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Florida Punks: Punk, Performance, and Community at Gainesville's Fest

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by

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Abstract

Fest is an annual punk rock music festival held in Gainesville, Florida. At Fest, participants engage in aesthetic creation and participation, negotiate identities, participate in political discourse, and forge communities. In this dissertation, I use theories of performance, framing, and culture to understand Fest. To do so, I theorize Fest using three approaches to performance: performance as an object of study, performance as a metaphor for everyday life and identity, and performance as a method of inquiry. Using these three approaches to performance, I understand Fest as performance, as a site that permits and constrains performances of self, identity, and community, and as inspiration for the performance of a musical EP *Whenever You're Ready*, which was written, performed, recorded, and released drawing from my own experiences with Fest as a scholar and fan. In doing so, I understand Fest as a site that is crucial for understanding performance, social and political critique and activism, and negotiation of identity.

Chapter One: Fest Narratives – Defining the Gainesville Scene

I remember sitting in my bedroom in the summer of 2005 as a teenager. My family moved to Inverness, Florida from New York's Hudson Valley two years prior. We discovered that our first home in Florida was at risk to be swallowed by a sinkhole and that we needed to move out of the house. We spent the subsequent autumn living through a now-infamous hurricane season where four hurricanes rattled the state, all while waiting on insurance companies to decide if the sinkhole was bad enough for us to move. Any delusions I had, imagining Florida as a subtropical paradise where I would spend my teens cruising the beach evaporated as quickly as a bead of sweat on the Florida asphalt. Even the closest beach to the house was a bummer! Affectionately called "nuke beach" by the locals, Ft. Island Trail Beach in Crystal River was adjacent to the now-closed Crystal River 3 Nuclear Power Plant. It is a cliche in pop-punk music: you hate your hometown and grow into a disappointed, angsty teenager who cannot wait to leave. I embraced that cliche to its fullest.

Now, in my second house in nearly as many years, I login to LimeWire or Kazaa or Bear Share or one of the other malware-ridden music sharing services that were both outrageously popular and equally illegal at the time. This was post-Napster, but pre-people being raided by the FBI for sharing music, so everybody knew sharing music existed in a grey area of legality. I click around on the queues to see if any of the punk music I used to at least sonically escape from Inverness downloaded while I was at school. No dice. I log out of the music sharing program and open my web browser to check the punk forums to see if any of the record labels I followed

released any free mp3s. At the time, many of the independent labels would release low quality mp3s on their websites for fans to sample songs before they invested the steep price of ten bucks for a CD. I open a second window and login to MySpace. At the time, I listened to the pop-punk found on the then-thriving alternative rock radio format, on skateboarding video game *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater,* and whatever albums MySpace would recommend in the "punk and indie" section of their site. Bands like Rancid, NOFX, Bad Religion, Blink-182, and Green Day made up the majority of my music collection — as well as a (un)healthy dose of third wave ska — and it allowed me to escape Florida for a bit. These bands had it better than I did, because all they had to worry about was skateboarding in California, or so I thought.

MySpace featured a band called Against Me! as their band of the month. I click on their profile and notice that they have a new album coming out on the Fat Wreck label, the same label as skate punk bands like NOFX, Lagwagon, and the Mad Caddies. I search the Fat Wreck site for samples of the upcoming Against Me! album, *Searching For a Former Clarity.* The site has a ninety-second mp3 of the song "Problems" free for download. I scurry over to my file sharing program and paste the sample into my library. I then search for more Against Me! in the file sharing platform search bar and I download two more songs from their earlier albums: "Walking is Still Honest" from the *Crime* EP and "Disco Before the Breakdown" from an EP with the same name. I press play on "Problems" and I am surprised at the sound of a thunderous, distorted Fender Precision bass coming through my cheap computer speakers. It was at a much slower tempo than any of the punk of the era, which is still fast for most other styles of music, clocking in at around 120 beats per measure. The bass gives way in the mix to a shouted-yet-still-singing scream of the lead vocalist. Instead of lightning-fast power chords, distorted chords in open position shrieked and shimmered through the speakers. Instead of the classic skate punk drum

beat that deployed a double kick technique on the bass drum that played at breakneck speed, the drums were tense, driving, mid-tempo, urgent, and dynamically interesting. "What the hell *is* this," I ask myself as the ninety-second clip fades and I click over to their MySpace feature. "Wait, they're from *Florida?"* When the album released later that school year, I took the money I earned working as a stock clerk at Ace Hardware, drove forty-five minutes north to Ocala, a midway point between Inverness and Gainesville and the closest town with a decent mall, and purchased *Searching for a Former Clarity* (2005) from an FYE store.

I provide this personal narrative to map my connection with the Gainesville scene while demonstrating that my own participation in the performance of Fest, a punk rock music festival held every year in Gainesville, Florida. Writing on personal narrative as and through performance, Kristin M. Langellier writes:

> … personal narrative performance *constitutes* identities and experience, producing and reproducing that to which it refers. Here, personal narrative is a site where the social is articulated structured, and struggled over … [i]dentity and experience are a symbiosis of performed story and social relations in which they are materially embedded: sex, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, geography, religion, and so on (Langellier 128 - 9).

By invoking my own experience here, I connected the ways in which not only my identity is constituted through performance, but also through the ways that my identity "fits" within the performances at Fest. Fest is. The festival functions as an outcropping of Gainesville's punk scene, one that developed in the 1980s and through the early 2000s as a regional brand of punk that gained national attention in punk circles. My narrative, at the beginning of this chapter and throughout this dissertation, is situated within interlocking identities that navigate and construct

the landscape that allows the performance of Fest. It is through these narratives that Fest becomes legible as a performance, especially when these narratives are shared.

I share my coming-of-age story about the Gainesville scene to situate Fest in a (sub)culture, in a punk rock scene, in history, in a social context, and as a nexus for identity formation. I do this, not because my story about Fest is particularly unique, but quite the opposite. I locate myself in the Gainesville scene to demonstrate how individuals make and shape various aspects of culture at the same time that the culture makes and shapes the individual. To do this, I analyze Fest from four perspectives: 1) as personal, 2) as a performance of, in, and within a place, 3) as a generative site for musical performances, and 4) as a rich site for theorizing about performance. I have already discussed how Fest is personal for me. In later chapters, I will use performance ethnography to connect my own experience of Fest with the experiences of others. Next, I map the history of the Gainesville, Florida rock and independent music scene more broadly because the Gainesville scene and the bands that come from and to it are crucial in staging Fest as a site of various performances. I do this by analyzing Matt Walker's history of the Gainesville punk scene through the lens of performance. I then look at music by four foundational Gainesville bands: Radon, Hot Water Music, Less Than Jake, and Against Me. These bands are musical manifestations of Gainesville's history and are chosen to serve as examples of the scene as it builds in local and national popularity. Finally, I argue for what an analysis of Fest can provide performance studies, as a rich site where interwoven conceptualizations of performance meet. Fest invites and creates performances as a culmination of the Gainesville, Florida scene. If Fest is the stage on which these various performances occur, the Gainesville scene is the theater, the sound booth, the vending machine, the ticket booth, the

seats, the curtains, and the audience that encompass these performances. To fully understand Fest, it is important to understand the Gainesville scene.

In this dissertation project, I use performance to analyze Fest. I have chosen Fest for a few reasons. For one, I see potential in the future of music studies and performance studies. Auslander (2021) identifies a disparity in performance studies early on in the 21st Century and provides a model for engaging with music as performance studies scholars. Drawing from the Derridean concept of hauntology to interrogate whiteness, Stephenson Shaffer and Gunn (2006) offer "music or musicking as the way we approach performance, perhaps even as a term for a new 'paradigm' that places hauntology at its center" (Stephenson Shaffer and Gunn 58). Finally, McRae uses music throughout his work to arrive at a performative listening, an ethical and methodological commitment to listening in performance research. Developing this performative frame of analysis, he "listen[s] to a brick in order to learn about the intersection of life stories and musical performances …" ("Listening to a Brick" 335), as "a performance and method of researching that asks questions and works to develop understandings about the complex relationships between individual practices and larger structures" (*Performative Listening* 96), and to understand music as it is "deployed culturally in the service of meanings and understandings, emotions and feelings, aesthetics and consumption" ("Hearing Performance as Music" 1). My work extends this paradigm of music as performance to offer performance as a framework for analysis of musical performances, as a metaphor for the lives of people who participate at Fest, and as a method of inquiry that informs my performance practices.

I have also chosen Fest as a sight of critical contestation. Picking up on Stephenson Shaffer and Gunn's use of hauntology to disturb systems of whiteness in music, a hauntology where music, musicking, and musical cultures form a "ghostly center of performance studies,

and race and sex connect as impossible, haunting objects," I argue that Fest is both a site for critical intervention and a performance of subversion of systems of whiteness (Stephenson Shaffer and Gunn 58). I argue that since Fest is a punk rock music festival, it is committed to four core commitments found in punk music: 1) play, 2) collaboration, 3) amateur aesthetics, and 4) social advocacy. As a site where performances of whiteness are both perpetuated and undermined, Fest operates at the periphery of 21st Century North American culture. Fest both upholds systems of its contemporary moment – late capitalism, whiteness, commodification of art, and exclusionary structures that constrain participation based on who can afford a ticket – while subverting it through its performance. Fest also subverts these structures, and it is this complex relationship with systems of whiteness and capitalism that justifies its prominence in my project.

Finally, I provide a narrative about my relationship with Fest and the kinds of music played there for two reasons. First, I situate myself as a member of a larger community that is an outgrowth of the Gainesville punk scene from the 1980s – 2000s. This is both a reflexive move, revealing my own commitments, values, experiences, and relationships with Fest and the Gainesville scene, and a theoretical move that locates my own identity formation within a larger culture, history, aesthetic and ethical paradigm, and location. Further, my own relationship with Fest stages and foregrounds my own performances at Fest, but also informs aesthetic performances based on this relationship. Later in this dissertation, I describe and analyze a performance of my own inspired by Fest and this research about it.

Fest provides an avenue of discovery for scholars of performance studies, communication studies, cultural studies, popular music studies, and many other scholarly disciplines. In this dissertation, I build connections among these varying scholarly paradigms to help understand

Fest and to help larger ideas of performance, aesthetics, whiteness, and culture. To first understand Fest, however, it is important to understand how Fest came to be and what kinds of performances happen at Fest. In the pages that follow, I will provide this information to create a better understanding of Fest. By knowing the kinds of music and performances at Fest, it will become easier to understand how and why Fest matters as a site for multiple understandings of performance, and how Fest and participants at Fest engage in performances that "claims the unique communicative, democratic, and critical dimensions of aesthetic performance to not only demonstrate theory, but also speak back to, challenge, resist, trouble, and make dirty and porous the rigid, shortcomings of the theoretical" (Goltz 23).

Gainesville's Punk History

Matt Walker's *Gainesville Punk: A History of Bands & Music* (2016) provides a similar narrative about Hot Water Music guitarist and singer Chris Wollard's discovery of the punk scene in the early 1990s. "'And you're like, this — this is out of Florida," Wollard recounts in an interview, "what the fuck? And you're like, Gainesville, Florida, where's that?" (Walker 87). Wollard and his bandmates would later move to Gainesville from Tampa, Florida to become one of the cornerstones of the city's punk scene. Walker's history details a punk scene that began like many others throughout the United States in the 1980s and 1990s, starting with the hardcore movement influenced by bands like Black Flag, Minor Threat, and Bad Brains, and evolving slowly into the college rock, grunge, alternative, and pop punk styles of the early 1990s. But much like the freshwater springs throughout North-Central Florida that bubble to the surface from underground in the Florida aquifer, unless somebody knows that there is a punk scene in the college town of Gainesville, they would never think to look for one.

The bibliography on the Gainesville punk scene has exactly two major, large-scale contributions. The first is Walker's, which serves as a history of bands, venues, and players within the Gainesville scene since the 1980s. The second is a master's thesis done at Florida State University in Tallahassee by Micah Vandegrift (2009). Vandegrift draws heavily from Barry Shank's work on the Austin, Texas rock scene in his book *Dissonant Identities* (1994), where both authors use ethnography and historical research to situate subcultures in college towns within larger national music scenes. Walker and Vandegrift's work provide an excellent historical context for the development of the Gainesville scene as bands from it like Less Than Jake, Hot Water Music, and Against Me! found themselves developing a national following throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

This dissertation extends their work by picking up where theirs leaves off, both chronologically and conceptually. In both works, the history of the Gainesville punk scene ends with the creation of a music festival in Gainesville known as Fest. For them, the establishment of a music festival that attracts attendees from around the world solidifies the legitimacy and longevity of the Gainesville scene. Walker writes that Fest is "one of the most far-reaching and impactful developments in the scene's history" (Walker 145). Building from the relative popularity of bands like Against Me!, Less Than Jake, and Hot Water Music, Fest developed into a site for fans of Gainesville punk to convene. "As these various aspects of the scene began to coalesce," Vandegrift writes, "Gainesville developed into a full-fledged, active music scene" with Fest marking this coming-of-age for the scene (Vandegrift 50). For most of its history, the Gainesville punk scene's sphere of influence did not extend much beyond Florida and often changed when members of the scene graduated from the University of Florida and moved to

other towns. Fest established the Gainesville punk scene as a more permanent and internationally-known institution.

Setting the Stage: A Brief History of Fest and the Gainesville, FL Scene

Gainesville, Florida's punk scene provides a backdrop for the performances in and beyond Fest. Mapping out and untangling Gainesville's punk scene situates Fest in a particular historical moment, geographic and political spaces, and within various other contexts that enable and constrain these performances. In the pages that follow, I trace out the history of the Gainesville punk scene. I do this by drawing from three texts: Matt Walker's book on the topic, Vandegrift's master's thesis, and a collection of stories about Fest and the Gainesville scene more broadly written by former Gainesville Sun journalist Andrew Caplan[1]. I do this, in part, to bridge the scholarly, journalistic, and popular publication formats to survey the ways in which Gainesville punk has been engaged, but also because these projects are among the few lengthy works done on the Gainesville scene.

I map a history, too, because a history of a scene is necessarily a history of performances. While many performance scholars debate the merits of translating the fleeting nature of performance in its here-and-now into the static, archival format of writing, stripping performance of its temporal essence, I argue that here-and-now performance is always built upon and contingent on situated histories. Performance does not exist in a vacuum, but rather, is social, citational, and contextual. Forwarding the theory of performativity of gender, Judith Butler famously argues this case. "In this sense," she writes, "gender is in no way a stable identity or

[1] Disclosure: Caplan and I are good friends and have worked on projects together in the past. His articles were chosen 1) for their timeliness, 2) for their in-depth coverage of the situation, and 3) because his body of work is one of the few examples of larger journalistic projects done on the topic of Fest at Gainesville's local newspaper.

locus of agency from which various acts proceede; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (Butler 519). Butler's argument here is radical because it makes the case not only for the citational nature of the performance of gender identity, but also for performativity's transformative potential. "If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity," she writes, "the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking of subversive repetition of that style" (520).

While the history of a relatively small music scene in Gainesville does not carry with it the far-reaching implications of understanding gender as performative, understanding performativity brings the Gainesville's history into contemporary performances. Perhaps without even knowing it, performances at Fest '19 cite shows at punk houses that existed long before the concept of Fest, which were citational of shows in the 1980s that paralleled larger, national trends in underground hardcore scenes, which are citational of Tom Petty reaching rock stardom after moving from Gainesville to Los Angeles, which is citational of blues and R&B musician Bo Diddley spending his last years living just outside of Gainesville. Fest's main stage is, after all, performed in Bo Diddley Plaza in Downtown Gainesville. The arbitrary relationship between Bo Diddley and a punk rock music festival are tethered to a shared musical history in Gainesville.

Performativity also speaks to the politics of not only Gainesville's scene, but punk rock more broadly. In the foreword to Walker's history of the scene, writer Patrick Hughes suggests this about the book:

Gainesville Punk: A History of Bands & Music is going to serve a lot of purposes. It'll

> give fans insight into the origins and development of their favorite acts. Music history buffs ill value the detail it brings to an interesting piece of our broader cultural puzzle. Scene participants from different eras will get context from it, be able to place their time and contributions in a continuum. It'll spur people to seek out and enjoy undervalued music. For some, it'll be a plain good read. For others, it'll be a way to understand their legacy, an artistic tradition they inherit.
>
> It's the last group that interests me most. My sincere hope is that someone reading this book gets fed up by it and decides to smash that legacy. That someone rebukes this inheritance in a way that surprises and excites us. Gainesville's punk scene has produced a lot of very cool things up to this point, and this book is proof. Now show me what's next. (Walker 10)

The politics in this excerpt stake out a politics of performativity; one that acknowledges what came before, situates it in a contemporary context, and makes room for transformation within the scene. These politics allow the scene to grow and evolve, transcending musical genre, historical era, and other contexts that frame other scenes. What makes the Gainesville scene interesting is, unlike other alternative scenes that popped up in the 1980s and early 1990s (Seattle grunge, Austin Americana, East Bay pop punk, and DC hardcore are a few examples), there is no *sound* or *genre* associated with the Gainesville scene. The scene is always changing based on national and local tastes, but what remains steady is the presence of venues, labels, bands, and eventually a music festival to keep the scene vibrant.

In the pages that follow, I map the history by incorporating historical accounts of the Gainesville scene and scholarly theorizing about music scenes more broadly with close readings of five songs: four by bands in the Gainesville scene – Radon, Hot Water Music, Less Than Jake,

and Against Me -- and the fifth by a band singing a song about Fest by Minneapolis band Dillinger Four. These songs will be analyzed chronologically, to map the development of the scene from the 1990s through the 2010s. They will also situate the songs both within a historical context and as participants in creating the historical context, directly connecting the historical writing done on the scene with the songs produced within those contexts.

Further, these songs function to define the Gainesville scene in four crucial ways: 1) the Gainesville punk scene is political, 2) the Gainesville scene is independent, favoring "DIY" groups (a concept that I will contest later in this dissertation), labels, and venues over their nationally-known counterparts, 3) the Gainesville scene is not bound by one genre, and 4) Gainesville and Florida more broadly are common themes in the music from the scene, establishing a sense-of-place in the music. Fest emerges as a performance from these aspects of the Gainesville scene. Unlike other music festivals that feature punk bands, Fest was not created to celebrate nationally-known punk acts like Chicago's Riot Fest, nor was it created as a tour with major corporate sponsors like the Warped Tour, rather, Fest exist *because Gainesville's punk scene exists*. Attending Fest is celebrating Gainesville's punk scene, and to understand the performances at Fest, it is important to understand that scene.

I began this chapter with a story of my relationship to with the punk more broadly, the Gainesville scene specifically, and Fest as a culmination of this personal history and social history. What inspired me to study Fest has less to do with the Gainesville scene's impact on my personal life as a fan – although its impact is substantial – but rather, how my experience relates to a broader, social experience shared with others. I find myself arriving at Fest in the same way that Barry Shank arrives in Austin, as ethnographer and participant, musician and scholar, a fan and critic (Shank). This chapter – and this project more broadly -- also takes inspiration from

McRae's *Performative Listening,* both in theoretically and in structure. McRae begins the book with an invitation to listen to a conversation a teenage version of himself was having with Miles Davis as he began playing trumpet (McRae 1). McRae theorizes performative listening as a position that hears the citational, embracing the listener's positionality in relationship with what is meant to be heard, and as a "transformative and generative act" (10).

It would be easy to mistake McRae's performative listening for the mission-statement-as-foreword from Matt Hughes in the Walker book, as they cultivate a similar ethical commitment. For Hughes and McRae, listening is first order, positionality and social context is second, and transformation is generated from that listening. To put it more bluntly: performative listening and punk rock share similar ethical commitments. I listen to Fest with the same commitments in mind, not in reverence to a musical community that I happen to hold dear, but to mark my place within this larger context while creating space for new performances. Performative listening guides my understanding of Fest and of the Gainesville scene because, as McRae writes, "performative listening works to hear and create understandings about the ways social and cultural structures enable and constrain individual performances" (109). In the same way that McRae listens to Miles Davis to uncover identities, histories, geographies, and pedagogies, I listen to Fest to uncover what hooked teenage-me in the first place, and to create musical performances for future teenagers to listen to all over again.

Beginnings: Radon, "Lying to You," "Science Fiction," and the Rise of the Gainesville Scene

Walker's book features a section on the 1990s in the Gainesville punk scene, appropriately named "The Lifting," because of the scene's rise in popularity, both among punks in the college town of Gainesville and punks outside the scene. These chapters document the

history of the bands Spoke and Radon, who became so popular in the Gainesville scene that they were able to go on tours throughout the Southeastern United States. Aided by an independent network of college radio stations, independent record labels, and small 'zines, punk music in the 1980s and 1990s was both extremely localized and national at the same time.

Daniel Makagon tracks a shift in DIY scenes from the 1980s throughout the 1990s. Like Walker's book on Gainesville specifically, Makagon traces the trajectory beginning with hardcore in the 1980s, to the mainstream explosion of pop punk and alternative rock in the 1990s, and beyond. On the evolution of the 1990s and more contemporary scenes away from the more violent hardcore shows in the 1980s, Makagon writes that "people who were invested in the radical possibilities associated with punk. DIY spaces became key sites, allowing a different way of being together" (Makagon 180). Radon's popularity marks the beginning of this shift away from the more violent aspects of punk music to a scene that creates space for different performances of punk. The Gainesville scene experienced various waves of popularity in the punk and hardcore scene throughout the 1980s, as different cohorts of college students and the bands they started would cycle in and out of Gainesville.

No Idea records – originally a zine that evolved into the foremost record label in the Gainesville scene -- changed the nature of Gainesville punk. The label was founded by Var Thelin and Ken Coffelt, both Gainesville locals who spent their high school years attending shows in town. In the same way that I found punk by listening on my computer and in the soundtrack of Tony Hawk, Thelin found punk on cassette tapes borrowed from classmates, where he was also intrigued by the fact that music could be both punk and from Florida (Walker 35). According to Walker, by 1988 *No Idea* the zine had reached a circulation of 2,000 and was toying around with the idea of releasing a 7" record (50). In a bit of punk rock irony, the first

record released by No Idea would spell the breakup of the band that performed on it; the Gainesville band Doldrums broke up at the end of the decade and appeared to take the punk scene with it. As Var Thelin began to become disgruntled with the Gainesville scene and think about moving away, the Gainesville scene would open a new punk rock venue that would be equally instrumental in developing the scene as No Idea records would become.

As No Idea's distribution spread, Gainesville started to gain a reputation for its punk scene. Gainesville's downtown area had largely given way to suburban sprawl growth trends that were popular in the era, and a local musician Alan Bushnell seized on the availability of real estate in downtown and started The Hardback Café with his sister in 1989 (58). The Hardback began as both a music venue and a bookstore, although the music venue quickly took over as the primary operation (59). The Hardback Café provide a stable location for Gainesville bands to play, and No Idea circulated the music that would play at the venue, well beyond city limits. To many, the history of the Gainesville scene begins with Radon and their contemporaries because this is when the institutions that are still apart of the Gainesville scene became established.

A final step in establishing the Gainesville punk scene was establishing a local recording studio. Rob McGregor was the sound engineer for The Hardback Café and used cassette recording as a songwriting tool to help him remember songs. As the lore goes, two friends "kidnapped" McGregor, took him to Tampa, and helped him buy a recording setup. The new studio, first called Turd Studios and later renamed to the "more professional" Goldentone Studio became an outlet for Gainesville bands to record their music (85). The Gainesville now scene had all the makings of a punk music scene: a venue for performances, a studio to record the music, and a record label to distribute the music.

Sonically, this era of punk – and subsequent eras of punk in the Gainesville scene – prioritized melodic vocal timbres over more guttural, shouted or screamed vocals of the hardcore scene. Radon's rise in popularity in Gainesville is not unique in this aspect; there are plenty of other scenes throughout the country where melodic punk rock supplanted hardcore as the primary style of music in the scene. Radon's music does not necessarily sound much different from the other punk and alternative being made in the early 1990s However, Radon makes a significant move to distinguish itself from its national counterparts, from writing punk that happens to be in Florida to punk that could only be made and performed in Florida.

Radon's LP *28* (1998) was released at the end of this era, but it features many songs that were previously released on live recordings and EPs and, more importantly, provides an excellent example of the kind of punk being played in the scene in the early 1990s. The first track on the album, "Lying to You," begins with a light strumming of an A-major chord that swells into the soundscape, from a light whisper to a full-blown arpeggiation of that A-major chord. A riff based on this arpeggiation serves as the melodic hook for the song, bookending the song's intro and outro parts. As the riff swells into the mix, the mid-tempo (for punk) guitar part is met with a frantic drum part that, while keeping the tempo, pushes the song with chaotic fills. This is punk that happens to be in Florida.

The album's third track, however, could only be written in Florida. "Science Fiction" serves as environmental critique, science fiction absurdity, and origin story for the band's name. The song begins with power chords from a guitar heavily distorted by a fuzz or distortion pedal, and the lyrics to the first verse are spoken instead of sung over the guitar's chugging:

"Little green men coming out of paint cans

Phosphate mines and Slaked Lime, 1966, he was sixteen"

The drums enter the mix in double time, and the words are still spoken instead of sung intermittently throughout. The lyrics throughout describe radon mining in the state of Florida, weaving geopolitics, science fiction, and environmental concerns into the narrative. The song continues with similar lyrics critiquing the phosphate industry and "liv[ing] in a state that digs Radon by the ton." Radon's band name is a subtle indicator of place, one that critiques the environmental devastation imposed onto the state by industrial agriculture and the mining practices the provide fertilizer to that agriculture. The level of detail in the lyrics show an intimate involvement with the subject, and the science fiction metaphors note the absurdity of risking environmental catastrophe for the industry.

Gary Mormino shares Radon's sentiments. In his social history of Florida, Mormino outlines phosphate mining's tenuous relationship with Florida's environment:

> New technologies, however, allowed refining [phosphate] to take place in Florida, a process that required huge amounts of sulfuric acid and chemicals. Such methods released poisons in the air, fouling the skies and polluting the regions water on a scale never before seen. Cattlemen complained of sickened herds while grove owners noted decreased yields and stunted trees. Since the 1960s, environmental disasters have become alarmingly commonplace. Dam breaks released slime ponds into the Alafia and the Peace rivers. Spoil banks and radioactive, 150-foot-high gypsum stacks dot the Florida landscape. Parts of Polk County resemble a moonscape. (Mormino 216)

Mormino's history of phosphate mining provides historical context to Radon's environmental anxieties. Mormino track's phosphate's dominance from a post-World War boom to the industry's peak in the 1980s, where the subsequent decline in mining inspired Radon's questions about cleanup, predating Mormino's by a decade. "Floridians in the new century," Mormino

writes, “will have to weigh the benefits of jobs and the heritage accrued by Big Sugar and Big Phosphate with their compatibility in an urban state” (218). Both Mormino’s and Radon’s critiques remain evergreen in 2021.

I listen to “Science Fiction” in my car on the way back from the grocery store, one of the few places I have visited regularly since the COVID-19 pandemic reached the United States in early 2020. I walk into my house, and my roommates have a local news channel is on the television in the living room. In April of 2021, Piney Point phosphate plant is expected to pump “480 million gallons of wastewater into Tampa Bay,” which is considered a better alternative to having the water flood the area and endangering local residents (Sampson). “Only in Florida,” I mumble to myself as I head to my room, disappointed in the news. Gainesville punk is political and foregrounds issues in Florida, and many of these issues have been around as long as the Gainesville punk scene has been around.

“Southeast First” and “Free Radio Gainesville”: Hot Water Music, Independence, and the Gainesville Scene

I listen to the second track on Hot Water Music’s 1999 album *No Division*. As a bass player, I am excited by the introduction, which is a four-measure bass solo. The bass player, Jason Black, plays a straight-sixteenth note bass part that outlines an C-minor, E-major, and F#-minor chord progression that loops throughout the rest of the song, serving as both the rhythmic and harmonic backbone for the song. Black’s straight-sixteenth note bass part – a musical shorthand meaning that he plays only sixteenth notes in the measure and all the sixteenth notes in a measure[2] -- allows the drums, vocals, and guitar work in the song more freedom to play with

[2] In Western music practice, a single unit of musical performance is called a “measure” or a “bar.” A time signature denotes how many beats, or parts of the measure, may be played to make a complete measure. The most common time signature in most genres of popular music is 4/4

musical time. Additionally, the driving bass part outlining the chord structure of the song allows the guitars to sit sparingly in the mix, playing single-note lines that create space in the sonic mix. The guitars are given the freedom to create dynamic contrast through their playing. For instance, after drummer George Rebelo enters on the third beat of the last bar of Black's bass intro, both guitar players enter the mix. One is playing power chords, the other is playing single note lines. Rebelo's cymbals play straight eighth notes while his kick and snare drums are syncopated, creating multiple layers of rhythmic complexity in the song. As soon as the intro ends, the guitars pull back in the mix and Rebelo's drumming becomes more syncopated throughout and not just in the snare and the kick. The lyrics to the verse are shouted, but still carry melodic elements.

