

MAKING A SCENE: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF
PARTICIPATION IN THE ST. JOHN'S INDEPENDENT
ROCK MUSIC SCENE, CIRCA 1985 TO 1995

LESLIE PIERCE



Making a Scene: An Ethnography of Participation in the
St. John's Independent Rock Music Scene, circa 1985 to 1995.

by

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Abstract

This thesis is about participation and the memory culture of the live independent rock music scene in St. John's, Newfoundland, as it existed from the mid-1980s underground to a period of increased interest and popularity in the mid-1990s. Chapter One discusses my fieldwork methodology and applies some key terms used in the study of youth and music culture: subculture, scene, punk, indie, and alternative. Chapter Two places the scene in the context of Newfoundland music and culture, as well as examining its relationship to the culture and landscape of the downtown St. John's core. Chapter Three considers how the scene emerged under global and local influences and how its members participated at the gigs, while Chapter Four considers how musicians and fans participated in the scene in everyday life. Chapter Five presents the life and death of Fred Gamberg as a case study in scene participation and constructed memory. Chapter Six concentrates on various scene members' reflections on a recent past.

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* Collector information listed on figures.

Chapter One Introduction

This thesis is about the live independent rock music scene in downtown St. John's, Newfoundland, as it existed roughly between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s. At the beginning of this time period, a handful of dedicated and artistically inclined young musicians and their fans were "making" a scene, forming a network of people, places, and events that allowed them to create, to belong, and to be heard. By the 1990s, the number of scene members increased from a few dozen to hundreds. Both all-ages and bar shows¹ were thriving within a downtown-centred community, although there was a noticeable decline in interest later in the decade. It was a remarkable period of creative output in terms of regular live musical performances, releases of local recordings, and other artistic offerings. The local media gave the scene considerable coverage, but the scene still remained underground, known to relatively few beyond the downtown St. John's neighbourhood.

Bands playing at the shows this thesis investigates primarily performed original songs, fusing together musical styles like punk, heavy metal, reggae, pop, hardcore, experimental, and industrial music for a live, local youth audience.² To refer to this as a "live independent rock music scene" is intentionally ambiguous. The music performed at the shows encompassed a variety of musical genres, but the scene's importance to its participants went deeper than affection for a

¹ All-ages shows are alcohol-free live music events with no age restrictions. Bar shows are restricted to patrons of legal drinking age (19 years old in Newfoundland). This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

² For a more detailed list of bands active during this time period, see Appendix A.

particular musical style. It became woven into their daily lives, inspiring other creative endeavours, and connecting them with others.



Figure 1: Poster for weekend all-ages shows at the LSPU Hall, March 1996. Collected by Darryl Bennett.

The 1980s and 1990s were exciting times to be a consumer of live independent rock music on a local, national, and international level, and St. John's was no exception. Although this thesis is about a comparatively small regional rock scene, constructed and experienced by Newfoundland youth, there were obvious correlations between this and other burgeoning local scenes that were documented in popular culture at that time, especially the American indie underground of the 1980s and the booming Seattle scene of the 1990s (Azerrad 2002; Yarm 2008). The Canadian context included well-established independent

rock music scenes in major cities like Vancouver (Keithley 2004), Toronto (O'Connor 2002), and Halifax (DeMont 1993; Tough 1993; Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2001), to name just a few that emerged roughly around the same time period.

St. John's is the capital city of the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador.³ It is the most easterly city in North America. In 2006, the Census Metropolitan Area of St. John's had a population of just over 181,000 people, roughly 35 percent of the population of the entire province (City of St. John's website). In many ways, St. John's rides a fine line between its official designation of capital city and its small-town ways. The arts scene in downtown St. John's is surely quite small by the standards of major metropolitan centres elsewhere, but it is big in terms of collectivism and mutual support. My own experience in researching this thesis bears that out, as I received an overwhelming amount of interest and support from friends and acquaintances in the local music community regarding this topic. In interviews and correspondence, members of this scene constructed the time between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s as a critical period for local independent rock music, while recalling many of their own fond memories of a recent past. Their attitudes were never "What do you want to talk to me for?" They were "How can I contribute?" As a St. John's native, I have enjoyed this live local music for the past fifteen years and when I decided to write a thesis for my MA program, I never had to anguish over a topic. It was a scene begging to be written about.

³ To clarify: Newfoundland is an island, and Labrador is a part of mainland Canada. Since this scene was located in St. John's, this thesis refers to "Newfoundland" as the island part of the province, whereas "Newfoundland and Labrador" refers to the entire province.

Two others got there first. I am the third St. John's native to write an MA thesis on the St. John's independent rock music scene and general timeframe of the 1980s and 1990s, with obvious reference to the preceding and following decades. Robert Kean's MUN thesis, "The Aesthetics of Dissent: Cultural Opposition and the Independent Musician," completed in 2002, and Stephen Guy's McGill thesis, "The Nature of Community in the Newfoundland Rock Underground," completed in 2004, were written in Sociology and Communications, respectively. Both used ethnographic fieldwork to frame their discussions of the scene.

Methodology

This thesis is not a definitive history of the St. John's independent rock music scene. It is an ethnographic and autoethnographic sample, serving to explain why the scene existed as it did, and how fans and performers participated to make it viable. A wider artistic community surrounded this investigation. Many of the people I interviewed, be it explicitly or implicitly, self-identified as members, not only of this musical scene, but also of the downtown St. John's community and the local arts community.⁴ Ranging from ages 27 to 43,⁵ some of the interviewees grew up in downtown and surrounding areas; others did not. Some were casual observers; others were accomplished artists and musicians. Some of them were dear friends of mine; some were acquaintances or people I had never spoken to prior to this project.

⁴ I realize that "arts community" is an ambiguous phrase. It is used here to encompass a wide variety of visual and performance art on the vernacular, popular, and elite level.

⁵ In 2008, when the interviews took place.

The first two face-to-face interviews used in this thesis (with Shawn Maloney and Miranda Reddy) were recorded on a Sony TCM-500 tape machine in March 2008 for use in a paper for *Folklore* 6600 (Folklore of Newfoundland) with Dr. Philip Hiscock. The resulting term paper explored some of the themes contained in this thesis, albeit on a more general level. The other eleven interviews were captured between May and October 2008 using an Edirol R-01 digital recorder. The locations included my downtown St. John's home, the coffee shop Hava Java, the food court at Atlantic Place, the University Centre at Memorial University and, in a couple of cases, the homes of my informants.

Another two dozen people corresponded with me online, right up until the final days of writing. During the initial research process, I saw a chance to use a popular online social networking website as a way to generate interest in my research. I started a group on Facebook⁶ and named it, "Fans of the St. John's Music Scene, Help Leslie With Her Thesis!" Approximately seventy people joined the group and posted comments, answered my questions, or observed. The format of Facebook allowed them to join, participate in, or leave the group at their own discretion. It also made it easy to send a message to all of these people at once and keep them updated on how the project was progressing. Facebook allowed me to search and contact potential informants without being too intrusive. Conversely, it allowed interested people to hear about my research and contact me if they wanted to participate.

⁶ Facebook [<http://www.facebook.com>] is a large-scale social networking website where users can link themselves to friends and create and join groups to suit their interests. My thesis group, as titled above, is publicly viewable to all Facebook users who are logged into the site.

Everyone I interviewed was asked similar questions, whether they were interviewed face-to-face or by e-mail. I asked about their background, how they came to patronize downtown and the music scene, with whom they hung out, and how they became – and stayed – involved in the scene. I also inquired about their favourite local and non-local bands. If they were musicians, I asked about their learned skills, their bands, and if they had done any touring or recording. Other than that, I tried to let them talk without too much interjection on my part, and often found my questions were answered organically, with new questions constantly emerging. As a group, my informants were creative, socially conscious, dynamic, and well-spoken people. The interview transcriptions presented here have been edited to remove false starts and promote fluidity in the written version. Similarly, some e-mails have been edited to remove spelling and grammatical errors without changing the meaning of the written text. All interviews and correspondence are listed in the Works Cited.

Autoethnography

There is a keen autoethnographic aspect to this research, without which I likely would not have chosen this topic. My own esoteric view of this scene certainly shaped my perspective, both as a Newfoundlander and as a scene participant. I was born and raised in St. John's. My first all-ages show was at the LSPU Hall on October 10, 1994, featuring Giver, Lizband, Potmaster, and Stirlingslacks. I was fifteen years old. There, I discovered a series of events, places, and people that I knew I wanted to be part of. For me, the scene was one of my first forays outside of the narrow suburban world of my middle-class

family, neighbours, and school friends. Those were formative years for me, and the scene changed the trajectory of my life, not only geographically, but socially as well.

Obviously, this project is highly personal for me and is coloured by my own experience, but that hardly weakens its value. There are plenty of other points of view here as well, from my informants, from popular culture and from the local media. Folklorist Elaine Lawless noted,

As ethnographers striving to be conscious of our own ideologies, we are obligated to present ourselves in our texts as we are in our work: humans seeking understanding, engaged in dialogue and interpretation with other people who are engaged in dialogue and interpretation seeking meaning. (Lawless 1992, 302)

I came upon that scene at a critical point in my life – adolescence – and I spent those years discovering new music, new people, and new ideas. But I am hardly the ultimate insider. Although I was a fervent fan back in those days, my own experiences as a musician consist of two years of childhood piano lessons and playing flute in my junior high school concert band. Forming a rock band, jamming, recording, touring, and promotion were not part of my own participation in the scene. I also missed out on the early days of the scene because I was too young and too far removed from the context. I did not turn the legal age of nineteen years old until 1998, so I did not attend the bar shows that often followed the all-ages shows during the time period outlined. As an underage audience member, I was on the periphery of this scene for several years.

Additional Sources

This study of participation in the scene was assembled primarily through ethnographic fieldwork, but it was greatly supplemented by articles in local publications. Aside from my fieldwork and scholarly sources, a significant amount of material used to construct and analyze this scene came from St. John's major print media, including *The Evening Telegram*, *The Express*, and the *The Newfoundland Herald*. A handful of interested and attentive writers at these three widely circulated local papers gave the bands and the scene substantial exposure, especially in the early-to-mid 1990s.⁷ They interviewed the bands, reviewed gigs and album releases, and tracked the bands' touring schedules and award nominations. These articles provided a written record of the bands involved, as well as the attitudes of the scene members at various points. The majority of these articles were located in the vertical files at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies at Memorial University.

Granite: Newfoundland's Indie Music Magazine was another critical resource for this project, despite its short lifespan. An independent venture, it circulated in downtown St. John's for six issues in the mid-1990s and included a wide range of band interviews, gig art, a band directory, and album reviews, as well as a host of other articles devoted to local art and popular culture. The internet was another important resource, despite its ephemeral and unmoderated

⁷ According to the Canadian Newspaper Association website, *The Telegram* (known as *The Evening Telegram* prior to 1998) had a weekly circulation of 223,682 as of 2007. *The Newfoundland Herald*, a weekly television guide (with plenty of entertainment news and local interest content) is "read by over 50,000 people each week," according to the Stirling Communications website. *The Express*, a free weekly paper, was distributed in the metro St. John's area until it folded in March 2007. I could not find any circulation numbers for it, but it was delivered to most households in the metro St. John's area.

nature. Many of the bands have their own websites, regardless of whether or not they are still active as a group. Many of these pages include band lineups, discographies, audio and video clips, pictures, and news of upcoming events and album releases. Perhaps most importantly, many of them include band histories written by their own members.



Figure 2: Poster for last Ditch show, September 1994. Collected by Leslie Pierce.

The next section of this chapter outlines the pervasive terminology used in academic, popular, and esoteric analyses of youth-oriented music scenes. Chapter Two examines the scene's relationship to perceived notions of Newfoundland music and culture, and explores how a strong artistic community – and by extension, a strong independent rock music scene – emerged in downtown St. John's. Chapter Three discusses some of the St. John's rock scene's most notable performers, as well as discussing the scene's relationship to the popular culture of that time. This chapter also describes the live musical performances, constructing the gig as the central event for social interaction and creative output. Chapter Four then investigates how fans and musicians participated in the scene, not only at the live performances, but in everyday life and related creative endeavours. Chapter Five is about the life and accomplishments of scene member Fred Gamberg, whose accidental death in 1995 has been constructed by many as an “end” to the scene. Chapter Six reflects on the recent past of the mid-1980s to mid-1990s scene in the context of the thriving music and arts scene in St. John's today.

Appendix A is a list of bands active in St. John's during the 1980s and 1990s. Appendix B is a list of questions asked during the interviews for this project. Appendix C is a map of the downtown St. John's core. All distances mentioned in this thesis were determined using Google Maps [<http://maps.google.ca>]. There are also a series of gig posters and photographs presented throughout the text of this work to give a better visual impression of the material culture of the scene. Appendix D is a list of websites that in 2009 have recordings of some of the bands from this era.

Labelling the Scene

This section will discuss some of the terminology and theoretical standpoints used in the study of local youth music scenes. There are no easy answers when it comes to determining how and why a group of people – young or otherwise – come together with common points of interest, and this is apparent in the literature. What one scholar posits, the next one refutes. Still, I needed a language to be able to describe this scene – and even the word "scene" is itself contested in the literature. Many of these terms were used interchangeably in the scholarly and popular sources, as well as in my interviews. In my local sources, this scene was referred to as a "punk" scene, an "indie" scene, an "alternative" scene, an "underground" scene, and a "grunge" scene. Scholars use some of this language as well, but they have other ways of constructing the relationship between music and youth culture.

Perhaps the most discussed word in this area of study is "subculture." Subcultural theory was primarily developed by the CCCS, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (A. Bennett 1999, 599; Hesmondhalgh 2005, 22). According to Simon During, "No cultural studies book has been more widely read than Dick Hebdige's 1979 *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*" (Introduction to Hebdige 1999, 441). In his seminal book, Hebdige studied the subcultures of the emerging groups of teddy boys, mods, rockers, skinheads and punks in post-war Britain (Hebdige 1979). Hebdige's influence cannot be discounted, although his work has certainly been reconsidered and reassessed over the last thirty years. Stephen Guy argued that Hebdige's notion of subculture

"suggests resistance against hegemony, and mobilizes an ideological weight which seems idealistically overstated at best and quaintly dated at worst" (Guy 2004, 20).

According to Andy Bennett, the CCCS changed the study of youth culture in two significant ways. Bennett posited that instead of making connections between the "deviant" sensibilities of youth "gangs" and the localities from which they emerged, the scholarly emphasis switched to style (A. Bennett 1999, 599).

He explained,

First, emphasis moved away from the study of youth gangs and toward style-based youth cultures, such as Teddy boys, mods, rockers, and skinheads, which from the 1950s onwards rapidly became an integral feature of everyday British social life. Secondly, in keeping with the central hypothesis of the CCCS, the 'local' focus of earlier youth studies was abandoned in favour of a subcultural model of explanation. Using the original Chicago School premise that subcultures provide the key to an understanding of deviance as normal behaviour in the face of particular social circumstances. (A. Bennett 1999, 600)

Bennett also argued that subculture has "become little more than a convenient 'catch-all' term for any aspect of social life in which young people, style, and music intersect" (A. Bennett 1999, 599). Specific local meanings also failed to be addressed. Harris Berger criticized Hebdige and others for their failure to temper their research with interviews or participant observation. Berger argued, "If past ethnomusicology had reduced the variety of local music meanings to a typified norm, the method of much of the 1980s British popular music studies of subcultural style is all that is needed to unearth local meanings – or even that participant perspectives are unimportant" (Berger 1999, 15). In the context of the St. John's scene, the word subculture was seldom found in interviews and only

occasionally used in newspaper articles. Some of my informants and the local sources often used the term "underground" instead.

