call affective authenticity. The feeling of having no culture, of being cultureless, and partaking in practices that, as both emplaced and embodied acts help to fill such a void allows Phish scene participants

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Jenny, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 15, 2010, Alpine Valley, East Troy, Wisconsin.

⁴³⁹ Anonymous male fans, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 8, 2009, The Gorge, George, Washington.

⁴⁴⁰ Sarah, conversation with Elizabeth Yeager, August 8, 2009, The Gorge, George, Washington.

to work to construct a place that feels like home. Being both in and of the Phish scene place affords scene participants the opportunity to both “get it” and to be a part of “it.” They help to create and experience the affective effect commonly referred to as “it.”

Sharing in the Groove: Communitas

As I explained in my introductory remarks, of the few academic studies that address either the Grateful Dead or Phish theorize performance as a ritual.⁴⁴¹ While I too theorize performance as ritual this project remains different from those studies in one key area of analysis. Unlike Christina Allaback and Daniel Culli, I use a performance studies lens to incorporate anthropologist Victor Turner’s theory of communitas.

Acknowledging that while, as Phish fan Martin Acaster suggests, “Phish [clearly] may not have invented the [live music experience]...they have allowed us [the fans], as a community, to take the concept to strange new sensory frontiers and unfathomable heights of experiential bliss,” I further argue that such “sensory frontiers” and “experiential bliss” are directly linked to Victor Turner’s theoretical conception of communitas.⁴⁴² When thought of as a social drama, it is my contention that the “frontiers and unfathomable heights of ...bliss” brought about and located at Phish shows represent the manifestation of Victor Turner’s concept of communitas. Put simply, I posit “it” is (or at the very least can be read as) communitas. Grounding my assertion in Turner’s belief that, while humans must “mobilize resources” to “produce life’s necessities,” they oftentimes reject this structure and attempt to live in an anti-structural manner, what he calls an existential or spontaneous communitas, I posit that the Phish scene represents a

⁴⁴¹ Culli. Allaback, “Theater of Jambands.”

⁴⁴² Martin Acaster, “Phish Festivals,” in *The Phish Companion*, 2d ed., 675.

space where all three stages of Turner's *communitas*, the existential or spontaneous, the ideological, *and* the normative can, at varying moments be located.⁴⁴³

I engage Turner's idea of *communitas* critically as I recognize he is often critiqued in some scholarly venues, especially within the field of anthropology for, as anthropologist Eric Silverman explained to me, "his implicit functionalism, his elision over the key roles of gender, his avoidance of power and ritual violence, and so forth."⁴⁴⁴ Keeping these criticisms in mind, it is also important to note that many contemporary interdisciplinary scholars draw from Turner's theories regularly. My application of Turner is not meant as an attempt to suggest that Phish fans seek out *communitas* as "a respite from the hierarchies of everyday life."⁴⁴⁵ Instead, I argue that participants in the Phish scene seek out *communitas* as a resistance to the social and cultural structures of middle and upper-middle class cultural identity during a heightened time of identity politics that I unpacked in Chapter One.

Given my ethnographic data and the cultural context it inhabits my claims in this chapter remain grounded in what Turner calls "the *communitas* of withdrawal and retreat."⁴⁴⁶ This *communitas* is based on the existence and establishment of social structure. In specific, this type of *communitas* according to Turner "involves a total or partial withdrawal from participation in the structural relations of the world, which is, in any case, conceived of as a sort of 'disaster area.'"⁴⁴⁷ That is, a *communitas* of withdrawal and retreat, while acknowledging current society as a "disaster area" simultaneously reveals a "crisis" of current society of which individuals wish to withdrawal or retreat from. This form of "crisis" *communitas* does not precede social

⁴⁴³ Turner, 135.

⁴⁴⁴ Email sent to members of the Deadwood list-serv on December 11, 2008.

⁴⁴⁵ Turner, 135

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 154-55.

structure. Instead a “crisis” *communitas* of withdrawal and retreat is based on an established social structure.