Hot Water Music carries on the tradition of Radon in the Gainesville scene. Growing up in other parts of Florida, the members of Hot Water Music heard Radon and decided to move to Gainesville to participate in the punk scene. A similar "hearing punk happening in Florida" event happened to Hot Water Music guitarist and vocalist Chris Wollard (Walker 87). Hot Water Music also promoted the politics of the Gainesville scene upon arriving there. The opening track to *No Division*, "Southeast First," features a chant from Gainesville's Radical Cheerleaders, "an activist group that at the time was protesting against the FCC shutting down Free Radio Gainesville, a low-powered political radio station" (113). In his book, Walker incorrectly places the chant at the beginning of "Free Radio Gainesville," however, dedicating two songs to this

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time: that means that there are four beats in a measure, and that a quarter note receives the beat. When you hear a drummer click his sticks, or a singer shout "1-2-3-4" before a song starts, they are establishing the time signature and tempo, which is how fast the song is played. Musical measures can be further subdivided at the beat, typically by half. A sixteenth note is subdivided twice from a quarter note, first as an eighth note, then to a sixteenth note. In 4/4 time, there are sixteen sixteenth notes in a bar. A straight sixteenth note phrase means that a player plays all sixteenth notes exclusively in the bar, with no rests, syncopation, or other note values in the line.

cause reveals a commitment to the Gainesville scene's radical politics and defense of independent media.

Ethnomusicologist Timothy Taylor critiques the notion of independence in DIY music scenes. Writing about digital technology and the music industry at the dawn of the new millennium, Taylor argues that DIY helped cultivate a musical culture that helped usher in neoliberal capitalism into musical practice (Taylor 121). Paradoxically, as technology advanced to the point where people like Rob McGregor could afford recording gear and use that gear to record their friends – which was an unheard of accomplishment in previous eras of recording technology, where recording studios required large budgets and were often licensed by large record labels – the opportunities for artists to make a living making music shrank. Record labels effectively outsourced the high cost of music production onto the artists themselves, and as the music industry moved to digital platforms, it became increasingly harder for musicians to make money with releases (129).

This critique of DIY is taken up by English scholar Jeffery T. Nealon, who recognizes Taylor and others' larger critique of the DIY scene's impact on music making, and argues that although musical corporations have absorbed many aspects of DIY culture in an effort to increase profit margins, this is the fault of the logic of neoliberal capitalism and not of DIY in and of itself. Nealon takes to task scholarly discussions on authenticity in popular music, and how capitalism morphed itself to meet the population and not the other way around. "Before the biopolitical, neoliberal revolutions of the Reagan-Thatcher 1980s, disciplinary capitalism didn't have much use for subjective authenticity," he writes, " … *American popular music's values of subjective rebellion and personal authenticity were not always coincident with the logic of mainstream American economic life* [emphasis in the original]" (Nealon 32).

In short, it's not that popular music sold out to the Man, or that musical rebellion and authenticity were always already a shill for the Man; rather, my argument is the dominant logic of American capitalism has morphed into a biopolitical form that was presaged by twentieth-century American popular music fandom and its intense investment in developing and maintaining your own personal authenticity within a wholly commodified field" (33).

The distinction Nealon makes here is important: it situates acts of rebellion like Hot Water Music's defense of Free Radio Gainesville in its historical context. "The Man," according to Hot Water Music's and Radical Cheerleaders' telling of events, collapsed the independent space necessary for divergent politics and art forms to occur. At the time, these performances were not in the service of advancing neoliberal capitalism, but actively performing against this encroachment. Neoliberal capitalism appears to favor individual authenticity while subsuming individuals into an increasingly omnipresent corporate domination.

Michael Denning marks the radical potential for independent music, taking the Frankfurt School to task by analyzing what he calls a "noise uprising" in the 1920s. Here, Denning explores the perpetuation of vernacular musics in port cities throughout the globe as a decolonization of the ear. I borrow Denning's term of "noise uprising," not to delegitimize decolonial efforts in vernacular and popular music, but to describe a similar effort that occurred in the 1990s at the core of musical colonization: American popular music. "To make another sounds is to project another world," Denning writes, and Hot Water Music's "Free Radio Gainesville" makes noise in defense of the proliferation of new sounds and new noises (Denning 13). In the same way that the straight-sixteenth note bass line is a sonic canvas, provides an opportunity for new noise and new sounds, "Southeast First," uses noise to assert Hot Water

Music's politics into the soundscape. In the first seconds of the track are various forms of sonic feedback. Eliciting the unearthly tone of multiple theremins in a mid-century science fiction film, the feedback dominates the soundscape while the chant from Radical Cheerleaders sits back in the mix. An abrupt moment of recording noise interrupts the track ten seconds into it. The noise and the chant serve to count the band off, setting a template for music to occur. This is a noise uprising.

These politics are intentional. In his thesis, Micah Vandegrift writes that Hot Water Music was "conscious of their place in the scene, as leaders and influencers, working to bring people together through common ideals. Hot Water Music wrote songs in this mode throughout their time as a band, and those who were connected to them, in the local scene especially, took their lyrics to heart perpetuating the sense of community the band sung about" (Vandegrift 43). Even today, Hot Water Music are seen as the forebearers of the Gainesville scene. During the Fest at Home events that were held in lieu of an in-person Fest, Hot Water Music held a livestream with Fest founder Tony Weinbender and talked about the history of the Gainesville scene. Fest was held in-person in October 2021. Hot Water Music headlined two nights: one night playing the entirety of their *A Flight and a Crash* (2001) album, and another playing a setlist made up of fan requests. For Hot Water Music, the independence of the community is crucial to their performance.

"Reinventing Axl Rose" and "Gainesville Rock City": The Gainesville Scene Solidifies and the Rise of Fest

I am a teenager in my bedroom at parent's house in Inverness, Florida. I am holding a CD case, which is made of cardboard instead of the usual clear plastic and features a yellowed map of Gainesville, Florida as the album art. The album is Less Than Jake's *Borders and Boundaries*

(2000) album, recorded "in between tours in [bass player] Roger's basement (aka the moat house)" in Gainesville. The back of the case features a cardboard cutout that is the size of a CD, and it is fixed to the squared case by a metal fixture that allows it to spin. There are three slits into this circular cut out; the first is labelled "Location," and the cutout reveals the following locations: London, England; Paramus, New Jersey; Tokyo, Japan; Ljubljana, Slovenia; Chicago, Illinois; Sydney, Australia; Seattle, Washington; and LA, California. These locations all respond to a second slit, which reveals an image of the band, and these pictures were presumably taken on tour at the corresponding locations. Finally, the last slit is labelled "Distance to Gainesville," and reveals the distance in miles between the location in the first slit and Gainesville, Florida. Spinning the cardboard cutout "plays" the disc, allowing my teenage self to "play" the album about touring and homesickness while the album plays music from my stereo. For me and for Less Than Jake, Gainesville is the geographic center of my musical universe. For Less Than Jake, a ska band from the Gainesville scene, their success in the late 1990s and international tour is putting Gainesville on the map.

The music video for the lead single from the album, "Gainesville Rock City," serves as an homage to Gainesville' punk scene. The track begins with the sound of rattling car keys that start the ignition to a van, and the video's imagery matches the sound. Members of the band are dressed in costume as they load up into a van, and the band's horn section overtakes the sound of the ignition in the soundscape. The horn section gives way to a pop punk-style distorted guitar riff, and a man holding a white sign with black font that reads "WE RECORDED THREE CD's [sic] RIGHT HERE!" enters the frame of the image. The image quickly zooms out and stops moving, and the man with the sign is now framed within a Polaroid snapshot. This image gives way to a shot of the band playing it what appears to be a rehearsal space, establishing the

dominant mode of presentation for the music video. Throughout the video, people can be seen holding signs like “WE PLAYED OUR FIRST SHOW HERE,” “WE GET 3 QUARTS DRUNK AT THIS LIQUOR STORE,” “WE PRACTICE 1200 FEET FROM THIS SPOT,” and “THIS IS OUR RECORD STORE, IT’S NOT FANCY, IT’S FANTASTIC!” are interwoven into images of the band playing, the band in costume, and images from a road.

The song and accompanying video serve as an homage to Gainesville, but it also serves as response to cries of “selling out” that were typical in punk scenes throughout the 1990s. Andrew Caplan, then writing for the Gainesville Sun, marks the moment Less Than Jake signed to a major label as Gainesville’s arrival onto the national punk scene (Caplan). Matt Walker, too, notes this as a pivotal moment in Gainesville punk history. While Hot Water Music remained on the independent punk touring circuit throughout their careers, Less Than Jake left No Idea and signed to Capitol Records, received airplay on MTV, charted on Billboard, and played Warped Tour (Walker 94). Less Than Jake has always been conscious of “selling out,” or betraying the independent values of punk for cashing in on mainstream success, writing a song on their 1996 album *Losing Streak* called ‘Johnny Quest Thinks We’re Sellouts” in response. However, “Gainesville Rock City” takes a less adversarial approach by reclaiming Gainesville. Here, Less Than Jake makes it explicit that their success is due to their time spent in Gainesville and their continued dedication to the Gainesville scene.

As Less Than Jake faces backlash for “selling out,” Against Me!, another Gainesville band, maps out the commitments to independence found in the Gainesville scene. In the song “Reinventing Axl Rose,” from an album with the same name, Against Me! claims both a scene ethic and an approach to social advocacy. The song’s ethos contrast the ethos of its namesake, Axl Rose of Guns n’ Roses fame. While Guns n’ Roses was well known for its large rock shows

with highly polished theatrics, music videos that dominated MTV in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and performances punctuated by the on-stage personae of band members with names like Axl, Slash, and Duff, Against Me argues for a scene where "there's no need to shit talk or impress, 'cause honesty and emotion are not looked down upon" (Against Me). The song is also a considerable sonic departure from its namesake: while Guns 'n Roses were known for highly-polished, wall-of-sound rock anthems, "Reinventing Axl Rose" strips back the studio polish and production. The song features an instrumentation of a jangly acoustic guitar, an acoustic guitar, electric bass, and a drum set with a snare that cuts through the mix to punctuate the song's weak beats. Laura Jane Grace's vocals are shouted over the instrumentation, again in contrast to Axl Rose's more refined vocals.

The subversive power in Against Me's performance is in its social advocacy. Against Me! spent its time in the Gainesville scene as a band espousing anarchist and other far-left politics (on the same album as "Reinventing … " is a song called "Those Anarcho Punks are Mysterious"), and serves as the most explicitly political group from the Gainesville scene to make national prominence. In "Reinventing …", the band calls for a scene that moves "beyond gender, race, and class, we could find what really holds us back" (Against Me!). This commitment to inclusion is a reflection of the Gainesville scene more broadly, and the ethics of the band members on a personal level. What is most notable about their advocacy, however, is singer Laura Jane Grace's contemporary advocacy for trans folks. Laura Jane Grace came out as a transgender woman to Rolling Stone on May 31st, 2012, a decade after the release of *Reinventing Axl Rose* (Eells).

In the article, Grace describes her parents' divorce that sent her to live in Florida with her grandmother, her lifelong struggle with gender dysphoria, and how this dysphoria manifested

throughout Against Me!'s body of work, "sprinkling [her] lyrics with oblique confessions" of dysphoria[3] (Eells). The songs throughout Against Me!'s catalogue are implicated in this social advocacy, particularly on gender. Axl Rose serves as a figure of what Robert Walser identifies as an Orphean masculinity:

> Like the story of Orpheus, heavy metal often stages fantasies of masculine virtuosity and control. Musically, heavy metal articulates a dialectic of controlling power and transcendent freedom. Metal songs usually include impressive technical and rhetorical feats on the electric guitar, counterposed with an experience of power and control that is built up through vocal extremes, guitar power chords, distortion, and sheer volume of bass and drums. Visually, metal musicians typically appear as swaggering males, leaping and strutting about the stage, clad in spandex, scarves, leather, and other visually noisy clothing, punctuating their performances with phallic thrusts of guitars and microphone stands. The performers may use hypermasculinity or androgryny as visual enactments of spectacular transgression. Like opera, heavy metal draws upon many sources of power: mythology, violence, madness, the iconography of horror. But none of these surpasses gender in its potential to inspire anxiety and to ameliorate it. (Walser 108-9)

Against Me!'s use of Axl Rose in their iconography is an ironic juxtaposition of performances of gender. Laura Jane Grace's vocal performance doubly undermines the figure of Axl Rose in what Judith Hamera calls a "figural economy" of gendered meaning (Hamera 14). For Hamera, a firgural economy is the "circulation of […] material/historical entities, exemplars, and representations throughout the public sphere sometimes constituting a representational

[3] Throughout the article, Eells uses Grace's deadname and pronouns. I have chosen to use her proper name and pronouns in their place throughout this piece, and will do so in further quotations about Grace.

commons" (14). Grace's performance of gender disturbs the representational common of masculinity in rock performance: where Axl Rose's vocal performance shows technical prowess and the ability to manipulate Rose's voice throughout his range, Grace's vocals are raw, shouted, and imprecise. By employing traits that are sonically opposed to those of Axl Rose's, Grace undermines the very understanding of masculinity in rock music. Laura Jane Grace's performances in Against Me!, however, disturb the very binary understandings of gender in rock music.

Grace's identity as a transwoman undermines these notions of gender as it relates to the body. Against Me!'s "Reinventing Axl Rose" can be seen as parody of how gender is inscribed onto bodies and regulated through performances of gender. "Parody itself is not subversive," writes Butler, " and there must be a way to understand what makes certain kinds of parodic reptitions effectively disruptive, truly troubling, and which repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (Butler *Gender Trouble* 189). Axl Rose is a stand in for hegemonic masculinity, but more importantly, the ways in which a dominant culture of binary gender disciplines bodies into performance. Whereas Axl Rose's performance of masculinity is understood as a hyper-stylized extension of his body and his ability to manipulate his body in his performances, Grace's performance of gender detaches the performance from the body itself, calling into question the cultural inscriptions of gender in the first place. "Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (191). To "Reinvent Axl Rose" is to make space for an altogether different approach to gender in rock music more broadly, and it is through this critique of hegemonic notions of gender that Against Me! "performs punk." Performance and performativity

create space for critique, for setting new boundaries, for circulating new images and inscribing bodies with more meanings. Gainesville punk is the historical context and place that stages these performances.

I have arranged this chapter in a convex manner, beginning with the deeply personal and particular, expanding out to larger histories and places, and refocusing it back to Laura Jane Grace's particular performance of gender. I do this to show the ways in which performance scales from the larger social, historical, economic, and cultural contexts to the individual performances of identity. This serves two functions as it relates to Fest: 1) it describes the people, politics, history, ideas, and cultures that are permitted to and by Fest as a site of performance, and 2) to provide a more nuanced understanding of Gainesville punk to help describe Fest as an outgrowth of this punk scene. In the following pages, I conclude this chapter by outlining Gainesville punk's four commitments, and show how they manifest in performances at Fest.

Conclusions

I offer this analysis to map out the Gainesville scene, physically, historically, temporally, and aesthetically. I map the Gainesville scene to situate the scene within a larger understanding of punk music. In the following pages, I conclude this chapter by mapping out four commitments in Gainesville punk, identifying these commitments in the histories and songs I have analyzed, and marking this as a performance of punk ethics. I will map out these four commitments below: Gainesville punk is about 1) play, 2) collaboration, 3) an amateur aesthetic, and 4) an ethic of social advocacy. Understanding these punk commitments helps to frame Fest as a punk festival Knowing Gainesville's history situates this punk scene within the particular Gainesville scene.

Furthermore, it is these commitments that situate and structure Fest into existence, and the ethos of the Gainesville scene is what informs the performances at Fest.

The commitment to play foregrounds the satirical tone and tongue-in-cheek nature of the lyrics, album names, and attitudes above. Play is also an invitation for audience members to participate in the scene as well. For instance, Less Than Jake's "Gainesville Rock City" is humorously comparing Gainesville's punk scene to more famous cities known for their rock music. Radon uses science fiction to critique ecological destruction. Hot Water Music connects their own music with activist movements in the Gainesville scene. Against Me!'s performance of gender parodies gender in the long history of rock music. Play here is just as serious as work, and is often in the service of functioning as critique.

Collaboration is crucial to a scene. The Gainesville scene is not exceptional in its cultivation of collaboration. However, Fest is born from this collaboration. While there are plenty of punk rock scenes with plenty of famous bands that come from those scenes, there is only one Fest and it comes from Gainesville. The spirit of collaboration is an ethic of giving back, of returning to Gainesville and citing Gainesville's influence on an artist's music. Collaboration also creates a more democratic set of interactions; instead of a scene's ethics being determined by a music label or by one band's particular tastes, the Gainesville scene is created, negotiated, and performed by the people within the scene. Fest is run by members of the scene, and members of the scene cultivate a music scene that creates Fest.

Amateur aesthetics further democratize this scene. The music, merchandise, venues, music videos, and other performance of and at Fest are committed to an aesthetic that foregrounds participation without regard to technical prowess or know-how. This decision invites more people to participate in the scene and opens space for subversive performances. A

commitment to "the serious play of performance processes that can unite us as friends, as small communities, as technological learners, and as co-creators of both aesthetic texts and positive memories" (Michalik Gratch 3).

Finally, the Gainesville punk scene is one committed to social advocacy. Punk music has largely been a site for political and social upheaval, where ideas, performances, and sounds subvert a cultural norm in a particular context. What defines the Gainesville scene, however, is the scene's commitment to be made and remade in the spirit of social advocacy. Many alternative music scenes are bound in time and space to a sonic memory and moment; for Seattle it is the grunge era of the late 1980s and early 1990s, for London it is a nihilistic and anarchistic flavor of punk rock that is antagonistic with the monarchy and Thatcher's social order, for Washington, DC it is a brand of hardcore from the 1980s that is socially conscious and musically experimental, and for the Bay area of the 1990s it is pop-punk that highlights the struggle of American suburbia. The Gainesville scene's social advocacy, however, creates an ever-changing scene that is committed to that social advocacy more than it is committed to maintaining an established musical or social order. The Gainesville scene provides space for performances of possibility, and Fest is a platform and a stage for these performances in concentrate.

In this chapter, I have mapped the terrain of the Gainesville scene and set the stage for Fest. I have highlighted how I came to Fest and why I selected it as a site for this dissertation. I have provided a brief history of the Gainesville scene, close readings of music from the scene, provided an argument for how these performances are situated in the historical context of the scene's rise to national prominence, and I have offered some insights on how these performances function as critique. I have done this while framing the Gainesville scene within four commitments: play, collaboration, amateur aesthetics, and social advocacy, and I have argued

that the final point is what creates and recreates performances in the Gainesville scene. In the following chapter, I focus on Fest as a performance. I use theories of performance to understand Fest, and use my understanding of Fest to help enrich the performance studies discipline.

In the pages that follow, I analyze Fest in three ways. I have already provided one framework to understand Fest in its historical context and as it relates to my own identity formation. In this chapter, I have introduced the ways in which musicians from the Gainesville scene have used their performances to critique systems of oppression in areas of gender, ecology, class, and whiteness. In Chapter Two, I will outline the theoretical considerations for this dissertation, mapping out Fest as it relates to theories of performance and framing. In Chapter Three, I will analyze Fest as both complicit in and a subversive force in systems of whiteness. To do this, I will use theories of whiteness and performance to theorize about how various performances in punk rock subvert these notions of whiteness. For Chapter Four, I document the production of an Extended Play, a performance that reflects on my scholarship and position as a fan of Fest. Finally, my last chapter I use ethnographic research to understand the kinds of people who participate in Fest. This ethnographic research will be done digitally, using survey questions. By exploring the multiple ways that performance helps to explain Fest, this dissertation project uses Fest to argue for the radical potential of performance.

Chapter Two: Framing Fest – Theories of Framing and Performance at Fest

This chapter reviews the literature on performance and framing as theoretical underpinnings for my analysis of Fest. In the pages that follow, I argue for the ways that Fest can forward understandings of performance and framing in communication studies more broadly. To do this, I first map out Fest as performance, by providing three understandings of Fest: 1) performance as a metaphor for everyday life and Fest as a site that stages these performances, 2) performance as an object of study and Fest as a performance worth investigating, and 3) performance as a method of inquiry. Next, I outline a body of literature that documents theories of framing. Finally, I argue for understanding Fest as haunting, a way of combining these theories of framing and performance as a critical method for conducting the research in the rest of this dissertation.

Fest as Performance

Fest is a site that provides opportunity to explore the various ways of understanding performance. Ron Pelias and Tracy Stephenson Shaffer provide the following definition for what performance studies scholars research: "performance studies is *the process of dialogic engagement with one's own and others' aesthetic communication through the means of performance*" (15). Performance Studies as a discipline has come to understand performance in at least three crucial ways: performance *as a metaphor to describe everyday life,* performance *as an object of study*, and performance *as a method of inquiry and engagement with the world*.

These three approaches inform my research on Fest. Fest provides a rich opportunity for performance studies research, precisely because it allows for all three facets of performance studies to be explored. In the following chapter, I describe how Fest functions as site to explore performance as a metaphor for everyday life, Fest as a performance worthy of study in and of itself, and Fest as a site that inspires performance research. By mapping out the potential for Fest as a site of investigation within the discipline of performance studies, I situate my research within the discipline and offer Fest as a site that can build upon and add to the history of the performance studies.

Fest as a Metaphor

I am in a classroom at my university, beginning class for the day as an instructor with the usual reminders of due dates. I teach in Florida, and although every building is thoroughly air conditioned, the trek across campus on a day in September on the Gulf Coast of Florida leaves me feeling sweaty and heated. I debate pulling the sleeves up on my dress shirt. Do I want to reveal my tattoos to my class this early in the semester? What if students ask about them? Do my stretched ears with 00-gauge earrings give me away? Do I *look* like somebody who works for a Research 1 university, or do I look like the "Florida instructor" that appears on a Fox News ticker that stokes fears of "radical leftists indoctrinating" college students? What kind of poser cares about what other people think, anyway?

As I announce the due dates for my students' persuasive speeches in my Introduction to Public Speaking course, I remind my students that while I usually respond to their emails on weekends, my availability will be limited during the upcoming weekend because I will be out of town. "Are you going to Fest?" a student asks as I finish my reminder. "How did you know that?" I respond. Fest is well-known among punk rockers, but it is rare to find people outside of

the scene who know about Fest. I search for a version of myself among the students to locate the student who asked the question. “You just look like somebody who goes to Fest,” they respond. I roll my sleeves back down, hiding my Hot Water Music tattoo on the inside of my bicep.

Despite my best efforts, my participation in Fest subculture is revealed to my students, at least to the ones who know where to look. This student’s inquiry speaks to the ways in which performance functions as a metaphor for everyday life. Before class starts, I rehearse my role: do I want to be a “cool” instructor with tattoos and ear piercings? Do I want to role the sleeves down on my arms to hide my tattoos and extend my costume? How do I negotiate the serious role of college instructor with the playful role of Fest attendee? This rehearsal is contingent upon not only my own participation, but of socially-situated, historical, cultural, and other contextual elements. The student in this story is able to identify my personal performance of self with the socially-sanctioned performance of “Fest attendee” through a network of overlapping signifiers and performances. My performance is further enabled and constrained by my body and the ways in which bodies like mine are understood in contemporary culture in the United States. Would a non-binary colleague be able to display tattoos with relatively little at stake? Could a black student’s musical preferences be seen as quirky in the same way that mine are? Even as a white, cis-hetero male, would I be able to perform in this way if I was a graduate student at this institution, say, forty years ago?

In the pages that follow, I explore the ways in which understanding performance as a metaphor helps understand Fest and, in turn, helps understand the cultural context that Fest exists within. To do so, I trace out the ways in which communication scholars more broadly and performance studies scholars specifically understand performance as a metaphor for everyday life. To this end, I understand Fest as the site in which the performance of *one’s true self* is

enabled. When I am at Fest, I fight the urge to shout "nice shirt!" to fellow attendees, a practice that I engage in whenever I am not at Fest. Since Fest serves as a focal point for a culture that grew out of the Gainesville punk scene, people look more like me at Fest than they do in any other aspect of my life. To understand Fest as a metaphor of performance of everyday life, I use Fest to understand what it means when folks hide aspects of their identity in their everyday performances, and offer Fest's embrace of the carnivalesque as a way to grant permission to perform in new ways

The understanding of performance as a metaphor is deeply rooted in the contributions of sociologists and literary studies to the discipline of communication and, thus, performance studies more broadly. Picking up from Kenneth Burke's use of theatrical terms to help provide a method for literary analysis, Goffman borrows terminology from the theater and uses it as a metaphor for everyday life. However influential Goffman's work may be, it does not follow that his work is necessarily an intellectual ancestor to contemporary performance studies. His work might be in the same family structure, but it is twice removed, perhaps divorced a time or two. This is because Goffman's man contribution to communication studies is the frequently unacknowledged, socially constructed ways people perform various roles in everyday life. "When an actor takes on an established social role," he writes, "usually he finds that a particular front has already been established for it. Whether his acquisition of the role was primarily motivated by a desire to maintain the corresponding front, the actor will find that he must do both" (Goffman 27). Goffman's primary concern is what is shown and what is hidden, the backstage construction of a performance, the individual decisions that go into performance, and the social conditions that necessitate a certain kind of performance, and the discrepancies and tensions that arise from these performances (43-6).

However, Pelias and VanOosting situate performance as a necessarily *aesthetic* act. For them, performance is an aspect of aesthetic communication. Performance, as aesthetic communication, must be intentionally marked *as* aesthetic. They write that "aesthetic communication may be defined from the perspective of a performer, a text, or an audience, or from the interaction among all three within a given context … To satisfy one or more conditions of the definition, someone (the "performer" or the "audience") must take *responsibility* for naming an aesthetic intent, quality, or effect … aesthetic communication is not foregrounded in the flow of everyday behavior and discourse" (Pelias and VanOosting 221). This is a departure from Goffman's work, and as the foundational article that shifts the paradigm from oral interpretation to performance studies, stakes a claim on what "counts" as performance. In order for something to "count" as a performance, there must be some agent — a performer, a critic, an audience member, etc. — who considers it a performance.

Fest provides an opportunity to incorporate both understandings of performance and use these to understand performance as a metaphor. On one hand, Fest as an event is comprised of many performances, and many layers of performance, that mark themselves as aesthetic communication. The advertising material, merchandise to be bought during and after the event, the live performances of music, standup comedy, and wrestling are a few of the ways that Fest marks itself as aesthetic. The festival situates itself in what David Picard calls the "festival frame," a "culturally specific frame" that embraces "the performance of embodied play, by means of which individuals test the boundaries of their bodies and identities [and] adopt temporary other identities …" (Picard 612-3). Fest encourages and necessitates performances suspended from the lived realities of everyday life. However, through ethnographic study, this

project understands these performers at Fest, but also interrogates the kinds of people in their everyday lives who would seek out an event like Fest.

Fest allows for understanding performance as a metaphor in understanding the *kinds* of performers who attend Fest in their everyday lives. This is achieved by understanding the identities of these performers. Fest is made up of performers with varying socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, gender, sexual, and national backgrounds. However, people who attend Fest are free to express a different kind of identity, one they do not get to express in their work places or in their daily lives. The goes "if you used to be punk, you never were," which speaks to punk as not only a musical genre and a subculture, but a fundamental aspect of identity. It is true that punk is not an identity in the same way or with the same at stake as, say, one's gender, race, sexuality, or otherwise. Nobody is assigned punk at birth. However, as the aforementioned saying demonstrates, punk becomes a fundamental aspect of one's identity nonetheless.

Punk identity borrows from punk music and punk subcultural choices and the four commitments of punk outlined in the previous chapter 1) play, 2) collaboration, 3) amateur aesthetics, and 4) social advocacy. Being and becoming punk is a performance of a political and cultural ethos that centers an amateur aesthetic (Michalik Gratch). While Michalik Gratch's concept of "sweding" — a film practice that embraces reconfiguring professionally-made films by using amateur aesthetics to create a "cover" of that film — is fundamentally different in both medium and (re)production techniques, punk's readymade tendency toward the amateur aesthetic embraces "the serious play of performance processes that can unite us as friends, as small communities, as technological learners, and as co-creators of both aesthetic texts and positive memories" (3). Fest provides a stage for punks to make and remake their identities by using the

tools available to them, all while embracing an eye toward parody and ironic self-awareness of these various identities.

The ironic nature of many performances of punk speaks to a shared awareness and understanding of the performative nature of identity. "[I]dentity is tenuously constituted in time," writes Judith Butler, "an identity [is] instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (Butler 519). Speaking specifically about gender, Butler argues that gender identity is made through history, class, embodiment, and experience, writing "the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts," and continues, "[b]y dramatic I mean only that the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant *materializing* of possibilities" (521). This is the fundamental distinction between Goffman's understanding of performance in everyday life and Butler's. Goffman's metaphor imposes language from theater to understand socially constructed phenomena outside of the body as *a priori* interaction, Butler's metaphor exists within the body.

Goffman's project understands social interaction as a text, embracing the scriptocentrism that performance scholars that Dwight Conquergood hopes to contest and dismantle within performance studies (Conquergood). Conquergood asserts that understanding the world as a text to be uncovered, read, and interpreted by academics is deeply rooted in colonial and ethnocentric practices (146). In many ways, Goffman's understanding of performance as a metaphor views performances as texts to be interpreted, to help understand a social interaction and the social construction of reality. For Conquergood, performance studies transforms this text-based approach to body. By situating identity in the material conditions of those who perform those identities, Butler suggests an understanding of everyday life not as a text to be read and

interpreted, but as an embodied behavior that is made and remade within various "stages" in everyday life.