The poster is a handwritten flyer for a Christmas benefit event. At the top, it reads "CHRISTMAS Can be Such a Bummer lighten Load HELP the". Below this, it says "Tommy Sexton Christmas Benefit to help people living with AIDS". The event is scheduled for "Sunday Dec. 10. LSPU HALL". The poster is divided into two sections: "ALL AGES" and "BAR SHOW". The "ALL AGES" section lists "MC. RENÉ RUBIA" (6pm - 9:30), "CHED GIVER", "POTATOBUG", and "CHAIN MAIL GRIP". The "BAR SHOW" section lists "930 pm - 2am.", "MC LOIS BROWN", "FLIES GIVER", "PANTING BROS", and "SIX DAY WAR".

CHRISTMAS Can be
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ALL AGES
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CHED GIVER
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BAR SHOW
930 pm - 2am.
MC LOIS BROWN
FLIES GIVER
PANTING BROS
SIX DAY WAR

Figure 3: All-ages show followed by bar show, LSPU Hall, December 1995. Collected by Darryl Bennett.

"Scene," as it relates to music culture, is another widely used term in the literature, and the one most critical to this particular study. David Hesmondhalgh discussed its scholarly use.

"Scene" is a term that has become increasingly prevalent in popular music studies in recent years. In fact, it is common for it to be talked about among popular music academics as a term that has replaced subculture as the key way in which musical collectivities are conceived. (Hesmondhalgh 2005, 22)

While the development of subcultural theory focused heavily on class and aesthetics, the notion of scene focused more on locality, acknowledging fluidity and change in a musical community that draws influences from the past and the present, as well as the global and the local. As Will Straw⁸ argued, a musical scene is "that cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization" (Straw 1991, 373).

In recent scholarship, scene proved to be a more complex and popularly used term than subculture, and that complexity gives it a broad scope, thus raising more questions. As Straw noted, "The place of 'scene' within cultural analysis seems forever troubled by the variety of tasks it is called upon to perform. How useful is a term which designates both the effervescence of our favourite bar and the sum total of all global phenomena surrounding a subgenre of Heavy Metal music?" (Straw 2001, 250).

Still, Straw also posited that scene is "usefully flexible and anti-essentializing, requiring of those who use it no more than that they observe a hazy coherence between sets of practices or affinities" and that it "has the capacity to disengage phenomena from the more fixed and theoretically troubled unities of

⁸ During the writing of this thesis, I was fortunate to attend two guest lectures by Dr. Will Straw at MMAP in November 2008. One included discussion of scene, subculture, and other terms, which directly influenced this chapter.

class or subculture, even when it holds out the promise of their eventual rearticulation" (Straw 2001, 7). Other scholars do not prefer it, like David Hesmondhalgh, who deemed scene "a confusing term" (Hesmondhalgh 2005, 23). Stephen Guy also wrote, "Scenes are sets, specialties, and clubs. They both enable and refer to enabled interaction. The term alludes to the space for and result of production." He further suggested that scene is "a much more modest and, perhaps, less fraught affair" than subculture (Guy 2004, 19). Scene certainly connotes ephemerality and subjectivity, but my informants talked about "the scene" in very real terms, as an integral frame of their social lives. It was the community they chose to belong to and participate in.

"Punk" was another widely encountered word in this research. There were many descriptions of things being "punk rock." One can be referring to punk in varying terms, including temporality, geography, musical style, aesthetics, production, and consumption. Punk can be an attitude, an ethos. What is, and what is not punk, is subjective. It has been used to describe many bands, styles, and scenes in the last thirty-plus years. It is still used to describe fast-paced rebellious music, even if the musicians were born in 1990.

Punk rock is widely regarded as having its roots in the punk scenes of New York City and London in the mid-to-late 1970s. Bands like the Clash, the Sex Pistols, and the Ramones, among others, would achieve international success, creating a path of influence for the next generation of young musicians (Thompson 2004). According to critical theorist Stacy Thompson, "Hundreds of small punk scenes, containing a few hundred members each, have sprung up

across the United States and around the world since 1974." Thompson observed what she referred to as "several major genres of punk textuality," including music (recorded and performed), style (especially clothing), the printed word (including fanzines, or "zines"), cinema, and events (punk happenings aside from the shows) (Thompson 2004, 3). Punk performances, musical or otherwise, often display a high degree of social conscience, a resistance to hegemonic forces. There is some tendency toward the rejection of capitalism and mass-produced popular culture. This is facilitated through the scene. Thompson explained,

The second building block of the field of punk is the scene, and punk is made up of a series of similar scenes. Third, two vectors shoot through and condition all of the various textualities of punk. From punk's birth in 1974 in CBGBs (a small nightclub in New York City's East Village) to its present multiplicity of scenes, which spans the globe, punks have always mounted economic and aesthetic forms of resistance to capitalism and the commodity as its most ubiquitous form. Because punk's oppositional practices have mutated radically over the past thirty years, it is impossible to establish a transhistorical definition of punk aesthetics... (Thompson 2004, 4)

If the guitar-driven, frenetically paced punk rock of the 1970s left a legacy, it was the youth-centric "indie" rock music scenes spread across Canada, the United States, and the world in the 1980s. In his book, *This Band Could Be Your Life: Scenes From the American Indie Underground*, Michael Azerrad explored the lives of thirteen seminal indie rock bands from various local scenes across the United States, including Hüsker Dü, the Replacements, the Minutemen, Black Flag, Minor Threat, Sonic Youth, and others.

What bound these musicians and their fans together? Azerrad remarked, "The key principle of American indie rock wasn't a circumscribed musical style; it

was the punk ethos of DIY, or do-it-yourself. The equation was simple: If punk was rebellious and DIY was rebellious, then doing it yourself was punk" (Azerrad 2002, 6). DIY simply refers to the independent - and often amateur - production of music and scene ephemera. Some of my informants used this term as well and

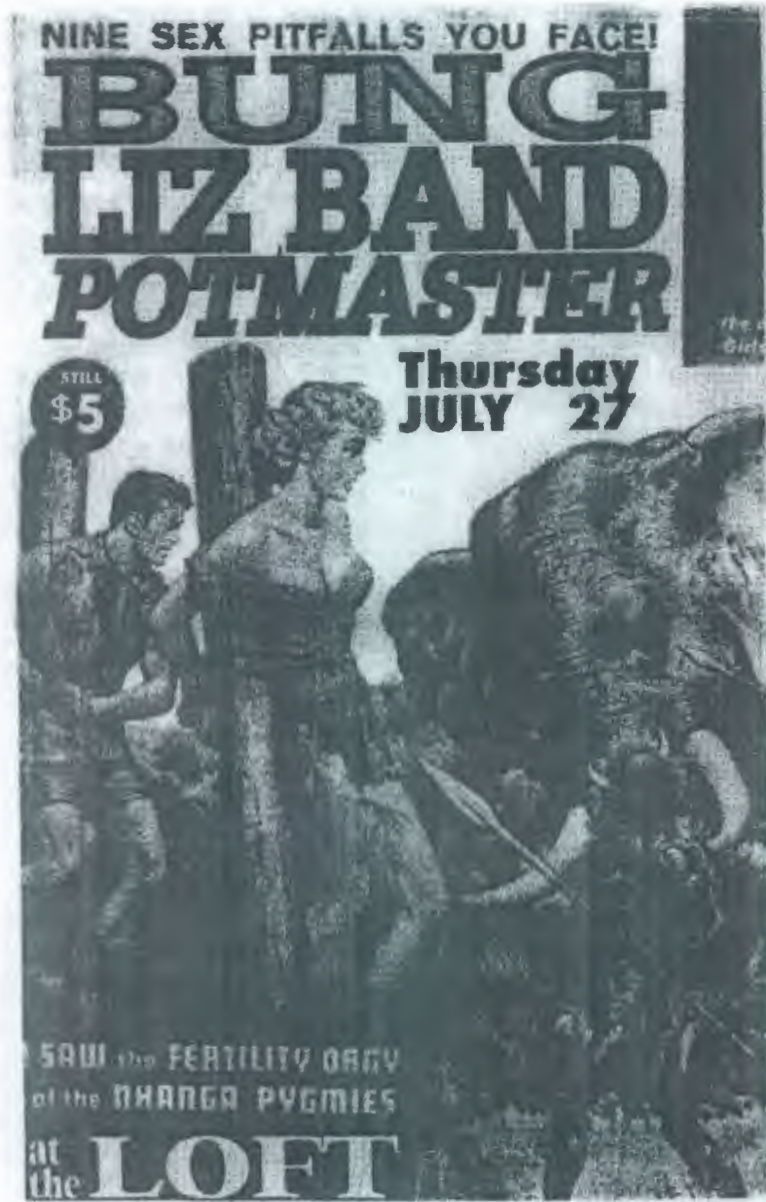


Figure 4: Bar show poster, The Loft, July 1995. Collected by Leslie Pierce.

Like punk, indie describes not only a loose construction of musical genre, but also modes of production, aesthetic style, and ethos. Like punk and subculture, indie also suggests a conscious movement against the mainstream. Azerrad highlighted the distinction between indie scenes and mainstream music when he wrote, "Corporate rock was about living large; indie was about living realistically and being proud of it" (Azerrad 2002, 10). Wendy Fonarow, working in the area of British indie rock, acknowledged the ambiguous nature of the word and laid out the multiple meanings the word has in a local music context. According to Fonarow, indie has been considered to be at least five things: a type of musical production affiliated with small independent record labels with a distinctive mode of independent distribution; a genre of music that has a particular sound and stylistic conventions; music that communicates a particular ethos; a category of critical assessment; and music that can be contrasted with other genres, such as mainstream pop, dance, blues, country, or classical (Fonarow 2006, 26).

Punk and indie seem to be kindred terms used to describe various aspects of musical scenes. Like punk's association with the 1970s, indie is considered by many to describe the independent local scenes of the 1980s. Stephen Guy noted, "The 'punk idea' or 'indie ethos' to which I continually refer has its roots in the more socially conscious bands of the British first wave (especially the Clash) and the American underground of the early 80s" (Guy 2004, 32).

"Alternative" is a word widely used to describe musical activities of the 1990s and beyond. David Hesmondhalgh wrote, "Indie is a popular music genre

which, in the 1990s, has considerably outgrown its original audience among students and (lower) middle-class youth. It was at first a British phenomenon, and is often subsumed under the category 'alternative rock' in the United States and elsewhere" (Hesmondhalgh 1999, 35).

Even on the local level, alternative was too ambiguous a term for some musicians and fans. In 1994, Jon Whalen, lead singer of St. John's rock band Bung, told a reporter, "Is alternative an adjective? Does it describe anything? No. It's a bad word created by somebody who didn't know what to say. We're a rock band spelled r-a-w-k" (Paddock 1994a). Local writer Russell Bowers also explicitly addressed this in an earlier article in *The Newfoundland Herald*. "Please note my exclusion of the word 'alternative.' After all, if bands like Nirvana and Pearl Jam are in the Top 10, what are they an alternative to?" (Bowers 1993a).

A number of music scholars refer to their own ethnographic research as a means of exploring and understanding local music scenes, yet, as Berger suggested earlier in the chapter, the real life, lived experiences of the musicians and fans often take a back seat to endless theorizing on how one might go about studying or labelling them. In her book on local music scenes in Liverpool, Sara Cohen made a similar point.

Whilst significant advances have been made in our understanding of issues surrounding popular music production and consumption, it will be suggested that particular emphases within popular music studies, and a reliance upon theoretical models abstracted from empirical data, and upon statistical, textual, and journalistic sources, needs to be balanced by a more ethnographic approach. Ideally, that approach should focus upon social relationships, emphasising music as social practice and process. (Cohen 1993, 123)

This is precisely why I use this terminology as a supplement to my ethnographic study of the St. John's independent music scene, and not the other way around. As folklorist Barre Toelken once said, "The meat of our scholarship is in the lore itself, not the theory" (quoted in Irwin 2004, 93).

This is a deliberately retrospective thesis, with a keen awareness of the construction of the recent past in the context of the present. Back in 1994, I barely considered the correlations between the music scene in St. John's and those in countless other cities and towns all over Canada, the United States, and the rest of the world. I had no idea that the scholars at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies might consider us part of a "subculture," or that we might have been reinventing Newfoundland music. My perspective was simpler than that: I just liked what I heard.

Chapter Two **Art and Rock on the Rock**

In order to provide a better understanding of how and why people participated in this music scene, this chapter examines how the scene came to exist in downtown St. John's in the first place, supported by a burgeoning arts community and making a mark on local music and culture.

The larger question here is: How does this scene relate to the music and culture of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador? Whether or not this music can be considered "Newfoundland music" is not up for debate – of course it is. It was – and to an extent, still is – created and performed by local musicians and enjoyed by a local audience. I argue that it is folk music, created and consumed at the grassroots level, keeping its ever-present relationship with popular culture. Beverley Diamond and Glenn Colton rightfully noted, "Newfoundland music' cannot be essentialized; it is not one thing, neither one genre, ethnic practice, nor style" (Diamond and Colton 2007, 3). With an even broader scope, Kelly Best suggested that "Newfoundland' is more than a geographic location; it is also a complex combination of aesthetics, dialects, feelings, ways of relating, groups of people, political stances, and individual experiences" (Best 2007, 331).

Despite such progressive attitudes, the popular perception persists of Newfoundland music as belonging to the more traditional, Celtic-derived forms. During my research, I did guest lectures about this topic to two undergraduate

folklore classes,⁹ one near the start of my research and the other near the end. My warm-up question for the students was "What do you think of when I say the words 'Newfoundland music'?" The responses generally included things like "Great Big Sea" and "Irish music," as I had anticipated, and they looked fairly surprised when I said, "Well today we're going to talk about punk rock!" But the perception of Newfoundland music as belonging strictly to the fiddles-and-bodhrans set is still prevalent for a very good reason – those forms are still actively practiced, extremely popular, and rooted in live performances.

"Newfoundland music" is often discussed interchangeably as "folk," "vernacular," or "traditional" song. Folkloristics allows for a definition of "folk music" that is much broader than what one might perceive on a popular level. According to Harris Berger, "Folklorists have long been concerned with the relationship between expressive culture and its social contexts, and in everyday life, jazz and rock are often casually referred to as types of 'folk music'" (Berger 1999, 3). In his article on satirical St. John's hip-hop group Gazeebow Unit, Philip Hiscock offered the idea that folk music can encompass a broad range of genres, suggesting, "What is 'folk music' anywhere is often highly influenced by its culturally hegemonic counterparts. People produce music for themselves that is at least partially stylized by whatever other music is on the go" (Hiscock In press).

Peter Narváez suggested "vernacular song" as an alternative to "folksong." He provided a legitimate distinction between the two.

As an analytical concept "vernacular song" is more encompassing than "folksong" and less elastic than "popular song." Vernacular

⁹ The classes were Folklore 1000 with Dr. Holly Everett, Fall 2007, and Folklore 2100 with Sarah Moore, Winter 2009.

here refers both to those traits of culture that people actually make for themselves, one of the designations of "popular," and to its more conventional meaning of indigenous culture, culture that develops in a given locale. Vernacular, therefore, signifies song as a sector of aesthetic development and social practice. (Narváz 1995, 215)

In recent years, there has been a noticeable interest in studying this aesthetic development and social practice in more contemporary forms. A 2007 issue of *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* was devoted entirely to the study of music, and the articles showed a keen awareness of the vernacular aspects of these performances. Of special interest was Kelly Best's article on the hip-hop scene in St. John's, which "challenges the narrow concept of Newfoundland music," something that normally "conjures up images of fiddles, accordions, old-time square sets, step-dancing, and Newfoundland-Irish bar bands" (Best 2007, 315).