I assert that the spatiality of a Phish show can also be read as a manifestation of a *communitas* of withdrawal and retreat. As I demonstrated earlier in Chapter One, many middle and upper-middle class whites’ motivation to seek “it” out stemmed from a desire to escape and withdrawal from a social and cultural structure already in place. Commenting (although probably unknowingly) on the white middle and upper-middle class feeling of culturelessness expressed by Phish fans such as David Steinberg, Benjy Eisen, and music critic/journalist Lester Bangs in Chapter One, Anastasio, in a more recent interview on Sirius Satellite Radio’s show “Jam On” reflected,

I think that there was an underground swell that started to happen in the mid-Eighties that wanted to rebel against this in any way that they could and that was when we started playing...And I think it was a response to what was happening in the Eighties culturally.⁴⁴⁸

Furthermore, in the same interview Anastasio, returned to this idea and explained that,

[T]o me it felt like that the world had become a nuthouse and we wanted to go where we could turn the sound off and sit in a field and hang out with our friends.⁴⁴⁹

Reflecting on the remoteness of Phish festivals, Anastasio claimed,

We [the band members] found over the years that when we were left alone...we could relax...and that’s when the really great stuff would happen. So we started making these festivals that were further and further away from the center of civilization.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸ Anastasio, “Phish Festivalography Part I.”

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Anastasio quoted in *Phish: IT*.

Expanding to reflect on the idea of retreating to northern Maine for IT Anastasio further contended,

If that's escapism...then fine. There's enough bad messages in our culture that people are getting bombarded with constantly: You're not good enough; You don't look right; You don't have enough money.⁴⁵¹

In this sense, Phish festivals (in this case IT in particular) can be conceived of and motivated by the means of escapism and withdrawal from a social structure that is already in place.

Anastasio's "you don't fit in" message echoes individual claims such as David Steinberg's suggestion that "Few people ever [ask] anyone, 'Wow, what was it like to be a college student in the mid-1980s?'" and Bangs' poignant question "[C]an you imagine being a teenager in the 1980s and having absolutely no culture you could call your own?" that I previously analyzed in Chapter One as examples of white middle and upper-middle class angst in the 1980s and 1990s.

This system or culture is, in the eyes of those seeking *communitas*, plagued with problems. In the case of Phish scene participants, one important and notable problem is the feeling of culturelessness. More specifically, postmodern America can be read by Turner's definition to be, in the minds of Anastasio, other band members, and fans, a "disaster area." Singing "perhaps you'll forget that you forgot for a while," a line from the song "Birds of a Feather," Anastasio calls attention to the possibility that one has the ability to forget one has forgotten society by retreating and withdrawing from it.⁴⁵² Echoing Anastasio's sentiments, Page McConnell suggests,

I think what we're trying to do is give people an experience that they wouldn't be able to get anywhere...else.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Lyric from "Birds of a Feather" as quoted in *Phish: IT*.

⁴⁵³ Page McConnell quoted in *Phish: IT*.

That is, as a band, Phish aims to provide the backdrop, the space, where people can retreat from the existing “structural relations of the world,” undergo an alternative experience, and take part in a different social structure, an anti-structure.

Additionally, this attempt to provide an anti-structural social experience, to retreat and withdrawal from the current culture is acknowledged by Phish fans as well as band members. Phishheads are heralded as “seek[ing] out quality and originality.”⁴⁵⁴ Oftentimes this requires that fans work against the status-quo, the existing social structure. For instance, as I explained much earlier in the Introduction Phish does not create music with the hope that it will be played on mainstream radio stations. Although by no means detrimental to its success, multi-platinum albums are neither the production goal nor the economic mainstay of Phish. Rather, as I’ve pointed out in the previous chapters, Phish’s musical and economic success developed and escalated through, but not necessarily by, those who inhabit social and cultural margins. Like existing punk and similarly burgeoning “indie” (independent rock) scenes of the 1980s and 1990s, the Phish scene in its earlier years embraced a DIY ethic, an “indie” aesthetic, and culturally “dissonant identities.”⁴⁵⁵ Phish fans work outside the institutionalized music industry to consume music and perform a resistance of middle and upper-middle class cultural norms. Moreover, this alternative activity stretches to include fans literally, physically retreating to far-away and isolated geographical places—the northernmost point in Maine (The Great Went in 1997, The Lemonwheel in 1998, and IT in 2003) and the Big Cypress Indian Reservation near the Big Cypress National Preserve in southern Florida—to have “an experience that” they