This understanding of performance as a metaphor allows performance, as aesthetic communication, to be understood outside the confines of the theater. Identities are performed in various ways given various stagings. Bryant Keith Alexander draws on critical race theories, critical pedagogy, and this understanding of performance as a metaphor to stage his identity as a black instructor in the classroom (Alexander). His performance is marked in ways, particularly in places where whiteness is institutionalized, that denote his history, body, and presence in the classroom. This is very much an "everyday life" stage for Alexander, however, the consideration of context, history, race, and location draw attention to the performative nature of his identity. Julie-Ann Scott's Pollack places the body at the fore. "The disabled body's narrative illuminates the body," she writes, "allowing the audience to move in and among physically disabled identity with the narrator" (Scott 102). Frederick Corey's exploration of sexuality at an Irish pub for members of the LGBTQ+ community understand the pub "as a performance space" that "signif[ies] cultural values" (Corey 147). Corey also provides a justification for extending the concept of performance outside of the theater, writing "the performance of Dublin's 'gay' culture takes place no in the theatre, but rather The George, Dublin's premier gay pub" (146). Various performances are encouraged, inhibited, enabled, and negotiated at the pub, which stages the performance of sexuality. The performance of sexuality is marked in different ways from that of a black educator, but nonetheless the performance of identities in everyday life are contingent upon shared cultural, social, and historical values. Likewise, situating performance in the body allows for performance to be understood outside the confines of the theater and in other spaces that allow such performances to occur.

These are just three ways to understand performance as a metaphor for everyday life, for identity, and for embodiment. Similarly, performance as a metaphor helps me explain and understand Fest. Like Alexander's classroom, Corey's Irish pub, and Scott's staged performance, Fest stages performances of identity. By understanding individual performances of culture, of punk-ness, and of self, using performance as a metaphor allows for a more intimate and accurate understanding of what it means to perform punk at Fest. Fest is a nexus of performances, a site where individual everyday-ness is suspended in favor of collective performance.

Fest as Object of Study

In many of the same ways that an exploration of Fest allows for an understanding of Fest-goers as performers of identity — an identity that is negotiated and re-performed at Fest — Fest itself is a performance that allows for these other, individual performances of self to manifest. In embracing Picard's previously discussed "festival frame" not as a passive staging, openness to understanding Fest as an object of study allows the site to be understood as an *active* performance of that frame. In order for the subversion and play that is typically associated with festivals to occur, Fest must necessarily embrace the active nature of its performance. Fest is not a force of nature, there is nothing about the city of Gainesville Florida, nor about the punk scene that exists that necessitates the existence of Fest. There are plenty of college towns, plenty of them with punk scenes, in plenty of locales across the globe. What makes Fest worthy as an object of study is the particular *performances* of Fest that distinguish it from, say, the rock 'n roll scene in Austin, Texas in the early 1990s (Shank).

Jill Dolan argues for these types of performances to be understood as utopian performance. She begins her work, "Performance, Utopia, and the 'Utopian Performative'" (2001), with the following research question: why is there a desire to perform together in the first

place? She offers the performative utopia as a model for playing, making, and for political entanglements and arguments to be fleshed out through performances. “My argument is that theatre and performance create citizens and engage democracy as a participatory forum in which ideas and possibilities for social equity and justice are shared” (Dolan 456). Dolan offers utopian performance — the performance of no “place” in particular — as an understanding of these democratic performances. However, Fest is certainly anything but a utopian “no place.” One only needs to peruse their online merchandise store to understand that a large part of Fest’s performance is contingent on “Floridiana,” the use of iconography, myths, symbols, folklore, and popular culture that invokes an understanding of Florida. Alligators adorn t-shirts, swamps and swamp monsters are seen sunbathing in Ray Ban-style sunglasses. The ever-popular “Fest Friends Forever” merchandise features a neon-pink outline of the state of Florida beneath bright blue script font, invoking the iconography from the1980s police drama Miami Vice. Fest might be a lot of things, but a “nowhere” is not one of them.

It is through the festival frame that we understand how this utopia is performed and how Fest and Floridiana more broadly work to create this utopia. The subversion of everyday life dis-and-un-places Gainesville, the utopia created in this momentary bracketing of Gainesville-but-not-quite. The city of Gainesville is home to the University of Florida, whose athletic department are known as the Florida Gators. On weekends during the Fall semester, over 88,000 fans of the Gators descend upon the city of Gainesville, whose usual population is roughly 133,000 to watch the Florida Gators college football team at Ben Hill Griffin Stadium, appropriately nicknamed “The Swamp.” The university and the accompanying athletic department events are a large economic, social, and cultural driver for the city of Gainesville. According to an article in the Tampa Bay Times, the University of Florida estimates $70 million in revenue are generated in

Gainesville for football alone (Baker). College towns throughout America have respectable independent music scenes, most of which are left over from the rise of the college rock radio format in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, Fest exists largely by chance. Every year, the University of Florida and the University of Georgia agree to play football against each other at a neutral site in Jacksonville, Florida, the biggest city that could split the distance between the two universities. While most college football rivalries are played on a home-and-home basis (one team visits the other team's stadium one year, and the following year the favor is returned), this tradition guarantees that the Florida Gators will be out of town on a specific weekend every year — taking many of their football-loving fans with them to Jacksonville — and allowing Fest to occur. Fest's utopian performance is largely contingent upon its place, however, the subversion of this place — a college town with a popular football team — transforms the place and creates the performance.

Diana Taylor puts this understanding of performance as an object of study succinctly, writing that her investment in "performance studies derives less from what it *is* than what it allows us to *do*" (Taylor 16). Taylor's project takes Conquergood's goal to task, using performance to escape the scriptocentrism of contemporary academic projects. To understand the *doing* that performance undertakes, Taylor offers the concept of the scenario. "Instead of focusing on patterns of cultural expression in terms of texts and narratives," she writes, "we might think about them as scenarios that do not reduce gestures and embodied practices to narrative description" (16). Performance as an object of study is the study of doing and making. I understand Fest as a scenario, a site that creates and allows particular performances, and itself a performance of embodied practices, cultural values, and contextual moments.

Performance as a Method

Performance is a method of intellectual inquiry and engagement. By doing performance, researchers are locating the very embodied knowledge that performance seeks to understand within their own bodies. If, as I have argued throughout, performance as a metaphor answers the question of "who" is performing, and performance as an object of study answers the "what" and the "where," then understanding performance as a method answers the question of "how." Arguing for a distinction between *performance* ethnography and *performed* ethnography, D. Soyini Madison calls for performed ethnography as a method, as a "theatrically framed re-presentation" of ethnographic work (Madison 169). For Madison, this staging of ethnographic work is a political and ethical project, one that also attends to the making of performances and the creative potential of staging performance.

For this project, I will stage a "release show" for an EP (extended play) record of my own original music based on my research and the style of many of Fest's musical acts. The EP will not be a one-to-one performance of ethnographic notes, rather, it will embrace the cultural performances and performances of identity at Fest as inspiration for the record. I will record three to five songs, create an album from these recordings, and then perform these songs live to celebrate the release of the record. Throughout the recording, production, preparation, and performance process, I use performance as a method to help understand Fest as it becomes performed by and through my body. The performance of Fest will be an aesthetic endeavor — I will make choices about the songs and the performance of these songs that embrace artistic ethos of DIY, amateur aesthetics, and punk-ness more broadly — but it will also be a performance of politics, critique, and ethics.

Madison derives much of her ethical and methodological commitments from the work of Dwight Conquergood. Conquergood asserts that performing one's fieldwork, especially if the performer receives negative feedback for their performance, "signals most clearly that ethnographic performance is a form of conduct deeply enmeshed in moral matters" ("Performing as a Moral Act" 2). Conquergood argues that performance ought to be dialogical, that is, in conversation with the research, the culture of the other, the audience, and one's own relationship with the performance. He provides a map that locates dialogic performance at the center of competing, contradictory poles: The Enthusiast's Infatuation, The Curator's Exhibitionism, The Skeptic's Cop-Out, and The Custodian's Rip-Off (5). Each of these poles are examples of what is *not* dialogic performance because the performer is not engaged in genuine conversation with one aspect of their research. Dialogic performance, then, is an ethical commitment to performing with consideration for the needs and values of all stakeholders in the performance.

Conquergood's ethical commitments are both active — something that the research consciously does and makes an effort to do — and implemented during a performance. However, by foregrounding dialogue Conquergood grants agency to the performer, and the Other that is implicated in the performance as a secondary but important component in the performance. Dialogue is necessarily about talking with and about an Other through active engagement. This ethical commitment is necessary because it acknowledges the needs of the Other through dialogue. However, Conquergood himself believes that performance ought to extend beyond "making not faking" into "breaking and remaking," calling into question the very paradigms that comprise the discipline of performance studies and its associated research practices ("Of Caravans and Carnivals" 138). Thinking of dialogue as the most equitable and engaged way to communicate and perform with others works insofar as considering others, however, dialogue

and the commitments of dialogic performance can be extended by incorporating understandings of listening. Conquergood writes, "[m]etaphors of sound, on the other hand, privilege temporal process, proximity, and incorporation. Listening is an interiorizing experience, a gathering together, a drawing together, a drawing in, whereas observation sizes up exteriors" ("Rethinking Ethnography" 183).

Listening foregrounds the other. Observation in fieldwork extends Conquergood's understanding of the political potential for performance in a few ways. For one, observation necessarily prioritizes the eyes and writing, the very scriptocentrism that performance seeks to complicate and critique. Secondly, dialogue assumes equity in a conversation. Given the colonial history of the ethnographic project in the Western academy, it is ahistorical and unrealistic to presume equity in the dialogue. However, listening reverses the order of operations in the dialogue. Chris McRae extends Conquergood's commitments by forwarding the concept and methodological potential of performative listening ("Listening to a Brick" 337). Performative listening prioritizes the other embedded within the dialogue. It suggests that learning from an other requires listening first before the dialogic act can occur. Listening requires an embodied attention to senses that sidestep the visual, the written, and the personal in favor of the sonic and shared.

McRae understands performative listening as a method that recognizes the "potentially transformative role of the researcher as listener" (*Performative Listening* 32). He also understands this research method as a performance in and of itself writing "[a]s a performance, listening is a relational practice and process that can be performed in a variety of different ways with a variety of different consequences. In particular, performative listening is a performance of hearing and learning from others in qualitative research" (32). Listening embraces the

understanding of performance as a method. In both works from McRae, he listens to, for, and with Miles Davis as a way to understand history, (auto)biography, context, music, culture, relationships, race, gender, and place. In much the same way, Fest allows me to engage in performative listening as a method for understanding similar topics in my research.

While the saying "if you used to be punk then you never were" might be true at the level of identity or cultural ethos, *becoming* punk is a rite of passage accomplished by listening. As a teenager, I illegally downloaded mp3 files on my family's shared desktop computer over dial-up internet. This was during the height of pop punk's popularity; Blink 182 was on MTV, ska was the soundtrack for numerous comedies, and video games like *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* and *Crazy Taxi* featured tons of punk music. Although this might be how I got into punk music more broadly, I remember being drawn to the Gainesville band Against Me! For their references to Florida, in both artwork, lyrics, and song titles. I could only imagine what it was like to be a cool skateboarder in Southern California, or a street punk in New York City, or the storied clubs where Green Day and Rancid cut their teeth in Northern California. But when I *listened* to Against Me!, I was able to locate myself, a sense of place, and inevitably the culture of Fest bands. I had to listen before I could understand, and I had to learn through listening. Performative listening fosters an understanding about performance that allows for this kind of learning.

Performance provides multiple ways of engaging with sites like Fest. Performance as a metaphor helps understand the different identities that come to Fest. This metaphor allows the festival framework to be seen and understood, and the metaphor distinguishes the aesthetic production that performance studies scholars investigate from the metaphor of performance as a descriptor for the social construction of everyday life. Performance as an object of study permits

an understanding of Fest that embraces the *making* that occurs within and among participants at Fest. Understanding Fest as a performance embraces the dynamic ways that Fest is always in the process of making and remaking. This is most important during covid-19 and the subsequent public health reactions to the virus: in an effort to keep their participants safe, organizers at Fest decided to postpone 2020's Fest until 2021, instead providing video live streams throughout the year in its place. And finally, understanding performance as a method allows me to engage more deeply with Fest through performance ethnography and performative listening.

The relationship between the methodologies of frame analysis and performance ethnography have long been intertwined. Victor and Edith Turner write, "[t]o frame is to discriminate a sector of sociocultural actions from the general on-going process of a community's life" (140). They continue to assert that framing offers possibilities for sociocultural groups to be reflexive, within "a bordered space and a privileged time within which images and symbols of what has been sectioned off can be 'relived,' scrutinized, assessed, revalued, and, if need be, remodeled and rearranged" (140). Frames are contested spaces that articulate and re-articulate social and cultural values. These frames situate participants from within and through exclusion while setting the stage for interactions within the frame. It is my argument that this negotiation occurs at, within, about, and through the embodied act of performance.

It is with this understanding of framing that I justify incorporating this methodology and theoretical tool into my investigation of Fest. Frame analysis opens up the possibilities for exploration of this site, revealing contested values sets, beliefs, sounds, stakeholders, and other performed phenomena. In the pages that follow, I map the concept of framing as a tool for understanding Fest. First, I will review selected literature on the concept of framing as it pertains to communication studies, and ethnography, performance, and festivals more specifically. Next, I

map the understanding of framing as it relates to understanding festivals more broadly. Finally, I articulate the ways in which framing may help to develop and curate interview questions and other ethnographic methods of data collection to help guide my research on Fest. By extending the concept of framing to understand performance at Fest, I articulate the ways in which frames are *made* by performers.

Auslander explicitly links performance and theories of framing, with the underlying argument that sound must first be framed as music, and that frame subsequently conditions the experiences and performances within and relation to the frame (Auslander 5). "Once we understand that a particular event has been framed as a performance of music," he writes, "we know the terms in which we are to perceive, think about, and interpret the situation, and we know that those terms are different from the ones that would enable us to understand and interpret another kind of situation, such as the performance of a play" (5). Auslander continues his analysis by setting up genre and persona as analytical tools that follow from framing by which to understand music as performance. For him, the frame is a musical performance, generally speaking, genre cues certain types of musical performances, and persona understands the performers themselves (6-14).

For my own project, I extend Auslander's conceptualization of framing to not only include a music framework, but to extend the frame beyond the music to an underlying cultural and social structure. The music is certainly important in the performance of Fest, however, it is my contention that the music is only a *component* of this framework that organizes experience. This is why Fest provides a fruitful opportunity for exploration, and why framing provides considerable theoretical groundwork for linking the musical performances with other performances at and of Fest. In the pages that follow, I map framing as a theoretical

understanding within the field of communication. Then, I show how the festival is the frame by which all performances related to Fest spring from, including the music.

Gregory Bateson theorizes and articulates the concept of the frame using the concept of play to describe frames. He argues that frames are metacommunicative forms of interaction that is two levels of abstraction away from the subject of a particular interaction. Using the example "the cat is on the mat," Bateson notes that the first level of abstraction is the use of words to communicate in the first place ("the word 'cat' has no fur and cannot scratch") ("A Theory of Play" 178). The second order of abstraction is the frame that begets the first level exchange of words and meaning. This level of abstraction contains the conditions that permit successful communication at the first level of abstraction. If the first level of abstraction in a communicative process answers questions such as *who* or *what* the nature of the subject is, the second level agrees upon the contexts within the interaction, what is *meant* and *not meant* in any given interaction. Bateson uses the concept of play to elaborate on this understanding of frame:

> … as in the case of the play frame, the frame is involved in the evaluation of the messages which it contains, or the frame merely assists the mind in understanding the contained messages by reminding the thinker that these messages are mutually relevant and the messages outside the frame may be ignored … a frame is metacommunicative. Any message, which either explicitly or implicitly defines a frame, *ipso facto* gives the receiver instructions or aids in his attempt to understand the messages included in the frame. ("A Theory of Play" 188)

For Bateson, the difference between *play* and *not play* goes beyond meaning and, rather, the frame allows interactions to derive meaning from sources beyond the taken-for-granted. In play, a bite *denotes* certain meanings and behaviors, yet within the frame of play these meanings are

suspended and altogether new and often contradictory meanings are made that correspond with the frame. Bateson's concept of framing is picked up by scholars later precisely this reason: understanding frames allow scholars to understand not only the meaning of what is happening, but also the conditions that predicate these real-time interpretations and interactions to occur in the first place.

Bateson expands on play to help him understand framing in "The Message 'This is Play,'" a transcription of a presentation given in 1955. In it, Bateson describes play as a process of exclusion that structures intellectual frameworks and conceptual categories. He provides an example of a chair; when a person is asked to describe chairs, they do so in part by creating a related category of non-chairs. However, there are categories that are so out of bounds — Bateson uses the example of "tomorrow" as a non-chair — that they are not used to define the chair. A desk is within the bounds of what Bateson considers the "class of proper not-chairs," whereas "tomorrow" is a "class of improper not-chairs" ("This is Play" 146). Play, for Bateson, is the structuring of these intellectual frameworks so that participants in play may identify boundaries while expanding, defining, and defying those boundaries. The process of play signals the boundaries of a frame, both to participants within the frame itself and to those outside of the frame. When a child pretends to be an archbishop, there are only two objective possibilities: either the child *is* an archbishop or *is not*. However, play does not call into question an *objective* reality, but rather, play exists to establish the framework of a *conceptual* reality. In order for the child's performance of archbishop to work, the child must simultaneously embrace understandings of what it *means* to be an archbishop, how the child intends to *play* as archbishop, but more importantly for Bateson, how the play necessarily creates structures that exclude concepts that are "improperly" not archbishops (152). The performance of play within a

frame does not all into question an objective reality. Through performance, frames are negotiated, renegotiated, and established as conceptual maps that draw attention to the frame.

Erving Goffman much like Bateson, claims that he is not entirely interested in objective claims to reality, but rather, by asking the question "*[u]nder what circumstances do we think things are real?* (emphasis in the original)" (*Frame Analysis* 2). Goffman links not only his work, but Gregory Bateson, Alfred Shutz, and others' work to the intellectual trajectory set by psychologist and American pragmatist William James, a philosophical vantage point that rejects both philosophical materialism and idealism in favor of a middle ground, one that later lends itself to theories of social construction (Bowen). For Goffman, a frame is a word he uses to identify "definitions of a situation [that] are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events — at least social ones — and our subjective involvement in them," while frame analysis is "a slogan [he uses] to refer to the examination in these terms of the organizing experience" (10-11). Goffman is concerned here with *social* organizational patterns that allow certain behaviors and interactions to occur within the frame.

What is interesting about Goffman here is that, while he insists on rejecting hard and fast distinctions between reality and fiction within the subjects of study, he does create a distinction between the work that he is doing — real science — and the "less robust" studies within the arts and the humanities (12). For the purposes of my project, it is important to trace Goffman's use of humanistic and aesthetic terminology to help describe social life, so that I may, in turn, use understandings of framing to describe cultural and aesthetic life. In other words: while Goffman makes no qualms with borrowing from theater to help explain social phenomena, I want to make the case that theories used to explain social phenomena can provide tools to understand cultural and artistic phenomena.

Goffman uses performance as a metaphor for understanding social life in what he calls social roles and social fronts (*Presentation of Self* 25). "A 'performance,'" writes Goffman, "may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (15). For Goffman, the metaphor of performance provides explanatory power to understand influence, participants, observers, audience members, and most importantly for him, the patterns of behavior and the social conditions that predicate these performances. Later he rejects what many have wrongly interpreted Goffman to mean, for him "[a]ll the world is not a stage — certainly the theater isn't entirely" (*Frame Analysis* 1). Performance is not a theatrical, aesthetic purpose for Goffman. Rather, it is simply a metaphor to *describe* social phenomena, an invocation of the arts and humanities, not for their own sake, but for their explanatory vocabulary that ultimately rejects the validity of the forms that they are originally meant describe. While this is certainly a bit of disciplinary and intellectual framing — to be a bit on-the-nose here — that posits social science as perhaps more rigorous and socially meaningful than aesthetic pursuits, I hope to recover framing for the arts and humanities.

The justification for this is one of intellectual and philosophical trajectory. Goffman links Bateson's frame to the philosophy of William James. James' intellectual protege John Dewey takes up American pragmatism and applies this philosophical approach to education, political philosophy, and most importantly for this project, the arts (Pickens). For Dewey, the aesthetic *is* experience, and that arbitrary distinctions between artistic life and social life are predicated on false assumptions about what makes an object art in the first place:

> So extensive and pervasive are the ideas that set Art upon a remote pedestal, that many a person would be repelled rather than pleased if told that he enjoyed his casual recreations, in part at least, because of their [a]esthetic quality. The arts which today have most

> vitality for the average person are things he does not take to be arts: for instance, the movie, jazz music, the comic strip, and, too frequently, newspaper accounts of love-nests, murders, and exploits of bandits. For what he knows as art is relegated to the museum and gallery, the unconquerable impulse towards experiences enjoyable in themselves finds such outlet as the daily environment provides. Many a person who protests against the museum conception of art, still shares the fallacy from which that conception springs … The factors that have glorified fine art by setting it upon a far-off pedestal did not arise within the realm or art nor is their influence confined to the arts. For many persons an aura of mingled awe and unreality encompasses the 'spiritual' and the 'ideal' while 'matter' has become by contrast a term of depreciation, something to be explained away or apologized for. The forces at work are those that have removed religion as well as fine art from the scope of the common or community life. The forces have historically produced so many of the dislocations and divisions of modern life and thought that art could not escape their influence. (Dewey 4-5)

The distinction between art and social life is arbitrarily constructed by stakeholders who seek to describe a world that simply does not exist. If we apply Dewey's understanding of the art as experience to Goffman's understanding performance, it can then be recovered as not simply a metaphor that borrows from the arts to describe social life, but rather, a word to describe the ways in which social lives and the aesthetic exist in the first place. In the same way, I wish to recover framing so that it is not a metaphor borrowed from the social sciences to describe cultural and aesthetic phenomena, rather, I pick up framing *as a way to understand the experiences* that denote particular performances. After all: what is "art" if not the explicit

pointing towards the very "play" and "not play" that Bateson uses to understand frames to begin with?

Nonetheless, Goffman's understanding of a framework provides answers to the very foundational question of most ethnographic research: "what is going on here?" Goffman labels this type of framework primary, one that is "of a particular social group [that] constitute[s] a central element of its culture …" (*Frame Analysis* 27). The primary framework is identified by the individual participating within it, whom always-already understands the stakes within the frame: "who is in the frame?" "where is it situated?" and "how do I fit within the frame?" are all taken-for-granted markers of a primary frame. Goffman provides a thorough description of how frames form, are articulated, and negotiated from both within and outside of the frame.

The question of "what is going on here?" informs the sort of questions that comprise my ethnographic work. This is useful for a deeper understanding of Fest. While the obvious answer to the question would be "a music Festival," asking questions that encourage participants to describe Fest in their own words will lead to a more rich and nuanced understanding of Fest. To answer this question of framing, participants will be encouraged to describe the events, the kinds of people that attend Fest, and their own engagement with the music festival. In my view, this rejects any sort of top-down model of understanding Fest. Sure, the participants are subjected to marketing from Fest and are encouraged to engage in consumption as a primary means of engaging with Fest, however, allowing participants to describe Fest on their own terms allows the participants to frame the festival for themselves.

This understanding of framing is a departure from how the theoretical tool is understood in other, adjacent sub-disciplines within Communication Studies, such as in Media Studies. Communication Studies scholar Robert M. Entman extends Goffman's idea of framing to

mediated texts, providing more concrete ways to understand the concept within the field of communication studies. For Entman, framing "select[s] some aspects of a perceived reality and make[s] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman 52). Speaking on texts specifically — a departure from Bateson and Goffman's use of frame to describe social phenomena in "real time" — Entman argues that framing is the process by which information may become salient, or "more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences" (53). His example here showcases framing, and argues for framing to be included in a research analysis that undertakes four debates: 1) audience autonomy, 2) journalistic objectivity, 3) content analysis, and 4) public opinion and normative democratic theory (56-57). Entman's uses for framing apply specifically to understanding mass media and journalistic endeavors, however, for the purposes of this study his clear definition of framing and discrete mapping of its functions prove to be most useful. In this understanding of frame, frames are agenda-setting devices curated to tell audiences the bounds of the frame and the acceptable terms of discussion within the frame. However, by allowing participants in my study, I situate the framing mechanism in the audience itself.

John A. Noakes and Hank Johnston's extends work beyond everyday social interactions and media texts to protest events. For them, "framing functions in much the same way as a frame around a picture: attention gets focused on what is relevant and important away from extraneous items in the field of view" (Noakes and Johnston 2). What's crucial about Noakes and Johnston's contributions to theories of framing, particularly for my project, is twofold: 1) they expand the understanding of framing beyond discrete interactions between two individuals and extend the understanding to include collective action and interaction, and 2) they articulate a way in which

frames can come to define social events. For them, frames not only situate the crisis within the realm of protest, within a problem that requires social organizing that participants seek to resolve, but the frame can also speak to those outside of the movement. They write, "the processes of amplification and articulation make [it] clear [that] strategic framing is not so much about the creation of new ideas of the presentation of the greatest truth, but the slicing together of old and existing ideas and the strategic punctuating of certain issues, events, or beliefs" (8). They articulate the frame of protest's relationship with a master frame, a frame that sets the stakes for protest movements. To me, their description of *frame of protest* and *master frame* closely resemble both Marxist understandings of ideology and hegemony (Gramsci), and liberal concepts of publics and counterpublics (Warner). Nonetheless, their contributions point to the competing, often contradictory and subversive ways that frames can negotiate social problems. Frames are not only deeply nuanced within the confines of the frame, but in the conversations had with those outside of the frame as well. This understanding of framing is closer to my understanding. By articulating frames of protest against master frames, Noakes and Johnston provide agency for engagement within frames. Frames are not just passively accepted, but rather, frames are always in a constant state of negotiation, critique, and subversion.

Finally, Stephen Nachmanovitch's fully extends Bateson's concept of play beyond human interaction and into the realm of the arts. Taking up play as a specific frame, Nachmanovitch expands on Bateson's understanding of play to encompass metacommunicative behaviors that extend human understandings of the world beyond a literal understandings of "thing-ness." Play, for Nachmanovitch, is frame that encompasses art and art-making, the performances and presentations of these artistic forms always-already exist within this frame. He

argues for the creative power of understanding the frame of play, propelling the world beyond what-is, and arguing for play's potential in the grammatical infinitive tense:

What performers do is not the noun *improvisation*— which can so easily be turned into yet another artistic object to be pinned down — it is improvising. If we want to avoid abstract epistemology and ask how to stamp out nouns in ordinary life, the answer is improvising, playing in real time. Playing can propel us right out of the limiting mindset of things-and-forces." (Nachmanovitch 13-14)

Here, Nachmanovitch recovers frames for understanding artistic and cultural practices. What is more, the emphasis on the infinitive tense here makes an explicit link to performance studies. Ron Pelias and Tracy Stephenson Shaffer write:

> It should be clear that to think of human communication as performance is to reject the stereotypic, negative connotations sometimes associated with performance. Too perform in the presence of others is not a means of hiding one's 'real self.' It is not a question of concealing who one is behind a number of public roles. The root of performance is to make, to do — not to fake. (Pelias and Stephenson Shaffer 6)

Performing is making, the abstract act of play that validates art on its own terms. "In contemporary culture," Nachmanovitch writes, "we are concerned that everything we do be useful for something" (Nachmanovitch 18). By recovering Bateson's concept of play and using this framework to understand play on its own terms, Nachmanovitch sets up a study for performance *as an aesthetic text*, performances *within the frame of play and aesthetics*, and a deeper understanding of performance as the act of constructing and reconstructing frames.

The arts have creative potential. Performance, as an aesthetic practice, is committed to making, a commitment it places within the body. By extending these concepts from Bateson,

Goffman, and Entman to understand aesthetic texts and not just media texts or everyday interactions, Nachmanovitch provides the room to play with the understanding of framing itself. By extending this understanding of play as a framework, I extend Nachmanovitch's understanding of play to performance. With performance, play happens in the body. Performance, then, allows frames to be negotiated, managed, made, remade, and critiqued. If Goffman's frame originally asked "what's going on here?" this approach, blending frame and performance studies, asks "who is making this happen?" This is a departure from theories of social construction to theories of performativity. By centering the participants within a particular frame, instead of interpreting interactions to help understand the frame, performance gives agency to actors in that frame. In everyday interaction, frames are taken for granted, *a priori* ways of knowing interactions and reading complex systems of communication and metacommunication. Performance understood as an aesthetic play-frame, however, reveals the making of the frame. The perpetual making of frames through performance becomes most apparent during events where the social phenomena of every day life are inverted: during festivals.

Frame and Festival

Victor Turner maps *liminal* spaces, spaces that mark a social transition, usually in pre-industrial societies, and *liminoid* spaces, or a more commodified space that allows for similar breaks within industrial capitalist societies. The distinction of liminoid is made to understand the ways in which industrial societies segment off time, with one's work taking up a majority of time while leisure comprises the other moments in one's life. For Turner, this leads to an understanding of "play" in binary opposition to "work," and thus, practices like "ritual" — a

behavior that performs social work — in similar opposition to "theatre" which many view as frivolous play. This distinction is a byproduct of capitalist society for Turner.