This perception of Newfoundland music also relates to the fact that traditional Newfoundland folksongs have been collected and analyzed so extensively within the last century. According to Diamond and Colton, "The study of music in Newfoundland and Labrador has come a long way since the pioneering song collections of Maud Karpeles, Elisabeth Greenleaf, and Gerald S. Doyle in the early decades of the last century" (Diamond and Colton 2007, 1). The Department of Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland also had a critical role to play in the unearthing and preservation of a host of rich living traditions – musical and otherwise – within the province, and the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) houses a large collection of regional fieldwork recordings (Rosenberg 1991). In 1975, Michael Taft published "A Regional Discography of Newfoundland and

Labrador, 1904-1972," a comprehensive listing of local releases during that time period, although it has not been updated in the recent past (Taft 1975). There has also been interest shown in music fandom, notably a 1987 special issue of graduate student journal *Culture & Tradition* (Narváez 1987).

Naturally, "Traditional Newfoundland Music" has been assimilated into newer forms well into the present day. Glenn Colton wrote,

Responding to the legacy of Doyle, as well as that of visiting folksong collectors such as Maud Karpeles, Elisabeth Greenleaf, and later Kenneth Peacock, a new generation of Newfoundland musicians – among them Anita Best, Pamela Morgan, Kelly Russell, Jim Payne, and others – pioneered a revival of Newfoundland traditional music through a process of rediscovery and reinvention. (Colton 2007, 11)

By the time the St. John's punk rock youth were starting to have semi-regular all-ages shows in the 1980s, local musicians had long been fusing together the traditional and the contemporary outside the mainstream. Of local traditional/rock bands like the Wonderful Grand Band and Figgy Duff and their predecessors, Philip Hiscock observed,

All of these musicians lived and performed physically at the very edge of the North American continent, which effectively meant they performed ideologically and aesthetically at the edge of mainstream culture. Being dually rooted in local culture and mainstream culture, they made powerful and empowering links to the hegemonic cultures, from "cultural edge" to "cultural centre." (Hiscock In press)

Hiscock's assessment can also be considered in the context of the St. John's punk scene of the 1980s and 1990s, in the words of "Nation," by popular 1990s St. John's hard rock band Bung:

Well I'll live with my natural alienation,
It stems from more than geographic location,

When you live off the edge of an outsized nation,
You know outsiders dictate your life situation. (Bung *Whole* 1994)

Singer Jon Whalen's lyrics expressed the feeling of being an outsider in one's own country, and more than just geographically. "He was certainly staunch when it came to his national feelings and stuff," Bung guitarist Phil Winters told me. "It's like, Newfoundland is the place, stay here. We've got stuff going on here, too. Don't fuck us over. Secret nation, that's the song" (Winters 2008).

Being on an island presents its own set of problems for the independent tourist or native, and by extension, the touring artist. One can travel to and from Newfoundland only by plane or ferry. All of the touring musicians I interviewed cited this as a significant aspect of getting their music out of the province. "We're on an island in the middle of the ocean and that's a huge thing. Like, even in Halifax you can hop in a van and drive to Moncton. You can drive to Montreal in a day. So that really played against us big time," said musician Liz Solo in our interview, adding the reminder, "It still does" (Solo 2008). That island isolation has long provided roadblocks for attracting touring artists and vice versa, but that did not stop local musicians from exploring a variety of genres and making these genres come to life at home, especially in St. John's. Local scene member Jocelyne Thomas wrote about this in 1996.

People tend to forget about Newfoundland, unless they're from here or have visited here. Granted, we are "hove off" on a rock in the middle of the Atlantic but that just means we have to use our own imaginations and resources to entertain ourselves, which is better than being fed mind mush from the U.S. and mainland Canada. (Thomas 1996, 2)

The scene was certainly shaped by its island geography, but, as "Nation" suggests, it goes much deeper than that. Newfoundland is often perceived as the underdog, Canada's underprivileged, slow-witted younger sibling. Many people do not seem to be overly aware of the diverse non-traditional artistic forms that have been popular here for decades, be they Newfoundland natives or outsiders. In their book, *Have Not Been the Same: The CanRock Renaissance, 1985-1995*, Michael Barclay, Ian Jack, and Jason Schneider provided an extremely comprehensive history of Canadian popular music and local music scenes from that time frame. In this otherwise impressive music volume, Newfoundland music was a ghost, save for a brief mention of popular traditional band Great Big Sea and some references in the chapter about Halifax. Although the book focused on Canadian independent music scenes and included an remarkable amount of ethnographic detail, Newfoundland was practically nonexistent. I wanted to know why, so I contacted one of the authors, Michael Barclay, who agreed to field any questions I might have about this. Among other things, I asked him what he thought were popular perceptions of Newfoundland music among Canadians.

You're probably not going to want to hear this, but I think for most Canadians, Newfoundland music means Great Big Sea and kitchen parties. I think most Canadians see Newfoundland music not so much as a commercial entity that travels off the island, but as something that is intrinsic to Newfoundland culture on a very personal level, a very local level. Stylistically, I think most Canadians assume Newfoundland music is either Celtic or singer/songwriter (Ron Hynes) or both. I don't think there's much awareness at all of rock, punk, jazz, hip-hop, electronic or experimental music coming out of Newfoundland. And frankly, having had several friends who have lived there, I'm not convinced there is very much. (Barclay 2008)

With obvious exception to the last statement, his reply was sound. There are thriving independent scenes in towns and cities across Canada and beyond, and it is not hard to imagine that most people naturally tend toward doing things in their own region. While it may be unfortunate that more people are not aware of the local rock music in St. John's, Newfoundland, it goes both ways; I know there has been a punk scene in Saskatoon for decades but I know absolutely nothing about it.



Figure 5: Poster for bar show, The Cornerstone, March 1995. Collected by Leslie Pierce.

For a long time, Newfoundland has been perceived as being behind the times culturally, politically, and financially. I lived in Alberta from 1998 until 2002, and I found that people generally had good things to say about Newfoundlanders they knew. But their perception of the province was often warped by the iconic images of fishing stages and clothes hanging on the line, not always taking into account that Newfoundland, like the rest of the country, changes with the times. As a server in a downtown St. John's restaurant a few summers ago, I was asked by a couple of Canadian tourists where they could "Go to take pictures of Newfie fishermen pulling in their nets." Even in 2005, it was acceptable for *Globe and Mail* columnist Margaret Wentz to refer to rural Newfoundland as a "vast and scenic welfare ghetto" and mercilessly bait Newfoundland and Labrador premier Danny Williams, in response to political strife between the provincial and federal governments (Wentz 2005).

These examples, while perhaps extreme, serve to explain why it might seem inconceivable to some people that Newfoundland has a thriving arts scene on par with contemporary cultural scenes in other parts of Canada. When I asked Michael Barclay if he thought Canadians were aware that St. John's has an extremely diverse and active music and arts scene, he replied,

In a word: no. I think anyone who follows experimental music closely--and really, in Canada I'd be shocked if that number broke the five-digit barrier--will know about the Sound Symposium. And a band like Hey Rosetta seems to be making inroads on the mainland--but they're the first rock band to do so since Hardship Post, which was more closely associated with Halifax anyway. Before that it was Thomas Trio and Red Albino in the early 90s, who did very well on the university circuit. (Barclay 2008)

To clarify, this is both an esoteric and an exoteric perception of the province. Elke Dettmer observed that Newfoundland achieved nationhood and a separate identity during the nineteenth century, and that during this process a view of history emerged that considered Newfoundland "a land of historic misfortune" (Dettmer 1991, 170). Formerly a British colony (and later a territory), Newfoundland became the tenth province of Canada in 1949. Some Newfoundlanders have contended that Confederation only seemed to exacerbate the province's social and economic problems, a recurring thread throughout Newfoundland history. According to Dettmer, after premier Joey Smallwood's transformation of the province in the post-Confederation era, "Within Canada, Newfoundland remained the poorest province, the butt of notorious 'Newfie' jokes. The decades of the Smallwood era ended in disenchantment and were followed by a neo-nationalist reaction that again turned to the past, to the traditional lifestyle, which now became sacrosanct" (Dettmer 1991, 171). Many of these "traditional" artistic forms would become hallmarks of Newfoundland identity.

Neil Rosenberg noted the relationship between the Confederation of Newfoundland in 1949 and the nationalistic role of folk music.

It was not by chance that folk music was chosen to stand for the identity of the new province. For half a century the intellectual elite of Newfoundland had identified folksong, along with other forms of folk expression and dialect, as a national resource emblematic of its culture. (Rosenberg 1994, 55)

As already suggested, self-representation is a cause for concern. Historian Jerry Bannister wrote, "We [Newfoundland] tend to be either captured by our past

or fixated on our future, but we have difficulty imagining the present" (Bannister 2002, 175). He further argued that the people of the province have remained focused on the political battles of the 1940s, and that "historians have become increasingly marginalized, as poets, novelists, and other writers have taken the lead in shaping how we view our past" (Bannister 2002, 175). As a result of such romantic views of the province, certain cultural objects have been held up as emblematic of the whole province and marketed as a part of the "authentic" Newfoundland experience, even if they mean little to the average Newfoundlander in their everyday lives. Other aspects of our culture fall by the wayside. Gerald Pocius observed, "This objectification of parts of the past then leads to these activities becoming collective identity systems for a culture, their practice believed to be the very enactment of what it means to be part of that group." He also noted that "Everyday activities become reinterpreted as 'tradition'; current values and events determine which aspects of the past are considered as signifying an entire culture, and which aspects are ignored" (Pocius 1988, 59).

Of course, not everybody wants or expects an "authentic" Newfoundland experience, and not all visitors are necessarily tourists. How we promote music and the arts to the visitor is obviously not a mirror of the lived reality of everyday life in Newfoundland. However, that is little consolation to local artists like Liz Solo.

The thing is, you can have a very vibrant, happening, economically successful tourist scene, like, let's do it. But when you marry your culture to that – and that's what they've done. Right away, as soon as they did it, I was like, "Ahhhhh! Emergency Emergency! Danger Danger!" This is not a good idea. It would be a good idea if they were also going to marry arts to everything else, so that arts

had a place in tourism, a place in health care, a place in industry. The minute you start sanctifying objects and saying, these are, this cultural object, this you know, cultural work, in this glass case, is significant to our culture because. I mean you've disconnected it completely from the people. (Solo 2008)

Pocius further contended that "Confederation with Canada in 1949 is viewed by some as a major blunder that opened the floodgates to let in all forms of mindless vulgarity, eroding everything considered distinctively Newfoundland" (Pocius 2000, 19). I have heard many comments by locals that Newfoundlanders are "losing our traditional culture" and that these things will surely disappear forever unless we preserve them. But contemporary folklore is emergent, with influences coming from the past and the present, as well as the local and the global. Nor are these outside influences a dilution of the local culture. I agree with Kelly Best's perspective that "The global does not supplant the local. Instead, it can serve as a fresh vehicle through which local identities and alliances can be formed, contested, and re-established" (Best 2007, 316). Back in 1993, Potbelly bassist Geoff Younghusband told reporter Tracy Barron, with reference to the local punk rock scene, "Whether you like it or not, all music is important because it all adds to the culture of any one place. Culture should be ever-evolving. It adds to the style and quality of life in any place" (Barron 1993c).

The Downtown St. John's Landscape

It is time to narrow the focus of this chapter to the spaces and places the punk music scene took place in. How did the St. John's arts community come to occupy the downtown core? Downtown St. John's is a mixture of commercial, residential, and social spaces, but it does not share the grid-pattern street layout of

many other downtown centres in Canada and elsewhere. The St. John's downtown map is convoluted and sometimes tricky to navigate on foot, and especially by vehicle. It has a strange and wonderful layout, peppered with narrow lanes, dead ends, steep hills, one-way streets, and perplexing intersections, all sloping downhill toward the harbour, which opens through the Narrows directly into the Atlantic Ocean.

When you walk into Hava Java coffee shop¹⁰ on Water Street (Appendix C), the first thing you see is a two-sided glass wall, jam-packed with posters advertising local music, theatre, film screenings, gallery openings, burlesque shows, and so on. People often comment that "There is so much going on." These days, it is difficult to conceive of a time when this was not the case. Downtown St. John's, the geographical centre of the music scene in question, has a high concentration of creative persons. According to the St. John's Downtown Development Commission website, the neighbourhood with "the A1C area code [roughly corresponding with the downtown core] has 250 artists among a labour force of 7,515", which they claim is four times the national average.¹¹ The website was not entirely clear on what classifies one as an "artist" in these sorts of demographics, but I can attest to the sheer number of people I know working to produce local music, film, books, radio, theatre, fashion, performance, and visual art. While the City of St. John's designates this as the downtown core, the boundaries of downtown actually extend much further, including neighbourhoods

¹⁰ Hava Java is a popular coffee shop in downtown St. John's. I worked there while I was in graduate school and did a few of my interviews there.

¹¹ The St. John's Downtown Development Commission acquired this information from Statistics Canada, derived from the most recent census in 2006.

like Georgestown, Rabbittown, Bannerman Park area, The Battery, and Southside Road. They are the oldest neighbourhoods in the city. The buildings in downtown St. John's house restaurants, offices, banks, large corporations, coffee shops, hair salons, clothing boutiques, retail stores, bars, nightclubs, convenience stores, and residences. The main blocks of office and commercial buildings are located on, or near, Water Street and Duckworth Street. Many of the bars in the city of St. John's are on George Street, although the scene this thesis investigates was fairly removed from the mainstream Irish bars and nightclubs of George Street.

Ray Oldenburg classified such urban areas as either first, second, or third spaces, the first and second being "domestic" and "gainful or productive," and the third space being "inclusively sociable, offering both the basis of community and the celebration of it" (Oldenburg 1999, 14). In short, this means home, work, and social space. In downtown St. John's, it is possible to have all three of these in close proximity, as I currently do. The A1C area is often fully integrated with regard to Oldenburg's three concepts of space, and many downtown residents rarely need to leave the neighbourhood.

In his book *A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland*, Gerald Pocius observed,

In Newfoundland generally, you do not live in a town, you "belong to" a place; you are not asked where you live, but rather, where you belong to. Belonging, then, is directly tied to both linguistically and experientially to a place, and in a community like Calvert this means sharing the knowledge of a series of common spaces. (Pocius 2000, 3)

In that respect, downtown St. John's shares something critical with a small outpost community like Calvert. That sense of belonging to a place can therefore

be intimately connected to something like a music scene. Although many downtown residents, including myself, may not have grown up there, it is still where we choose to spend our time. Local musician Phil Winters, who has since moved outside of St. John's, remarked,

I lived on Colonial Street for the longest time, and I had a house on Quidi Vidi Road, not quite downtown but close enough. A significant part of my life was down here. Night after night at Bar None. I've been certainly nurtured down here. It is certainly a birthing place. This is where the scene is centred. (Winters 2008)

A century before I started traversing these streets, the downtown landscape would be irrevocably affected by what is vernacularly known as "The Great Fire of 1892." On July 8th of that year, a lit pipe dropped in a stable at the top of Carter's Hill and Freshwater Road led to the most devastating disaster in the history of St. John's. Within 12 hours, two-thirds of St. John's was in ruins, with 11,000 people homeless, 3 dead, and more than \$13 million in property damages (Higgins 2007). Much of the layout of downtown can therefore be attributed to the post-fire rebuilding scheme. According to Jenny Higgins,

By the end of August [1892], the Newfoundland and Labrador government and the St. John's Municipal Council had agreed on a rebuilding scheme for the city. Government officials ordered workers to widen and straighten many downtown streets, but decided against restructuring the city on a grid pattern – such an undertaking would require a significant amount of time and money. (Higgins 2007)

The city underwent the process of rebuilding as quickly and cost-effectively as possible. Local architect Robert Mellin noted, "What is especially remarkable is the congenial, irregular, and sometimes eccentric character of the streets and the architecture, built largely without the professional expertise of

architects, engineers, and planners” (Mellin 2005, 11). The hasty nature of our downtown planning contributes to its personality, if you will, setting it apart from other locales. Downtown St. John's sits at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. It is a very photogenic neighbourhood, framed by postcard-perfect scenery, and peppered with colourful row houses and shops, but still home to the requisite neglected buildings and alleyways.