⁴⁵⁴ Bernstein, “Foreword.”

⁴⁵⁵ In his book *Dissonant Identities* Barry Shank addressed the impact that changes within the national recording industry resulting from late capitalism had on those producing and consuming music in Austin, Texas, by analyzing the independent and alternative music-related identities (bands, artists, music scene) such industrial shifts produced. Barry Shank, *Dissonant Identities*. Fonarow, *Empire of Dirt*.

believe “could never happen anywhere else.”⁴⁵⁶ Recalling the band’s 2003 IT festival Phishhead Jeremy Goodwin explained, “[T]his is the point of the Phish Festival. We [the fans] are drawn to a remote location to build ourselves a city. This city is a cultural work of art that is fleeting in nature and a wonder to behold.”⁴⁵⁷ Put simply, Phish fans both mentally and physically retreat to the geographical margins such as Maine and Florida as a way to withdrawal from the structured society in which they currently live and to create a new society, an anti-structural society.

Aside from a manifestation of the *communitas* of withdrawal and retreat the Phish scene can further be examined as a space where existential/spontaneous, ideological, and normative forms of *communitas* can all be located. According to Turner, an existential or spontaneous *communitas* is a “transformative experience that goes to the root of each person’s being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared.”⁴⁵⁸ Central to this description is the notion that a spontaneous or existential *communitas* is a shared and communal experience. Just as Turner references Buber’s sense of community as being the difference between the “I” and the “Thou,” Turner points out that such a relationship “is always ‘happening,’ something that arises in instant mutuality, when each person fully experiences the other.”⁴⁵⁹ That is, this form of *communitas* is dependent on the giving up of the individual as “self” and the consequent acceptance of the group, or the community, as “we.”

Summarizing the weekend experience of IT, Anastasio claimed,

The reason ‘IT’ works so much as a festival is [because] something happens when the whole flow, [the] emotional flow of the entire weekend is tied up with a group experience between the audience and us [the band].⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁶ Page McConnell quoted in *Phish: IT*.

⁴⁵⁷ Jeremy D. Goodwin, in The Mockingbird Foundation, *The Phishing Companion*, 2d ed., 683.

⁴⁵⁸ Turner, 138.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁴⁶⁰ Anastasio quoted in *Phish: IT*.

Building on this Anastasio further clarified,

IT was supposed to be a festival where there were events that weren't really events until the people were there. We tr[ie]d to keep it as open and fluid as possible.⁴⁶¹

By suggesting that the experience of the IT festival in specific and Phish shows in general are indeed communal, Anastasio reveals that without both the band *and* the fans such an experience would not even be possible. In this sense, the Phish show experience and scene participation is dependent on all individuals, both the band and the fans, giving up the “self”, the “I,” and accepting the communal “we.” That fact that events were not really events until both parties found and acknowledged each other suggests that IT in particular was indeed an event or a “happening” that arose out of “instant mutuality.”