"Theatre, in Western liberal-capitalist society is a liminoid process, set in the liminoid time of leisure between the role-playing times of 'work'" (Turner 114). This statement does two things: 1) it critiques the ways in which contemporary industrial societies demarcate work and play to separate spheres because, for Turner, play does work, and 2) employs the idea of role-playing and performance not as a metaphor from the arts to describe everyday life, instead arguing that the role-playing on stage and the role-playing in the work place are the same phenomenon: a performance. He continues:

> The difference between ordinary and ritual (or extraordinary) life, is certainly a matter of framing and quantity, not of quality. In ritual, roles are separated from their embedment in the ongoing flow of social life and singled out for special attention, or else they were seen as points of entry and exit on a continuous process … with some interesting transitional symbolism, and the shadowy appearance of the lineaments of the antistructural 'individual' at some places and times. But in these societies actin was mainly role-playing; the *persona* was the dominant criterion of individuality, of identity. Thus, the great *collective* which articulated *personae* in hierarchical or segmentary structure was the real protagonist, both in life and ritual … But now we detect an interesting contrast, even a paradox. For Western theatre has often posited, like Western art generally, a contrast between everyday life, whether work or that part of non-work devoted to institutionalized concerns, membership of family, sports club, charity organization … and *truly* antistructural life (private religions, taking part in the arts as creator or spectator, and the like). The *persona* 'works,' the *individual* 'plays'; the former

> is governed by economic necessity, the latter is 'entertained'; the former is in the indicative mood of culture; the latter in the subjunctive or optative moods …
>
> (Turner 115)

The different frames of play and work here are byproducts of contemporary society flipping what Turner understands to be the pre-industrial order. The goal here is to collapse the distinction between the frames of work and play. The anxiety in Nachmanovitch's work about play in the arts, and his argument for rethinking play as a creative frame, is predicted in Turner's work. More importantly, this understanding of theater *as an aspect of everyday life,* a product of the social conditions in Western, liberal society, necessarily argues that the kind of play being done in theater can be done in everyday life as well.

Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs work to further complicate the distinction between aesthetic performance and the performance of everyday life. In They create a taxonomy for understanding the ways in which performances frame social phenomena, as well as the ways in which frames create and encourage certain performances. Their goal is to try and break from the linguistic tradition of relating meaning directly with words and language itself. Many of their arguments are taken up by Butler to critique the performative nature of heteronormative gender (Butler). However, their departure from J. L. Austin's understanding of performativity — where words have a one-to-one relationship with actions "in real life" — mirrors Butler's. Their approach foregrounds performance and poetics as ways of understanding a framework or event and not to understand meaning between an utterance and the subsequent action performed by those who hear it. Their work bridges the previous era of framing and performance with the contemporary understanding of performativity and the then-newly emerging discipline of performance studies more broadly.

Albert Piette, picks up Turner's call to understand the festival framework in contemporary society. Piette, too, comes to understand the concept of the frame through an understanding of Goffman. However, in tracing French sociology's festival and carnival studies tradition, Piette concludes that a single frame (he provides Durkheim's destructive, transgressive frame as an example) is inadequate to understand festivals in contemporary Western society. At the intersections of everyday life and fiction, order and disorder, Piette argues that festivals are organized under the "specific framework of the festival context," one that "constitutes … an interstitial space-time in the social system" (Piette 40-41). Borrowing from Goffman's concept of keying, festivals allow for behaviors, performances, and meanings to occur in ways that are not permitted in everyday life, while paradoxically mimicking certain aspects of everyday life. "The carnival involves a shifting away from the everyday hub of life," he writes, "[i]t detaches one of its expressions from the everyday and reframes the meaning in another context. Thus, the carnival appears as a regulated challenge to establish limits, a special play authorizes an intermingling of ordinarily incompatible themes and types of behavior" (51). This understanding of the festival framework applies Turner's concept of the *liminal* to the *liminoid*; the festival creates space and time to perform an in-between-ness, a performance that is rooted in both everyday life and aesthetic transgression and creation.

Finally, David Picard's completes Turner's project, arguing for the socially meaningful work that occurs during the festival frame. He argues that the festival frame "describes a kind of socially constructed 'recipe' for people to deal with the smaller and larger life crisis they face in their daily lives, by both giving these meaning and by leading people through an embodied process that eventually allows them to go on with their lives" (Picard 601). Picard foregrounds embodiment and framing here, but perhaps his metaphorical use of the term "recipe" is most

evocative, summarizing the tenuous relationship between social construction and performance. On one hand, a recipe provides a frame and a script for individual actors to create foods that have already been created. However, as anybody who has ever messed up a recipe or added their own ingredients to make a dish "their own" could tell you, it is in the performance — the making — of executing the recipe where the creative potential exists. Frames might tell you what is going on — somebody is attempting to make a family member's famous soup — but it is performance that distinguishes every stew made from every previous stew derived from the recipe.

Picard articulates five aspects of the festive frame: context, narrative, dramaturgy, circulation, and play. He also situates the subjects within his study within the context of a "global reorganization of economic processes in the 1970s and 1980s," in what is commonly referred to as neoliberalism (602). Picard maps the contemporary participation in festivals onto the spread of neoliberalism as a way to both appropriate the dominant modes of this economic order, while simultaneously subverting that very order. Picard makes no hard and fast delineation between industrial and pre-industrial, or non-industrial festival performances and instead embraces contemporary festivals as an embodiment of an increasingly global social order. In this era, festive frames are mediated, and "suggest an overarching metaphorical framework for social life, entailing simultaneously a myth of origin, a value guide to exemplary behavior, and a story explaining the separations within the social world" (603).The festival frame allows for is performers to engage in creation myths, critiques and understandings of the larger social order, and understandings of their individual lives away from the festive space.

What's interesting in Picard's work is he extends the time in which festivals can exist. While aforementioned scholarship makes clear when festivals start and when they end, Picard argues that festivals linger in the minds of participants even beyond the temporal event. "In the

post-festive context, the physical space of the festival is usually quickly removed, people go home, and a new cycle starts," he writes, "[t]he festival continues in the social memory and affective links and sense of belonging the common experience has generated" (607-8). In doing so, Picard rejects previous understandings of contemporary festival culture, of understanding a fundamental difference "primitive" and "modern," writing "such a distinction seems an unnecessary epistemic artifice" (608). Instead, he argues that "… festivals are not mechanically 'reproducing' established forms and structural positions of political and social order," but rather "provide space for cultural creativity and new forms of circulation" (610). For Picard, the festival frame is a locus, a site for everyday performance to negotiate political, social, and cultural meanings.

I have adopted Picard's definition of the festive frame moving forward. "The festive emerges as a specific frame," he writes "allowing people to deal with different forms of life crisis." Further, he argues that the element of "performance of embodied play, by means of which test the boundaries of which individuals test the boundaries of their bodies and identities, adopt temporary other identities, engage in sexual and sensual pleasures, and also re-enact the mythical narratives that provide metaphors to think about the order of social life and the wider cosmos" (613). Here, the festive frame is epistemological and performance within it is ontological. The performance within the frame is always self-regulating and self-perpetuating, the freedom to play and perform identities, to create and participate in an aesthetic enterprise, reshapes every new festival frame in the image of those who perform within it. Fest, like the festivals Picard studies, creates, manages, and performs these festive frames.

The festival frame organizes Fest into a cohesive performance. Without Fest, the components would comprise distinct, discrete performances that may or may not overlap: punk

music, the city of Gainesville, merchandise vendors, the music industry, DIY and independent music scenes, the multiplicity of musical genres presented at Fest, independent wrestling organizations, comedians, restaurants, and other performances become participants at Fest under the festival frame. Yes, the musical performance is an important aspect of the festival frame that gives it purpose and cohesion, but it is the festival frame that allows for Fest to be understood as noteworthy. For instance, many of the same groups and practices could be found at the Vans Warped Tour or Riot Fest in Chicago. If music was the dominant frame, as Auslander asserts, then studying Fest might not be all too much different from studying these other punk rock music festivals. What is interesting about fest is how its festival frames, conditions, and articulates all other performances within it. This understanding of Fest as not simply a musical performance, but a culturally, socially, historically, and geographically-specific performance framed in a particular way informs my ethnographic research. In the pages that follow, I articulate how this understanding of framing informs my research questions and my interview questions for my research.

Conclusions

The term frame exists as a visual metaphor. Frames house works of art, delineating the aesthetic from the everyday, and the noteworthy from the mundane; a work of art is separated from the wall by a frame, a family portrait is framed as a way to visually capture the participants in the family unit, my diploma is framed on my wall to denote an academic accomplishment. Frames serve as cues for observers to come to an understanding, to begin an evaluation, and as a way of making sense of the content within the frame. Fest is framed as and by the festival, an event that permits certain behaviors and performances and constrains others. To conclude this chapter, I interrogate this framework and extend the understanding of frame beyond the visual.

During the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019 and beyond, a global pandemic provided a framework that created liminoid spaces, a subversion of an established socio-economic-cultural order. In the case of Fest, like many other musical events that had to find a way to carry on during the pandemic, the festival was extended beyond the boundaries of a weekend in Gainesville, FL. Fest was streamed across various social media platforms, mediated through video streaming. Live music became live *streaming* music, devices and living spaces once used for either work, education, or play were now forced to share space, energy, and time on a singular device. In an era where the very foundations of contemporary North American life became highly mediated, how much subversion and carnivalesque is really happening at Fest if it is asking its attendees to participate in the same ways that their workplaces, schools, medical visits, and family get-togethers were asking them to participate in during the pandemic? Is a festival still a festival if the frame now includes your home computer within it?

"In a world that is *really upside down*, the true is a moment of the false*,"* Guy Debord famously writes in his foundational work on the spectacle (Debord 9). Writing in response to the widespread adaptation of television and mass media in post-World War II, Western, liberal societies, Debord critiques mediated relationships and meaning-making. These images, and the capitalist apparatuses that produce and distribute them, replace experience, causing further alienation in capitalist societies. "The spectacle is not a collection of images," he writes. "it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images" (7). Debord's concern with images is the inverse of Turner's concerns with performance. Debord sees mediation as *faking not making*, and not only that, it is the very site of the production and re-production of fakery. He writes:

> The concept of "the spectacle" interrelates and explains a wide range of seemingly unconnected phenomena. The apparent diversities and contrasts of these phenomena stem

> from the social organization of appearances, whose essential nature must itself be recognized. Considered on its own terms, the spectacle is an *affirmation* of appearances and an identification of all human social life with appearances. But a critique that grasps the spectacle's essential character reveals it to be a visible *negation* of life – a negation that has taken on a *visible* form (9)

For Debord, a society organized for and by images always-already reproduces itself within the image of the dominant system. This representation of life-but-not-quite disturbs an idealized, objective reality. Debord is haunted by the negation of life, of meaning-being-presented without materiality, the spirit detached from a corporeality that may not have ever existed. The spectacle is a ghost story.

The English words specter and spectacle share a common Latin lineage, with the former an appearance, an image, or something to be looked at, a visual thing-in-and-of-itself, and a spectacle is what *frames* the thing-being-seen. In everyday English usage, spectacles are glass lenses that sit within frames, providing sight for those with visual impairments. In contemporary English usage, a specter is another word for a ghost, a soul without a body, a being that exists as not-quite-living and not-quite-dead. A specter may be seen but not touched, sensed but not embodied. A society of the spectacle is a society living among the ghosts. But if the performances in that society point to the framework of ghosts, is there radical potential in being haunted?

Fest operates as a haunting. When football fans and college students leave Gainesville, Florida, for Jacksonville to watch a football game, Gainesville becomes a ghost town; the main economic engine of the city leaving town for the weekend. The framework of Fest subverts the established social order, and once a year during the same month (and usually weekend) as

Halloween, Fest serves as an invitation for ghosts to haunt Gainesville, in the spirit of listening to live music. A cursory look at Fest's marketing materials conjure images of the undead: for Fest 19, held over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and in-person in 2021, the official logo of the event invokes images of Southern Gothic in this haunting. Cypress trees droop with Spanish Moss over a landscape of a swamp, with a bright white moon casting its reflection on dark blue waters. Two swamp monsters with deep purple swimwear and floatation devices lounge in the lake, while another angrily swipes toward the viewer at the forefront of the image. Black clouds dot the sky as alligators and owls peer at the viewer. Logos from previous years share a similar, undead theme: zombie panthers and warlocks jet skiing on a swamp, angry piñatas embellished with sugar skulls, and a reanimated alligator corpse were all featured prominently in previous logos. Fest embraces the aesthetic of the undead.

The matter of image-as-fakery is collapsed when considering theories of performance. Auslander presents a paradox in the history of mediated performances of rock music, like music videos, as one of co-dependent mimicry. "Initially, mediatized events were modeled on live ones," he writes, "[t]he subsequent cultural dominance of mediatization has had the ironic result that live events now frequently are modeled on the very mediated representations that once took self-same live events as their models" (Auslander 10). Auslander works to use theories of performance here to collapse this binary distinction, offering a model of understanding the relationship between live and mediated performances as dependent upon each other. However, as Auslander works to converge on these two platforms for performance, the embodied, in-person performance still carries with it an implication of authenticity and realness: if the in-person performance is *live*, then the mediated version must not be *alive*. At the very least, it is *undead,* at the liminal space where hauntings occur.

I offer this examination of life and death, haunting and production, images and experiences, and the in-person against the mediated, as a meditation on what kind of work we are doing when we frame mediated experiences as *less than* in-person experiences, as empty signifiers with no referent to "reality," whatever that means. During the COVID-19 pandemic, *the mediated became reality,* and for the many working-class folks who were not able to work from home, going to work was literally a matter of life and death. Fest being broadcast across the internet on multiple platforms was not a matter of conspicuous consumption – although to be sure, that may be one aspect of it – but rather a matter of personal and public safety. When over half a million people died in the United States alone due to systematic failures in matters of public health, economic stability, and personal welfare, framing in-person performances as *live* performances seems a bit on the nose, given all that is at stake.

Instead, I offer Fest's existence in both mediatized and in-person forms as situated in the same frame of resistance and subversion. Unbound by conventional structures, Fest's haunting creates the conditions for change within the frame of the festival. It is the festival frame that binds these performances together, not the on-site gathering of folks in Gainesville, Florida, but the social and cultural performances that the frame attends. In the same way that the diploma on my wall is marked as an accomplishment by the frame that surrounds it, the performances at Fest are marked as haunting and as subversive possibilities through the festival frame. I introduce this theoretical understanding of the frame as a haunting to foreground the next components of this dissertation.

Chapter Three: Fest and Whiteness: Fest as an Object of Study and Site of Critique

In this chapter, I use Fest as a site for understanding, interrogating, and critiquing whiteness. Here, I argue that Fest participates in competing relationships with whiteness, at once perpetuating some of its core tenants and subverting others. In the wake of 2020, where the United States experienced a social revolution that made reckoning with racial injustice mainstream, I explore Fest's relationship with whiteness, mapping out how whiteness operates in often contradictory ways, to situate Fest in its historical context, and to offer Fest as a model for resisting whiteness. I want to situate Fest in a complex relationship with its own context, subcultural ethos, and political position. That is; Fest is both implicated within and resistant to structures of oppression that it finds itself networked within. Fest is not utopian; the politics of Fest are contingent on performances of whiteness while they critique these very systems. To put this concretely: Fest would be a fundamentally different phenomenon if it featured music and musical subcultures that are predominantly mapped onto non-white performers.

To do this, I explore how Fest collapses distinctions of mediated and in-person as a critique of representation and logocentrism, a system of whiteness and argue for understanding this as performance to sidestep these themes. I do this by exploring Fest's online history page and demonstrate how it perpetuates whiteness in its invocation of nostalgia and community. Next, I use Fest's #FestAtHome video performances held throughout 2020 as a performative method of offering new social relations and systems. Finally, I analyze a performance of frequent Fest performer, Tim Barry, and argue for an understanding of the underground as anti-racist

advocacy. Using these mediated performances of Fest to understand performance as an object of study, I use these three performances to articulate a critical performance paradigm that not only documents these performances, but forwards an ethic of performance for social change.

Fest and Whiteness

In early Spring of 2020, I begin my yearly ritual of frantically checking my social media accounts for announcements from Fest.. As I begin my ritual of checking to see which acts fill the bill for this year – Fest normally releases the lineup in three waves, with the first two announcements in the Spring and the last set of "secret shows" released during the festival – I text my Fest group chat to see if anybody has any leads on rumors for potential acts. On Facebook, I lurk "Fest Friends," the unofficial group for Fest goers to coordinate rides, meetups, unofficial DIY house shows, and other accommodations for the festival. Once the festival lineup is announced, the 5,000 tickets are released to the public for purchase. Fest is a brand that operates within what Sara Banet-Weiser calls "brand culture," where the "making and selling of immaterial things – feelings and affects, personalities and values – rather than actual goods" does work "so that there is not a clear demarcation between marketer and consumer, between seller and buyer" (Banet-Weiser 7). The first section of this chapter allows me to examine a kind of brand culture that I am intimately intertwined within in order to understand 21st century North American culture more broadly.

In this chapter, I argue that Fest operates as a complex cultural negotiation through embodied performances. Here, I articulate an understanding of Fest as a performance that is an object of study. This "performance as an object" understanding allows me to critique some of the very logics that structure Fest. Using theories of whiteness, performance, and the carnivalesque, I argue that Fest is site through which contemporary racial politics are buried as a participation in

21st century colorblindness, a post-racial framework of the world where racial politics are sidestepped as a way of perpetuating whiteness.

I argue that Fest's carnivalesque subversion and liminal play offer potential to move beyond structures of whiteness and post-race ideology. Fest serves as a subcultural critique of late capitalism's destructive ideology of individualism, anti-solidarity, and meritocracy in favor of community, coalition building, and egalitarian politics. Through my performance-based analysis of Fest through its Fest 18 highlight video, featured on Fest's history webpage, I come to these conclusions through the following research questions: 1) How can subcultural sites like Fest, which claim to subvert the racist, sexist, and consumerist trappings of mainstream popular culture still perpetuate whiteness? and 2) If authenticity and brand culture help to perpetuate a culture bound to whiteness as an ideological cornerstone, what does irony and the carnivalesque do to subvert and reinforce these notions? To do this, I understand Fest's history page as an archival performance that creates a liminal space for participants to inherit a history. I extend scholarship on whiteness beyond representational texts to theorize other ways of understanding whiteness and to think of ways of dismantling whiteness.

I choose to employ the word "performance" here strategically as both a framing device, political move, and a theoretical position. This is done to distinguish my analysis from a textual analysis of a mediated site and, instead, situates my work at the crossroads of both performance and cultural studies. Borrowing from performance scholar Diana Taylor's term *scenarios* as "shifting the focus from written to embodied culture, from the discursive to the performatic" which, "[i]nstead of focusing on patterns of cultural expression in terms of texts and narratives, we might think about them as scenarios that do not reduce gestures and embodied practices to narrative description" (Taylor 16). Here, *performatic* is Taylor's term that "denote[s] the

adjectival form of the nondiscursive realm of performance … it is vital to signal the performatic, digital, and visual fields as separate from, though always embroiled with, the discursive one so privileged by Western logocentrism. The fact that we don't have a word to signal that performatic space is a product of that same logocentrism rather than a confirmation that there's no there there" (6). Drawing attention to the performatic and framing Fest as a scenario instead of a text or site is political. It undermines the very Eurocentrism that whiteness is contingent upon and, further, argues that bodies are the site of knowledge creation in the same way that texts and images also produce knowledge. If, as Shome writes, whiteness is to be named and then be made an impossibility, then the very *doing* of Eurocentric logocentric analyses must be sidestepped so that whiteness is not reified in our own analyses (Shome). In this chapter, I examine Fest's highlight video not as a standalone site, but rather, an archival representation of a performance that hails viewers into the scenario, the embodied culture from which it came.

I draw the term hailing from Sara Ahmed's foundational work in "A phenomenology of whiteness," where Ahmed, too, situates the project of whiteness within bodily experience. "Whiteness could be described as an ongoing and unfinished history,' she writes "which orients bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space. … Phenomenology helps us to show how whiteness is an effect of racialization, which in turn shapes what it is that bodies 'can do'" (Ahmed, 150). Fusing Ahmed's work with Taylor's, I argue that whiteness is not only an ideological project, but a performance and a scenario. Yes, the highlight video as a standalone text does work to perpetuate whiteness, but framing the video as a scenario within a larger cultural site situates whiteness in bodies, as a "doing," and not within a text, as an object "out there" uncovered as an ideological artifact.

This chapter also forwards Sara Banet-Weiser's work on brand culture and authenticity. In her work, Banet-Weiser tracks two trajectories of critique: one Marxist critique that understands brands as ideology imposed upon the masses, and the other that argues for consumer agency in late capitalism. Banet-Weiser, however, offers a third way of understanding brand culture *as* culture. "US culture is predicated not on the separate domains of individual experience, everyday life, and the market," she writes, "but rather their deep interrelation" (Banet-Weiser, 9). In the rest of the book, she works through what it means to "live a life through brands" who use authenticity as a tool to reach consumers who use anti-consumerism and anti-corporate sentiments can be set aside for feelings of authenticity (14). Fest operates within the logic presented by Banet-Weiser of brand culture: it is an independent music festival that traffics within punk rock tropes of authenticity. As musicologist Steve Waksman points out, punk's rise was in part an "authentic" reaction to "inauthentic" live performances of arena rock and more commercial forms of rock in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Waksman). Waksman's history of punk tracks with Banet-Weiser's history of brand culture because the two moments are inextricably linked. The rise of late capitalism begot both the cultural thirst for "authentic" cultural relations and brands that were willing to sell back authenticity to the masses. This project is personal and contextual: it is through my relationship of Fest as a brand, as a culture, and as a performance that, I argue, can lend itself to more generalizable understandings of whiteness in the culture of the United States more broadly.

Fest and the Gainesville Scene as an Inherited History

As I wrote earlier in this dissertation, Fest grew out of the city of Gainesville's history as a hub for independent music since the late 1980s and early 1990s. Micah Vandegrift's master's thesis documents this history and makes the case for studying Gainesville as a site of significant

cultural production (Vandegrift). His thesis maps the logistical formation of the Gainesville scene: Gainesville is close to other cities in the American South on I-75 and I-10, Gainesville is a college town and college towns were important for the rise of "college rock" and independent, alternative radio formats in the United States from the late 1980s to the early 2000s, and the founding of No Idea records in the city helped cultivate an independent music scene in Gainesville. Outside of Vandegrift's thesis, Gainesville punk and its cultural significance has yet to be engaged further in other scholarly texts. This project extends the burgeoning scholarly and popular interest in the Gainesville scene while adding nuance by focusing specifically on Fest as an event that manifests from Gainesville's punk scene.

Matt Walker also provides a history of the Gainesville (Walker). His book traces the history of the Gainesville scene, its importance in the national independent music scene, and maps out important bands, record labels, recording studios, and venues within the scene. However, the book only devotes a chapter to Fest itself, focusing on the scene more broadly. These two texts serve as an exhaustive list of large-scale research projects about Gainesville's music scene. Further, these texts provide a historical backdrop for the Gainesville scene more broadly but do not thoroughly investigate Fest as a site of cultural studies inquiry. This project adds to previous work by focusing on Fest as it is situated in the Gainesville music scene and national independent scene more broadly, while providing a new intervention into the scene by focusing on the festival. Engaging with updates this work for the 2020s, informs further discussion on the Gainesville scene, and speaks to scholarly conversations about music festivals, popular music, and media.

Once again, Fest is also contingent upon the University of Florida's football team leaving Gainesville every year to play the University of Georgia in Jacksonville, Florida. Unlike other

college football rivalry games, Florida-Georgia is played at the same site every year (teams usually rotate playing games at each other's home stadiums on a yearly basis). This yearly absence of the University of Florida's football team – and the absence of the approximately 100,000 fans who come to Gainesville on Saturdays to support the team – gives Fest organizers a weekend to plan when Fest can be held. This means that Fest is usually held during the last weekend of October or the first weekend of November. Fest operates as a site that mobilizes Bahktin's theories of the carnivalesque:

> A special carnivalesque, marketplace style of expression was formed … All symbols of the carnival idiom are filled with this pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities. We find here a characteristic logic, the peculiar logic of the 'inside out' of the 'turnabout,' of a continual shifting from top to bottom from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and un-crownings. A second life, a second world of folk culture is thus constructed; it is to a certain extent a parody of modern times (Bahktin 10-11)

The world of the carnivalesque, for Bahktin, creates a world that subverts the modern social order while building itself on top the existing world. When the Florida Gators leave town for the weekend, an absence is created in the existing order that is filled by Fest. The Gainesville punk scene, which exists on the periphery of the University of Florida during every other weekend, becomes foregrounded in this absence, inverting the social order. Likewise, for Fest-goers, Fest becomes the site through which their performance of punk becomes foregrounded. Fest is not only a carnivalesque subversion for the city of Gainesville as a place, but it becomes the nexus for subverting the larger late capitalist social order.

According to the history tab on their website, Fest began in 2002 "with only 60 bands, four stages, and two days" (thefestfl.com). In the subsequent years, Fest expanded significantly. By 2019, the most recent Fest data available on their site, it featured "319 musical acts, 29 comedians, and 50 professional wrestlers at 18 venues in the heart of Gainesville, FL" (thefestfl.com/history). This expansion grew to include the main pavilion in Gainesville's downtown area known as Bo Diddley Plaza and the festival touted sales of over three thousand tickets for the event. The history section also provides demographic information for the festival: this information includes how many attendees were from outside of the United States (12%), from the United States (88%), and from Florida (32%). This is notable because more mainstream festivals like Bonnaroo and Coachella do not include a history section and do not pitch their economic accomplishments to their audience in the same way that Fest does. History is important for Fest's organizers to warrant a spot on the official webpage for two reasons: 1) it creates the conditions for a rite of passage into a liminal space (explained below), and 2) it conditions necessary for the perpetuation of whiteness.

Returning to Sara Ahmed's work, she writes "if whiteness is inherited, it is reproduced" (Ahmed, 154). "Whiteness becomes, you could say, 'like itself,' as a form of family resemblance," she continues, "[i]t is no accident that race has been understood through familial metaphors in the sense that 'races' come to be seen as having a 'shared ancestry … [this produces] a particular version of family, predicated on 'likeness,' where likeness becomes a matter of shared attributes" (154). Fest makes this likeness explicit through the history page on its website. Participants can inherit the history that exists beyond their entry into the performance. The freedom to play as your "real self" in this carnivalesque environment is made easier by the perpetuation of whiteness: in the cultivation of a history to be inherited, in the

presentation of attendee statistics from white-majority countries, and in the invitation to perform presented within the highlight video.

Jayson Baker maps the ways in which globalization transcends national border. "Revising international hierarchies in the global era," he writes, "restages whiteness as a unifying identifier of Euro-American economic and social power, yet within this loose image of solidarity emerges deep fissures along class, ethnic, and gender lines …" (Baker 3). This restaging highlights the previous tensions apparent in Fest's online presence. Whiteness unifies music festival attendees, mainstream and otherwise, while the fissures Baker articulates necessitate different *kinds* of whiteness to be staged at these music festivals. Fest makes this staging explicit by presenting its attendance data. The countries most represented – the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and Germany – read like a who's who of countries with majority white populations and a high degree of global economic, social, cultural, and political capital. Fest's attempt at appearing cosmopolitan reifies the globalized project of whiteness.

The website, and particularly the history section, marks what symbolic anthropologist Victor Turner calls the *liminoid*, a rite of passage developed in capitalist economies out of the *liminal* from pre-industrial societies. While Turner's hard and fast binaries are perhaps too nostalgic for a pre-industrial, "authentic" way of living before capitalism, the term *liminoid* most accurately describes the social function of Fest. "*Liminoid phenomena may* be collective," for Turner, "but are more characteristically individual products though they may have 'mass' effects. They are not cyclical, but continuously generated, though in times and places apart from work settings assigned to 'leisure' activities" (Turner 54). The relegation of Fest to a site of cultural consumption represents a break from the typical workplace relations under late capitalism. Turner continues:

> The *liminoid* is more like a commodity – indeed, often *is* a commodity, which one selects and pays for – than the *liminal*, which elicits loyalty and is bound up with one's membership or desired membership in some highly corporate group. One *works* at the liminal, one *plays* with the liminoid … There are permanent 'liminoid' settings and spaces too – bars, pubs, some cafes, social clubs, etc. But when clubs become exclusivist they tend to generate rites of passage, with the *liminal* a condition of the *liminoid* realm. (Turner 55)

The carnivalesque described by Bahktin is made possible through the maintenance of limoid spaces and performances as described by Turner. The history page and highlight video hail the viewer and potential customer into the space of the liminoid, offering an exclusive right of passage into the realm of play at Fest.

The liminoid is made apparent in the staging of the highlight video by Costello Films. The video is six minutes and twenty-five seconds long and is shot like a music video, with three songs in the soundscape set over a montage of video that captures participants at Fest. A neon drawing of a wizard literally hails the viewer into the presentation, waving to them as an invitation to the forthcoming montage. As punk band Rational Anthem's "Welcome to Paradise City" plays in the soundtrack, the film displays the point through which participants enter the space: the registration desk. It at this point where participants buy their way into the liminoid realm, and the video reaffirms this purchase as the point through which participants embody the inherited history of Fest. The video closes with a new logo for Fest 19 – to be held in Fall 2020 – incorporating the history captured within the film into the history-making of Fest as a performance and as a site of the liminoid and carnivalesque.