Downtown and the Arts

The artistic spirit has inhabited downtown St. John's for a long time. According to Philip Hiscock, "For a hundred years, Newfoundland's capital city, St. John's, has had successful musical performers who built on local culture sensibilities, and self-conscious senses of local culture, to produce a contemporary sound for eager regional audiences" (Hiscock In press). The perpetuation of Newfoundland culture and identity through song, literature, theatre, and visual art was already well established by the 1970s, but this time period saw the arts community changing markedly. Newfoundlanders were seeing a fervent artistic response to the economic and social conditions they were living in. Glenn Colton observed, "The theatrical comedy of the Mummery Troupe and CODCO, the modernist canvases of David Blackwood and Christopher Pratt, and the satirical musings of Ray Guy are all varied expressions of what Sandra Gwyn referred to as the 'Newfoundland mystique'" (Colton 2007, 12).

Colton was referring to a 1976 *Saturday Night* magazine article that took an in-depth look at "The Newfoundland Renaissance," as Gwyn titled it. In the article, she highlighted nationalistic Newfoundland performers and organizations.

These included theatre companies like the Mummer's Troupe and CODCO, the visual art of Gerald Squires and Mary Pratt, the inception of local publishers like Breakwater Books, and the importance of MUN Extension Services and the Memorial University of Newfoundland Department of Folklore in the fostering of not just a strong arts community, but a Newfoundland-centric one (Gwyn 1976).

According to Gerald Pocius,

Since the 1970s, Newfoundland has witnessed what anthropologist Ralph Linton called a nativistic movement. From many different quarters, Newfoundlanders have increasingly become concerned with reviving or perpetuating aspects of culture that are considered specifically distinct. (Pocius 1988, 58)

During the 1970s, there was also grave concern for the preservation of historic downtown St. John's. The acquisition of the LSPU Hall by the Mummer's Troupe in 1976 was an important move in establishing the arts community in the area and recognizing the significance of the built heritage of downtown St. John's.

As Shane O'Dea observed,

It was with the LSPU Hall that art and heritage combined to advance the nationalist agenda. When it was taken over by both the Mummies and Community Planning Association in 1976, the hall was a building in trouble, since the longshoremen had declined from their glory days as one of the largest unions in Newfoundland. The downtown was also in trouble. The City Council was hell-bent on turning it into a high-rise shopping mall intersected by highways, ignoring a dangerously decaying residential area of architectural merit and an almost moribund retail area. With the Newfoundland Historic Trust fostering a concern for the architecture of the buildings and the Community Planning Association fostering their reuse and rehabilitation, a groundswell of public interest was created in what most citizens had written off as irretrievable. (O'Dea 2003, 384)

Pocius noted that by the 1970s, "The LSPU Hall had become the centre for these performing groups" (Pocius 1988, 58). To this day, the LSPU Hall is still

one of the most important spaces in the arts in St. John's, and was the central venue of the scene discussed in this thesis. At the time of this writing, "the Hall" is still a favourite local arts venue and is currently undergoing extensive renovations with funding from the city and the provincial government.

Punk Rock Comes to Newfoundland

Roughly around the time the arts community was becoming situated in downtown St. John's, punk rock first found an audience in the city. As discussed in Chapter One, independent rock music scenes in many places owe much of their aesthetic, politics, work ethic, and musical sound to musicians and scenes from the preceding decades. In the mid-to-late 1970s, punk rock exploded in New York and London, catapulting bands like the Sex Pistols, the Ramones, and the Clash into music history and public consciousness, and paving the way for a generation of kids who would learn to do it themselves. This has had a long-lasting influence on regional music scenes, on both an international and a local level, and St. John's was no exception.

The "Newfoundland Renaissance" of the 1970s undoubtedly influenced the local independent punk scenes of the 1980s and beyond, perhaps as much so as the popularization of punk on the international level. Musician and artist Liz Solo referred the late 1980s and early 1990s, the focus of this thesis, as a critical time. She called it "The end of that big push in the seventies to reclaim and write our own stuff and gather all our stories and generate our own theatre and celebrate our own music" (Solo 2008).

Live, original rock music was scarce in 1970s St. John's. Dog Meat BBQ member Mike O'Brien told Stephen Guy, "There were no bands around here doing original material. If you were in a rock band you played what was on the radio at the clubs" (Guy 2004, 37).

Self-proclaimed – and as far as I could tell, undisputed – as the first St. John's punk rock band, Da Slyme formed in 1977.¹² "Da Slyme should never be forgotten," said John Fisher, adding the visceral analogy that "They popped St. John's cherry with the huge cock of counter culture. She was never the same again!" (Fisher 2008). The first Da Slyme show (and Newfoundland's first punk rock show) was a "beer bash" held at MUNRadio on February 3, 1978 (Guy 2004, 39). Stephen Guy maintains that their music and performance was significant as much for the self-deprecating local humour as it was a mockery of the so-called punk aesthetic.

Da Slyme, from their inception, were well aware of the authenticity argument surrounding punk rock, and were quick to distance themselves from the disingenuousness that has tended to characterize the local appropriation of pop form in Newfoundland. Their song lyrics, stage personas, and personal politics mirrored the contemporary punk world in forming a whirling mass of contradiction. (Guy 2004, 40)

Liz Solo also stressed the band's importance in her interview. She said "All of this comes on the heels of bands like Da Slyme, who are the grandfather of us all. The grandmammy!" (Solo 2008). With Da Slyme in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the first seeds of the St. John's independent scenes were planted. The next chapter follows the scene through the time period of the mid-1980s to the

¹² For more detailed history of the adventures of Da Slyme, their website contains a very comprehensive (and entertaining) account of the band from past to present. [<http://abandonstream.net/slyme/bio.html>]

mid-1990s, when independent music went from esoterically popular to relatively mainstream.

Chapter Three A Scene Emerges

This chapter follows the local scene from its burgeoning years in the 1980s to its popularity in the 1990s, with a close eye to the context of popular culture. It discusses the differences between the all-ages and bar shows, and outlines a typical gig to highlight the importance of the live musical performances around which scene participation was centred. This will set up the discussion of scene participation in everyday life, the basis for Chapter Four. As discussed in the previous chapters, non-mainstream music was experiencing a surge in interest in the 1980s underground, and punk's influence was spreading all over Canada, the United States, Europe, and the rest of the world. At this time, the producers and consumers of these self-labelled indie scenes, both locally and globally, were generally in their teens or twenties, with little or no notice by the larger record labels.

To many, that was part of the appeal: to make it your own – the aforementioned "DIY" ethic. With contemporary technology, it was becoming increasingly easier to produce and promote your own cultural product, without a major record label footing the bill or providing guidance intended to make money for the industry. Michael Azerrad echoed this sentiment when he wrote about the American indie rock scenes of the 1980s.

The breakthrough realization that you didn't have to be a blow-dried guitar god to be a valid rock musician ran deep; it was liberating on many levels, especially from what many perceived as the selfishness, greed, and arrogance of Reagan's America. The indie underground made a modest way of life not just attractive but a downright moral imperative. (Azerrad 2002, 6)

The 1970s explosion of punk rock in London and New York had seen a previously underground musical genre become commercially viable in the 1980s, but the real revolution was going on in much smaller contexts. Independent music scenes were also gaining popularity in Canadian cities and towns, as well as those belonging to our American neighbours. According to Will Straw,

By the early or mid-1980s, a terrain of musical activity commonly described as 'alternative' was a feature of virtually all US and Canadian urban centres. In one version of its history, the space of alternative rock is seen to have resulted from the perpetuation of punk music within US and Canadian youth culture, a phenomena evident in the relatively durable hardcore and skinhead cultures of Los Angeles and elsewhere. (Straw 1991, 375)

It is crucial to note the Canadian context here. If Newfoundland was suffering identity crises in terms of music and culture, Canada was not faring much better before 1985. Although the Canadian music scene of the 1960s and 1970s was recognized for the superb talents of singer-songwriters like Neil Young and Joni Mitchell, Canada was, according to *Rolling Stone* magazine, "notorious for virtual non-support of its own talent" (Keillor 2006, 246). Despite strong music traditions all over the country and independent music scenes in a variety of genres, popular Canadian bands were still seen as playing second fiddle to their American counterparts.

Federal legislation was passed in January 1971 that made it a mandatory regulation of the CRTC for radio stations to play a minimum of 30 percent Canadian content, commonly referred to as "CanCon."¹³ CanCon was maligned by some for forcing otherwise unpalatable Canadian music down the throats of Canadian listeners, whether it was what they wanted to hear or not. According to

¹³ CRTC stands for the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

Barclay, Jack, and Schneider, the legislation was lampooned by the business community, which saw Canadian culture as shabby, sloppy crap that could only survive with such "extreme" measures of support (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2001, 23). Other writers have made strong cases for Canadian insecurity in the music industry before the 1980s (Jennings 1995; Straw 2000; Capel 2007).

Barclay, Jack, and Schneider described the bleak situation.

The year is 1985. Canadian music is right up there with Canadian television and Canadian film: the term "Canadian" is used as a derogative, or as a patronizing, medicinal adjective. Admitting you like Canadian music as an umbrella genre is like revealing an affinity for turnips. Some would argue that the youth of the early 80s had no opinion of their country's culture, but they most certainly did. They thought it sucked. (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2001, 3)

Despite such sentiments about mainstream music, there were pockets of independently produced and regionally successful punk rock music being created in virtually every part of the country. This points to a definite divide between mainstream media culture and what was occurring at the local level.

The 1980s Scene in St. John's

In St. John's, Dog Meat BBQ were frequently mentioned in my interviews as one of the most influential bands from this time period. According to the band biography on their website, Dog Meat BBQ were originally comprised of members of The Bubonic Plague, The Riot, and Da Slyme. They played their first show at Peace-a-Chord 1986 and disbanded in 1988, reuniting in 1995 (Dog Meat BBQ Website). They were a definite influence on the younger crowd.

Punk scenes were popping up in towns and cities everywhere, but in their infancy, it was a lot more difficult for young people to find a venue for their art

and acceptance of the punk aesthetic was fleeting. St. John's musician Phil Winters described his early days on the scene playing with his first band, Schizoid.

Our first gig was at the 301 Club on Hamilton Avenue. I don't know if it had ever been used before, but you know, we had to find whatever space we could find, right? It was all totally DIY. We rented the space, we were downstairs in the basement, we played there. That was sort of our gig place for six or eight months or something like that. I think - from what I can recall - I think the management just was sort of getting fed up with the freaks being in the building because we'd be down there playing and the regular patrons upstairs - you know, who'd be there for pool or darts or what have you - they'd all be coming down just to look at the freaks, you know. Because of course at that time, 1986, the scene wasn't as spread out as it is now. There's a lot more people who are sort of dressed in the fringe. So that's kind of what we got, the rednecks coming down and checking out the punk rockers. (Winters 2008)

The 301 Club would be the primary all-ages venue for a short time, until a parent's complaint forced the bar to stop letting kids have shows there. "It was a hole...but it felt like our hole," remembered Tough Justice guitarist John Fisher, who played at the venue. Geoff Younghusband estimated that his first show occurred around this time. He recalled,

I believe it was Schizoid's second show, and I believe WAFUT also played and maybe the Asthmatics and the Resistance were supposed to play, from British Columbia, but they didn't make it. And it was in the basement of the 301 Club, which used to be, which is where now the Laurentian is there at the top of Hamilton Avenue. So you go around the back, in the basement, and there were all-ages shows in there. Tough Justice probably played that show too. (Younghusband 2008)

Tough Justice were one of the most talked about bands from the 1980s scene, and widely considered the best in St. John's hardcore. "The original Tough Justice started in 1983 and it started at a MacPherson variety show, in junior

high," recalled their long time guitarist John Fisher (Fisher 2008). The band has existed in various incarnations over the past couple of decades. John joined some time in the mid-1980s.



Figure 6: All-ages show, LSPU Hall, August 1990. Collected by Darryl Bennett.

Young bands like Tough Justice drew on outside influences, taking their cues from punk rock and indie scenes elsewhere. According to Stephen Guy, "The tone of these bands seems to have been relatively consistent. The Riot, the Red Scare, Tough Justice, Public Enemy, and even Dog Meat BBQ leaned toward the engagement of socio-political issues typical of American and British punk and

hardcore" (Guy 2004, 53). Although the scene was relatively small in those days, with audiences in the dozens, its participants put in the effort necessary to sustain it. My informants mentioned a number of bands from that period, including Schizoid, WAFUT, Fish 'N' Rod, Malpractice, Asthmatics, The Riot, Band From Hell, Public Enemy, Red Scare, The Reckoning, Fleming Street Massacre, and the Bottom Dogs. Many of these early shows involved musicians and fans who would continue to be involved during the scene's popularity in the following years, and there to guide the next wave in the 1990s.

Peace-a-Chord

In the mid-1980s, the Peace-a-Chord festival was a critical place for a band to reach a wider audience. Peace-a-Chord was a free, two-day outdoor festival held in Bannerman Park (Appendix C) each summer, originally organized by members of Ploughshares Youth (later Youth for Social Justice) in 1985 and continuing annually until 2007.¹⁴ The performances featured an eclectic mix of musicians and activists, and the main focus was on the recognition and promotion of social justice issues. Each year, the festival brought together youth from St. John's and surrounding areas to take on the task of independently organizing nearly every aspect of the festival in the preceding months. Most of the organizers were young participants in the local rock music and arts scene, funding the project through grassroots fundraising efforts. Peace-a-Chord was always free to the public, and as I can attest to from attending numerous Peace-a-Chords from the mid-to-late 1990s, it made for an interesting mix of people, performances, and

¹⁴ The demise of Peace-a-Chord is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

social interactions. It survived through a couple of generations of the music scene.

Erin Whitney, a past volunteer and co-ordinator observed in 2006:

Peace-a-Chord is actually twenty-one years old, which is pretty old in festival years. Especially considering it's run by a loose affiliation of young artists and activists that shifts from year to year. Peace-a-Chord is as grassroots as it gets. Born in 1985, it was conceived as a gathering place for radicals, activists, and concerned citizens to voice ideas and inspire action on issues as wide ranging as nuclear disarmament, poverty, women's rights and environmental conservation. The free, weekend-long festival in Bannerman Park raised its voice with music from punk to folk and everything in between, speakers and other performers, all centered on social change. (Whitney 2006)

Bannerman Park borders the downtown and Georgestown

neighbourhoods. During the festival, there was a stage set up at one end of the park (expanded to two in later years), leaving plenty of open space to sit down. People sat on lawn chairs and blankets, relaxing, chatting, smoking, and listening to the music and speakers. Peace-a-Chord volunteers would be helping to sell t-shirts, newsletters, and buttons, and vendors would sell locally produced food and crafts. Children, adolescents, and adults all attended, although the primary audience was teenagers and people in their early twenties. Past Peace-a-Chord performers from outside the province included Jane Siberry, Spirit of the West, Thrush Hermit, and Me, Mom, and Morgentaler. It was a large-scale social event, highly anticipated each year by those in the scene. In our interview, John Fisher referred to Peace-a-Chord as "Christmas in the summer" (Fisher 2008).

While a festival like Peace-a-Chord was attended by crowds of hundreds, the burgeoning punk scene of 1980s St. John's was still very much underground. Popular culture interests would soon shift to alternative music. Harris Berger

commented, "From its roots in the independent record labels and college radio stations of the 1980s, alternative grew from an obscure motley of genres to the mainstream rock music of the 1990s" (Berger 1999, 35). Independent local music scenes would not stay under the radar for much longer, and global media exposure of what was being dubbed alternative music would not take long to trickle down to the local level.