Indeed, this communal experience, the existential and spontaneous *communitas*, is what attracts many people to Phish shows and Phish festivals in general. Reflecting on both fan-fan and fan-band interaction at Phish festival, The Lemonwheel, in Limestone, Maine, fan Pamela Chodosh asserted ,

They voluntarily gave up something that belonged to them [glow sticks]. That's the kind of stuff that happens at these concerts. They were caught up in the moment. Jam, spontaneity, surprise the unexpected, certainly that was why many of us had traveled all the way to Limestone, Maine. Maybe the music is secondary to the feeling of being there in that place along with all of the other people, being a part of the same event.⁴⁶²

Specifically, not only have I felt as Chodosh suggests, that I was a part of something, I have also found that the “sensory frontiers” and “experiential bliss” I experience at a Phish show, and in

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Pamela Chodosh, “Phishing’ For Meaning at the Great Went,” in The Mockingbird Foundation, *The Phishing Companion*, 484.

particular a festival, stem most importantly from the sense that I am a part of some one thing that is both larger and more important than myself. In this light, as a Phish fan I agree with Anastasio when he argues that at IT,

We [both the band members and the fans] are insignificant and there's something much bigger than us.⁴⁶³

Furthermore Fishman draws attention to this idea suggesting that, in reflection on IT, “the whole is far greater than the sum of its parts.”⁴⁶⁴ Additionally, Fishman goes on to claim,

I feel grateful and honored to have been a part of this organism...that I was just this one cell in that organism and my job wasn't more important than a lot of other people's jobs.⁴⁶⁵

In this way, *communitas* is not just a community experience, the feeling one experiences when one sees himself or herself as an individual that is part of something. Rather *communitas* is what happens in the space where one releases the “self” and only sees and feels as “we.”

This understanding of collective identity is of particular importance to Phish scene identity and, as I explained in the Introduction, to my decision to theorize the Phish scene as a scene and not as a community or subculture. In his book *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* Philip Auslander recalls,

[T]he theater is, as Herbert Blau puts it, premised on an ‘original splitting’ – the differentiation of performer from audience. As a collective enterprise, the theater seems to hold out the promise of community, but always ends up asserting the basic fact that ‘there is no theater without *separation*.’⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶³ Anastasio quoted in *Phish: IT*.

⁴⁶⁴ Jon Fishman quoted in *Phish: IT*.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Herbert Blau, *The Audience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 10; quoted in Philip Auslander, *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 13.

This presents somewhat of an interesting paradox once placed alongside prior spatial ideas focusing on process and structure. While Lawrence Grossberg, Doreen Massey, Stuart Hall, and others demand attention on both process and structure, some performance studies scholars focusing on the theater utilize theoretical frameworks which are founded on separation. That said, I do not mean to imply that there are *no* interrelations between audience and performer because as Diana Taylor points out, “Even in Brechtian distancing relies on notions that the spectators are keenly bound up with events happening on stage, not through identification but through participation, and they are often called on to intervene and change the course of the action.”⁴⁶⁷ In this sense there is separation by identification rather than by participation. Situated in terms of homogeneity, or community, and heterogeneity, difference, the theatre itself, like the Phish scene, serves as an identity/entity in which, to borrow from Massey, collective difference is deeply embedded. In this light the theater, like the scene, the location of a particular experience, serves at the intersection of difference *and* unity.

Although, not as candid as the existential or spontaneous form of *communitas*, Turner’s notion of the ideological form of *communitas* can also be located within the Phish scene. By defining ideological *communitas* as “a label one can apply to a variety of utopian models of societies based on existential *communitas*,” Turner suggests an inherent connection between the existential or spontaneous form of *communitas* and the ideological one.⁴⁶⁸ That is, the ideological form is dependent on the existential or spontaneous form. In fact, Turner is correct in labeling this form ideological because it is a theory, which, by its very definition, must remain no more than “a label one can apply to a variety of *utopian* models of societies based on existential

⁴⁶⁷ Taylor, 12.