Whiteness and the Fest Highlight Video

In the following section, I am situating this analysis in performance following Auslander's lead and arguing for this highlight video to be understood as a mediatized performance of persona (Auslander 207). Extending Raymond Williams' concept of flow, Auslander maps out an understanding of on-screen performances staged by popular musicians as extensions of their persona. In this chapter, I expand Auslander's understanding of this phenomenon beyond individual performers and to collective performances with Fest. In the same way that, to Auslander, mediated performances stage by Nicki Minaj and Lady Gaga are rearticulations of an on-stage performance, I argue that Fest's highlight video is a re-staging of the various performances of Fest. As the first logo in the Fest 18 Highlight video gives way to the montage, the camera takes the viewer from the registration area outside to a pool party held on a hotel rooftop. There are young, mostly white bodies shown consuming alcohol, playing drinking games, and dancing while standing next to merchandise booths. The camera cuts quickly, showing footage of bands performing on stage, attendees waiting in line to see a show, a singer with a microphone in the "pit" with the audience, and a vegan hot dog vendor are displayed across the screen. This montage does work of showing who belongs at Fest, what happens at Fest, and which behaviors are accepted in this scenario. The video makes no explicit claims about race, however, as Carrie Crenshaw points out, "mapping the terrain of whiteness" requires an attention to the ways in which whiteness is typically "unmarked and unnamed" (Crenshaw, 254). Crenshaw continues that since "[w]hiteness functions ideologically when people employ it" we may use it "as a framework to categorize people and understand their social locations" (255). Returning to Ahmed once again, Fest's whiteness becomes institutionalized and performed in the bodies of participants:

> … organizations tend to recruit in their own image. The 'hey you' is not just addressed to anybody: some bodies more than others are recruited, those that can inherit the 'character' of the organization … To be oriented, or to be at home in the world, is also to feel a certain comfort: we might only notice comfort as an affect when we lose it … White bodies are comfortable *as they inhabit spaces that extend their shape* … In other words, whiteness may functions as a form of public comfort *by allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape*. (Ahmed 158)

The beginning of the video montage makes Ahmed's point most explicit: at 0:18 in the video, a white, stockier-build man with a mustache is wearing a crop top t-shirt with the word POLICE written in white font across the chest while drinking a beer. The institution has extended the privilege of whiteness onto this body so much that it is unmarked: how comfortable would other bodies be giving this kind of performance? Would this kind of performance – an ironic mockery of police and hegemonic masculinity – go unbothered within institutions that did not inscribe whiteness onto the bodies of those performing within and as a part of the institution?

This performance embraces what Rachel Griffin calls "strategic whiteness" that "not only centralizes whiteness but also functions as a site of apologia" that centers white people and institutions, even when the explicit goals of the performance appear to be progressive (Griffin 148). As a minute of film passes by, the viewer sees bodies that are at once transgressive of mainstream concepts of beauty, gender, and class while reaffirming whiteness. The crowds and performers display an institution, a place, a performance instead of individual successes. The camera does not linger on a particular person for much longer than a few seconds, however, some performers do stand out. Skatune Network, a black ska musician from the Gainesville scene, is seen wielding a trombone and wearing a checkerboard shirt that symbolizes ska music's

history of an ethos of racial solidarity in the UK, is seen diving into a crowd at a show. At the end of this segment, Laura Jane Grace, the lead singer from punk band Against Me! And a transwoman, is also seen embracing the crowd; instead of foregrounding Grace as a star of the show the film instead places her among the masses. Her body might not "belong" outside of this carnivalesque space, but the filmmakers make it clear that she belongs here. The subversive potential here, however, also reaffirms whiteness: the institutions of whiteness allows these bodies to exist "authentically" in this space because the space has already taken their shape. As Grace's image leaves the screen, the video displays a crowd of mostly white bodies staring up to a stage as the lyrics to Rational Anthem's song become foregrounded in the soundscape: "don't you, know I should have stayed back home in Florida." The video works to assure viewers that Fest is home and that their bodies belong. While this does allow viewers and participants to be their "authentic" selves, this performance of authenticity is contingent on the perpetuation of whiteness.

Rachel Dubrofsky and Emily Ryalls have argued that "performing of not-performing" is the site through which performers – for them, represented in popular music videos, film, and television – inscribes whiteness onto bodies. This performance of authenticity is contingent on "behaving in a natural-seeming manner [that] is transposed onto the body …" (Dubrofsky and Ryalls 396). This performance of whiteness-through-authenticity "provides symbolic and material benefits, including the attainment of power through lack of defined boundaries and its invisibility" (Dubrofsky and Ryalls, 397). Dubrofsky furthers this concept in her analysis of music videos by Taylor Swift and Miley Cyrus, extending the performing-not-performing to what she calls "white freedom and authenticity" (Dubrofsky 194). She writes that "whiteness cannot hide" and that "authenticity and freedom of expression are privileges most easily

harnessed by white bodies" (194). This works in Dubrofsky's analysis of popular, mainstream North American texts where "[i]deas about authentic whiteness in US popular culture divorce performing from normativity, insinuating normativity as expressly not-performing, as behavior that appears natural, unplanned, without artifice or forethought" (190). Popular music is, as Anahid Kassabian asserts, such an overwhelming presence in everyday life – in grocery stores, on commercials, as background music – that the performing not-performing is essential for it to remain ubiquitous (Kassabian). This upholds both whiteness and the contemporary model of late capitalism, where every aspect of life needs to be commodified and monetized.

Returning to the ideas of carnivalesque and the liminoid, I take Dubrofsky and Ryalls's idea of performing not-performing as upholding whiteness and offer "performing-performing" – or the constant acknowledgement of the performance within the realm of the carnivalesque and liminoid – as a scenario through which performers can negotiate different possibilities for the institutions that they inhibit. This serves two purposes: 1) it shifts the critique of whiteness away from individual actors and to the institutional forces that allow bodies to inherit whiteness and 2) argues for the transgressive, subversive nature of performance – particularly in scenarios that subvert the existing social order – to allow for bodies to change these institutions. Unlike in Dubrofsky's examples with Taylor Swift, ideal white bodies are not put on display to discipline deviations from hegemonic, white, patriarchal norms.

The Fest '18 highlight video is not speaking to a mainstream audience, but rather, is contingent upon the absence of a mainstream social order for its very existence. By pointing to the artifice of the performance under the carnivalesque conditions on display in the video, the performers are pointing to a world built on top of another. This is not a mainstream audience being beckoned to perform who "they really are" in spite of societal expectations to the contrary

through performing not-performing of a racialized other, but rather, the video hails viewers into a communal, collective space that allows for participants to perform instead of being constrained by their "authentic selves" in everyday life. The most blatant signifier for this comes in the representation of "performing-performing" happens throughout the video. There are performers wearing masks, audience members wearing Halloween costumes, participants staring into the camera and singing or dancing along with music, and concluding Rational Nation's segment of the video with the most blatant example of performing-performing: a shot of a wrestler body slamming another. The inclusion of wrestling – infamously known as a performance and athletic form that embraces its theatricality – makes this explicit: this is not encouraging folks to be their true selves, but rather, this is encouraging viewers to embrace the possibilities of performance. This is a celebration of a world that could be, not a world that is. The institution of whiteness allows for this performance – it is hard to believe that a small college town in the American South would permit or even promote this performance if Fest was not inscribed with whiteness – but it is the collective performance that allows individuals who might not otherwise feel comfortable in their performance. Laura Jane Grace is not being called to be her true self, but rather, the performing-performing clears space for her belonging.

Music, Hailing, Whiteness

To embrace the possibilities of performance, in this next section I embrace the body as a site of knowledge creation by challenging the logocentrism prevalent in academia. This issue is pressing for a project on whiteness because, as I argue, it does not make much sense to critique whiteness if the medium of critique is the written word or critiques representational works. In the following, I offer the potential for understanding music *as* performance as a way to map knowledge forms that move beyond logocentrism as a way to critique the way that whiteness

literally inscribes itself in our institutions. Tracy Stephenson Shaffer and Joshua Gunn argue that it is music's slipperiness or lack of easy transcription into writing that prevents scholars from tackling the form, in what they call the "hauntology" of music. Arguing for understanding music as/is performance, they write that "*writing* about performance has tended to focus only on those modes most easily translated into iconic terms. Our fear of music, then, reflects a pervasive imago-centrism, a hankering to capture the feeling of sound into pictures or words … We suggest that characterizing music as an agent that haunts helps to characterize the feeling of listening …" (Shaffer and Gunn 42-3). They continue to define hauntology of performance as "the study of ephemeral events in which performers and/or audiences are asked to occupy spaces and places that straddle different, if not contradictory, temporalities" (43). Music does not represent. It hails, it invokes, it haunts. It may accompany images – moving and static – or texts and imply a representation, but that implication is entirely dependent on the social conditioning of the listener or the work of the representational text to work. The music played in the Fest 18 highlight video may come *from* bands that played at Fest and may *invoke* connotations of being at Fest, however, there is no quality in the sounds themselves that represent – or even attempt to represent – Fest. Music may accompany representational forms – most popular music scholars in cultural studies focus on lyrical content, music videos, live performances, or popular conversations about performances – but music's hauntological nature resists representation and translation.

Stuart Hall's foundational work on the representation of race in media is contingent on the logic of logocentrism that upholds whiteness. In his discussion of the "grammar of race" and the base-image reaffirm the very Eurocentric logics that write and represent race into ideology (Hall). Music and music cultures, then, provide a crucial intervention for critical media and

performance scholars to grapple with an aspect of culture that is at once inherently tied to Eurocentric systems that *do* representational work while mapping a trajectory of study toward the non-representational. This is not to say that music has resisted connotation or the trappings of white, patriarchal, heteronormative structures, but quite the contrary. Music, through its hauntology and in its invocation hails listeners into whiteness in ways that escape representational understanding. Drawing from Althusser, Sarah Ahmed argues that it is through this hailing that bodies organize around whiteness:

> Some bodies more than others are recruited, those that can inherit the 'character' of the organization, by returning its image with a reflection that reflects back that image, what we call a "good likeness." It is not just that there is a desire for whiteness that leads to white bodies getting in. Rather, whiteness is what the institution is oriented "around," so that even bodies that might not appear white still have to inhabit whiteness, if they are to get "in." (Ahmed 158)

Yet in this description of the ways in which subjects are hailed into whiteness, the vibrational sound of "hey you" travelling through space and time is translated into a representational forms: as a spoken language, a written language, and then further into reflections, images, colors, and likenesses by Ahmed. If we are to take Ahmed's word for it – that whiteness is not restricted to white bodies, but rather, the underlying conditions that hails bodies into whiteness – then it is necessary to untether whiteness from logocentric conceptualizations.

The practice of translating unbound sonic forms into representational images is deeply imbedded in projects of whiteness, particularly through the apparatuses of colonialism. Bruno Nettl's anthology, one so ubiquitous in training generations of ethnomusicologists that is has

earned the title of "the red book," describes how foundational this act of transcription is for the discipline:

> I'm not sure my colleagues would agree with me if I claim that there is a single fundamental skill that is required of all ethnomusicologists. But if there is such a skill, it is surely transcribing, the ability to reduce sound – usually recorded, but in the nineteenth century just performed and heard – into some kind of musical notation. (Nettl 72)

This essential skill, for Nettl, is what defines ethnomusicology: reducing sonic performances to representational music notation for the consumption of Western scholars, institutions, and audiences. Performance scholar Diana Taylor, invoking what she calls the performatic so that "we might think about [performances] as scenarios that do not reduce gestures and embodied practices to narrative description" subverts this tendency in an aim to de-center Eurocentric conceptualizations of knowledge-making by re-cenering the body (16). "Writing now assured that Power, with a capital P," she writes "could be developed and enforced without the input of the great majority of the population, the indigenous and marginal populations of the colonial period without access to systemic writing" (Taylor 18). In her sweeping monograph that details how whiteness, Eurocentrism, and coloniality deploy representational forms to discipline newly-colonized subjects, from the 16th century to rumba musicians performing in 1990s New York City, she maps two knowledges that construct the conditions for whiteness. The first is the *archive*, which are representational and enduring ways of knowing, and the *repertoire*, which is embodied practice and knowledge (19). Fest's history page and the videos within it are *archival*, yet the performances represented on screen represent the *repertoire*. The act of creating an archive and displaying the documentation of embodied practices is intrinsic to the project of

whiteness because it is *the very logic and form by which whiteness comes into being*. In the video, whiteness is transcribed onto white bodies *through* this documentation and display.

This is not to say, however, that music and embodied knowledge sidestep constructing whiteness altogether. At 2:33 the soundtrack for the Fest video segues from "Welcome to Paradise City" by the band Rational Anthem to "Victoria" by Bad Cop/Bad Cop. The song features a fast-paced tempo, instrumentation typical of a punk band, – that is, electric guitar, electric bass, vocals, and a drum set – and a chord progression that is quite common in most vernacular forms of music in the West. The song employs a structure that is familiar to fans of punk and other forms of music alike, with perhaps the tempo and timbre of the vocals and guitar serving as the only sonic signifiers of punk rock. Yet, at 3:05 and most noticeably at 3:15, the harmonic components of the song diverge from this comfortable formula by "borrowing" a chord from another tonal center while slowing the tempo considerably.

This sonic hailing accompanies the lyrics "his little girl took her life," and while the lyrics represent a tragedy within the narrative of the song. Borrowing a chord disrupts the stability of the song, yet listeners are drawn to the chord for its out-of-placeness. This practice is commonplace in Western tonal music, and it is through the embodied act of listening that this practice becomes inscribed onto the listener. The chord substitution sounds out of place, desperate, longing, and paired with the representational lyrics, these feelings are affirmed. Whiteness and the Eurocentric systems of learning are so imbedded into our systems that even listeners with no musical background are made to feel by these harmonic structures that come from white, Western conceptualizations of music and emotion. Performance not only offers a way for scholars to rethink their own scholarship and how it reaffirms whiteness, but offers new

possibilities for scholars to think about the non-representational ways that whiteness becomes entrenched in culture.

Whiteness is a performance. It is performed by actors who inherit the history of whiteness through their bodies. Whiteness is inscribed into institutions, allowing certain bodies the privilege to perform and feel at home, while tacitly excluding other bodies. But where texts are stable and artifacts are uncovered and interpreted by the very institutions most complicit in the perpetuation of whiteness, performance is a doing, an infinite making and remaking. By theorizing a performance that acknowledges its own performance, I argue, I theorize a performance that acknowledges itself *in the act of making*. To perform-performing is to acknowledge the making. By acknowledging the making, actors can acknowledge the ways in which institutions shape their performances to exclude and make performances that include. If whiteness not a monolithic object to be studied but an ideology being made and remade, then shifting focus to the bodies and performances that make and remake whiteness is crucial.

Through their making and remaking of an inherited history, performers (musicians, audience members, promoters) at Fest demonstrate ways that performance makes both radical change in the fostering of communities more open to different kinds of bodies, they still exist within the institutions that privilege performances of whiteness. By understanding how these histories remake whiteness, how acknowledging performance offers resistance to performing authenticity, and by urging scholars to move beyond representational forms of whiteness, I offer performances at Fest as a complex negotiation of whiteness with potential for change. By locating the site of knowledge creation in the body and in the ways that knowing a performance is a performance can point to the making of the performance, I offer that to understand whiteness as a performance is to know that whiteness can be un-made.

Whiteness, Fest, Music, and Performance

An important critique of punk is its relationship with the structures of whiteness. In this section, I argue that Fest acts as a site with the potential to both perpetuate and dismantle whiteness, and this is done through performance. To accomplish this, I argue for performance as a method to study musical cultures that does not, itself, perpetuate whiteness. Then, I map how whiteness forms as an ontology, making and remaking itself. Finally, I rectify tensions brought up in this literature review about the commodification of the carnivalesque with the festival frame, foregrounding the next section of literature.

Discussions in musicology about the study of popular music are contingent on a binary that performance scholar Diana Taylor calls "the archive" and "the repertoire," a split between mediated containers written culture and oral culture. "'Archival' memory," she writes, "exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change … archival, from the beginning, sustains power" (Taylor 19). Here, Taylor reaffirms the suspicion that many of the musicological traditions of translating the embodied practice of musical performance into notation perpetuates the power structures that this performance exists within, and in this case, perpetuate whiteness. "The repertoire, on the other hand, enacts embodied memory," she continues, "performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing …" (20). While Taylor does traffic in some of the same binaries as Hebdige and Shank, suggesting that once something is made into a "thing" it stands to serve power, this formulation gets at the powerful potential of performance. What is important here is not the outright rejection of written epistemologies as always-reactionary, but rather, the rejection of *the supremacy* of these ways of knowing. Punk — and other genres of music —

cannot only be valuable for how it is measured against the archive of Bach and Beethoven, but in its performances.

My argument in this case extends scholarship by Jill Dolan, who argues "that theatre and performance create citizens and engage democracy as participatory forum in which ideas and possibilities for social equity and justice are shared" (Dolan 456). Here, I also take up Small's concept of musicking to understand the democratic potential for understanding performance as music. If musicking collapses the audience-performer distinction into an act that extends beyond the concert hall, then performance can be understood to extend beyond the confines of the theatre. It is with this potential in mind that Fest serves as a site of re-creation, not only in its yearly performance, but in everyday life.

Finally, I return to Sara Ahmed's discussion of how the structures of whiteness are made. Ahmed argues that whiteness is an orientation, a way of navigating the inherited terrain of our lives, an understanding that foregrounds certain comforts and dismisses external ways of being as object. In the same way that Turino argues for understanding habits, Ahmed argues that whiteness is made in public spaces, and that these spaces "take shape through the habitual actions of bodies, such that contours of space could be described as habitual … whiteness is what bodies do, where the body takes the shape of the action" (Ahmed 156). Habits here, again, seem to stand in for performance. Whiteness is made, not faked, and the doing of whiteness has very real implications for those who are not oriented toward it.

Identity is a performance. Music is a performance. The collapse of the aesthetic and the social into performance does not render the distinctions arbitrary. Rather, understanding the ways in which the aesthetic and the everyday are contingent upon circuits of co-creation and making rely upon a performance studies approach to be mapped and navigated. As a style of music that

is structured within performances of whiteness, punk rock and Fest specifically recreate what are often the very structures they aim to critique. However, performance extends the socially constructed paradigm of identity into the body and offers possibilities of change and rupture within these systems. In the space below, I argue that it is through the festival frame where performances can be re-articulated to, hopefully, transcend structure like whiteness. By engaging performance with musicology, it is this project's goal to create a performance paradigm within music studies that allows for and encourages a way of knowing music that is not contingent upon structures of whiteness. Fest, as a performance to study, as metaphor for for everyday life, and as a method of knowing, offers one possibility for reimagining music studies. Knowing the difference between Black Sabbath and Black Flag is one way of learning how to un-know whiteness.

In the following pages, I articulate how Fest embraced theories of performance to function as critique. To do so, I explore how the #FestAtHome videos create spaces of solidarity, both for the artists whose livelihoods were at risk due to stay at home orders, and in creating space for Black Lives Matter protests to be incorporated into Fest's performances. In order to critique and dismantle systems of whiteness, Fest offers performance, presence, and performativity as a way to reimagine unjust social relationships. By creating new ways of being together in the wake of a global pandemic, Fest provides a model for creating new social interactions through performance.

From Live Streams to Live Music: #FestAtHome, Community, Performance, and Redemption for Fest 19

On April 9th, 2020, Fest debuted its #FestAtHome showcase in response to the global outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. At first, #FestAtHome was introduced as to mitigate the

financial hardship faced by bands, venues, and other participants in the music industry who were negatively impacted by stay-at-home orders implemented globally at the beginning of the pandemic. The artists featured in the semi-regularly released video series' set up virtual tip jars and sold merchandise to supplement lost income they would usually make from touring, and the venues that host Fest set up pages to contribute financially while they remained closed during the pandemic. Eventually, as it became clear that the pandemic would continue to get worse throughout 2020 and into 2021, Fest transitioned #FestAtHome into a substitute for the in-person festival. In the following section, I argue that this mediated performance functions as a critique of the very structures of whiteness and capitalism through performance. To do this, I argue that #FestAtHome collapses distinctions between the "live" and the "mediated," the "authentic" and the "performative," and the aesthetic and everyday life. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these distinctions collapsed in ways that revealed possibilities for new ways of thinking about race, political economy, economic injustice, disability, aesthetics, and other taken-for-granted assumptions that structure our experience. By holding a de-centralized, digital festival that was contingent on concepts of mutual aid, solidarity, and social advocacy, #FestAtHome offers a model for aesthetic performances to create social change.

On June 1st and 4th, 2020, Fest suspended its #FestAtHome schedule and promotion of Fest as an event to pause and respect the Black Lives Matter protests happening across the country in the wake of the police murder of George Floyd, Brianna Taylor, the white vigilante murder of Ahmaud Arbery, and many other murders of black folks in the United States. Fest is not unique in this regard; nearly every public figure, corporation, and agency with a social media presence paused during these protests to recognize racial injustices in the United States. But what is notable is Fest's inclusion of anti-racist acknowledgement and activism into its routine

#FestAtHome performances and, by extension, the solidarity created by including this political statement in its aesthetic programming for Fest. As protests spread throughout the United States and throughout the world, many folks online began to critique online posts like Fest's as "performative activism." Here, performative is synonymous with fake, inauthentic, and "just for show." However, as I have outlined previously throughout this dissertation, performativity means quite the opposite, the performative is the perpetual act of "making not faking." Here, I suggest that *performative activism is needed* in order subvert and reimagine racial social relationships. "Artistic performance can illuminate alternative lives, worlds, and forms of relation, Goltz (2013) writes, "and anticipates emancipatory ways of speaking, hearing, and knowing – ones never to be recuperated fully into existing logics and discourses, but lingering outside the intelligible and haunting the foreclosures of discourse" (Goltz 38). Goltz argues that while the critical-norms used to critique whiteness are focused on "*thing*[s] *done*," performance opens up possibilities for reconfiguring relationships (38). When activists critique "performative activism," they are asking others to show their work, to demonstrate "things done." Performance and performativity, on the other hand, invokes a *doing*.

The incorporation of Black Lives Matter protests into Fest's social media presence and providing a break in the performances during #FestAtHome allows performances of activism to be situated within a paradigm of aesthetic performance. Fest understands the radical and transformative potential of performance with its #FestAtHome showcase: in the same way that it understands that streaming artists over social media platforms creates space for aesthetic performance that materially change the conditions of both artists and audiences – artists are able to maintain a living from donations, merch purchases, and tips, fans are able to enjoy a Fest without risking their health and wellbeing during a global pandemic, and Fest is able to provide a

platform for these performances to be staged on – Fest also recognizes that aesthetic performance provides opportunities to change and challenge structures of whiteness. Fest's performative activism is *doing something* about anti-racist activism, in the same way that #FestAtHome is *doing something* about the livelihoods of Fest artists in these performances. Presence and performance is the radical act.

It is October 2021, and after a year of #FestAtHome, Black Lives Matter protests, and working remotely as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for my university while completing my PhD, I step into Bo Diddley Plaza in Gainesville for the first time since 2019. Since my last Fest, the world is radically different. Personally, I last attended Fest in my 20s and return in my 30s, my hair has started greying and receding on my head. I am still wearing a mask and fumbling through a new social reality in public life: "I've been vaccinated, do I need to wear this outside?" "Will people say anything to me if I wear a mask in the venue?" "How will I be able to breathe in the mosh pit?" "Are mosh pits even allowed anymore?"

I started the day at Fest waiting in a line at a park called the Depot, a converted railway stop-turned-public park just outside of Downtown Gainesville. Here, I wait in the registration line to receive my wristband, which grants me admission into Fest. As I wait in line, a volunteer walks down the line – which stretches more than a mile down the sidewalk – to check for each attendee's CDC-approved vaccine card or negative COVID-19 test result. I reveal a digital photograph of my vaccine card to the volunteer, and they stamp my hand to certify to the volunteers with the wristbands that I have been vaccinated. I receive my wristband and am thanked by the volunteer for being vaccinated and am wished a "great Fest" as I exit out of the old train depot that houses the registration table.

Frank Turner is a British folk-punk musician, perhaps most famous for his appearance in the 2012 London Olympic Games opening ceremonies. Performing with acoustically with mandolinist Matt Nasir, Frank thanks the crowd for performing their duty and responsibility in getting vaccinated, taking care of each other, and speaking about injustices throughout the last year. Throughout his set, Turner thanks volunteers at Fest for keeping the area safe, recommends audiences keep masks on for indoor performances, and reflects on the ways in which digital interactions in 2020 created both promising new ways of human interaction and perpetuated the cruelties of online interaction.

After a year where authorities from across the political spectrum failed the public in every measurable way, at best, suggesting that better worlds are not possible and, at worst, inciting violent acts that sought to further entrench whiteness and capitalism into our social order, a small punk rock music festival in Gainesville, Florida provided another way. On the fly, Fest created opportunities to materially support their artists and anti-racist organizations. Fest created ways for aesthetic performances to continue, both digitally and when they were finally safe to be held in-person. Fest cultivated a community that prioritized safety, solidarity, community, and reimagination. If a music festival with relatively limited resources can reimagine itself to benefit others, then institutions with access to more resources can do so as well. Fest provided more safety measures and more networks of mutual aid and material relief than the State of Florida that it operates within. In a state that threatens businesses with fines for enforcing mask, vaccine, and negative test mandates, centering care in both the digital and in-person stagings of Fest is a radial act. Through performance, Fest materially and conceptually critiques the very structures of whiteness that made the events of 2020 devastating for

everybody, but most acutely in marginalized communities. Fest shows that better worlds *are* possible.

Anti-Racist Performance: Tim Barry and "Prosser's Gabriel"

Throughout this chapter, I have theorized about whiteness more broadly and how structures of whiteness exist in and through Fest. I have provided examples of how whiteness is perpetuated, and I have offered hints at how Fest, through performance, creates the potential of critique through radical performance. Here, I would like to provide an example of anti-racist advocacy done by a frequent Fest performer, Tim Barry. To do this, and to continue the theme throughout this chapter of analyzing mediated performances of Fest, I look at a video of Tim Barry performing his song "Prosser's Gabriel" at the Grist Mill in Waterloo, Ontario, and uploaded to YouTube by user 519punkvids in 2010. I choose this video of Barry's performance for pragmatic reasons: it is the highest quality video available of Barry performing this song available on YouTube. There are videos of Barry performing this song at Fest, but many of them are fan videos that are of lower quality, shot on cell phones throughout the decade. As I write later in this section, Tim Barry articulates anti-racist sentiments every time this song is performed, not just at Fest, and maps out a model of social advocacy for not only Fest attendees, but critical scholars.

It is the summer of 2020, and like many folks in the United States and across the globe, I am confined to the bedroom that I rent in a mid-sized city in the Southeastern United States. Like so many folks, I am paralyzed by the overwhelming news that culminates in a boiling over of racial tensions across the United States. I am heartbroken by the lynching of Ahmaud Arbery, a twenty-five-year-old Black man who was gunned down by white vigilantes for the crime of jogging while Black in Georgia. I am hurt but unsurprised by the news of Breonna Taylor, a

Black woman who was gunned down by police as she slept during a no-knock raid in Louisville, Kentucky. I still have not been able to watch George Floyd's life leave his body as a police officer in Milwaukee pinned his knee into the back of Floyd's neck. In Florida's capital city of Tallahassee, a Black trans man named Tony McDade is fatally shot by police. As protests broke out across the country in response to not only these nationally- and locally-known instances of white supremacist violence against Black folks, I sat glued to my laptop and iPhone, feeling incapable of changing anything.

I am a white, cis-hetero, male, straight, middle class graduate student earning my PhD at a Research One university in a major metropolitan region in the Southeastern United States. My experience with racial marginalization and violence in this country has always been mediated and from the position of the third-person perspective. In this way, the writing I have done throughout this chapter on whiteness mimics the primary way that I experience racial injustice in my everyday life: through a screen. I write this point of reflexivity, not as a pat on the back or a moment of coming clean about the various degrees of privilege that I experience, but as a way to situate my position and relate my experience of race to the deeply-imbedded networks of whiteness that structure my engagement with race. This positionality invokes what Sara Ahmed famously writes about whiteness as a "zero-point of orientation, the point from which the world unfolds, and which makes what is 'there' over 'there'" (Ahmed 151). My whiteness allows me to approach race through observation, not through an embodied, lived experience. As activist steer the conversation about race in the United States away from seemingly apolitical ideas of "non-racism" to an active understanding of anti-racism, I wonder what I could be doing to dismantle the very structures that privilege my experiences of race.

I offer my positionality as a way to foreground my own implications in whiteness and as a way to dismantle what Bryant Keith Alexander and Mary E. Weems call a "white double consciousness." This is, of course, a play on Du Bois' notion of double consciousness for Black folks in the United States. For Alexander and Weems, white double consciousness is "the outspoken and sometimes outrageous advocacy of white folks on issues against racism, sexism, lack of diversity, and social justice," but an ethic and practice that "always includes self-referential statements that reify their liberal self-interests and deflects perceptions of their own biases by reinforcing their own self-promotion …" (Alexander and Weems 173). This section functions as *an analysis of* what I understand to be an anti-racist musical performance *and as a written performance of* anti-racist scholarship. I understand that any writing by, for, and within the United States academe is always-already implicated in centuries-old structures of whiteness and, as institutions, universities and the journals housed within them are structured on and by white supremacists logics. However, it is the goal of this chapter to understand performance's power to dismantle and remake new institutions through a commitment to anti-racist action, writing, scholarship, thinking, pedagogy, and artistic creation.