In September 1991, Seattle punk band Nirvana released their second album (and major label debut), *Nevermind*, on Geffen Records. The success of the first single, "Smells Like Teen Spirit," quickly catapulted them into rock superstardom (Azzera 2002). Their home base quickly became the focus of great media interest, and other Seattle bands like Pearl Jam and Soundgarden, to name just two, became immensely popular. All of the sudden, struggling Seattle independent label Sub Pop Records was in the spotlight (Yarm 2008). In the early 1990s, music executives were eagerly scrambling to sign punk rock bands and find "the next Nirvana" (Weisbard 1994). That nickname was closer to home than one might guess, as we will see a little later in this chapter.

The mainstream media labelled this "new" style of music as "grunge." To its audiences and performers, grunge, much like alternative, seemed to be nothing more than a throwaway term used by clueless journalists to encompass a large number of independent rock bands from various scenes, even though the learned listener would recognize that many of these bands differed from each other greatly in many respects. After all, those on the inside realized that this movement had been fermenting for years. Michael Azerrad wrote:

With only minimal production to begin with, *Nevermind* hit number one, blanketed MTV with several videos, and went on to sell more than ten million copies. The funny thing was the album was a fairly complete compendium of the music the industry had been largely ignoring for the previous ten years, synthesizing underground bands like Black Flag, Hüsker Dü, Dinosaur Jr, the Pixies, Scratch Acid, the Melvins, and others. But it made that sound palatable to the mainstream with strong melodies and slick production. (Azerrad 2002, 494)

The 1990s Scene in St. John's

In St. John's in the early-to-mid 1990s, music scene participants were aware of the likely comparisons of the scene with those so-called grunge bands permeating popular culture. The local media proclaimed that with bands like Hardship Post, Potbelly, Bung, and Lizband gaining popularity, "Grunge Scene Alive and Well on East Coast" (Buck 1993b). Local St. John's fan and promoter Fred Gamberg denounced this label, saying, "I don't book grunge bands. We're all punks!" and declaring sarcastically, "I want to be grunge. I want to open Eddie Vedder's mail!" (In Memory 1995, 4), the latter a reference to the lead singer of the hugely popular Seattle band, Pearl Jam. I have already noted that by the early 1990s, independent scenes were losing their esoteric edge and crawling steadily toward commercial viability. Nearly every informant I interviewed drew parallels between local scenes and the explosion of the music scene in Seattle in the early 1990s, which almost single-handedly catapulted alternative music into the international mainstream consciousness. Azerrad described the impact it had on popular culture.

The alternative phenomenon deluged the media landscape, from fashion runways to a 1993 car ad in which a grungy young man crowded, "This car is like punk rock!" The indie community of the Eighties had developed largely outside the withering media

spotlight, where it could hatch and thrive unmolested. That situation simply didn't exist anymore. For a while, there effectively *was* no underground. (Azerrad 2002, 498)

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw a few, tight-knit musical groups finding audiences in the downtown St. John's core – and beyond. You could hardly lump them all in as grunge bands. The upbeat Thomas Trio and the Red Albino were a big draw for live shows, featuring the charismatic singer/songwriter Jody Richardson ("Our best kept-secret" said Darryl Bennett in his interview) on vocals, and brothers Lil Thomas on guitar and vocals, Louis Thomas on drums, and Danny Thomas on bass. They successfully toured the university circuit and were nominated as Best Live Act at the 1993 East Coast Music Awards,¹⁵ which also featured sets by Potbelly, Bung, and the Lizband. At one showcase, "Newfoundland's Thomas Trio and the Red Albino was the last act to take the stage, but the first to draw fans to their feet" (Barron 1993a).

Thomas Trio released two albums before calling it quits in 1992. "When the Trio were around, they were the band to go see," said Phil Winters, adding, "Actually, Dead Reckoning [a three-piece rock outfit from Long Harbour, Placentia Bay] were on the go at the same time and they were also quite popular too" (Winters 2008).

¹⁵ The ECMA Awards are held annually to recognize musicians in eastern Canada. According to their website, the East Coast Music Association has over 1,000 members, including musicians, artists, agents, managers, record companies, studios, media, related corporations, and retailers. <<http://www.ecma.ca/association.asp>>



Figure 7: Thomas Trio and the Red Albino bar show, Bridgett's, June 1990. Collected by Leslie Pierce.

Four bands of the early-1990s time period were often spoken of in the same breath. In his analysis of the early 1990s scene, Stephen Guy noted, "The loose group of bands that formed the core of the St. John's scene during this period – Hardship Post, Bung, Potbelly, and the Lizband – shared a rehearsal

space and continued with the relatively friendly, co-operative spirit that characterized the city's punk forbears" (Guy 2004, 58). Not surprisingly, the bands often shared show bills. "They would be the four bands you could go see at the time," said Shawn Maloney in our interview (Maloney 2008).

In a March 1993 article in *The Evening Telegram*, Halifax band manager Peter Rowan (who managed popular independents like Sloan and Hardship Post) commented that, "Punk rock isn't going mainstream; mainstream is going to it. Things are changing in our benefit." The article also observed, "Rowan has his eye on a few other alternative bands on the St. John's scene – Potbelly, Bung, and The Lizband" (Barron 1993c). Around that time, Robert Buck of *The Newfoundland Herald* also wrote about the situation.

The major labels are finally looking to the East Coast and with an open mind to boot. Slightly behind us now are the days when every musician from the East is depicted as having his rubber boots on and fiddle in hand; all genres are being recognized from rock to reggae to country and yes, some of our traditional musicians are still turning heads and leaving jaws hanging on the floor. (Buck 1993a)

Potbelly formed in January 1992, featuring Geoff Younghusband on bass, Doug Jones on guitar, and Tony Tucker on drums (Younghusband 2008). It did not take long for the band's energetic live sets to gain an audience, and by 1993, Geoff commented, "At an all-ages show, 10 minutes after the doors open it is sold out" (Barron 1993d). The band toured outside the province in the summer of 1993, playing Toronto, Montreal, Moncton, and Halifax (Barron 1993d). Potbelly's self-released tape, *Glid*, would prove popular with the locals and critics

(Bowers 1993b). Their song "Wading Pool" was featured on a compilation CD put out by Raw Energy Records of Toronto in October 1993 (Potbelly 1993).

Lizband were also one of the first breakthrough bands in the 1990s scene. Fronted by outspoken singer-songwriter Liz Pickard (who goes by Liz Solo these days), Lizband are one of the few prominent bands of this period that are still actively writing, performing, and recording new material as of the writing of this thesis. The original lineup consisted of Liz on vocals, Marcel Levandier on guitar, Mike Kean on bass, and Paul Curnew on drums. Steve Hussey also played guitar with the band from 1993 to 1997, and Mike Clarke would be the band's longtime drummer until 2002 (Solo 2008). They released an independent EP, *Six Songs*, in 1993. Their next full-length release of the time period of this thesis would be 1997's *I've Been Here Before*, and Liz referred to them as "a punk band. A country punk band" (Vaughan-Jackson 1997).

Hard rockers Bung began their ascent to local fame in 1992. In the beginning, Bung's lineup consisted of Jon Whalen on vocals, Justin Hall on drums, Barry Newhook on bass, and Phil Winters and Arthur Haynes on guitar (Bowers 1994). Phil Winters recalled the band's early days.

Bung really didn't get up and running until like '92, really. We got together in '91 and were jamming and stuff and did a couple of Sunday night jam things down at Bar None, Now that was a decent venue at the time that Diane Weston and Neil Pottle had on the go, now of course they got Bar None down the road there, but they were very, you know, like, as many freakish bands as they could get in there, that's what they wanted, right? They were totally into the arts scene and the music scene as well. (Winters 2008)

The early 1990s saw an increased interest in such local bands, and while Bar None became a favourite venue for the over-19 crowd, the media exposure

eventually brought bigger crowds and a need for more space. Geoff

Younghusband estimated crowds of about thirty to fifty people to see those bands in the early days. He described the evolution of the situation.

Finally it got to the point where both floors [at Bar None] would just be full when the bands were playing, so then we started booking at the Loft then. That was right when Nirvana and Mudhoney and all the SubPop scene and Seattle thing was exploding and so there was this great amount of press that was eager to give us press to chase up the local aspect of that story that was everywhere. And so we managed to capitalize on that and get people to start showing up, because the press was sort of encouraging them to. (Younghusband 2008)

By March 1993, the local press was reporting, "In the past year, audiences have gone from 40 to 400 people. Potbelly's first single, Twister, is now at number one at CHMR, Memorial University's radio station" (Barron 1993c). In a 1994 interview with *The Express*, scene member Shawn Maloney bemoaned the influx of "16-year-olds in plaid at the shows who just discovered Nirvana" (Paddock 1994b). Fourteen years later, he stood by this comment. "Well, there was," said Shawn in our interview. "There was a big wave and lots of people wanted to ride it" (Maloney 2008).

During this time period, newer, younger bands were also emerging and drawing audiences. Ditch came together in April of 1992, self-described as playing "a style of music that we affectionately called 'Jangle Pop.'" The band featured Doug Rowe on drums, Paul Gruchy on bass, Doug Mason on vocals, and Bob Dicks on guitar (*Danger* 1994). After contributing the track "Autumn Eyes" to the *Danger: Falling Rock* compilation, they disbanded in September 1994, although their members went on to numerous other projects. Like many of their

peers, they were not too thrilled to be boxed up in the grunge category with the Seattle bands that ruled the airwaves at the time. Doug Rowe recalled,

A lot of us got lumped in with that because the people thought we were that. *The [Newfoundland] Herald* did a review of us one time – Ditch – and they called us some kind of grunge-pop and it was just like a pile of shit that didn't have anything to do with what we were about at all. I don't think the guy knew what we were trying to accomplish, you know. We certainly weren't one of those groups that were trying to be like, Nirvana or Mudhoney or somebody. (D. Rowe 2008)

Bands were regularly forming and reforming, with some musicians playing in multiple bands. Potbelly would play their last show at the 1994 Sound Symposium, and their members would go on to form new bands, namely Potmaster and Stirlingslacks (*Danger* 1994). Described in their *Granite* bio as "Working-class punk with art influences," Potmaster were formed in 1994 with members of the by then-defunct bands Potbelly and Darshiva. The band featured John Fisher on guitar, Geoff Younghusband on bass, Tony Tucker as their first of numerous drummers, and 16-year-old Natalie Noseworthy on vocals and guitar. "I loved seeing Nat Noseworthy when she arrived on the scene with a big ta-da," remembered fellow female singer Liz Solo (Solo 2008).

Ched were another staple band of all-ages shows in the mid-1990s, and unlike some of the more established musicians, its members were still primarily in their teens. They were fast and fun. Singer/guitarist Phil van Ulden recalled how they came to form the band and play shows.

I started going to all ages shows (mostly at the LSPU Hall) in 1993. Around that time, got my first electric guitar and started jamming in my basement with my brother Leo, Ted Taylor, and Ivan Coffin. The three of them had a band called Barbatzu (eventually changed names to CHED) that assembled in 1994 and

played several shows, Peace-a-Chord, etc, before dissolving a week before the *Danger: Falling Rock* recording sessions. Myself and another friend of ours, Chris Hanlon, joined up with Leo and Ted to write a few songs and record two of them during the Danger Falling Rock session. The rest is history as they say. (van Ulden 2008)

Giver formed in 1992, and their primary lineup has featured Rene Rubia on vocals, Frank Nolan on bass, and according to Frank, "more drummers than Spinal Tap" (Nolan 2009). Their music is bizarre, but strangely catchy. Local writer Mark Paddock observed that "This unique trio combines spare punk noises – no guitars, just voice and rhythm section – with a strong sense of theatre" (Paddock 1995). John Fisher referred to Rene as "King of the beat poets" during his interview, and Liz Solo lauded their "Get up there and do it!" approach. "The first time I saw them, I said, this is what it's all about," said Liz, who has filled in on drums over the years. They have also had a few guest appearances on guitar, "for a laugh," Frank wrote to me, as the majority of their performances have not included a guitarist, just bass, drums, and vocals. Frank added another worthy detail to the Giver band history, "The youngest member of Giver was Sera Blake, my (at the time) four-year-old. She would accompany Rene on vocals, or Fred on the drums, at all ages shows" (Nolan 2009). Giver also have the distinction of being the first local band I ever saw live.

Potatobug were formed in 1992 with Ritche Perez on guitar and vocals, Jamie Tucker on bass, Brian Downton on drums, and John Rowe on mandolin, although Rowe departed early on. There was a definite traditional influence in the early days, a sound they referred to as "Sludge Newfie" but they quickly moved past that (Potatobug 1995, 4). They were a big draw, especially at all-ages shows.

After four years together, they released a self-titled album in 1996. According to Chris Smith in the Memorial University newspaper, *The Muse*, "The album debuted at number one on [Memorial campus radio station] CHMR's weekly chart and retained that position from December to February. Through a combination of DJ support and fan devotion, the album has proved to be one of the most popular in the station's recent history" (Smith 1997).

Two of Potatobug's members would appear in other local bands, including John Kenneth Wilkes Blues Band (later shortened to JKW). JKW's frenetic, fast-paced blues-tinged rock sound featured Alex Schwartz on vocals, Darrell Moulant and Ritche Perez on guitar, Peter King on bass, and Brian Downton on drums. They were still playing shows sporadically up until 2006.

By the mid-1990s, quite a few musicians were playing in multiple bands, and the presence of established scene members in a group was part of the appeal. Fur Packed Action would quickly become a favourite on the local scene, playing highly energetic sets to packed venues. Remarkably, unlike many other bands, their lineup remained unchanged during their entire lifespan. The band included a brief bio on their Myspace page.

Fur Packed Action are defunct, funky, rock, and or rolling. They lived from 1995-2001 in St. John's, Newfoundland. Jody Richardson (Thomas Trio and the Red Albino, The Haters) played guitar and sang. Geoff Youngusband (Potbelly, Potmaster, Jigger) played bass and did some singing. Barry Newhook (Bung, Band from Hell) played drums. They were nominated for 3 ECMA awards, won best Alternative artist at the 1999 MIANL awards, released 1 album, made 1 video, appeared on numerous compilations and toured eastern Canada repeatedly and generally had a pretty fucking good time. (Fur Packed Action Myspace)

Other bands would gain popularity with an even heavier sound. Unlike most of their counterparts on the scene, sHeavy were a metal band, one of the only local bands that would see substantial success outside the province. Originally called Green Machine (Vaughan-Jackson 1994a), their primary lineup was Steve Hennessey on vocals, Ren Squires on drums, Dan Moore on guitar, and Keith Foley (originally Paul Gruchy) on bass, although they have had other drummers and bassists in the interim. They released the first of a number of albums, *Blue Sky Mind*, in 1996, and would go on to sign with Rise Above Records in the UK. Preceded by local bands like Sacramento, Festered Corpse, and Martial Law, sHeavy kept the metal in the St. John's scene, along with other notable metal bands like Afterforever and Necropolis. Also on the heavier side were industrial outfit Draize Eye Test, which featured Todd Pardy on vocals, long time MUN radio station manager Kathy Rowe-Earle on bass, and Kathy's husband Bob Earle on keyboards. Ritche Perez and John Fisher also played guitar for the band at various times.