⁴⁶⁸ Turner, 132.

communitas.”⁴⁶⁹ Because spontaneous communitas is defined as a “happening” it exists in a liminal space. Spontaneous or existential communitas according to Turner at some point “develop a structure, in which free relationships between individuals become converted into norm-governed relationships between social personae.”⁴⁷⁰ Put simply, spontaneous communitas is just that. It is spontaneous. Over time spontaneous communitas becomes normative. It undergoes according to Turner, “what most people see as a ‘decline and fall’ into structure and law.”⁴⁷¹ To suggest a long-standing form of existential or spontaneous communitas is to suggest the impossible. Ideological communitas, by its very definition remains impossible to achieve in reality.

Just as the Phish scene can be said to be a existential or spontaneous form of communitas it can also be viewed as the ideological form of communitas as well. That is, viewed as a specific place in time, as a snap-shot so-to-speak, the Phish scene—an effect of particular emplaced practices—can be seen by some—those who as I’ve suggested view current structured society as a “disaster area”—as a “utopian model” for society. Some, to quote Phish bassist, Mike Gordon, may see “something beautiful and tragic about...[the] letting go” that occurs in those moments.⁴⁷²

However, this anti-structure remains a mere snap-shop, nothing more than an image frozen in time, a “label” Turner reminds us “appl[ied] to a...utopian model[] of societ[y].” Furthermore, the Phish scene is ideological because its participants exhibit an inherent understanding and acceptance of its liminality. By designating particular times to participate in

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Mike Gordon quoted in *Phish: IT*.

the scene—to withdrawal from a disaster area to achieve spontaneous or existential *communitas*—Phish and Phish fans accept and acknowledge ideological *communitas*.

Both the inherent connection between the existential or spontaneous form of *communitas* and the ideological form and the discussion of the “normative” reveal a space in which Turner’s third and final form of *communitas* emerges. Whereas existential or spontaneous *communitas* is a “transformative experience that goes to the root of each person’s being and finds in that root something communal and shared,” normative *communitas* promotes “a system for the production and distribution of resources [which] within it the seeds of structural segmentation and hierarchy” are born.⁴⁷³ In other words, normative *communitas* is what follows spontaneous *communitas*. Normative *communitas*, according to Turner, creates conditions where, “some [people] must initiate and command, and others must respond and follow.”⁴⁷⁴ It reflects a “‘decline and fall’ into structure and law.”⁴⁷⁵ This structure does not mean that the notion of *communitas*, specifically a *communitas* of retreat and withdrawal, ceases to exist. Rather, normative *communitas* acknowledges the limits of spontaneous *communitas* and serves to define *communitas* which extends over a longer period of time. That is, while spontaneous and existential *communitas* reflects the death of the “self” and the birth of the “we,” a *communitas* of retreat and withdrawal in general as an overarching theory, reflects an anti-structure. However, the acceptance of an anti-structure does not equate an absence of a structure. Instead, an anti-structure reflects the rejection of an *existing* structure. Therefore, the anti-structure inherent in a *communitas* of retreat and withdrawal can be a different form of social structure, a normative form of *communitas*.

⁴⁷³ Turner, 138, 136.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 132.

Although several aspects of the Phish scene can be considered to be existential or spontaneous forms of *communitas*, the scene still houses a form of normative *communitas* as well. For instance, discussing the music making process and performance, keyboardist Page McConnell revealed,

There are things that happen when we're improvising where a jam will go...and all of a sudden at...eighteen minutes something will happen where it gets to this place musically where if you hadn't persevered...you never would have seen this thing.⁴⁷⁶

Additionally McConnell further stated,

[I]f you keep working at "it" there are going to be these moments, these high moments of exploration and discovery.⁴⁷⁷

In other words, "it" is both the spontaneous form of *communitas* and the general *communitas* of withdrawal and retreat. Achieving each involves some sort of work. The Phish scene, as a *communitas* of retreat and withdrawal, contains moments of spontaneous and existential *communitas* as well as ones filled with while an anti-structure, a normative structure nonetheless. This structural anti-structure can be the work and the effort deemed necessary as a means to produce spontaneous *communitas*.