I think back to a time before COVID-19. I am in the hallway outside of my shared office at my home institution, speaking to my dissertation advisor about reports in the local newspaper; discovers of Black cemeteries that had been bulldozed over, apartments and development literally built on top of Black bodies make headlines on a weekly basis. I think of how earlier in the year, white folks protested the removal of Confederate monuments near government buildings downtown. I think of the large Confederate flag that looms over the two interstate highways, greeting (warning) motorists as they travel the interstates that serve as entry points to the downtown core of this city, highways that displaced many Black communities in the mid-20th

century. Symbols, systems, and structures of whiteness serve as explicit reminders of the racial hierarchy that literally and figuratively networks this city and those who exist in it. Whiteness is on full display, a force to be reckoned with, while Blackness is bulldozed, buried, displaced, and killed. I think of "Prosser's Gabriel," a song by one of my favorite folk-punk musicians from Richmond, Virginia, Tim Barry.

"Prosser's Gabriel" is a song featured on Barry's album *28th & Stonewall* (2011). The song, an acoustic ballad featuring guitar and vocals, written in the protest song-style of artists like Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, Barry laments the fact that Virginia Commonwealth University paved over the gravesite of Gabriel Prosser, an Black man who led a slave revolt in 18th century Virginia. I draw inspiration from Barry's song as I sit thinking about the erasure of Black folks that happened in my own city. I draw inspiration from Shaffer and Gunn's call to employ the hauntology of whiteness to "negotiate the terrain of race and whiteness" as a "performative reckoning with race that other forms of human expression do not (e.g., writing), owing to the radical disjuncture that is hidden by the ghost of identification … musical performance *does not promise reconciliation, nor does it promise finality or 'moving on' or a final working-through,* but a continual, open-ended unraveling" (Stephenson Shaffer and Gunn 41-2). In this chapter, I analyze Tim Barry's live performance of "Prosser's Gabriel" at The Grist Mill, uploaded to YouTube by the channel 519punkvids (Barry). Here, I offer Barry's performance as an example of an unraveling, a step toward anti-racist performance.

I come to Barry's performance through the experience of what Brennan-Moran calls an offering, a re-membering, and a conjuring (Brenna-Moran 269). She writes, "haunting is a constant condition – particularly in landscapes marked by unrecognized violence" (269). In her piece, Brennan-Moran looks for ghosts at a memorial set up by Toni Morrison, a memorial

meant for re-remembering slaves forgotten by history. I am haunted by how much of this history is buried underground, intentionally out of sight. In my own city in the Southeast and in Tim Barry's city, the legacy of what horrors slavery, Jim Crow, and other eras of white supremacy imposed onto Black folks is subterranean, in a shallow grave beneath contemporary memorials to white supremacy pretending to be otherwise: in Barry's case, a parking lot for a public university in Richmond, Virginia, and my own highway systems and apartment complexes responsible for displacing Black residents in my city. Here, white supremacy is a foundation of society, and foundation is not a metaphor. These structures are literally built on top of unrecognized violence.

Barry's performance disturbs this very structure. By digging up a site of unrecognized violence, and performing a song to an audience that may not have otherwise known about the violence, Barry's performance haunts the very structures of white supremacy. As I think about Barry's performance and about my own conversations outside my office, I think about the potential to embrace the term "underground" as a point of subversion. The underground, as it commonly comes to be understood in many music scenes, is a site of independent music-making that has somehow escaped the more corporate, mainstream music-making and music-producing structures. Musicians in the underground are either waiting to be [un/dis]covered by mainstream taste-makers or, in the case of punk musicians, purposely eschewing this spotlight as a critique of this very taste-making apparatus. Here, I offer the underground as a theoretically rich concept that subverts the established social order. The underground is created by mainstream taste-makers but also in response to that structure. The underground, in this case, is a site of haunting, of waking the dead to materialize a history that had been bulldozed over. In other words: *how can underground musicians embrace the aesthetic of the underground to foreword an ethic of critique, and in this case, an ethic of anti-racism?*

I offer Tim Barry's performance as an example of anti-racist ethics informed by an underground aesthetic. To do so, I draw from Gingrich-Philbrook's call at the beginning of his editorship in 2019 to encourage performance scholars to "enhance 'intradisciplinary' among specialties within communication studies …" (Gingrich-Philbrook). I embrace the intradisciplinary approach, here focusing on performance and rhetoric, but with attention to musicology/sound studies and critical race studies as well. In his call, Gingrich-Philbrook looks to focus on "non-elite performance communities," and it is my goal to offer the underground as a theoretical way to understand performances in these communities through Tim Barry's performance as a folk-punk musician. I offer Tim Barry's performance as a case study and as a critique of the punk rock concept of Do-It-Yourself (DIY), and foreword a concept of the underground that supplants the individualism embedded in DIY's rhetoric in favor of an ethic of community and solidarity. Finally, I recommend this performance's example as an invitation to theorize other ways in which the underground can be employed, and particularly in the context of the contemporary United States, for anti-racist means.

Tim Barry is a now-folk singer whose punk credibility comes from his time fronting the Richmond, Virginia-based melodic hardcore band Avail. Avail was popular throughout the late 1980s to the early 2000s, and their time as a band remains crucial to the foundation of the Richmond punk scene. After Avail broke up, Tim Barry embarked on a solo career that embraced punk rock's ethos, DIY ethics, and independent nature while performing original and folk songs on acoustic guitar and solo vocals. In the video, entitled "Tim Barry – Prosser's Gabriel (Live at the Grist Mill)," Barry plays "Prosser's Gabriel." In the song, Barry's lyrics describe a slave revolt in Richmond, Virginia during the 18th century which was inevitably put down, leading to Gabriel's execution/

In a monologue given prior to his performance of the song, Barry distinguishes himself from neo-Confederate movements and sympathies. By mentioning a previous performance where members of the audience confronted him about bringing up Richmond's confederate history, Barry asserts that the purpose of his song is to raise awareness for the forgotten people of Richmond in place of honoring the Confederate figures whose statues are prominent in the city. He proclaims:

> If you walk the streets of Richmond, Virginia you will see monuments. Phallic, dick-sized – if you have the biggest dick in the world – monuments … all our you see this: quote un-quote Confederate heroes, you understand what I'm saying? And they are the filthy, the economic elite, the white master class, the people who enslave Blacks. And there's nothing for the people who busted their ass, broke their backs, and had bleeding hands to make these people filthy fuckin' rich. There's nothin' in our city that represents that aspect of our city and it makes me sick to my fuckin' stomach.

Barry continues the monologue by sharing that a few of his friends turned him on to reading back when he was heavily into drug culture. "Had I not started reading, I wouldn't know anything about the city that I lived in," he argues, "and the reason I started reading was these people encouraged me [sic]." This monologue, along with the subsequent performance of "Prosser's Gabriel," provides a crucial moment to inject thoughts of performative listening and rhetorical listening to interrogate the rhetoric of DIY.

DIY culture is a cultural ethos and ethic that derives from the hardcore punk scenes of the 1980s and has influenced popular music more broadly since. DIY is an ethos that values independent production over corporate production, a network of performance spaces, record labels, record stores, and performers with whom members of the community collaborate to

participate in musical scenes. DIY values an "authentic" kind of individuality, of standing out against mass culture to provide a "real" performance of identity, culture, and art. Ethnomusicologist Timothy Taylor interrogates DIY culture as an imperfect project that is antagonistic to corporate capitalist trends, all the while engaging in commodity exchange and the use of corporate platforms to share music (125-6). Jeffrey T. Nealon attributes most DIY's ethics to the larger biopolitics of neoliberalism. For both Taylor and Nealon, DIY perpetuates the very systems it claims to resist. While Taylor notes that DIY's work is contingent on capitalist networking, commodification, and economic structures, Nealon argues that these practices are deeply imbedded in the structure of neoliberalism.

I would like to argue briefly in favor of DIY so that the rest of this chapter does not seem like an outright dismissal of the ethos. DIY arose in the late-20th century as a response to the presence of what Frankfurt School scholars would call the culture industry. During the rise of mass media and the eventual consolidation of media platforms into increasingly fewer corporate firms, DIY came about as a network of independent record labels, venues, music scenes, and artistic movements formed in response to these trends in media. In that way, DIY is foundational to punk and the core tenets of punk outlined throughout this dissertation as it foregrounds amateur aesthetics and collaboration. With the rise of a professionalized and increasingly-financialized culture industry, members of various DIY communities – both inside and outside the punk subculture – invited talent from varying abilities. Artists no longer needed expensive recording studios with major record label production polish to put a record out, artists simply needed an instrument, something to say, and a place to say it.

DIY is a response to corporate control over culture and the distribution channels of that culture. However, the rest of this chapter extends this ethos of DIY into the underground,

foregrounding collaboration of underground performances over the mythology of individualist rebellion against status quos. In many ways, this dissertation embraces DIY ethos like learning how to record myself for an EP, not seeking out major label support to fund the recording processes, and the organization of performances of this EP without the use of culture industry apparatuses. This critique of DIY that follows is not a critique of these aspects of DIY. The critique of DIY that follows forwards the critical and radical politics of DIY into the underground, arguing for an ethos that functions as collective resistance instead of individual resistance to the standardization of culture.

Of course, neither Taylor nor Nealon's criticisms of DIY and capital altogether new. John Dewey identifies a similar phenomenon happening with artists under industrial capitalism:

> Because of changes in industrial conditions, the artist has been pushed to one side from the main streams of active interests. Industry has been mechanized and an artist cannot work mechanically for mass production. He is less integrated than formerly in the normal flow of social services. A peculiar esthetic 'individualism' results. Artists find it incumbent upon them to betake themselves to their work as an isolated means of 'self-expression.' In order not to cater to the trend of economic forces, they often feel obliged to exaggerate their separateness to the point of eccentricity. Consequently artistic products take on to a still greater degree the air of something independent and esoteric (8)

Long before any punk band played a basement show to promote music put out on their own DIY record label, Dewey identified the paradoxical relationship industrial capitalism had on artistic production. As the economic conditions created a more standardized everyday life through factory work, office work, and mass culture, artistic expression increasingly sought an ethos of individualism. DIY, then, is not only a problem with neoliberal capitalism, punk rock, or post-

1970s breakdowns in consensus making in public life (including popular culture). DIY is a symptom of capitalist standardization writ large.

"But the point is here, with this monologue," Barry continues in the video, "when I was twenty-years-old I barely read, I was strung out on drugs, and I had a couple good friends that taught me that reading was a wonderful thing." This confession disrupts the individualization that DIY is contingent upon. Barry locates his learning in a moment of listening to his friends' recommendations to read. By reading history books, he uncovers his song's topic. The community that Barry finds himself within allowed, inspired, and promoted Barry's listening, and the song becomes a performance of collective effort and not individual discovery. "Had I not started reading," Barry continues, "I wouldn't know anything about the city that I lived in. And the reason I started reading is these people encouraged me." After dedicating his song to the work of Howard Zinn and reflecting on how Zinn's work was crucial to Barry's sense of self and activism, Barry reveals to the audience that Virginia Commonwealth University had paved a parking lot over Gabriel Prosser's final resting place. "Virginia Commonwealth University, the main university in the city of Richmond, Virginia," he continues, "owns a parking lot, and below it there are enslaved Blacks buried and there's nothing done about it."

Barry's improvised monologue prefaces the performance of his song, however, it creates performative space for sites of listening. Throughout, Barry is accountable for the ways in which whiteness has hidden signs of Black struggle and resistance while propping up monuments to white supremacy and slavery. He listens for contexts and with his body. "Does anyone know the name Gabriel Prosser?" Barry asks this rhetorically in the first line of the song before finishing the line, "my conscience says he's the one history missed." By pointing to the constructed nature of history – or at least in this case, the ways in which histories are left un-constructed to promote

dominant narratives – Barry highlights the double marginalization within his story. Not only was Gabriel Prosser stripped of agency, freedoms, and human decency in life, but his story was denied re-telling and literally buried under an academic institution, denying him these things in posterity.

In 2011, VCU worked to give the land to the Virginia Trail Commission. However, efforts to place a monument at the site have been met with resistance (Murray). There is no evidence to directly connect Barry's song to the actions taken by the university to repatriate the land. However, it is undeniable that Barry employed listening to uncover a forgotten past, hold himself accountable for the ways in which he overlooked this history, and motivated his audiences to listen for these injustices not just in Richmond, Virginia, but where ever he performed. In another video available on YouTube, Barry performs this song with a similar monologue at Fest 10. In a very shaky video taken from a fan's phone, Barry is captured mid-monologue talking to fans about the anti-racist social advocacy, inspired in part by the song:

> "Through a lot of pressure, y'all listen please, through a lot of public pressure, within the city that I live in and outside of it, something actually fucking happened. [The crowd cheers in response] There was acts of civil disobedience, there was flyering, there was a lot of people talking, there was a lot of letters written, all these crazy fucking very simple acts, not just hitting 'like' on Facebook. A lot of people put their fucking feet into action, and all I gotta say to you is this: we fucking won. There is no longer a parking lot where Gabriel finally rested. The city, the state, and Virginia Commonwealth University submitted to the public pressure and ripped up the parking lot, and it is now officially green space. And this all I want to say to you, and listen closely: don't ever let somebody tell you that your talking about a topic doesn't change anything. Don't let anyone tell you

> that your listening about a topic doesn't change anything. Don't let anyone tell you that your screaming and that your fucking protesting and that your acts of civil disobedience and your time in fucking jail and whatever the fuck you have to do on whatever subject, don't let a motherfucker tell you it won't change a fucking thing." (Barry)

Here, Barry implicates the crowd in the performance, but he also implicates the direct action, the acts of civil disobedience, and the social advocacy – social advocacy that his song takes part in – as an underground act to inspire change in Richmond, Virginia. These "simple acts" reveal the radical potential for performance to inspire change, to disrupt systems of whiteness, and to inspire collective action for better worlds.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discuss the ways in which mediated performances of Fest both reinforce and critique whiteness. I have also mapped out the ways in which performance and performativity can critique and subvert these systems of whiteness. Fest's relationship with whiteness is complicated. Fest is implicated in perpetuating systems of whiteness through its use of nostalgia and history-making. However, its embrace of punk rock's commitment to social advocacy functions as a critique of structures of whiteness. Fest, through performativity, offers new ways forward and provides models for radical change. Performance as social advocacy is modeled by Tim Barry's performances of "Prosser's Gabriel."

In this chapter, I call the collective *doing* of this social advocacy "the underground." The underground rejects individualist notions of activism and doing-it-yourself, and instead embraces mass movements as ways forward. By carving out space for the underground to exist, Fest carves out space for radical, anti-racist performances. A site that is contingent upon the underground, on the collective making and re-making of structures that frame performances, must necessarily be

reflexive about the ways that even radical sites may perpetuate the very systems they wish to subvert. Throughout this chapter, I mapped out the ways in which Fest perpetuates whiteness to not only critique Fest, but to implicate my own participation in these structures as well. It is through Barry's social advocacy, however, that I argue that Fest allows for itself to be remade in the image of anti-racist advocacy. Anti-racist activism is never finished. In the same way that Barry reminds the audience to continue the struggle in their own lives, this is a call to action for performance scholars to continue the struggles in our own lives, to write and perform so that better worlds can be remade. In a climate where terms like "critical race theory" are under intense public and political scrutiny, it is of utmost importance to remember that little acts of resistance, small subversive performances of a better world, can disrupt the very structures of whiteness.

To embrace and embody this ethic of performativity, I have recorded and performed and extended play (EP) based on my experience with Fest, both as a researcher and as a member of the scene. This EP stages Fest as it relates to the four commitments in punk that I have shared throughout this dissertation: 1) play, 2) collaboration, 3) amateur aesthetics, and 4) social advocacy. In the next chapter, I write about this EP, and what this ethic of performance provides for an ethic of radical change. By embracing Fest's ethics throughout the performance of this EP, I hope to continue the work within this scene and the work of performance studies scholars by offering new ways of understanding scholarship to begin with. In the same way that Fest reimagines a "live" performance with #FestAtHome, I reimagine scholarship to extend beyond the written word and into performance. In the same way that Barry carves out space to inspire change, I carve out space for an EP to inspire similar kinds of change, especially in the wake of 2020's racial awakenings and all future anti-racist projects.

Chapter 4: Performing Fest in *Whenever You're Ready*

Whenever You're Ready (2022)[4] is the culmination of not only my dissertation research, but of my experiences throughout my educational experiences, particularly in graduate school at the University of South Florida. I relate these experiences to Fest because as I became more involved in graduate school and my own scholarship, I became less involved as a performer in the music scene that comprises Fest. This chapter and the EP described within it is an attempt to recover that aspect of my identity and restore a fundamental component of my everyday life that became shelved during grad school.

When I enrolled at the University of South Florida as an undergraduate transfer student a decade ago in the Spring of 2012, enrolled in American Studies for two reasons: 1) it provided the quickest path to graduation, and as a first-generation college student I was well on my way to finishing my degree in six years instead of the typical four years, and 2) the coursework and content seemed interesting. My experiences with higher education were messy and atypical: I flunked out of my first university during my sophomore year because my roommate got arrested and left school, my upright bass got stolen, and my Jazz Studies major got cut due to austerity measures during the financial crash of 2007-2009. I never planned on attending college in the first place, but I felt an immense sense of obligation to my family to not only go to college but

[4] A link to the EP is currently hosted on the SoundCloud platform at https://soundcloud.com/mikey-mcdowell-ii/sets/whenever-youre-ready?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

finish with a bachelor's degree upon graduating high school. After bouncing around two schools in the Florida College System – what may be called a junior college or community college system in other states – for two years to improve my grades and earn an associates degree that allowed me to transfer into the University of South Florida, I wanted the quickest path to graduation possible.

It was during this time that I dedicated most of my free time to making music in the Florida punk scene more broadly and in cover bands throughout the area. The band that situated me in the Gainesville scene was called Modern Cavalier, a three-piece punk group that was heavily influenced by Against Me, Hot Water Music, The Gaslight Anthem, and many of the other bands that play Fest. The three of us all attended the same university out of high school, the University of West Florida in Pensacola, and we all decided to come back "home" to the Tampa Bay area at the same time. Upon our arrival back home, we wrote, performed, and recorded a dozen songs in a year, culminating recording a demo at Golden Tone Studios with Rob McGregor. The band broke up the semester before I enrolled at USF as an undergraduate, and my role as a performer in this scene took a back seat. What emerged, however, was a new role of audience member, Fest-goer, and ultimately, scholar.

My relationship with Fest specifically is inherently tied to this trajectory as well. I started attending Fest the same year I started my master's program, in the same Humanities and Cultural Studies Department where I earned my bachelor's degree. My easy way out of college turned out to not be such a quick escape after all. In the same Spring 2012 semester that I entered USF, I enrolled in a class about the American West, which was a performance-based course that served as a prelude to a tourism course in the following summer semester, where I would learn about performance as an object of study, as a metaphor for everyday life, and as a method of inquiry

on-site in Yosemite National Park. Suddenly I found myself spending as much time reading Tracy Stephenson-Shaffer, Judith Butler, and the Frankfurt School as I was listening to Laura Jane Grace, Chuck Ragan, and the Gainesville punk scene. After finishing my undergraduate degree with a 2.6GPA, I enrolled in graduate school in part because I found a new "scene," as a way to redeem my own academic failures as an undergraduate, but most importantly because I suddenly found friends and colleagues in the Departments of Humanities and Cultural Studies, Communication, and in the School of Music at USF who allowed me to think, write, and talk about the music I cared about in the ways that I always wanted to think, write, and talk about them. My performance as a scholar of Fest is inseparable from my performance as a fan of Fest.

Graduate school and the stability it provided also allowed me to experience the Gainesville scene in a more immediate way. As an undergraduate, I spent most of my time either doing schoolwork or working jobs in the food service or retail industries to help subsidize my schoolwork. Graduate school provided me with a luxury that I had yet to experience in my adult life: a set schedule and weekends off. The fall semester of 2015 was my first year of Fest, because it was the first year that I could both afford to pay for the tickets (I commuted back and forth to Fest every day from my parents' house in Inverness to save on lodging) and could plan the time to attend a music festival on the weekend. In a conversation with my good friend Steve in the summer prior, we both caught ourselves fantasizing about one day attending Fest and realized that for the first time in our lives we had the financial stability and set schedule to allow it to happen. We bought our tickets immediately after the conversation ended.

Steve is important to this story as a collaborator, friend, a fellow musician, and as the person who gave the EP a title. Steve's band, The Proper Crooks, played blues-influenced punk in many of the same venues on many of the same nights that my band played, and him and I

cultivated a friendship in the subsequent years. Since we started attending Fest together, Steve was also the first person to encourage me to make an EP after years of showing him unfinished songs that I wrote since our bands broke up. Steve allowed me to use his home to record demos, try out sounds and ideas, and just collaborate in the creative process that allowed this EP to come to fruition. In the eighth track on this EP, Steve can be heard through a hot microphone whispering "whenever you're ready," inviting me to start recording my parts for the song. When Steve sent me the unmixed demo track for this song, he assured me that he would remove that "mistake" before the final mix was completed. It is a poetic accident that a microphone happened to capture, but the phrase "whenever you're ready" perfectly captures the ethics, aesthetic principles, and underlying message of this EP.

As I have discussed throughout this dissertation, I understand punk to have four ethical commitments: 1) play, 2) collaboration, 3) amateur aesthetics, and 4) social advocacy. *Whenever You're Ready* as a performance mediated through the recording process embraces the sentiment in "whenever you're ready" as a phrase. The phrase often grants permission without demanding a particular time or place, it embraces a stance of listening and collaboration instead of rigidity and exchange. Not only does the concept explain the long writing process that took a decade after the breakup of my prior band, but it describes the meandering ways in which I negotiated my life as a scholar, performer, and human being. "Whenever you're ready" is the permission I needed to re-establish myself as *both* a scholar and a performer and as *both* fan and musician. The phrase collapses the very tensions present throughout this dissertation and performance studies more broadly, but most importantly for performance scholarship, it offers an approach that centers listening, learning, and contextualization. As I have written throughout this dissertation, I situate myself in this project, not because I find my story to be particularly

remarkable, but in highlighting my own everyday performances I hope to uncover other stories, contexts, histories, and performances as they relate to Fest.

In the pages that follow, I will provide a brief explanation of the recording, performing, and research that went into this EP. I will explain these tracks in the format of an artist statement that behaves like linear notes in a physical copy of an album, with brief explanations and stories behind each song. As I will demonstrate throughout, these songs embrace the four commitments of the Gainesville scene. To further demonstrate these commitments, I have provided lyrics, chords, and tunings for anybody who would like to play along, collaborate with me, make an amateur cover of an already-amateur song, and participate in the advocacy that sharing music and performance may provide. I draw inspiration for this from two places: 1) from a precedent set in the Gainesville scene for this practice to occur, most notably in Rob McGregor's own solo album *Valentine* (2008), where the linear notes include chords, lyrics, and instructions for the listener to "[p]lay it LOUD!", and 2) from scholarship in performance studies. Gratch's work on amateur aesthetics in amateur filmmaking serves as a manifesto for the practice of sweding, or "the serious play of performance processes that can unite us as friends, as small communities, as technological learners, and as co-creators of both aesthetic texts and positives memories" (Gratch 3). McRae and Huber's (2017) locates this specific ethic of amateurism in musical practice as "generative forms of inquiry that can be used to extend critical approaches to pedagogy" (McRae and Huber 71). They continue:

> Musical experience or skill is not necessary for an appreciation or application of this session. Rather, this practice session opens the space for the recognition of how the design of routine and experimentation can work to critically recognize and engage larger structures, especially in pedagogical contexts. We argue music making can function as

> critical pedagogy in that it is culturally located and enacted on and by bodies (McRae 2015a, pp. 4-5) and therefore has the potential to highlight specific ways that cultural practices are (re)constituted by both musicians and audiences. As a creative act, music making can be further understood as critical pedagogy in that it is a site of embodied inquiry into the production of not only individual, but cultural, and social performances (McRae and Huber 71)

Here, I would like to incorporate my understanding of the ethical commitments of Fest into a project that I call "punk rock pedagogy." Punk rock pedagogy takes both Gratch and McRae and Huber's work and extends it into social and aesthetic performances of punk. Not only does punk embrace these commitments, but it employs these commitments in a way that is always-already at odds with the established social order. Punk insists that other, more equitable worlds are possible, Fest is a celebration of this commitment, and this EP is a celebration of not only my personal relationship with punk, performance, Fest, Florida, the Gainesville scene, and other topics discussed throughout this project, but an opportunity to offer new ways of existing in the world.

Whenever You're Ready

Recorded in Alex Gardner's living room in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Personnel: Mikey McDowell – guitar, bass, vocals

Josh "Rookie" Long – words, music

Elijah Garland – music

Alex Gardner – recording, mixing, mastering

Eb Standard Guitar Tuning

Verse: C#m11#5 – E – F#m9/11/A – Am7(add 7)

Chorus: F#m/C – A – E

I could walk away

Everything's so complicated

I fucked it up

I know, I hate it

You can't make me stay

Leave it all behind and be miserable

At least I tried

Is what I'd tell myself but

I'm not giving up just yet

I've still got a lot to give

I'm not giving up just yet

You took everything

You lied about every promise you made me

It felt like my fault,

I felt so crazy

It took everything

To rebuild myself, start from the beginning

Back at home

Back where I'm needed and

I'm not giving up just yet

I've still got a lot to give

I'm not giving up just yet

I wrote the music to this song when I first arrived in Tallahassee, Florida to begin graduate studies in a musicology program at Florida State University. I ended cutting these studies short for various reasons, one of which was so I could return home to the Tampa Bay area to help my dad, who at the time had recently been diagnosed with cancer. In Tallahassee, I was playing music all the time, and would spend countless nights talking about harmony and music theory with a theorist friend, Eli. In Tallahassee, I became slightly obsessed with the math rock band Look Mexico. Look Mexico is a Fest staple, frequently playing in some of the smaller venues and putting on live shows where lead singer and guitarist Matt Agrella would enter the crowd and encourage everybody to sit in a circle as the band finished out their set. It was during a Look Mexico set at Fest where I first conceived of what would inevitably become this dissertation project.

Throughout my years at punk shows, I had witnessed many bands blur the boundary between the performer and the audience. Look Mexico's shows made this an explicit set of ethos in their performance. I attended a Look Mexico show for a Field Methods course in Ethnomusicology and wrote about my experience. In the seminar, the other graduate students

exchanged fieldnotes and we all jotted down notes about our respective thoughts on the fieldnotes. When my feedback returned, I was a bit shocked to learn, for instance, that my colleagues did not know what "ska" was and that terms like "crust punk," "poser," and "math rock" were foreign terms to them. This moment cemented my interest in documenting and describing punk performances.

This mild obsession with Look Mexico grew even stronger when I realized that their bassist owned a punk venue in Tallahassee, The Wilbury, and the band would often host shows for each of their respective members' birthday parties at the venue. I probably saw Look Mexico a dozen times in the two years I lived in Tallahassee, and it inspired this song and my guitar playing in general. This experience shaped not only my guitar playing, but my understanding of what punk means. Punk exists as a sort of postmodern attempt at recreating third places; as you will read further along in this chapter, Fubar in St. Pete served as mine for many years, and the various venues in Gainesville allowed that scene to become vibrant enough to host Fest. These places allow for the creation of different ways of performing, but they also inspire a pedagogical experience. I learned how to sound like Look Mexico by showing up at The Wilbury and hanging out with the punks in Tallahassee, in the same way that I learned about the Gainesville scene by hanging out in my bedroom in Inverness dreaming of Fest, and in the same way that I learned the inner workings of Fest by showing up and hanging out at Fest.

The tapping guitar riff in the introduction is a blatant rip-off of the kind of tapping Look Mexico performs in their music. Tapping is a style of guitar playing where the player forgoes using one hand to fret the notes on the guitar neck and another hand to strum or pluck the notes with a pick or their fingers and, instead, uses both hands on the fretboard of the guitar to fret the notes, allowing for players to have a wider range of notes than traditional guitar playing allows

and creating a more dynamic timbre in the notes that mimics the sliding of a bowed instrument or the human voice. When I wrote the song, I wrote it around the tapping riff and around ideas inspired by music theory talks with Eli. However, this song would simply be a cool riff and chord progression that I would play around with at Guitar Center for years, it would never fully develop into a song until I returned to the Tampa Bay area after exited Tallahassee.

When I arrived back to St. Petersburg, Florida to attend the University of South Florida, my friends and I met up for the first time in years and decided to fish near the Skyway Bridge to the south of the city. After a day of fishing, my friends and I returned to our apartments and my friend Rookie – the same friend who sang and played guitar in my old band Modern Cavalier – asked a familiar question: "what have you been playing lately?" As I have written about throughout this dissertation, this question is an invitation and a vital component of what I have identified as the four main commitments in the Gainesville punk scene. I show Rookie the tapping riff and accompanying chord progression. Our friend Nick finishes cooking the fish that we caught earlier in that day. We eat dinner, and Rookie picks up his guitar and plays my riff and chord progression back to me and, without any prompting, sings "I'm not giving up just yet, I've still got a lot to give" over the progression.

I tell this story not as a magical origin story for this song, but rather, to emphasize the radical, communicative power in music, hanging out, and performance. Rookie and I have been playing music together for years. I did not tell him anything about the song, I just played with him and "jammed" on the chord progression while waiting for food to cook. Yet, after playing music together for years, Rookie intuitively wrote a chorus that empathized with what I am sure was written all over my face upon returning to St. Pete after flunking out of music school in the Panhandle for the second time. I was not sure what this song was supposed to be about when I

showed it to Rookie, but as soon as he sang what would end up becoming the chorus to the song, I realized what it needed to become.