Hardship Post and Halifax

In the early-to-mid 1990s, local St. John's alternative bands were a regular presence at East Coast Music Awards showcases, and the local media duly covered it (Vaughan-Jackson 1995a). Local recognition of the bands was fine, but people like local promoter Fred Gamberg were seeking more for the scene in the mid-1990s. "It's been like hell trying to get anybody to notice us," he admitted in a 1994 interview (Paddock 1994b). But the early-to-mid 1990s national media was already preoccupied with another thriving independent music community on

the east coast of Canada: Halifax, Nova Scotia (De Mont 1993). Halifax was one of several North American cities posited to be the next big thing, or as a tongue-in-cheek *New York Times Magazine* article phrased it, "The Next Next Seattle" (Tough 1993). According to Barclay, Jack, and Schneider,

By necessity, Halifax bred its own heroes. This, coupled with a small population, explains why the scene is so inbred and fiercely proud of its own. There are no major labels in Halifax, and thus, there is little to gain or lose by taking a stab at the music business. For years there was no infrastructure to support the underground bands. Playing a Top 40 cover band provided the possibility of some success, but if one dabbled in the alternative sphere, any success would be limited to a small portion of the city. All of these factors resulted in artists who had no choice but to remain true to themselves and create their own rules. (Barclay, Jack, Schneider 2001, 487)

The above statement could have just as easily described the St. John's music scene of the 1990s. Add the opinion that the St. John's sound was heavier and edgier than the Halifax independent scene, and many thought we were deserving of at least equal attention. Said fan Shawn Maloney in 1994, "Compared to the Newfoundland bands, Halifax groups are poppier and more melodic" (Paddock 1994b), something local fan Darryl Bennett echoed in his 1996 letter to local fanzine *Granite*.

Even though there are some great bands in Halifax, there is no doubt in my mind that if we had as many indie record labels and scenesters as Halifax, we would be the next ones being called the "next Seattle". Bands such as Bung, Potatobug, Potmaster, the Lizband, Ched, Drive, Afterforever and Draize Eye Test would most likely be signed to at least an indie record deal. So while Halifax continues to grab all the positive press, while we wait on the sidelines, we must get more people working on promotion. (Bennett 1996, 3)

Darryl and I talked about this letter during our interview, and he still stood by his original thoughts on the matter.

It was very rudimentary, but I had a point I was trying to make at the time. I guess I was upset that they had all these bands on all these labels in Halifax – Cinnamon Toast, Murderecords and all them – they had their shit together pretty good over there though, so I can't really fault them for that in hindsight. And we were always a little bit late with stuff like that and we finally got Best Dressed and the compilation on the go and it was all a bit too late. And our bands were more, a bit too hard-edged for mainstream success anyway, I always figured. A lot of the Halifax bands were pretty poppy at the time, right? (Bennett 2008)

Stephen Guy also covered this territory in his MA thesis, discussing the "murmured shadow of rivalry" between the two cities. He explained that

With its art school, its larger population, its proximity to larger centers and its more frequent position in the schedule of touring bands, Halifax has leaned more toward the cosmopolitan than its smaller, poorer, isolated cousin to the east. Sonic Youth played at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in 1983. A 'cross-Canada, coast-to-coast' tour is Vancouver to Halifax. It is unquestionably the capitol of the region. (Guy 2004, 58)

Any undercurrent of disdain for Halifax's success had another contributing factor. Not only was Halifax being hailed as "The Next Seattle," but that moniker described St. John's more closely than many people realized.

Though the lazy Canadian journalism analogy of "the new Nirvana" was often bestowed on Sloan, it was associated with the wrong band. In actuality, it was Hardship Post, a trio from Newfoundland who were more suited for the tag. They were the biggest live spectacle, and explosive on stage. "Those guys blew up the city when they came here," states McLeod [Alison McLeod of Halifax band Jale]. Like Eric's Trip, these transplants would erroneously be billed as a "Halifax band," though admittedly, the majority of the band's lifespan was spent in Halifax. (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2001, 512)

Hardship Post were a staple of the downtown scene in St. John's in the early 1990s, and their LSPU Hall shows were always a huge draw. "I remember when Hardship Post used to play there before they moved away," recalled Rick Power. "The lineup would be by the door, down the door, down the stairs and along Duckworth Street" (Power 2008). Barclay, Jack, and Schneider summed up the band's evolution from St. John's band to Halifax industry favourites.

Formed in 1992 by guitarist/vocalist [Sebastian] Lippa with drummer Matt Clarke and bassist Mike Kean – replaced by Mike Pick in 1993 – Hardship Post remains the most notorious alternative band to hail from Newfoundland. As suggested by the band's 1993 recordings – the independent cassette *Moodring*, the Mag Wheel single "Sugarcane" and the Murderecords EP *Hack* – the band fit neatly into the next-Nirvana vein the entire music industry wanted at this time with nuggets like "My Only Aim" and "Colourblind." As the tightest of the tribe of east coast bands in the early 90s, they quickly won the attention of the industry. (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2001, 514)

In late 1992, Hardship Post "lucked into a spot in the province's Music Industry Association (MIA) Showcase '92 at the Loft on Duckworth Street. The audience, which included music industry people from across the country, liked what they saw" (Barron 1992). "The ECMA did it for Hardship Post last year," Tracy Barron later wrote: "Relative unknowns outside St. John's, the trio was named the weekend's buzz band and the title seems to have carried some clout" (Barron 1994). Hardship Post left St. John's and moved to Halifax in 1993.

According to Sebastian Lippa of Hardship Post,

It wasn't really much of a scene there," Sebastian Lippa says of St. John's, Newfoundland. "Audiences were small and the clubs didn't really like having bands play. We would always have to play with groups who I didn't feel much affinity with. I felt way closer to the scene in Halifax artistically. It was the pop influence. (Barclay 513)

This overriding sentiment elicited feelings of contention from St. John's fans, who could not understand why St. John's bands were constantly passed over by the media, both nationally and locally, while Halifax bands were getting signed to major record labels. More than that, many could not fully understand why one of their own had seemingly abandoned them. Local musician Jody Richardson wrote an article about the upcoming *Danger: Falling Rock* compilation in 1994. Without saying their name, he made a dig at Hardship Post, who had "relocated to Halifax, soma-ed out, recorded with Murder, and stopping giving lip service to those who helped them along the rocky road" (Richardson 1994).

When Hardship Post returned in December 1994 to play what would ultimately be their last show in St. John's, some remember a mixed reaction from the crowd. Darryl Bennett recalled, "In between the songs, it was, like, dead silence and some guy goes, 'Go back to Halifax!'" (Bennett 2008). Hardship Post's success would be short-lived, but their influence not generally discounted.

According to Stephen Guy,

Immediately after the Sub Pop debut, 1994's *Somebody Spoke*, the band fired their drummer and toured as a two-piece. A 1995 single was released as the New Hardship Post, but the group had completely disintegrated. Rumours circulate about Lippa living in Thailand, teaching English. The early nineties boom created the first band, after fifteen years of Newfoundland punk, that truly registered on the radar of the North American underground. Reliable venues emerged, shows were well-attended, recordings were being made, and bands were finally mounting modestly successful tours off-island. (Guy 2004, 60)

Many of my informants for this project still mentioned them as a favourite. "I loved them – loved them dearly – and I will never have a bad word to

say about them and I'll take them to the grave," laughed Darryl Bennett (Bennett 2008). Ritche Perez also listed them as an influence. "I liked Sebastian Lippa, his songs were great," Ritche wrote to me. "Songwriting was melodic and poppy, but still kind of heavy. He looked like a modern version of Elvis Costello" (Perez 2008). John Fisher also expressed admiration for them, but suggested that in light of the media attention, priorities had changed for some people beyond just getting up there and doing it for yourself. Now there were new opportunities.

Up until '91, up until Nirvana, none of us had any expectation whatsoever of fame or fortune or any of that stuff. It was all about being part of a family. It wasn't about how far we were gonna go. And in '91 that changed, you had Sloan just on the other side of the St. Lawrence there, making money and people over here with just as much talent at the time. You know, I'm not gonna slag Sloan because Sloan are wonderful, but you know, at the time, Sloan were a three-chord grunge band! Everyone tried to duplicate it. Look what they did to our poor Hardship Post – those bastards! Oh, I forgot to mention them in bands I liked... (Fisher 2008)

All Ages Shows vs. Bar Shows

In the early-to-mid 1990s music scene, those kids who had been putting off all-ages shows in the 1980s scene were now in their twenties. Many of them were more established as musicians and artists. By this time, these people were playing bar shows to their core audience, but also introducing their music to the next crop of young music enthusiasts in the city, who were also learning to play. As discussed in the previous chapter, the media was on their side. By the time I arrived on the scene in 1994, the scene was a frenzy of activity. Shows were occurring every other weekend, and many of the bar shows, especially the ones at the LSPU Hall, were preceded earlier in the afternoon or evening by an all-ages show. Earlier in this thesis, I alluded to "all-ages show" and "bar shows,"

providing a quick definition based on the age of the show patron in relation to the local drinking age. Now I will open this subject up for discussion, pointing out some fundamental differences in all-ages and bar shows that were raised in my interviews.

The legal drinking age in Newfoundland was (and still is) nineteen years of age. Theoretically, the bar shows were restricted to patrons who were that old or older, but frankly, more than a few slipped through the cracks. My one and only attempt to get into a bar show at the Loft worked for about ten minutes, until the bar staff came over and asked to see my ID. Being two years shy of the legal age, I was asked to leave before any of the bands started. Nearly everybody has a story about trying to get into a bar show when they were underage, and not everybody was as unsuccessful as I was. Despite that, the bar shows catered to an older-than-adolescent crowd.

That hardly meant that all-ages shows were limited to patrons below the legal age, and many people still continued to attend and perform at all-ages shows well past the legal age. If you were old enough to attend the bar shows, deciding to attend the all-ages shows was a matter of personal preference. Paul Gruchy pointed out,

Again, it comes back to the age, maybe the people who were old enough to get into bars and that was more what they were into, they would think the bar show was the best and they wouldn't be caught dead at an all-ages. It's a matter of perspective, I suppose. (Gruchy 2008)

At the bar shows, patrons had full access to alcohol, and whatever else might be around. Drugs and alcohol were certainly in use and readily available at

the all-ages shows, but it was by no means the sole propellant of a good time. For many fans, it was, to a large extent, about the music and social networking. "We weren't there to do anything other than hang out with our friends and enjoy some fabulous music," insisted Lesley Reade (Reade 2008). Darryl Bennett seconded this when he said, "I never cared about that. I just used to go see the music, right?" But then, curiously, he added, "I was such a naïve, foolish little guy" (Bennett 2008). Steve Hennessey, himself never a user of any alcohol or drugs, put it this way:

If you look back to the shows that you first went to, there was probably a certain amount of innocence associated with them, you know, it's not all about booze and drugs, it was about kids and skateboards and scuffed-up knees and hoodies and everything else and just an innocent kind of scene. (Hennessey 2008)

Liz Solo pointed out a fundamental difference between all-ages and bar shows, the purpose of the performance. Liz said,

Something that is important to scenes, that I've realized, is the promoters, and this is really true. You can see it in all-ages, because all-ages is all about the music. It's not about bars, it's not about money, it's not about getting a record contract, it's not about anything. It's about kids wanting to play music and kids wanting to see music. (Solo 2008)

A few of my older informants claimed to have enjoyed the all-ages shows just as much – or more – than the bar shows. Steve Hennessey joked, "The kids' shows were better than stiffies stood around with drinks in their hand" (Hennessey 2008). Even though he was the legal age of nineteen by 1992, Shawn Maloney also enjoyed the all-ages shows more. In his opinion, the drinking shows had less energy than the all-ages shows. "There would be less people there and most of the times, the all-ages shows would be early in the evening and the

drinking show would be after," Shawn said, "so the bands would be playing the same stuff for the second time during the night" (Maloney 2008). This agreed with Doug Rowe's assertion that "the youth brings the energy," although it should be noted that most of the bar show patrons I spoke to still would have been under the age of thirty in the early 1990s.

The Gig

The next section narrows the focus again to discuss the live performances in greater detail, including the spaces used and the progression of events. Gigs were, after all, the events around which the scene was centred. According to Wendy Fonarow, "The gig is indie's pre-eminent participatory event. The gig converts the indie community from one of discourse to one of interaction" (Fonarow 2006, 79).

Starting in the early-to-mid 1990s, a number of all-ages shows took place at the LSPU Hall. The LSPU Hall, a space frequently mentioned in this thesis, is located at 3 Victoria Street (Appendix C). "The Hall," as it is commonly referred to, was a favourite rock music venue in the 1990s. It stands out from the residential properties on Victoria Street. Like many other northbound streets in downtown St. John's, Victoria Street is steep and goes directly uphill. The street does not intersect with Duckworth Street, but is connected by a set of stairs flanked by murals advertising upcoming events at the Hall. A 1993 article in *The Evening Telegram* stated that, "The LSPU Hall, for one, puts off alternative evenings with four or five bands on the bill and opens the doors to all-ages" (Barron 1993c).

As discussed in Chapter Two, the LSPU Hall was already an established venue for local traditional music, theatre, and art, so it was not surprising that live rock music performances ended up taking place there. Phil Winters recalled,

I was actually working there at the time, I'd been – from '91 to '93 – the technical director there, so I had an in anyway. And they were looking to sort of expand. There were always the traditional music and stuff, they had those kind of concerts there but when they did say yes to us, it was certainly a nice venue. There's a good stage, you know, like, a good atmosphere in there. You feel like you've got a safety net in a way, too, right? But we still went to find a place, you know. It wasn't just a place that catered to that sort of thing, right? We had to make it ours for the short period of time that we did have it, right? (Winters 2008)

The Loft (Appendix C) was another favourite and oft-mentioned venue of scene members, except for one particular aspect of setting up a show there – three flights of stairs. John Fisher explained, "I liked the Loft, you know, as a bar venue. It sucked bringing gearing in and out of there, three flights of stairs, no elevator" (Fisher 2008). Aside from Bar None, the LSPU Hall, the Loft, the Ship, the Cornerstone, and other favourite and established venues, there were also some smaller and lesser-used venues. I attended a few Friday evening and weekend afternoon all-ages gigs at the basement theatre at Bishop's College, a local high school. Still, the Hall was number one in many people's minds.

Consider the following endorsements: "Everywhere else paled in comparison for a variety of reasons," Matthew Furlong wrote to me. Lisa Abbott agreed with this, also writing to me that "LSPU Hall was my favorite, I didn't enjoy shows at other venues half as much." Of the Hall, Lesley Reade said in her interview, "Other places don't even come to mind when I think all-ages shows in

the 90s." John Fisher said. "LSPU Hall, I mean, it was home, you know? We liked it very much" (Abbott 2008; Fisher 2008; Furlong 2008; Reade 2008).

All-ages shows were normally held in the daytime or early evening, during times when its patrons would be out of school. They were never held too late, as they were usually followed by a bar show, often with a similar or identical lineup of bands. On the days of scheduled shows, it was easy to make a day downtown out of it, as Doug Rowe often did.

I remember when they used to be at the Hall, for instance, like, there'd be an all-ages show in the afternoon and a bar show in the night and I'd go like, a lot of times I'd just be by myself and I'd come downtown for the day and just go to the show, go up to KFC or something, hang out there, and be around downtown, talking to people, this and that, like spending the whole day just going to shows like that, you know. I'm not saying shows my group was playing at or anything, I'm just talking about the shows. Did that lots of times. (D. Rowe 2008)

By the mid-1990s, it was worth going down early to line up for the all-ages gigs. "There used to be lineups all the time," recalled Geoff Youngusband. "You could tell if a show was gonna be sold out before you opened the doors because there'd be a lineup at it" (Youngusband 2008). The line-up was the place to chat with friends and meet new people at a sensible volume before you ventured inside to listen to loud music. Musicians would be lugging gear into the venue through the clouds of cigarette smoke. In the case of the Hall, smoking was only permitted in the small bar area near the front door, and not in the main theatre. Other than that, you could smoke in all the coffee shops, bars venues, and restaurants. Phil Winters remembered, "Everybody smoked. *Everybody* smoked.

Everybody. Honest to god, I mean, everybody smoked!" (Winters 2008). I guess that Phil, not a cigarette smoker himself, is the exception here.