Overall, the Phish scene, while representing a *communitas* of retreat and withdrawal, simultaneously serves as an example through which one can locate Victor Turner's three forms of *communitas*: the existential or spontaneous form of *communitas*, the ideological form, and the normative form. An escape from what many white middle and upper-middle class Americans view as a "disaster area"—what I situate as a their resistance to multiculturalism—Phishheads, as

⁴⁷⁶ Page McConnell quoted in *Phish: IT*.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

I've shown in Chapters Two through Four, enact a number of ritualized emplaced practices with the aim of doing more than simply withdrawing from society. By being in and of the place, the Phish scene, participants are able to help create and feel the affective effect "it."

Conclusion

Making Sense of *it* All: Phish Scene Identity, Music, and America's Middle Class

“Understanding It: Affective Authenticity, Space, and the Phish Scene” marks my attempt to answer the request of an array of interdisciplinary scholars to pay attention to the production of space, especially in cultural work that examines identity. Like many American studies, cultural studies, performance studies, and anthropology scholars I am interested in identity as both a process and a product. In this dissertation, as my introductory remarks suggest, I have attempted to locate the identity of the Phish scene spatially. It is in this vein that I situated the Phish scene as one constructed by those who participate in it—both the band and the fans. It is in this same vein I refer to my “informants” as “scene participants.” As such, both the members of Phish and Phish fans exemplify the fluidity of both culture and identity. They occupy a space that can, and at times is, located outside mainstream dominant society. However, these same people, both musicians and fans, often actively participate and locate themselves in dominant mainstream American culture.

Additionally, I contend the scene also be theorized as an event. As an event, the place “Phish scene” happens. That is, “space and time come together in place” and “it” happens.⁴⁷⁸ And, just as the theory of articulation I unpacked in Chapter One “does not separate the focus from the background” I demonstrated how, as an event that happens, the Phish scene “arise[s] from the experience of place.”⁴⁷⁹ In this way it is not just an articulation of floating identities but rather a spatial articulation.

⁴⁷⁸ Casey, 27.

⁴⁷⁹ Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place*, 55. Casey, 36.

With this in mind, I then explained how the Phish scene can be theorized as a spatial articulation of what I have called affective authenticity. Specifically, I demonstrated how Phish scene identity when read as a performance, as an effect of specific emplacé practices that in turn foster the affective effect “it,” could also be read as a middle and upper-middle class performance of resistance.

While distinctly different from one another, the identities of the Phish scene and the countercultural psychedelic-seeking Deadhead scene remain linked not just by mainstream society but most importantly for the purpose of my research, by members of the scenes themselves. Nevertheless while the Phish scene embodies, as a physical performance, the earlier Grateful Dead scene, I have argued it represents a different historical moment: one in which understandings of American culture as monolithically white and middle class were destabilized. Set amidst this alternative historical context I have shown how the practices and processes of Phish scene identity must be analyzed outside of the diverse countercultural climate in which the Grateful Dead first formed and attracted an audience. Rather than “turning on, tuning in, and dropping out” attempting to create “a new world that...[runs] parallel to the old world but has as little to do with it as possible,” the contemporary Phish scene represents an interesting cultural paradox.⁴⁸⁰ White middle and upper-middle class Americans, as Phish scene participants resist mainstream middle class culture while simultaneously embracing and participating in that culture. In particular, like many counterculturalists before them, Phish scene participants as white middle and upper-middle classed Americans, employ similar countercultural practices of escapism. However, unlike those before them Phish scene participants ultimately seek to locate themselves within mainstream American culture.

⁴⁸⁰ Barry Melton quoted in Schulman, 17.