Chomsky on Dewey

Recorded in my bedroom.

Personnel: Mikey – guitar, recording, mixing, mastering.

Noam Chomsky – spoken word (K2nsl3r)

Eb Standard Guitar Tuning, Capo on the 2nd Fret (or transposed a full step up)

A Section: Cadd9 – B/Cadd9

B Section: Amaj7 – Bm7 – Gmaj7 – Amaj7 – Bm7 – Fmaj7

This EP contains eight songs with lyrics and music that was either written by me or written in collaboration with friends of mine. The EP also contains three samples of spoken word with original to accompany the discussions to denote thematic shifts in the EP. This first track of spoken word set to music is an interview with Noam Chomsky posted to YouTube, where Chomsky explains John Dewey's theories of pedagogy and democracy. Here, Chomsky articulates an understanding of Dewey's educational theories to understand a learner's tendency toward creativity and independence, which according to Chomsky's reading of Dewey is absent in contemporary educational paradigms. Instead, he argues, the current educational paradigm functions as a tool for elite control. The antidote for this paradigm is the democratization of the educational process, which inevitably involves the democratization of all aspects of social life: business, industry, and the arts.

In his study of the ritual processes in the classroom, McLaren extends Dewey's understanding of arts in the educational paradigm (McLaren 230). In Fall of 2019, I took a

Pedagogy & Performance graduate seminar that explored these understandings of education with Dr. Aubrey Huber. For the final performance in the course, I staged a performance that encouraged my colleagues to learn musical instruments. Before the performance, I tuned my collection of guitars to an open tuning; a tuning where the strings on the guitar are pitched to a note in a particular chord. I then began a very basic lesson that showed my colleagues how to fret a guitar, and showed them positions on the fingerboard that correspond to chords in a song. At the end of the performance, colleagues who admitted to having no musical training were able to perform a cover of a very basic, three-chord song by Woody Guthrie.

This track offers a critique of an educational system that not only convinces students that they are less creative – that any person is innately artistic or creative, or that art is a skill to be learned and not a way of knowing and engaging with the world -- but it also critiques the very systems in this society that discipline students for pursuing the arts in education. To continue my assertion that a commitment in punk involves play, collaboration, amateur aesthetics, and social advocacy, this track is performance of the ethics expressed in the final performance for that graduate seminar.

This Fuckin' Loan

Recorded in my bedroom.

Personnel: Mikey – guitar, vocals, bass, mixing, mastering.

Eb Standard Guitar Tuning

G

Some kids are six feet under

C

From all the anxiety

G

Others are alcoholics

D

There's no future for them to see

G C G

The institutions lied and put us out on our own

G D G

Well, I ain't payin' back this fuckin' loan

G twice for the breaks

G

They sold me on a dream

C G

When I was seventeen

G

Then they busted all the unions

D

Exploit workers overseas

G C G

Now the only work around pays really low

G D G

Well I ain't payin' back this fuckin' loan

C

Well you can call my phone

G

Anytime of the day

Am

You can come a-knockin'

Take all my shit away

G C G

And if it gets too rough I'll sleep out on the road

G D G

Cuz I ain't paying back this fuckin' loan

I went to the doctor's office

They ran some tests on me

Fourteen hundred dollars

To tell me I had a sneeze

Insurance claim declined to meet a monthly minimum

And I ain't paying back this fuckin' bill

If you think for a second

Imagine if you please

If we were a corporation

A bank or property

The government would want us to profit even more

And we'd never pay back a fuckin' loan

To continue thematically in the EP on the discussion of the disciplinary functions within educational institutions, this song is the first of many on this EP that engage in explicit social advocacy. I borrow the folk-punk style from may Fest performers: Tim Barry, Laura Jane Grace, and Chuck Ragan, to name a few, have all written folk songs with varying degrees of explicit social advocacy. For instance, I have written elsewhere about Tim Barry's "Prosser's Gabriel," a protest song about Virginia Commonwealth University paving a parking lot over the unmarked grave of Gabriel Prosser, the leader of a 19th century slave revolt in Richmond.

This EP is being released digitally and not through any typical distribution networks, and the chords and lyrics for this song will be available to anybody who would like to learn the song themselves. I have released this song as a "single" from the EP, and with the single I will create a video performance for the song. In doing this, I want to encourage a participatory performance where folks are invited to sing and perform the song along with me and, if they like, submit a recording of themselves playing along with the song.

Kipling

Standard Guitar Tuning

Recorded at Eric Miller's apartment in Oldsmar,

Personnel: Mikey – guitar, vocals

Eric Miller – guitar, vocals

G

Well I tried to figure out

C9 Dsus4

What's wrong

G

This aching feeling lasts

C9 Dsus4

Way too long

G

I take one step forward and

C9 Dsus4

Fourteen back

G

I've tried too many ways to get my

C9 Dsus4

Life on track

C9 Dsus4

So momma please forgive me

G

I'm coming home

C9 Dsus4

Sick of all these assholes in this

G

Rundown town

C9 Dsus4

Father please forgive me

G

I quit this dead-end job

G C9 Dsus4 G

But this black thundercloud keeps following me

There aren't many ways to mend a broken heart

Beer, a little whiskey, and a broken guitar

I've tried to help myself but I'm

Born to lose

Instead of giving in

I'm moving onto somewhere new

This is the oldest song on the EP, recorded at my friend Eric's apartment in Oldsmar, Florida in 2010 when I moved back to the Tampa Bay area after leaving UWF. I found this song when organizing the space in my music folder on my computer, and I did not intend on including it in the EP until I thought of the name for the title of the album. Including this track is a bit

embarrassing for me: I can hear my vocals sliding all over the place, there is a hum of white noise throughout the track, and the lyrics and chord progression are a pop punk cliché that makes my skin crawl when listening to them. Pineau (1995) argues for creating space in performance scholarship for rehearsals, a "methodology of enactment, a learning by doing … [that] explicitly privileges process over product; rehearsal is the site of research, the space of fieldwork, and the means of data collection and analysis" (Pineau 48-9). In the spirit of both amateur aesthetics and forwarding an understanding of rehearsal as a method of performance research, I include this track on the EP to foreground the processes that go into creating music. *Whenever You're Ready* allows for the possibility of always rehearsing, re-making, performing, and developing these performances.

When Eric and I recorded this song in a makeshift studio in his apartment, our goal was to figure out how to create multiple layers of vocal harmonies. We were both learning how to write songs, record music, and sing at this time in our lives, and this goal gave us an opportunity to rehearse a new creative process. Listening to this track again over a decade later, I may be a little embarrassed by how young and raw it sounds, but I am fond of the memories of learning how to create harmonies with recording software and learning how to enjoy listening to my own voice on a recording.

Hurston Hauntology

This is the second track to feature a recorded sample with my own music juxtaposed onto it. In it, I explore haunting, the undead, and the underground as metaphors for disturbing our existing social order. Here, I sample a Zora Neale Hurston interview about zombies in Haiti as an example of an epistemology that is at odds with understandings of life and death. In my local

newspaper, *The Tampa Bay Times*, stories broke throughout my time in the doctoral program about the re-discovering of gravesites for black residents of Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Clearwater.

I have been quite disturbed by recent stories in the news about black cemeteries in the Tampa Bay area being recently re-discovered. To me, burying and forgetting the black folks whose forced labor built this area, and whose status as beyond human dignity even in death, is the physical and conceptual foundation of whiteness. This disturbance – a haunting – became even more of a focal point of my thinking, writing, and creative practices during the summer of 2020, when the killing of black folks like Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd created a national uprising that forced America to reconcile its racist history and present. In the same way that the zombies in Hurston's story march down the street, forcing the living to reconsider the social, spiritual, and metaphysical order, the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests took to the streets and forced Americans to reconsider their relationship with their country's racial hierarchy.

This track was recorded against a backdrop of ongoing political struggles where right wing leaders have reacted to the protests by creating a moral panic about Critical Race Theory, arguing that students in public schools are being made to feel bad for being white. This extreme reaction to understandable frustration across the United States evokes what Stephenson Shaffer and Gunn call a "haunting conflictedness" in the racial imagination in the US (Stephenson Shaffer and Gunn 47). They write:

> Insofar as Whiteness is spectral, music in/as performance may be a fruitful way to commerce with the ghost of race. Insofar as music harbors the potential to undermine

> regimes of visibility, and insofar as racial identity functions fundamentally at the iconic level, we suggest that the in-betweeness [sic] of a haunting musical experience may more effectively call the invisibility of Whiteness into question among performers and practitioners in performance art (48)

I extend this understanding of haunting beyond the in-betweenness of music and use zombies as to return these understandings of race to the body. Re-remembering these sites of racist forgetting wakes the dead. By waking the dead, zombies force a reckoning, bearing witness to a corpse that no longer exists out of sight and out of mind. In the same way that I was disturbed by a racist past that was literally buried in my metropolitan region, uncovering theses histories forces a racial reckoning.

I am also interested in zombies as a metaphor for deep anxieties in America about "mob mentalities," "unwashed masses," and other innuendos used for collective organizing. Black Lives Matter, Defund the Police, and Antifa protests have been described in the media through the lens of unthinking mobs disturbing the peace and disrupting the social order. Take away the specific group names, and the media might as well be describing a zombie apocalypse. Zombies (and mobs, to continue the metaphor) disturb the very foundation of post-Enlightenment thinking: of individual actors, of rationality, of self-interest, and objective reality. "Mobs" disturb the very foundation of the hyper-individualism that the United States was built on.

It is here, too, that I argue for the underground *instead* of a DIY ethic. Doing-it-yourself is rugged individualism reimagined for alternative aesthetic creation. But the term "DIY scene" is an oxymoron. You cannot be a scene — a collective — at the same time that you "do-it-yourself." The underground is radical dependence, not independence. It is collective action that emerges in bodies. The underground is aesthetic creation that uncovers forgotten histories,

demands reckoning, and inspires utopian reconfiguration. Becoming a zombie is becoming an affront to the very systems of racism, classism, colonialism, and other forms of oppression that demand individual obedience instead of the liberation of collective action.

Furthermore, the model of the underground serves as a call to action, allowing the commitments in the Gainesville scene to serve as a model for re-establishing a more equitable social order. Fest's horror-themed imagery, highlighting the fact that the festival happens near Halloween every year, reinforces the idea of the zombie, of a collective action that takes to the streets of Gainesville to reimagine the social order. Comeback Kid is a Canadian hardcore band that frequently plays Fest. Their most popular song is called "Wake the Dead," and the chorus refrain is "you said, you said, you said, this time was gonna be different – wake the dead." The underground inspires a collective haunting, and embodied sense of urgency that changes the established social order and critiques racist systems.

On This City's Streets

Recorded in my bedroom.

Personnel: Mikey – acoustic guitar, electric guitar, vocals, bass, mixing, mastering.

Eb Standard Guitar Tuning

Verse: Em – G – D – C

Chorus: Em+9 – D – C

You took my family's home

You sold us a loan

The public was fleeced

You called it the American Dream

You made your bets

Profit dripping from your teeth

Your lost our billions

You kicked us out on the street

Just laying in the street

Just laying in the street

Just leave me in the street

Just leave me in the street

You sleep in the comfort

Of the wealth that you stole

They gave you severance pay

At your failed company

The structures that built

Your golden parachute

Are the structures that protect you

From the people you duped

We're just laying in the street

Just laying in the street

Just leave me in the street

Just leave me in the street

You stole what little we had

And we were already beaten down

But who gives a fuck right?

We're just poor, black, or brown

But you'll never learn

But we won't forget

Last time we called you 1%

Now we're calling for your end

We're taking to the streets

We're taking to the streets

We're taking back the streets

We're taking back the streets

This song is the last Modern Cavalier song we wrote before breaking up. The song was never recorded, and the original lyrics are lost somewhere on a laptop computer that was pawned off long ago. The song was written in response to the financial and housing crisis of the late 2000s, and the only lyrics that I remember from the original are the lyrics to the chorus and the line "they gave you severance pay," only because it was an inside joke within the band that our lyrics were beginning to sound a bit too much like a financial blog post and not enough like song lyrics.

I included an updated version of this song on the EP, because in many ways the problems that we wrote about a decade ago have become more pressing at the time of writing this dissertation. In the late 00s, we were all growing increasingly tired of the story of the financial collapse being told as a personal failing, as a story about individuals taking on more debt than they could afford and not living within their means. In response, the government tightened its own belt and imposed austerity members on an already-hurting public, creating more despair in its wake. This is all set against the backdrop of massive public bailouts of the banking and finance systems that created predatory financial products that created the crisis in the first place.

Now a decade and a pandemic later, the lessons that were supposed to have been learned from this crisis seem to have gone ignored. This is made more pressing by the fact that in the subsequent years that followed the Occupy Movement that protested the United States government's handling of the crisis, more popular movements have grown to protest systemic racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and a host of other structural problems in the United States that have been highlighted by the government's failure to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am writing this dissertation in a bedroom, in a house that I share with roommates who were fortunate enough to purchase a home when the market crashed. From this room, I watch as the Tampa Bay area experiences the fastest-growing rental and home prices in the United States, and where gentrification threatens the most marginalized communities in the city of St. Petersburg. This song is a call to arms for folks to reclaim streets, a symbolic act of protest against the market structures that create the very systems of oppression that marginalize so many.

The Ballad for South St. Pete

Recorded in my bedroom.

Personnel: Mikey – guitar, vocals, mixing, mastering.

Eb Standard Guitar Tuning

Intro: G – C – G – Am – G – C – G – D – G

G C

What do a dome and an interstate have in common?

G Am

They're built on a history that's been long since forgotten

G C

Before the beaches and the art scene became tourist destinations

G D

St. Pete was built on black oppression

G C

In the 1980s they wanted a baseball team

G Am

In the Gas Plant District in South St. Pete

G C

A black community, with churches, clubs, and a school

G D

No sign, no memorial, nothing there to remind you

G

So dig deep, dig deep

C

It’s buried under your feet

G

Dig deep, dig deep

Am

What wasn’t meant to be seen

G F#/G

Dig down, dig down

Em

Dig under the ground

C

You can’t fix a past

D G

You know nothing about

If you ever drive South on 22nd street

Pass the gentrification, past the craft breweries

You’ll drive through the Deuces

The former Black Main Street

Where Ray Charles and Louis Armstrong

Never missed a beat

It was the mid-20th century, and the uppity whites
Couldn't stand jazz and blues at all hours of the night
So when it came time to build 275
They built it right through the Deuces and it couldn't survive

This song models the activism I call for in the previous section on "Hurston Hauntology." Earlier I wrote that Tim Barry's "Prosser's Gabriel" inspired me to think about the ways I could use performance and folk punk to inspire change in my own community. I have written extensively about this Tim Barry song elsewhere, but it is here where I begin to theorize blurring interdisciplinary boundaries and rejecting ideas of DIY in favor of the underground and collective action.

My own experience with these communities came during my MA program in American Studies at USF. During that program, I took a course on Jazz in Florida with Dr. Andrew Berish. In the course, we explored the WPA archives at the University of South Florida's Florida Studies special collection. While exploring the archives, I was intrigued by the ways in which federal music projects in the area – mostly serving MacDill Air Force Base during World War II – navigated segregation in the Tampa Bay area. One day, I decided to write for this course while eating at a now-closed Louisiana-style restaurant in St. Pete, Ricky P's. While eating lunch, a woman sat down next to me at the bar and interrupted my eating and writing. "I couldn't help but notice, so I apologize if this is rude," she suggested softly over the solo jazz saxophone being played at the restaurant, "but if you're writing about jazz in this area, you need to write about the Manhattan Casino. I used to write for the [then] *St. Petersburg Times* and I have stories to tell

you." Sandra Gadsden, former editor for the *Times* spent the next few hours telling me stories about Ray Charles, Luis Armstrong, and Cannonball Adderley playing shows at the Manhattan Casino, a jazz club in the Deuces neighborhood of Southside St. Pete.

Ms. Gadsden was kind enough to exchange emails with me over the next few weeks, curating my own research for the course and deeply impacting my interest in the then-relatively unknown history of the Deuces neighborhood in St. Pete. This song comes from the many conversations we shared on the topic, and from the rest of the research I did for the Jazz in Florida course. In the same way that Tim Barry uses his knowledge of the city of Richmond, VA to raise awareness about racial inequality and encourage change, I offer "The Ballad for South St. Pete" as a performance of the same commitments.

Fubar

Recorded in The Pink Room, Clearwater, Florida against Steve Miller's own will and best judgement.

Personnel:

Mikey McDowell – guitar, lead vocals

Steve Miller – recording, mixing, master

Josh "Rookie" Long, Cody Tilwick, Nick Scurlock, Steve Miller – gang vocals, PBR burps

Standard Guitar Tuning

Chord Progression throughout: C – Am – F – G

Got off work about an hour ago

Long after white collars get to go home

It's eleven, maybe eleven forty-five

My clock is all wrong, but I'm too fuckin' tired

My legs are so sore, my back is stiff

My check's been spent and it's not even in

And tomorrow, I'm doing it again

So tonight it's whiskey and then it'll be gin

Cuz I'm drunk again

On a Saturday night

And I'm drinking alone just to sleep through the night

And the thoughts of

What could've been

They haunt my dreams until the morning comes so I drink

My friends they all moved about three years ago

They don't send me messages, I don't get any calls

This bar is so lonely, but the seats are all full

My drink is lukewarm and I don't even know

That the bartender is the only one here

Who knows my name so he pours me another beer

And the only thing that's keeping me alive

There's this girl that I love and she's not even mine

This song is dedicated to Fubar, a music venue in Downtown St. Pete that hosted many punk shows that closed on New Year's Eve, 2018. I started attending Fubar when they started booking Modern Cavalier for shows, and it served as a cornerstone of the 600 Block in St. Pete, which until recently was known for its thriving music scene. In Spring 2019, I wrote about Fubar in Dr. Jane Jorgenson's Framing and Sensemaking class; as Fubar shut down, many local newspapers tried to make sense of a changing city. When Fubar first opened, the 600 Block was described with metaphors of life, sound, vibrancy, and color, and when Fubar closed the metaphors were silence, death, and decline.

The song is an amateur ethnography, a composite character I created after spending many nights at Fubar alone, often reading for class and always consuming Pabst Blue Ribbon. Another patron at the bar put Billy Joel's "Piano Man" on the jukebox, almost certainly ironically, and exclaimed "man, it's a good thing Billy Joel didn't write this song about Fubar, how fucked up would that be?" and that was all the inspiration I needed. What if Billy Joel *did* write that song about Fubar? At the same time, it occurred to me that Fubar was probably not going to be around forever (punk venues rarely last longer than the punk songs played within them), and the only song documenting Fubar's existence was made by St. Pete ska band UNRB and their song was much less glowing than mine: the lyrics to the chorus were "why don't you learn how to put on a show?"

I spent plenty of nights in Fubar, scribbling random conversations and utterances I overheard into a notebook, writing a song with the working title "Working Class Piano Man" for years. "My check's been spent and it's not even in" was the first line I scribbled down, yelled by a patron from across the bar who was spitefully ordering another drink even when he knew he could not afford it, flaunting fiscal responsibility aside. In the same way that Billy Joel's song

sounds happy but has deeper undertones of melancholy and loneliness, I wanted to create the inverse: what if a bunch of people who were miserable otherwise could come together on a Saturday night and find collective comfort in each other for a night? My version's explicitly depressing lyrics are set to an upbeat chord progression in six-eight time, implying a sense of irony and self-deprecating humor often used to cope with hard times.

The song was recorded at Steve Miller's house, at his in-home studio that he calls "The Pink Room." The personnel notes to this song indicate that he recorded it "under duress," which means that I begged him to record us playing music until he finally caved and decided to oblige my request. The song was recorded late in the summer of 2019, when I began finalizing my plans for this dissertation project. Before the world was changed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the group of friends who attend Fest with me would schedule monthly hang out sessions, where we would cook, watch movies, play music, and enjoy our time together. In many ways, the recording of the song parallels the idea that inspired the lyrics. This recording was one of the last moments we were all able to hang out together before the pandemic hit, and it was recorded a few weeks prior to the last in-person Fest before the pandemic. In the same way that Fubar provided a place for punks to hang out and become themselves and provided a place for a bunch of punks in downtown St. Pete to form communal ties and engage in performances outside the parameters of their everyday lives, recording this song captured a moment that embraced similar ethos.

Last Night

Recorded in my bedroom.

Personnel: Mikey – guitar, vocals, bass, mixing, mastering.

Standard Guitar Tuning

C

Last night

Am

I fell asleep

F

In a bed of vomit

G

Yelling in my dreams

C Am

Did you ever think I would ever wonder?

C G

Did you ever think it would bother me?

C Am

Did you ever think we'd make any money?

C G

Do you ever think past your selfish needs?

Did you really think I wanted exposure?

Do you really think that's good enough for me?

Do you ever think, do you ever wonder?

Why nobody wants to play your bar for free?

This is a song I wrote as a very frustrated, gigging musician who was tired of playing music in front of packed venues and not being compensated for the gigs by the venue owners. I understand that the chorus's lyrics may seem like confessions of self-harm, but when I wrote them they were intended to signify how venue owners treat musicians as if they are disposable; I have never actually fallen asleep in vomit and I do not think I spend nights yelling in my sleep. The other songs are a bit more subtle and nuanced than this one, but this one is on the EP for two reasons: 1) I enjoy ska as a genre and wanted to include a ska song on the EP, and 2) I have always paired this song with "Fubar" as the sort of "hangover" to the latter song's night of drinking.

To extend this metaphor, this song has taken on a symbolic meaning of hangover. In the same way that a night of drinking cannot last forever and the next day often comes in the form of punishment for the good times had, the vibrant sense of community on the 600 Block and Fubar more specifically eventually came to an end. The hangover, in this case, is a St. Pete punk community that is still trying to make sense of itself without places to play. In this sense, my interest in Fest and the Gainesville scene comes in response to the absence in St. Pete's scene. Fest institutionalizes Gainesville's punk scene, the annual festival solidifies the punk scene in the community and necessitates the constant upkeep and maintenance of various punk venues. Fest was originally an outgrowth of the Gainesville scene, but now it is the institution that allows the scene to continue to exist.

Untitled (Write My Name)

Recorded in my bedroom.

Personnel: Mikey – guitar, vocals, bass, mixing, mastering.

Eb Standard Guitar Tuning

F E/F B/C C

You don’t even write my name no more

G B/C C

In those notebooks when you’re bored

F E/F B/C C

I can feel it coming, I feel it every night

G B/C C

I can tell because you sleep so far away

G B/C C

I can tell because you sleep so far away

You don’t even shine my way no more

It’s in your eyes, it won’t go away

I can feel it coming, I feel it every night

Just hurt me and get it over with

Just hurt me and get it over with

Am B/Am C

I just want to see you smile

F E/F D

Even when I'm not around

Am B/Am C

I just want to see you smile

F E/F G

Even when I'm not around

You don't even write my name no more

In those notebooks when you're bored

I can feel it coming, I feel it every night

Just hurt me and get it over with

Just hurt me and get it over with

This is the last song that I completed on the EP. The guitar part was written long before the lyrics were completed, which is typical for my songwriting process. During a phone conversation with my dissertation advisor, Dr. Chris McRae, we both voiced our frustrations about doing work in academia during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the conversation, he suggested that we were experiencing a collective loss – and the "we" in this conversation was everybody impacted by COVID-19, not just academics – and that none of us have really been given an opportunity to work through this sense of loss, to grief or to make sense of it.

I wanted to write a song that conveyed a sense of loss without necessarily writing about the COVID-19 pandemic. In the realm of popular music in the United States, breakup songs are about as ubiquitous as it gets, and perhaps the only form of collective grieving we allow for ourselves. I wrote this song about an interpersonal relationship to thematically tie myself to that sense of collective grieving, but I wanted to subvert the genre conventions a bit. Most breakup songs tend to be spiteful or one-sided declarations of love lost and wrongdoing. I wanted to create a song with a sense of loss that was not spiteful, hurtful, or about revenge, but instead about dwelling with the loss itself as shared grieving. The sense of disappointment in "just hurt me" is understood as an acceptance, a willingness to move on and to renegotiate the terms of the relationship. I tend to avoid writing love songs or songs about relationships because they seem to be too prominent in our popular imagination. This song offers a way for me to process the sense of loss, the friends I have not seen in years, the moments many of us could not share with loved ones, the false promises of ending the pandemic and collectively working together to take care of each other, only to be let down and hurt all over again. The breakup here is not romantic in nature, rather, it is a breakup with a society that cannot bother to remember my name and certainly cannot bother to give us space to grieve through a massive, deadly pandemic.

Tolstoy

Recorded in my bedroom.

Personnel: Mikey – guitar, mixing, mastering.

Throughout my time in coursework at USF, I would stage performances that relied upon the manipulation of recorded sound through the pickups of my Danelectro electric guitar and into a pedalboard, where I would manipulate the sound further. When I was first learning how to play

bass and first performing in cover bands, my friends and I learned that if you hold a speaker up to the pickups of an electric guitar or bass, the sound will be transferred to the amplifier of the guitar or bass, serving as a makeshift amplifier for the song we were trying to learn. This technique seems to be relatively idiosyncratic, because I have been to many rehearsals with bands not from my own music scene and they are amazed when I do this in practice.

I employ this technique for this final sample track, which is the first track I recorded for the EP. When the first wave of stay-at-home orders hit Florida, like many other folks during the pandemic, I decided to relearn how to record my own music. At the time, nobody was certain when the orders would end or how long the pandemic would last. As I spend the subsequent weeks learning how to navigate Garage Band, Apple's proprietary recording software, the outside world became more and more bleak. I used an audio recording hosted on YouTube of Tolstoy's "On Anarchy," because at the time it expressed how I was feeling about the ongoing pandemic.

As the pandemic continued, I decided to try recording music over this Tolstoy recording to relearn how to record electric guitar, use plugins and effects, and test out my own mixing and mastering skills. This recording is a product of those trial and error sessions, another set of musical experiments inspired by my obsession with Look Mexico in previous years. I close this EP with the song that I first created for it to bookend this EP experience, punctuated by a global pandemic that made a fun dissertation project about Fest feel pretty meaningless in the grand scheme of things.

This EP and the dissertation project ended up becoming more somber than I originally intended when I envisioned this project years prior. I began graduate school with the intention of celebrating Fest, of offering it as a model for building better worlds and embracing more

democratic and independent processes in our daily lives, and of thinking of performance as a way for me to embrace my political ideas about anarchy and enact them in my aesthetic choices. However, the circumstance that surround this dissertation project might have created space for somber self-reflection and collective grieving, but throughout this entire project I find myself believing even more deeply in the commitments that I have outlined throughout this project and how they can offer opportunities to create performances that make the world a better place.

Chapter 5: “Fest Friends Forever” An Ethnography of Fest-goers

In the previous chapter, I drew upon my experience with Fest and the Gainesville scene’s relationship with my own story throughout my academic career. I did this to provide a detailed understanding of the three ways of understanding performance: as a metaphor for everyday life (my experience in school), as an object of study (understanding the aesthetic choices and ethical principles that inform Fest), and as a method of research (conducting arts-based research by recording an EP). In this chapter, I connect the work I do in my EP with Fest more broadly. To do this, I surveyed members of the Fest Friends group on Facebook. I chose the Facebook group as my data collection site when COVID-19 restrictions began to become commonplace throughout 2020 and 2021 to supplement in-person interviews. This chapter is based on that ethnographic work. While it serves as the conclusion for this dissertation project, this chapter lays the groundwork for future research projects that draw more heavily on more traditional fieldwork at Fest.

This component of the project was adapted early in the dissertation project to document a “Fest that Never Was” in lieu of more traditional fieldwork. The task of generating interview questions is aided by D. Soyini Madison’s three forms of interview question: 1) oral history, 2) personal narrative, and 3) topical interviews (Madison 35). Madison then gets at “what is going on” with three sets of question types. The first set of questions are the ones on opinions, feelings, and the senses, which are further broken down into 1) behavior or experience questions, 2) opinion or value questions, 3) feeling questions, 4) knowledge questions, 5) sensory questions,

and 6) background demographic questions (36-7). These questions are aimed at participants and their sense-making understanding of their performances within the festival frame and help describe the frame at the first level of sensory experience. The next style of questioning, what Madison calls "conversation prompts" point most specifically to the frame and its boundaries, and is broken down into three aspects 1) descriptive questions, 2) structural or explanation questions, and 3) contrast questions (37-9). This set of questions embraces the spirit of framing, allowing participants to point to the boundaries of the frame through contrast, or identify what structures prop up the frame with structural or descriptive questions. Finally, Madison provides examples of what she calls creativity questions; 1) advice questions, 2) quotation questions, 3) once-upon-a-time descriptive questions (39-40). These questions embrace the spirit and ethic of play and are perhaps the most fitting for a project that is investigating performances of play within a festival frame and, furthermore, embrace a fundamental aspect of the ethos of punk that I have outlined throughout this project.