Eventually, the doors would open and the lineup would start to move. You would pay your cover, get your hand stamped (or scrawled on with a Sharpie marker), and enter the venue. That's when you really became a part of things. You would regroup with friends, find a place to sit or stand, check out who was there, and wait for the music to start, if it had not already. The LSPU Hall theatre is windowless and painted completely black from floor to ceiling. It has stadium seating, and ample floor space for dancing in front of the bands. The capacity, according to Rick Power, "was supposed to be 225 but they always oversold it" (Power 2008). If it was a larger event, such as the Peace-a-Chord in Bannerman Park, the crowds could be a lot larger, upwards of a thousand people.

Inside, the audience watched the performers or socialized between sets. Naturally, much of their attention was primarily focused on the stage. There were no barriers between the audience and the musicians, and that close connection marked a fundamental difference between local independent shows and large-scale stadium concerts. "Indie bands proved you didn't need those things [barriers] to make a connection with an audience," Michael Azerrad wrote of the American indie underground, "In fact, you could make a better connection with your audience without them" (Azerrad 2002, 10).

At local St. John's shows, people would dance in front of the stage, stand against the walls, or sit if seating was available. When the music was loud and the energy was high, it was not unusual to see people literally throwing themselves

into the music, dancing, thrashing around, hugging, singing along, cheering, and shouting out. The bands were well aware of this, audiences and performers fed off it. According to Harris Berger and Giovanna Del Negro, "The aesthetics of performance are tightly bound up with the issue of reflexivity – the performer's awareness of herself as a participant in an interaction, his/her signalling this awareness to others, and the reciprocal phenomena experienced by the audience" (Berger and Del Negro 2004, 96). Jason Toynbee made a similar point.

There is a self-conscious awareness on the part of the musicians and audience of the gap between them, a gap that even the most naturalistic of performers in the most intimate of environments have to confront. From this perspective, creation includes the struggle by musicians to *get across* to an audience. (Toynbee 2006, 75)

Bung were a prime example of the explosive energy that could be expended at a show. Bung elicited something altogether different from their counterparts, what Rick Power referred to as "the danger." Rick elaborated that "There was something mystical and magical and dangerous about their show because I'd seen other local bands play at that point, like Potbelly, and Drop Kick Jesus, and all them and they were good music but, you went to see Bung and you didn't know, like, what was gonna happen" (Power 2008). According to Phil Winters, Bung shows often involved the following:

People going apeshit. Apeshit crazy. Losing their minds. Becoming something you wouldn't expect. Swinging from the rafters, swinging from the pipes, you know, stage diving, and people crawling around on the floor and throwing themselves to the floor. Just unreal. (Winters 2008)

Dancing was an important aspect of the gig and the movements were a matter of personal style. If the band had a decent following, the space at the front

of the crowd was prime real estate. There would often already be a substantial crowd assembled when the band kicked into their first song. If the floor was empty, it was a pretty solid indication that the band still had something to prove to those assembled.

Verbal interaction was fairly limited in the venue if a band was playing, depending on your proximity to the stage. The music was usually quite loud. "I think we give you no choice but to listen," said Potbelly's Geoff Youngusband back in 1993. "You can't exactly sit back and have a conversation" (Barron 1993d). That same year, *The Evening Telegram* reported that at the East Coast Music Awards, "Bung's five-song set literally deafened people, forcing bartenders and patrons to pass notes when ordering drinks" (Barron 1993b).

If not in the venue watching the band, there were a number of other spaces people could socialize in. The bathrooms and smaller liminal spaces like hallways and entrances could be utilized to have a conversation at a normal decibel level. At the LSPU Hall, you could hear the band from outside the venue, and also from the washrooms and art gallery downstairs.

The style of music could also elicit certain reactions, especially when the dynamic between audience and performance – fuelled by alcohol and adrenaline and who knows what else – reached the point of frenzy. "[Bung] Lead singer Jon Whalen commands attention from the second he steps on the stage," reported Russell Bowers in 1993, "He spouts non-conformist rhetoric, but has a sense of maturity in his rebellion" (Bowers 1993a). Still, according to Mark Vaughan-Jackson at *The Evening Telegram*: "You can't really pin Bung down to any one

message: some songs are political, some are personal, some angry, some sarcastic" (Vaughan-Jackson 1995c).

When I told Bung guitarist Phil Winters that his band had a reputation for stirring people up in a myriad of ways, Phil agreed completely.

We were certainly a party band. There was no denying that. When we did play, people got on 'er. I think for a lot of people, it was a really good release, just to get out there and freak out, shake it. I know one friend of mine, I mean, he was really releasing, he was throwing himself at the floor to his knees, repeatedly. His knees, he walks with a cane now. Now whether or not that was all due to his religious moments watching us or whether that had to do with other accidents – he was an accident-prone guy, too. But he was throwing himself to his knees repeatedly in front of us, which, when you see someone doing that, you step back a second, it's like, "What are you doing to yourself?" But, I mean, if it works for you to release that energy that is driving you mad, then great! (Winters 2008)

As a teenager, I yearned to attend those bar shows that followed the all-ages shows. I knew I would eventually join the ranks, but the wait seemed intolerably long. But even if you could not get into the venue, you could still participate. Doug Rowe remembered hanging out by one of the venues and listening to the music from outside and thinking, "We're gonna get up there someday!" Keeping the gig in mind as the central event of the scene, the next chapter will examine how my informants participated in the scene in everyday life.

ALL AGES

BENEFIT FOR PEACE-a-CHORD '94

With **CHED**
 the cabmen
 Potmaster &
 Potato Bug

AUG. 15th At the **LSPU HALL**

Doors open at **6pm**, tickets **\$5.25**

DANCE YER FACE OFF

Figure 8: Peace-a-Chord benefit, LSPU Hall, August 1994. Collected by Darryl Bennett.

Chapter Four

The Scene in Everyday Life

The previous chapters of this thesis provided context for the existence and development of the St. John's independent rock music scene, as well as providing insight into the bands and events involved in it. This next chapter is about how people participated in the scene in everyday life. It asks a few questions alluded to in the introductory chapter, primarily: How did these fans participate? How did they take part? How involved did they get? How did those social interactions shape the scene? As Bung guitarist Phil Winters pointed out, "That's your scene, where your inspiration is coming from, those people that you hang around with and that you see everyday, right? I mean, they're influencing you. No matter what it is you're doing, they're influencing you and you're influencing them" (Winters 2008). In a folkloric sense, this chapter is about participation as a means of establishing both personal and collective identity (Oring 1994) through music fandom.

The relationships and roles within a scene are interchangeable and its patrons and performers can assume many roles. Folklorist Camille Bacon-Smith described this through the lens of science fiction fandom, stating that participants in the science fiction community "regularly move from position to position, acting sometimes as consumer, sometimes as producer, sometimes as critic" (Bacon-Smith 2000, 3). Clearly there are more than just performers and audience members at work here. Just because one is not involved in the creation of the music itself does not mean they are not actively participating outside of the shows.

In his book *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*, ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin provides a useful and unrestrictive model for explaining interest and participation in local music scenes. Slobin identifies three spheres of involvement for the participant in "micromusics," which he defines as "small units within big music cultures" (Slobin 1993, 11). According to Slobin, the first sphere of involvement is "Choice." He wrote, "Choices have to be made; everyone is exposed to too much to take it all at face value." The second sphere of involvement, according to Slobin, is "Affinity," which is important in understanding why people are attracted to such a music scene and make the choice to take part. "So essential to understanding choice, so necessary for affiliation," observed Slobin, "for choices are not random." Belonging is the third sphere, and Slobin noted, "Belonging is itself a complex act. How deep does it go – casual participant, part-time organizer, professional musician?" (Slobin 1993, 55-56). This chapter takes all of these things into consideration – choice, affinity, and belonging – to imagine how and why some scene members enter into, participate in, and in some cases leave, the scene.

Will Straw explained, "As local punk scenes stabilized, they developed the infrastructures (record labels, performance venues, lines of communication, etc.) within which a variety of other musical activities unfolded" (Straw 1991, 375). As mentioned in the previous chapters, in the 1980s and into the 1990s, these scenes were DIY, do-it-yourself, in most aspects of the performance and production of cultural objects and events. For gigs to occur, musicians needed to be practicing music, forming bands, booking the venues, and promoting the shows, all while

hoping there was a willing audience for them. It would be ideal to divide the scene up between musicians and fans, but those roles are not as clearly defined as one might think. As Barry Shank wrote in his study of the rock and roll scene in Austin, Texas, "Spectators become fans, fans become musicians, musicians are always already fans ..." (Shank 1994, 131).

This particular scene attracted youth from all over St. John's and surrounding areas to the downtown core. The everyday social interactions in St. John's oldest neighbourhood – and not merely the gigs – made it an exciting destination. My own suburban neighbourhood in the west end of St. John's was clean and safe, with its rows of similar houses and manicured lawns. It could have been plucked from any suburb in Canada or elsewhere. There were very few places for youth to gather. Ray Oldenburg explained this on a larger social scale.

Pervasive zoning laws and poor planning have eliminated from new neighbourhoods places where youth and adults once encountered one another frequently, casually, informally. The exile of youth from the world of adults still proceeds apace as if nothing can be done to reverse the process. (Oldenburg 1999, 263)

In downtown St. John's, unlike my own neighbourhood in the west end, there were now spaces specifically designated for youth activity, and parental supervision was further away than ever. Not only did this suit my love of music, the events were actually tailored to my age group and interests. As Oldenburg suggested, "Residential areas have become the settings of isolated family life and when people find no reason to walk down the street from their homes, they begin to seek community and communion elsewhere" (Oldenburg 1999, 264).

First Shows and First Impressions

In order to seek community elsewhere, as Oldenburg suggested, one needed an "in." Mine came from a childhood friend, Miranda Reddy, who called me up one afternoon and asked if I wanted to go to an all-ages show at the LSPU Hall. I was intrigued. Her mom drove us down and mine picked us up. I ascended the LSPU Hall stairs to see a couple of hundred kids milling around who looked more like me than anybody I had ever seen at my school. Although I cannot remember specific details about the show, I was likely equal parts nervous and elated, and could not wait to repeat the experience.

During interviews, I asked the question: "How did you get involved in the scene?" This meant I ended up with a lot of "first show" narratives, as well as my informants' early impressions of what they had experienced. They remembered varying amounts of detail. Darryl Bennett, who has an impressive collection of local music scene ephemera (and an uncanny memory), recalled, "August 10, 1993 was the first show I ever saw. Potatobug, Potbelly, [Halifax band] Dead Red, and Ditch at LSPU Hall" (Bennett 2008). Darryl also had a copy of the poster from my first show, nearly as fresh as the day it was plucked from some wall or utility pole in downtown St. John's back in the fall of 1994.

During our interview, Geoff Younghusband also brought out his scrapbook collections of local music ephemera, many of them gig posters designed either by Geoff himself or by friends of his, many of which are found throughout this thesis. He had been keeping an eye out for a poster of his first show, and when he found it, he pointed it out to me.

This one, that's the show there. That was the first show I went to. So that's the Resistance – the guys that were supposed to come. So...Schizoid, but this would have been probably with Danny Thomas playing bass in Schizoid, before Don Ellis played bass. Tough Justice, which would have had Don playing drums and Danny Thomas sang, and WAFUT, which was Ken Tizzard, of the Watchmen and Don Ellis and Barry Newhook, I think, played guitar at that time, and Clark Hancock. Asthmatics, that's John Fisher and Llewellyn Thomas. (Younghusband 2008)

Some people remembered specifics of their first shows, while other interviewees had absolutely no idea where and when their first show had been, and were only able to offer vague generalizations about who might have played. My partner, Shawn Maloney, grew up in the Georgetown neighbourhood and has spent his entire thirty-six years living in or bordering downtown St. John's. Shawn remembered, "I started going down maybe '91, '92. I was in university, getting dragged down there by the Perez clan" (Maloney 2008). Shawn usually has an excellent memory, especially when it comes to small details, but he could not recall the exact band lineup, venue, or the date of his first show. It was likely not the earth-shattering event for him that it was for me. For Shawn, living on the border of downtown took logical precedence over youthful idealism, especially in a scene rife with budding artists and activists.

I was a downtown kid mostly 'cause I lived downtown. I didn't go the first couple of Peace-A-Chords because I was a hippie or a Youth for Social Justice or wanted to change the world. I went because they were happening in the park I spent every weekday in anyway. (Maloney 2008)

Place had a prominent role to play in the music scene, since it was undoubtedly centred in downtown St. John's and there were young people living there amidst an active artistic community. "I think my first real involvement in

the local music scene was helping move gear and sound equipment for Figgy Duff in 1982 at the age of 10," Giver bassist Frank Nolan wrote to me. "After moving to Canada to live with my mother, I grew up in the local arts scene, in downtown St. John's. My small world at the time was filled with musicians and theatre. It simply became a part of my life" (Nolan 2009). As to be expected, many of the youth involved in the scene grew up in or around downtown St. John's, making it part of their daily lives, and easily accessible without a vehicle.

Others came regularly from considerably further away – from Mount Pearl, the Goulds, Paradise, and Conception Bay South. "It was definitely a bit of a chore getting from Paradise to downtown, especially in the winter," chuckled Darryl Bennett. City buses do not go to Paradise and Darryl did not have a driver's license. sHeavy singer Steve Hennessey grew up in the Goulds, a good twenty-minute drive (fifteen kilometres) from downtown St. John's. Steve recalled,

I grew up in the Goulds, and I don't know, I felt kind of alienated from town because I went K to 12 at St. Kevin's in the Goulds, so just getting to town and getting to shows as a kid was a matter of hitchhiking, which is always an adventure and staying out too late was always an obstacle, going to all-ages shows was about the only thing that I did when I was in high school. I think the first band probably I might have ever seen was Tough Justice I think, with Don Ellis and those guys, back then, so that was, and well, I guess I remember seeing Chaos at a concert in the park, when these OZ-FM concert at the parks when I was like, fourteen or something, which would have been 1982. So yeah, that's a while ago. (Hennessey 2008)

Steve also maintained that getting involved in the music scene as a musician increased his presence downtown. "Growing up in the Goulds was an obstacle to getting to shows, I'll tell you that, and being away from the downtown

scene," he told me. "But we managed to get down to see some things and it wasn't until I think I got involved with [bandmates] Dan and Ren and the whole sHeavy thing, that I really got immersed in it (Hennessey 2008). Informant Rick Power grew up in Pouch Cove, but attended Booth Memorial High School in St. John's, so downtown was more easily accessible. He also had an early introduction to live music. "I've always been interested in music," he said, "I grew up in a family where my uncle played in a country band, my uncle Eugene Costello" (Power 2008).

If you were lucky, your family lived near downtown, or owned a business there. Potatobug guitarist and singer Ritche Perez's parents owned the Cocamanga Café on Duckworth Street in the early-to-mid 1990s (Perez 2008; Appendix C). Cocamanga was a frequent favourite hangout of local music scene members. Even after the Cocamanga had closed, the Perez family would still regularly attend Potatobug shows. "A lot of kids had hockey moms and hockey dads, took them to their hockey games, bought them their hockey gear," recalled Rick Power, "Ritche had rock and roll parents. They were to see all of his shows. They were rock and roll parents" (Power 2008).

Aesthetics

John Fisher told me about his introduction into the music scene around 1984, as well as the similar style he shared with some of the patrons. He also quickly decided playing music was something he would like to do.