As the first interdisciplinary ethnographic research project on the Phish scene, my dissertation has introduced a valuable object of study to the academic community. I have demonstrated how the band Phish and its fans can be used as a lens to study a subject I believe is both widely and wrongly overlooked in contemporary American cultural studies scholarship: American middle class cultural practices at the turn of the millennium. While a great deal of attention has been paid to the building of the American middle class as well as its diverse cultural practices in wake of the second World War very little work is being done that analyzes middle class America in the formative years of a new century. With a turbulent economy, a newer post-industrial technologically advanced job front, and a heightened level of interconnectivity coupled with a growing sense of individualism and privatization, middle class America, or at the very least, the idea of middle-class America is, to borrow from Sherry Ortner not only out there in “out there in some part(s) of social space” but worthy of analysis.⁴⁸¹

A significant body of work addressing the predominately white middle class identity of Generation X does exist. That said, this scholarship remains centered on one main assumption: Generation X “has always been, first and foremost, about identity through work: jobs, money, and careers.”⁴⁸² David Brooks offered his interpretation of a “new upper class” of Americans and their children (Gen-Xers) called “bobos” where the values of the bourgeois and bohemian combined to create a class of individuals who were creative and competitive, self-consumed, and wealthy.⁴⁸³ Andrew Ross critiqued Brooks’ postmodern “bobos” claiming that underneath the “elaborate market profile of an upscale consumer” one found a modernist “revision of industrial

⁴⁸¹ Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory*, 87-88.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 89.

⁴⁸³ David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

personality.”⁴⁸⁴ According to Ross, this group of individuals and their shared mentality, was best described as “no-collar.” Barry Shank addressed the impact that changes within the national recording industry resulting from late capitalism had on those producing and consuming music in Austin, Texas, by analyzing the independent and alternative music-related identities (bands, artists, music scene) such industrial shifts produced.⁴⁸⁵ However, even in cases where acts of resistance or rejection appear (Shank’s “dissonant” indie-rock scene identity) such acts are theorized as being in opposition to the type of work itself rather than with the fundamental theoretical premise linking identity and work.

My dissertation, while drawing from these studies remains quite different. I suggest many white middle and upper-middle class Americans resist cultural changes associated with postmodern America such as multiculturalism by creating identities outside of dominant culture as a way to feel a part of that same culture. In this vein, my project, like Eric Usner’s research regarding white youth interest in Swing culture in the 1990s, is helping to carve out a space in contemporary scholarship that investigates those once considered as America’s silent majority.⁴⁸⁶ I urge scholars to pay more attention to, and take seriously this subject by listening, to borrow from Mechling again, to the “silences” in contemporary American cultural studies research.

In a corresponding vein, I envision this dissertation contributing to academic discussions of affect and in particular, the consumption of affect. Again, given the current cultural climate where virtual tourism is an increasing popular practice, no doubt in large part to the technological advancements of the internet, more and more people are participating in processes

⁴⁸⁴ Andrew Ross, *No Collar* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 124.

⁴⁸⁵ Shank, *Dissonant Identities*.

⁴⁸⁶ Usner, “Dancing in the Past.”

in which the consumption of affect takes place. What types of meaning are being sought out? What is or is not being achieved?

Additionally, I hope this project adds to the already fruitful body of scholarship regarding the 1960s and America's countercultural movements as I feel their underpinnings still thread through a number of the contemporary conversations and debates regarding resistance, social change, and power relations. Perhaps the upcoming opening of the Grateful Dead Archive at the University of California-Santa Cruz will provide new and interesting materials through which this can continue.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, my research about Phish scene identity continues American Studies' longstanding commitment to exploring understandings of America as well as both what it means to be American and who is American. Moreover, "Understanding *It*: Affective Authenticity, Space, and the Phish Scene" disrupts postmodern conversations regarding difference. My project explores a performance of resistance that achieves community and meaning without resisting class privilege. In American and cultural studies work today it is all too easy to shine the light on and highlight and critique examples of difference and inequality. By no means do I want to suggest this stop. Rather, I urge scholars to continue theorizing culture as a site of struggle and to develop related frameworks that mirror the complex and interrelated nature of American cultural resistance at the beginning of a new century. Performances of resistance, such as Phish scene identity, help us to understand how people negotiate identities that question privilege (in this case class privilege) without giving it up.

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