Based on these theoretical, methodological, and ethical considerations, I have attached these survey questions used in this dissertation. In them, I consider the contributions of framing and performance, while creating questions that articulate Geertz's understandings of culture with Madison's commitment to evocative, generative questions. In doing so, I hope to address the underlying question of framing, as presented by Goffman ("what is going on here?") as well as addressing issues of performance ("what is being made?" and "who is doing the making?"). These questions get at Fest as a cultural site, as a site of social negotiation, as a performance, as a frame to encourage performances, and as a scenario that is always contextual within a given time, space, political atmosphere, and location.

The contribution of scholarship on framing can be crucial for performance studies projects. While direct links between the two conceptual commitments have not been clearly made, this project explicitly links those intellectual trajectories. Furthermore, since foundational scholars in both spheres tend to cite each other as a launching-off point into their own studies, it only makes sense to use the two approaches to complement and supplement each other's tendencies. The festival frame, most specifically, does this work, as it allows for investigation into the making and re-making of frames during festivals. Fest is a site that is constantly changing and being remade through performance. Fest is both a discrete event held one weekend in the Fall in Gainesville, FL, but it also lingers in the identities of those who participate in their everyday lives while not at Fest. Given the recent developments with COVID-19, Fest's in-person event has been cancelled. What is interesting to me, as this project has developed, is how Fest maintains and reframes itself to accommodate its participants during this global pandemic. I created the survey questions with the following questions in mind: can the festival still happen if the festival does not happen in person? What sort of tools are employed to substitute the in-person interaction, and how are identities and festival frames negotiated throughout this process of remote Fest-ing?

The concept of framing Fest implicates my own participation as a researcher, fan, and with my own contributions in my EP from Chapter 4, as a performer. As I argued in Chapter 1, my commitments to performance and ethnographic research is situated in the methodology of performance ethnography. Performance ethnography is, at once, a methodological and ethical commitment. Performance ethnography as a methodology requires an embodied approach to research; while the ethnographer's body has always been on the line "in the field," what distinguishes performance ethnography from traditional ethnography is understanding the

performance of one's research. This commitment to performing research is one based out of ethical concerns embedded in the history and practice of ethnography. While traditional ethnographic research gave researchers — many of whom in positions of social, economic, political, and other kinds of power — access to bodies and communities. More often than not, this access was not reciprocated; the researcher's body was not subject to the scrutiny of the community in the same way that the community's bodies were subject to the scrutiny of the researcher. The ethic of performance ethnography comes from a place of dismantling this power dynamic. To understand the development of this ethic, it is important to understand how scholars have understood the ethics of ethnography and, further, how these scholars suggest performance helps in dismantling this power dynamic.

In this chapter, I am situating my own research within the bounds of the ethical commitments mapped out by previous scholars. It is with these ethics in mind that I engage with participants in my ethnographic research, and it is with these participants in mind that I construct my performance based on this research. Although my engagement with Fest does not necessarily carry the same sorts of power dynamics that other ethnographic projects may have — I would consider what goes on at Fest a crucial aspect of my own culture and my own identity — the fundamental breakdown of the researcher-participant binary is still important here, and it is important that this breakdown happens through performance.

This research ethic is rooted in both my positionality as a researcher and as punk. In punk cultures, the terms "poser" and "sellout" are used pejoratively to describe varying degrees of not-punk-ness. While I tend to disagree with their usage these days, their underlying premise of identifying people who "aren't real punks" shows a tendency toward a similar ethic found in performance ethnography. A poser is a fake, somebody who "fakes not makes," who buys punk

clothing but does not participate in any other aspect of punk performance. A sellout is somebody who, at one time, committed to the ethos of punk but subsequently betrayed these ethical commitments in exchange for (often) financial gain. In many ways, my commitment to the ethics of performance ethnography are deeply rooted in an anxiety to not be a poser and to not be a sellout in my community. If I want to be part of this community, I actually need to make not fake my punk-ness. It is not enough to buy a few albums or linger on message boards, but to be punk is to perform punk music and to commit to punk's often radical ideas about democracy, anti-authoritarianism, creativity, and providing a platform for marginalized folks. If I do not want to be a sellout, I cannot mine my own community for my own personal gain — finishing a dissertation, writing papers, and winning awards about the community, possibly gaining employment based on this research — and not reciprocate. My commitment to performance ethnography satisfies both aspects of my dual role of punk-scholar. In short, I argue that scholars like Edith and Victor Turner, Dwight Conquergood, and D. Sonyini Madison are pretty punk rock and that my own extension of this commitment makes this connection explicit.

In foregrounding the body as the main site for both the scholarly collection of information and as the site in which culture is produced, maintained, and undermined, performance ethnography is the method of engaging with and in the making of culture through performance. In doing so, I return to understanding my own project in relation to the term "poser" presented earlier in this section. Embedded in the term poser is an ethical commitment in punk communities to performance. For punks, it is not enough to listen to music or buy a record here and there. To be punk, one needs to perform punk: by going to music festivals, speaking out against injustice, starting a band or independent label, and showing a respect for the punk community writ large. Fest is a site where punk is performed and Fest is a punk performance. To

adequately fulfill this commitment to punk rock and to performance ethnography, I need to make punk in my research.

Performance ethnography a powerful tool for engaging with culture and performances like Fest, as both radical politics and an ethical commitment in research. Since it is undertaken in and with the body, it may be adapted for *every* body. Performance ethnography is, paradoxically, always personal yet always interdependent. It is through the ethics of dialogic performance that one balances ethical commitments in critical projects, and it is by embracing an ethos of "performance as making" that the method is made and remade. By making an EP based on the research in this project, I am embracing the idea that performance is making, that performance ethnography is both personal and collective, and that a deeper understanding of not only what it means to be punk, but to be the kind of punk that goes to Fest can be achieved through performance.

Below, I connect my own experiences from Fest that have been expressed throughout this dissertation to the experiences of others from Fest. I do this, not because my own experience with Fest is particularly remarkable, but to re-locate Fest performances on bodies besides my own and to situate my own experience as a performer, researcher, and person in Fest.

Fest Friends

The Fest Friends Facebook group is a private group hosted on the popular social media platform that serves as a digital meeting place for discussions related to Fest. According to the available data on the group, it was started seven years ago and, at the time of writing, has approximately 5,300 members. The group's behavior is curated by a set of seven rules made available to all who gain access to the group: 1) Fest Friends does not condone or promote illegal activity, 2) permission must be granted from Tony (Fest's organizer) or the Fest crew before

making any Fest-related merchandise to sell, 3) a set of rules and best practices for COVID-19 considerations and Fest, 4) no unsolicited tagging, harassment, or direct-messaging Fest staff, 5) zero tolerance for racist, sexist, homophobic, or "otherwise asshole behavior," and 6) a limit of one fundraiser post per user to the group. The rules here highlight the ways in which Fest Friends cultivates and curates behavior in the group. The most explicitly political rule in the group is rule number five. This rule further explains that "Fest Friends does not tolerate the use of slurs, calling illnesses Fest AIDS (Fest Flu is a cool alliteration), or any alt-right nonsense whether it's ironic or not" (Fest Friends). This frames Fest Friends the group and Fest itself as a community that is committed to inclusion and acceptance.

I chose Fest Friends as the site for my digital fieldwork for a few reasons. The group is fairly active, with users generating posts and conversations throughout the year, multiple times a day. The topics of conversation range from punk rock-style celebrity gossip, newer bands asking about how to play at Fest, general tips on travel and lodging in Gainesville, swapping Fest stories, and sharing tours and album releases from Fest bands. Since this group is fairly active and tends to keep conversations on the topic of Fest or Fest-related aspects of punk culture more broadly, this group provides a sample of folks who are the most committed to Fest.

I posted a call for participation into the group, and approximately thirty members of the group responded to indicate interest in participation. However, due to the logistics of e-mail questionnaires, time zones, and the deadlines necessary to complete this dissertation in a timely manner, only a half dozen responses were returned at the time of writing. Many participants responded after this chapter was written, and in future publications on Fest I intend to expand this chapter to include their responses. From there, I collected emails from the respondents and provided the following ten survey questions:

1) Can you describe the average Fest attendee for me? What do they look like? What do they wear? How can you pick out somebody attending Fest from an average Gainesville citizen? Feel free to be creative in the space below with your description.

2) Have you made friends and connections through your interest in Fest?

3) What does Fest sound like? If you were to make a record that sounded like the other bands at Fest, what elements would you include to "fit in" with the rest of the lineup?

4) Do you know about or attend other music festivals? Which ones? How does Fest compare to these other festivals?

5) Can you tell me about how you found out about Fest?

6) What kind of music is played at Fest? Be as descriptive as possible. How is it different from music played at other punk festivals like Riot Fest, Warped Tour, or Punk Rock Bowling?

7) What do you do in your everyday life when you're not at Fest? You may be as specific as you are comfortable with sharing.

8) Can you tell me your favorite Fest story?

9) Are there any Fest legends, myths, or rumors that you would like to share?

10) What advice would you give to somebody who was interested in going to Fest for the first time?

Participants were encouraged to engage with as much of the survey as they felt comfortable filling out. The participants were not asked to reveal any personal information, and this survey information was collected to inform my own performance from Chapter 4, not as a way to collect demographic information about Fest participants.

In many ways, my understanding of Fest was confirmed by the responses to this survey. That is, many of my hunches and underlying assumptions about Fest were echoed in the survey

information. This does not mean that the survey information gave me a deeper understanding of Fest. In fact, some of the responses expressed a similar murkiness that I have expressed throughout this project about Fest. The most notable example of this happens in question six, which asks participants to describe the kinds of music that plays at Fest. One respondent wrote that "[a]ll types of music are played at Fest, with a focus of traditional rock being the background … genres at Fest can range from alternative punk/rock to acoustic folk music, from hardcore screaming sessions to horn-based ska music" (Respondent 1). This respondent did reveal some insight that had not previously occur to me. When making their comparison to other festivals like Riot Fest, Warped Tour, or Punk Rock Bowling, this respondent noted that "Fest has some of the main bands from Riot Fest, Warped Tour, and Punk Rock Bowling, but adds in hundreds of other bands to fill the venues throughout the weekend – almost like a showcase for future festival headliners" (Respondent 1).

This response is a succinct justification for what makes Fest a punk rock festival in the first place. As I have written throughout this project, punk performances are framed by four principles: 1) play, 2) collaboration, 3) amateur aesthetics, and 4) social advocacy. This respondent highlighted the third commitment to amateur aesthetics as a fundamental distinction between Fest and other punk rock music festivals. While other festivals feature bands that are *already* headliners – bands with a national following and enough of a reputation to be featured heavily in festival advertisements – Fest's structure allows for bands that have less of a following to participate. This is not to say these bands are necessarily amateurs – a lack of following or major record label financing is not an indicator of musical proficiency – but that Fest creates performances for bands that have not "made it" yet in the larger rock music business.

In another response, the respondent expands on this embrace of amateur aesthetic as a way of participating in and with the Fest community:

> "[A]t Fest, not only would I get random high fives and smiles from people because of a particular band's shirt I was wearing, but it was fun to walk into a random show at Fest, not knowing who was playing, and finding a new band I liked, and me and my friends actually having fun doing that. A few bands I listen to now I actually discovered that way! Also it's worth noting I've never felt out of place or even in danger at Fest the way I have at other festivals, and how people I know have described how they felt at festivals I haven't attended" (Respondent 2).

For this respondent, a sense of community and belonging is cultivated through a sense of shared values. Folks are welcomed into the community through both discovery and re-stating values; the high fives shared among friends with cool band t-shirts, what Goffman would call "tact" as a strategy of impression management (Goffman *Presentation of Self* 235) and what ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino would call "constellations of habits" that "always involves the twin aspects of unifying ourselves (emphasizing similarities) with some people and differentiating ourselves from others" (Turino 105). This self-identification and impression management serves the function of maintaining identities for these informants, but through the act of discovering new bands, this re-produces Fest's ethos. By embracing amateur aesthetics, Fest creates a set of performances that beckons Fest-goers to welcome new, "undiscovered" artists into the community. Fest is not simply nostalgia in the service of bands who have already "made it" or fans who have already decided what performances of self they wish to present, but it is a perpetual performance of making and re-making through the embrace of the amateur aesthetic.

This sense of safety and belonging extends beyond the music being played at Fest. While respondents one and two could agree on discovery and amateur aesthetics in what distinguishes Fest from other music festivals, they could not reach a consensus on what Fest sounds like. The first respondent suggested that a compilation album or comp – a common form of album release format in the punk community where various bands collaborate to put out an album instead of the more traditional single-artist album – would be the best album to represent Fest (Respondent 1). The second respondent, while pointing out there are some exceptions, had a more specific description of how Fest sounds, employing phrases like "intelligible screaming vocals," "over driven guitars," and "high energy rhythms" (Respondent 2). This very specific set of descriptive words contrasts significantly with the first respondent's more ambiguous response, although the first respondent did note "distorted guitars" and "gravely voices" as well.

A third respondent described similar common attributes – distorted guitars that are not too distorted to drown out the melodies and harmonic structure of the notes being played, vocals that sometimes tend to be harsh enough to be considered a scream, a tighter rhythm section than what may be found in most other punk bands – that are an approximation of what the other respondents reported (Respondent 3). Respondent Two and Three reported a deviation from other kinds of punk in the lyrical content: Respondent Two reported lyrics with less political content, while Respondent Three described this deviation as "[m]ore melodic songwriting and vulnerable lyricism" (Respondent 3). Respondent Three continues, "[t]here's a strong tie to bands who are more emotionally charged in their lyricism, and while certainly not apolitical, it doesn't always come through as brusque as other punk bands" (Respondent 3). Similarly, both described a "know it when you see it" phenomenon that is a bit hard to pin down, with

Respondent Three describing this as identifying a "Fest band," and made the strongest case for a "sound" that unites Fest more so than other punk music festivals (Respondent 3).

The sense of discovery and perpetual re-making of musical performances at Fest contributes to this disagreement among informants. If one of the primary features of Fest that sets it apart from other music festivals is the discover and amateur aesthetic, then discovering new sounds is part of the allure. The murkiness here also seems to foreground my suspicion that Fest is organized by a set of principles more than a set of aesthetic musical choices. In the questionnaire, I asked my respondents to play with the idea of Fest by describing a legend, myth, or rumor from the event. Respondent One told a story about an alcoholic beverage from the Chicago metropolitan area, Malort, serving a mythological function that "only pops up on my social media feed around Fest, I've never actually seen a bottle of it. I'm not convinced it's real" (Respondent 1). Respondent One reported on a "hot dog guy" that shows up to Fest every year but not around Gainesville during any other time and is "a legend in and of himself" (Respondent 1).

Respondent Two made a joke about Chris Farren, a singer and guitarist that frequently performs at Fest as a solo act and with his band Antarctigo Vespucci. Farren has cultivated an online persona that is laden with irony; a few years back, Farren tweeted about Fest but accidentally created a hashtag with the typo, #Fesy, and then started a campaign to make the hashtag the unofficial hashtag for that year's Fest. The ethic of play here is always a reference to a form of inside-joking, where the joke is highly contingent on insider knowledge in these responses. "Getting the joke" and "telling the jokes" is framing Fest within Bateson's understanding of play, as a formulating a logical type of social interaction that is, at once, riddled with paradox and foundational for staging the kinds of performances permitted within the frame

(Bateson 189). The important connection between framing and performance here is that the signal of "this is play" in the jokes and stories told about Fest functions as a staging mechanism for the kinds of performances at Fest. In other words, the respondents felt comfortable casually hinting at these inside jokes because, as a fellow member of the Fest Friends group, they understand that I am involved in the community enough to understand the joke without much prompting. Getting the joke and telling the joke, here, is both granting permission to play with the joke and a way to prove membership in the Fest community.

These processes of identification within the Fest community are collaborative, but also serve as a reconfiguration of performances of everyday life. In Chapter 2, I discussed the ways in which David Picard understands the festival frame as a reconfiguration and subversion of everyday performances. In that same chapter, I cited Dolan's work on performative utopias that create participatory, democratic performances. Here, I will draw from my informants and their descriptions of their everyday lives to demonstrate these occurrences of these theoretical concepts at Fest. In the surveys, the respondents reported that they worked in law, air conditioning and heating, and real estate, respectively. I did not ask respondents to disclose any demographic information like socioeconomic class, gender, race, or any other identifying factors.

However, these three respondents described their occupations when asked to describe their everyday lives outside of Fest. What is more telling, is each respondent made a clear demarcation between their occupation and creative projects they participate in while not at Fest. Respondent One listens to "bands I've fell [sic] in love with at Fest throughout the work day" (Respondent 1). Respondent Two listed hobbies like playing music, editing video, building computers, and coding video games as a distinct way to participate in performances of everyday life outside of work (Respondent 2). Respondent Three participates in semi-professional sports

and performing in a band that "would never be heard at Fest" (Respondent 3). It is unclear if Respondent Three is making a self-deprecating joke about the quality of their band's music or a claim about the kind of music they play outside of Fest.

An interesting dynamic emerges from these responses. The respondents prioritized their careers in their responses. This was not prompted by the questions in the survey; the respondents were encouraged to answer in whatever ways they felt comfortable. Furthermore, the respondents made a clear demarcation between what can be understood as "work" and "play." Through this demarcation, the respondents make their connection to Fest clear: Fest occupies a similar categorization as the creative, artistic, and aspirational aspects of their everyday lives. Each respondent also shared quite different responses when asked about their own "Fest Friends." Respondent One describes learning about Fest from a best friend and then creating a core group of folks that attend Fest together (Respondent 1). Similarly, Respondent Three describes a core group of Fest Friends, but does not share Respondent One's bonding moment with a best friend (Respondent 3). Respondent Two described a long history of friends from high school attending Fest, several friends known exclusively through Fest, and even describes making connections with customers at work through Fest and punk more broadly. I highlight the friend relationships to tease out a paradox in these responses: Fest is described as both deeply personal and a foundation to various friendships, while also understood as a phenomenon that exists outside the everyday life of their respective occupations.

I have theorized throughout this dissertation about the radical potential for performance. To double down on the paradoxical nature of these responses, the aspect of the respondents' everyday lives that individualizes them – their participation in Fest – is the very thing that renders them a part of a collaborative performance at Fest. I asked each participant to describe

their fellow Fest attendees, and while they claimed in their response that this was a hard task, these responses contained the most detail and quite a bit more consensus than in the previous responses. Respondent One called Fest diverse, but distills a few key generalizations: for those who are able to grow facial hair, they have beards, tattoos, and wearing a band tee. Respondent One also makes this collaboration most explicit by describing Fest attendees traveling in "packs" (Respondent 1). Respondent Two echoes the sentiments of tattoos and band t-shirts, and approximates an average age range of 20-to-40 years of age, with a slight edge given to Fest attendees who present as masculine. Respondent Two also adds flannel and the Converse brand of sneakers to this list of attributes (Respondent 2). Respondent Three identifies a similar age range, tattoos, and clothing choices, while also describing a variety of hair cuts and piercings. Fest attendees create a collective, collaborative performance of a Fest Friend through this shared costuming. The aspects of their lives that mark them as individuals in everyday life become a part of a collective subversion of the everyday life through this performance.

The respondents were not quite sure what to make of Fest's political commitments. Each was not interested in mapping out a specific paradigm for social advocacy that is maintained at Fest. Here, I make the case that this collaboration, commitment to amateur aesthetics, and an embrace of play and the creation of a space that allows for these ethics to occur is the social advocacy happening on an implicit level. In their performances of everyday life, the participants make a clear distinction between work and play. Fest blurs these distinctions and permits alternative performances. The responses in this chapter string together the themes in the previous four chapters, grounding the theoretical concepts in lived experience and in acts of aesthetic performance. Performance is a commitment to social advocacy because performance permits the creation and maintenance of worlds that are different from our own, of social arrangements that

list hobbies before careers in everyday life, and of social arrangements that exchange hyper-individualism for community.

At the beginning of this chapter, I stress the importance of understanding the performance in this dissertation – the EP – as both deeply contingent on my own autobiography, but more importantly, on my own relationship to Fest and the Gainesville scene. Carving out time and space to write, produce, practice, perform, and record an EP during a global pandemic where my rehearsal space also became my workplace is a radical subversion of the social arrangement that asks the respondents to parse out work and play in their responses. John Dewey writes:

> To the being fully alive, the future is not ominous but a promise; it surrounds the present as a halo. It consists of possibilities that are felt as a possession of what is now and here. In life that is truly life, everything overlaps and merges. But all too often we exist in apprehensions of what the future may bring, and are divided within ourselves. Even when not overanxious, we do not enjoy the present because we subordinate it to that which is absent. Because of the frequency of this abandonment of the present to the past and future, the happy periods of an experience that is now complete because it absorbs into itself memories of the past and anticipations of the future, come to constitute an esthetic ideal. Only when the past ceases to trouble and anticipations of the future are not perturbing is a being wholly united with his environment and therefore fully alive. Art celebrates with a peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is. (Dewey 17)

Here, Dewey insists that aesthetic creation *is* living. Fest embraces the utopian performative and festival frame in creating the conditions that collapse the distinction between work and play, the individual and the collective. The EP project from Chapter 4 is a performance of Fest in that

way: in the same way that the respondents signaled their membership in the Fest community through their creative projects and hobbies, *Whenever You're Ready* serves that same function. I am not a "poser" because I performed punk. The important contribution performance studies makes to this understanding of the Gainesville scene, Fest, and my own creative work, is the radical contention that work can be play and play can be work. In a dissertation project that does a lot of work – it signifies that a doctorate is being conferred, it grants access to jobs that I would not have access to otherwise, it confers a level of status that my colleagues recognize – carving out time to make music is a radical act. Performance not only permits these kinds of radical interjections, it encourages them. Performance is pretty punk, if you ask me.

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I have used Fest to understand performance and I have used performance to understand Fest. Performance has provided the theoretical and methodological tools for understanding issues of aesthetics, politics, histories, identity, place, class, political economy, and race. Fest has proven to be a fruitful phenomenon that allows me to play with these concepts, theories, and commitments. I want to rearticulate, once again, the four key attributes of punk as it is performed at Fest: 1) play, 2) collaboration, 3) amateur aesthetics, and 4) social advocacy. I have used theories of performance and framing to map these commitments out throughout this project.

In Chapter One, I used my own experience and history with Fest and connected it to the Gainesville scene more broadly. As a teenager in Florida, I spent time listening to music to imagine other social arrangements. I then used histories of the Gainesville scene to locate a context for my relationship with Fest. This history was met with an analysis of the musical

performers that made up the Gainesville scene. In this chapter, I mapped out the four commitments in the Gainesville punk scene.

In Chapter Two, I argued for understanding performance in three ways: as a metaphor for everyday life, as an object of study, and as a method of inquiry. This chapter mapped out the intellectual lineages that provided the tools I needed to understand performance in this way. Fest provides ways of explaining these three ways of understanding performance throughout this dissertation. I also articulate the ways in which theories of framing help to inform work in performance studies. By making the connection with theories of framing, I connect performance studies to communication studies more broadly.

In Chapter Three, I analyzed a retrospective video produced by Fest to interrogate whiteness as it is both perpetuated and subverted at Fest. I analyzed a promotional music video created by Fest to create a history about the festival. Doing this articulated a model for this dissertation to understand Fest as an object of study through the lens of performance. This chapter analyzes systems of whiteness, how they are maintained and structured at Fest, and theorizing the ways in which these systems can be critiqued and dismantled. Furthermore, this chapter extended approaches to performance, understanding Fest as an object of study, and that these performances are always-already situated in political, social, historical, and cultural contests. Fest is not only an object of performance to be admired, but a site for radical interrogation of the very logics that allow it to exist.

In Chapter Four, I described the process used to create my performance, an EP called *Whenever You're Ready*. I performed aspects of Fest as they have manifested throughout my time in graduate school, informing my own scholarly research, creative practices, and ethical commitments. This chapter is a written account of a performance of the four values in the

Gainesville scene as well as a performance of the themes articulated in my ethnographic research, engaged in dialogic performance with this research.

In Chapter Five, I conclude this dissertation project by describing the ways in which members of the Fest Facebook group, Fest Friends, understand their own relationships with Fest. Using ideas from Madison's *Critical Ethnography*, I used these questions to generate ideas about how Fest attendees understand themselves. This ethnographic work connects my own creative performance in this project to Fest.

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It is a cool October evening in Gainesville, Florida and I am standing with my Fest friends as we watch folk singer Frank Turner's Friday evening set. On my wrists are the usual admission wristbands given out to attendees at each of the venues that host Fest performances. In addition to these wristbands, I am also wearing a sturdier wristband, made of a plastic material instead of the thin paper-and-adhesive material that makes up most wristbands. This wristband indicates my vaccination status and serves as a signal that I proved this status to Fest's organizers. "It's hard to believe, man," my friend leans into my ear between songs, "that Fest has more safety protocols this year for COVID-19 than most schools in the state of Florida do." The same virus that transitioned Fest to a digital streaming platform in 2020 is now shaping the ways that Fest exists in-person a year later in 2021.

This dissertation tells the story of many Fests: Fest as a source of inclusion, belonging, and community for teenage me as I daydreamed of one day attending. It tells the story of Fest as a set of performances, understood three ways, and as a site for understanding commitments in punk rock. It tells the story of a Fest that inspires creation and re-creation of these commitments through my own artistic contribution to the scene. It also tells the story of ethnographic work

done during a time of a global pandemic, lockdowns, political and social uprising, and a music festival that took place online in the wake of all these events. “You know what’s hardest for me to believe,” I respond to the same friend between another Frank Turner song, “is the last time we were at Fest, we were in our twenties. Now we’re in our thirties.” This dissertation tells the story of Fest as it intersects with my teens and twenties, a liminal festival celebrated during a liminal era in my own life in school, as a punk musician and fan, and as somebody navigating changes throughout every day life. I document this constellation of moments, experiences, and performances as they orbit in and around Fest, not to invoke a sense of nostalgia but to argue for a research agenda that is always in the making, always remaking. I nod to Fests in the past and the Fest that never was to project a hope for Fests to come, and the possibilities future Fests can create. As Frank Turner proclaimed at the start of this set:

> This is a song … it’s not about the future, it’s about this fucking show. It’s about tonight, about you and us, this place and these instruments and this PA, and this fucking barrier, and this space, and the things we can achieve if we decided to be more than the sum of our parts. (Turner)

A Fest that happened digitally throughout 2020, only to return in-person in 2021 with the same title it would have had the previous year – Fest kept the “Fest 19” name meant for 2020’s Fest for 2021’s version of the event – documents a skip in the record of chronology for Fest, a pause in the music that allowed for reflection and understanding. While this dissertation has argued throughout that Fest *is* about the future, Frank Turner’s sentiment at the beginning of the set echoes a sentiment expressed throughout this project. Fest is about the performances that occur within it and because of it. It is about carving out time to gather, and most importantly it is about the people who come together to form a community in a social climate that prioritizes individual

achievement over collective effort. Fest is about becoming more than the sum of our parts. Fest is about committing to the health and safety of everybody involved with Fest, in spite of a state government that actively tried to oppose these safety measures.

To that end, the end of this dissertation serves as the beginning of a new research program for me and for Fest. As the record skipped throughout 2020, providing a fruitful site for exploring these themes of performance, framing, culture, and whiteness, flipping the record over and listening to the other side undoubtedly beckons for more research. Here, I would like to invite other performance scholars to consider the work presented in this dissertation as an invitation to "jam" with me on some of these ideas. How do performance scholars understand performance? How can we articulate a disciplinary paradigm that, while deeply indebted to the theater and the theoretical potential of concepts from it, extends beyond the stage and into the crowd, into music, and into the everyday lives of those experiencing these performances? How can we carve out space for aesthetic creation when even the most radical among us clings to cited pages and CV lines for a sense of belonging and worth? How can we forge communities that refuse to replicate what already exists and, instead, creates spaces for radical reimagining? When was the last time you checked out a scholar you hadn't heard of at a conference, and what can Fest teach us about the benefits of doing more of that? What happens when we imagine a community that highlights not the performances occurring within its boundaries, but the work it takes to put these performances on? What if we take Frank Turner's call to action, and commit to building communities, staging performances, and cultivating scholarship that beckons us to become more than the sum of our parts?

As I leave Fest 19 with this dissertation project in mind, I consider the absurdity of the scenario. A bunch of punks, despite all odds, came together to put on a punk rock show that

foregrounded a sense of community, that carved out space for aesthetic performance, that considered the safety of its stakeholders, and that provided a platform for radical reimagining. How can performance scholars embrace the ethos of punk highlighted throughout this dissertation; an ethos of play, collaboration, amateur aesthetics, and social advocacy? What does this look like within performance studies as a discipline, and what does it look like when we replicate these commitments elsewhere?

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Appendix A

1. Can you describe the average Fest attendee for me? What do they look like? What do they wear? How can you pick out somebody attending Fest from an average Gainesville citizen? Feel free to be creative in the space below with your description.

2. Have you made friends and connections through your interest in Fest?

3. What does Fest sound like? If you were to make a record that sounded like the other bands at Fest, what elements would you include to "fit in" with the rest of the lineup?

4. Do you know about or attend other music festivals? Which ones? How does Fest compare to these other festivals?

5. Can you tell me about how you found out about Fest?

6. What kind of music is played at Fest? Be as descriptive as possible. How is it different from music played at other punk festivals like Riot Fest, Warped Tour, or Punk Rock Bowling?

7. What do you do in your everyday life when you're not at Fest? You may be as specific as you are comfortable with sharing.

8. Can you tell me your favorite Fest story?

9. Are there any Fest legends, myths, or rumors that you would like to share?

10. What advice would you give to somebody who was interested in going to Fest for the first time?