I started going to see live music before I started playing it. I probably saw my first local live band when I was just after turning fourteen, at the Grad House. Yes, it was a bar show and at fourteen, I could get in anywhere and I often did. And you know,

the Grad House was near where I lived, and I'd walk by and I'd hear noise and I'd see people who looked vaguely like me because I was a huge Billy Idol fan and I had spiky hair and fancy boots and leather jackets 'cause I mimicked my idol and the punks kinda looked like that too. I started playing probably - I was still fourteen - so it was probably like, maybe six months after I went to a show. I thought, hey, I can do that. (Fisher 2008)

When I asked my friend Siobán Quicke, now thirty, who she had come into contact with at her first shows, she answered, "Rock and rollers, teenagers, miscreants. Just mostly teens. People in the music scene. A lot of kids that were like me, kind of, you know, didn't feel like we fit in anywhere, so we kinda created a little community" (Quicke 2008). Some scene members contended that they had finally found in the scene a place to belong, but were almost nonchalant about fitting in elsewhere. Going against the norms of your peers was almost a badge of honour. Rick Power explained,

The reason why we all hung out downtown and we all met up and all became friends is because we weren't cool enough to hang out anywhere else and that's it. And I said that one time, and Naomi Johnson said to me, "I thought we were the cool kids," and I'm like, "What do you mean?" It's actually an interesting way to look at it, absolutely everybody in school knew who we were, we were the most popular kids – everybody knew who we were. (Power 2008)

While there was no single prescribed style of clothing within the scene, you could certainly recognize other potential scene members by their style of dress. Wearing a certain hair or clothing style told the people around you that you might be someone they could relate to. If you were new to the scene, the aesthetics of scene members, combined with other elements of participation, could be intimidating, as it was for Darryl Bennett.

If you'd never been downtown, it's a pretty mind-blowing experience. I never went down expecting to see all these people with big boots on, and leather jackets and big plaid shirts and long hair. I mean, the guys I hung around with at school wore skate clothes and stuff, but it was still different to go down and see those older people looking like that. So it was kind of scary but then I saw the bands and I was just blown away because I couldn't believe it was going on. (Bennett 2008)

When You Love Cheese
But It Doesn't Love You.

BUNG



the
LIZ
band

sunday feb. 7
at the cornerstone

\$3 advance \$4 at the door

tickets at FRED'S and TIMEMASTERS

showtime 9:00 pm

last stop before the mainland / whore tour

Figure 9: Bung and Lizband bar show, the Cornerstone, February 1993. Collected by Leslie Pierce.

Despite his initial impressions, Darryl maintained, "It got really comfortable down there – quickly, right?" It wasn't one of those things where you felt like an outsider at all. I didn't. Not for very long" (Bennett 2008).

If some newcomers were intimidated by the small army of punk kids they saw there, then it was no surprise that their parents might be concerned as well. Even the most liberal of parents could be surprised by things, including John Fisher's mother Patsy, herself no stranger to punk music and punk kids in her house. John humorously recalled his late mother's first encounter with a classic punk hairstyle some time in the mid-1980s.

I remember my mom's first Mohawk – not her Mohawk, but the first one she saw was Clark's and he was passed out on the couch, and she came home and she walked in and she walked into the kitchen and laid her bag down and came back out through the living room and went, "John, he's got a Mohawk!" "Yes he does, Mom" (Fisher 2008)

While one might stand out outside the scene for having a certain punk-influenced personal style, one could just as easily stand out inside the scene by not looking the part. One informant even told me of a friend of his who stood out at shows because of his neat, preppy appearance. The blue-haired youth wearing a plaid shirt and combat boots might have stood out at school or work, but not at a show. The guy who looked as though he were headed to a job interview was now the one who was in stark contrast to the others.

When you consider something like this, you realize the musicians were not the only ones performing at the shows. Everybody was dressed for the event, whether they did it consciously or not. Harris Berger discussed this in the context of hard rock shows at the Agora nightclub in Akron, Ohio.

The notion of performance is not merely meant to awaken us to the social nature of aesthetics, but to emphasize that performances are enacted, actively achieved by their participants. While the participants make an effort to dress themselves up for an evening at the Agora, it is their comportment and bodily stylistics that pushes their behaviour from mere socializing into performance. (Berger 1999, 39)

If certain aesthetic styles signalled to others that you might have something in common with them, then the stage was set for making friends. Showing genuine interest in the bands also helped form those bonds. When I asked Darryl Bennett if he had an easy time making friends at shows, he said,

I did. That's one of the reason why, I think, about ninety percent of the friends I have now is through going to shows because I think like, there wasn't much, there wasn't any kind of pretension with those people, you know? It wasn't like they were high and mighty and didn't want to have anything to do with you. I found they welcomed people at the time, you know? Especially if you showed any interest, I mean, I showed interest in the bands right off the bat. I remember writing to the address on the Potbelly tape to Geoff, right, well, like, you know, "I like your music" and stuff like that. I still got a letter there. (Bennett 2008)

Hanging Out and Getting Involved

By the mid-1990s, it was not unusual for shows to occur on consecutive weekends. As discussed in Chapter Three, the gig was a concentrated gathering of scene participants, but most scene interaction took place in everyday life. Most people stayed close to downtown to socialize, and many moved there when they were old enough to get their own apartments. Hanging around certain places downtown was the best way to hear about upcoming shows, in addition to keeping an eye out for show posters on the utility poles downtown, at the university, or in high schools in the proximity of downtown. If you were not already a patron of

downtown bars or other social gathering places, you might hear about the scene through a friend in the know, as I first did.

Hangouts came and went in the downtown community. The Funland Games Arcade and Ports of Food in Atlantic Place were both located on Water Street and were popular downtown hangouts for teenagers in the 1980s and early 1990s. You could also find young people hanging out at the War Memorial or Bannerman Park, or perusing the fine selections at St. John's oldest and coolest music store, Fred's Records on Duckworth Street <<http://www.freds.nf.ca>>. Fred's has been a staple of the downtown music scene since it opened in the 1970s, fervently supporting both traditional and non-traditional local artists.

In the mid 1990s, specialty coffee shops like Hava Java, Coffee and Company, and Perkup began appearing on Water Street and Duckworth Street (Appendix C). Perkup was especially popular with the all-ages crowd in the mid-1990s, as it was located at 272 Duckworth Street, mere seconds from the LSPU Hall steps. As Phil Winters and I sat at Hava Java over coffee and a digital recorder, he put it this way, "Just talking about the scene, like the coffee shop and the games arcade. That was, for me, the meeting place, where we all met up, where all the information was brought in and disseminated and stuff. Gigs were planned there, all sorts of stuff" (Winters 2008).

There were other non-musical ways in which one could become further involved in the scene and claim space. Youth for Social Justice was one such community organization, dedicated to raising awareness of social justice issues. According to a 1992 article in *The Express*:

Based out of the Oxfam office on Duckworth Street, Youth for Social Justice links together not only youth from all over the metro area but also young people from around the province. There are about 40 members from St. John's and Mount Pearl and about the same number from the rest of Newfoundland. Youth for Social Justice was founded in 1988 by several peace and development educators. Among the groups involved in establishing it were Oxfam, the Peace Centre, the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Association and the now-defunct MUN Extension Services. (Carrol 1992)

YSJ, as it was commonly referred to, was also closely connected with Peace-a-Chord for many years. Peace-a-Chord and YSJ had many overlapping members, and many of them were young fans of the local music scene. I volunteered for the Peace-a-Chord committee because of the people I met in the local music scene.

Other fans participated in less visible ways, taking on the role of collectors. Aside from tapes, records, and CDs, there were more ephemeral material culture objects to be acquired. Well-designed show posters became collector's items, often pulled off downtown bulletin boards and utility poles. There was one unwritten rule for taking them. Geoff Younghusband explained,

Most of my collection is stuff that I did just because I kept copies of it and some of the older stuff from before my time and other things that I lifted. I tended to be a person – I didn't get everything I wanted because I was a person who believed in leaving the posters up until the gig was over and then I would take them. But once in a while, there was one you just had to take [laughs]. Because you knew it wouldn't last and it would be a shame for it to disappear. (Younghusband 2008)

Many scene members, like myself, saved only mere scraps over the years, with no sense of consistency or tendency toward organizing it. "Physical documentation of obscure independent music is almost always scant," wrote

Stephen Guy, "largely limited to a handful of press clippings and fanzine articles, fading photographs, and poorly dubbed cassette demos" (Guy 2004, 11). Others made it a hobby and are even known for it by the performers they have documented, resulting in some reverse admiration. In his interview, Phil Winters recognized Darryl Bennett's collection and documentation abilities, and said, "He has got the stuff, he's an archivist himself, you know? He's recorded so many shows. I'd love to get over and see what he's got!" (Winters 2008). Darryl has amassed an impressive collection of scene ephemera, including live video and audio recordings, show posters, band t-shirts, and local fanzines. The print items, while not catalogued, are kept in a large, sealed plastic storage container, many of them in excellent condition. It is another way many people participated in, and supported, the scene. Band members usually made the posters themselves, sometimes with help from their friends in the scene. Posters were most often designed and printed on 8.5"x11" paper in black and white, as they appear in this thesis, making them photocopier-friendly.

Fanzines (a portmanteau of "fan" and "magazine") are also important sources in the study of specific music scenes. According to James Hodgkinson, fanzines "are generally considered to provide an independent voice, distinct from the major publications on so-called alternative popular and contemporary music such as *Melody Maker* and *New Musical Express*" (Hodgkinson 2004, 225). Like the music they are writing about, fanzines are rarely produced by professional means. Stephen Dunscombe wrote, "Zinesters privilege the ethic of DIY, do-it-yourself: make your own culture and stop consuming what it made for you"

(Dunscombe 1997, 5). Fanzines are a display of certain aesthetic preferences, but they can also provide useful fragments of oral history, straight from the source. Argued critical theorist Stacy Thompson, "It is in zines that punks produce and articulate their own histories in the most detail" (Thompson 2004, 3).

One St. John's example of this, as discussed back in Chapter One, was *Granite*. *Granite: Newfoundland's Indie Music Magazine*, was a mid-1990s chronicle of the local music scene with free distribution in downtown coffee shops, music stores, and bars. In it, one could read interviews with local bands and visual artists, reviews of local (and Canadian independent) albums, and peruse the handy band directory in the back to discover new bands or find kindred musicians to start your own. Local musician and scene enthusiast Jud Haynes and his graphic design classmate Krista Pires started *Granite* in 1995. Jud was on a work term at Bristol Communications while completing a design program at the College of the North Atlantic. Jud remembered,

The staff of Bristol were very helpful in teaching us how to use many of the computer programs that were needed to assemble and layout your own zine. They let me use their computers after hours to mock up ideas and put together *Granite*. The only other resources we had at our disposal was our place in the music scene of St. John's. We were friends with many of the bands and called upon them for stories. (Haynes 2008)

Granite was quickly embraced by the downtown community and local businesses took out advertising to help offset the printing costs. They put out six issues between 1995 and 1996 before calling it quits. One might argue that your typical cut-and-paste DIY fanzine authors never had access to fancy graphic design equipment or the means or desire to raise advertising revenue, as Jud and

Krista did, but that did not make *Granite* any less of an independent production. "It was pretty scrappy," remembered Jud, "I look back at it now and it is not very slick, but that was part of its charm" (Haynes 2008).

If fanzines were one way for fans to communicate with each other and promote the local scene, campus radio also had a crucial role to play. Scholars and indie rock writers have often cited the symbiotic relationship between college and community radio stations and local music scenes. Holly Kruse observed, "During the 1980s, rock and pop music put out by independent record labels, disseminated over the air waves of college radio stations, and produced in geographically peripheral locales emerged onto the national (and international) scene" (Kruse 2003, 4). CHMR has been the local campus radio station in St. John's since the 1960s, making the jump to the FM dial in January 1987.¹⁶ To this day, nearly all of the station members are volunteers, with the exception of the station manager and a handful of executive members.

Campus radio had a different purpose than commercial radio stations. According to Michael Azzerad, "Tightly controlled FM formats, mostly programmed by a small group of consulting firms, kept new music off the radio. College radio jumped into the breach, providing a valuable conduit. Now indie shows could be well promoted; records could be adequately showcased" (Azerrad 2002, 9). That is not meant to vilify the local commercial radio stations. Longtime CHMR member Bob Earle observed,

Local radio stations were very supportive of local musicians as well. OZ-FM put out their "Rock of the Rock" CD for a number of

¹⁶ A more comprehensive history of the station can be found at the official CHMR website [<http://www.mun.ca/chmr/history.html>].

years, and there wasn't much resistance from them in getting local music aired. Every band had their CD or cassette at CHMR, and they would get regular airplay, often making "The Chart." Of course, it didn't hurt that a lot of musicians had their own programs, which would give them the opportunity to befriend other DJs, resulting in more airplay for their band. That's not why musicians joined the station, but it didn't hurt their cause. (Earle 2008)

Not only did CHMR provide an important means of exposure for local musicians, there was the ever-important social aspect. I was a volunteer disc jockey there from 1996 until 1998, brought into the station through a friend I met going to shows. Another friend I met at the station, Siobán Quicke, said in her interview, "I think going to local shows when I was a teenager kinda looped me into meeting the people I still hang out with today. And also got me into CHMR and radio DJ-ing. So music has been a huge part of my life, since I started going to shows" (Quicke 2008).

CHMR - FM 93.5
 1st Annual
 "Local Music"
LOG FESTIVAL



It's Big, It's Heavy, It's Wood

Friday, 24th	Saturday, 25th	Saturday, 25th
Dreadheavy	Ched	Draize Eye Test
Giver	Infant Kit	After Forever
Drive	Potato Bug	Bung
sHEAVY	Liz Band	
<small>Bar Show - It's req.</small>	<small>All Ages Show</small>	<small>Bar Show - It's req.</small>

Tickets: \$6:00 per show
 Available at: CHMR - FM and The Loft
 sponsored by: CHMR and The Loft - Haymarket Square

Figure 10: CHMR all-ages and bar show fundraisers, The Loft, February 1995. Collected by Leslie Pierce.

Becoming a Musician

In order to gain fans and execute successful shows, various people needed to learn to play instruments, make connections with other musicians, form bands, write and play music, promote themselves, and organize gigs. Beyond the gigs, recording and touring were also important to many musicians as a means of getting their music to a wider audience. This section is about the social interactions of musicians. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the number of bands, fans, and venues increase. Bob Earle said,

As a musician, it was a pretty exciting time. There were a lot of venues for original bands – Bridgett's, Bar None/Junctions, The Loft, and a few bars on George St. that popped in and out of existence – even concerts at the university featured original local bands as opening acts. The general public seemed interested in the original scene as well, to the point where at times it was difficult to get into shows – especially those by the Thomas Trio, Dead Reckoning, and even Bung later on. (Earle 2008)

Playing an instrument and learning to play in a band were important skills for amateur musicians. There were no homogenous sets of tastes, and everybody brought a different and personal set of influences to the table. As former Bung guitarist Art Haynes told reporter Mark Paddock back in 1994, "We've got five different individuals here of different ages – you don't have enough tape for us to tell you who's influenced us" (Paddock 1994a). There was also a high degree of personnel crossover between projects in the St. John's scene. Phil Winters elaborated this point.

It's such an incestuous scene... I mean, in Bung alone. Just the band members going to band, everybody's played in just about everybody else's band, you know, like, at some point or another – which is great! I mean, that's amazing, you have all these people who are quite talented and all different in many ways but at the same time you have your common ground and stuff, easy to get along with, for the most part, obviously you're going to have some personalities that don't necessarily mix, but at the same time, those relationships can certainly produce volatile music. (Winters 2008)

Musicians often connected based on a shared level of proficiency – or not. Of the early days of Giver, Frank Nolan recalled that he and singer Rene Rubia tried playing with other musicians on the scene but the difference in skill level was too glaring. "We tried every variation we could think of, but myself and Rene were not musicians... it wasn't working out," Frank wrote to me (Nolan 2009). Still, one needed not be a professional musician to get their point across. Liz Solo

explained, "Learn two chords – and there are chords that take one finger. Punk rock. And that principle works, it still works. It's about simplicity, it's about your intention, your idea. What do you want to say? What you feel when you're doing it. That's what it is, right?" (Solo 2008).

Once a musician gained even a small degree of skills, they could get together with friends and acquaintances to learn together, as bassist Geoff Younghusband did.

I'd been playing guitar since I was a teenager, sort of you know, very badly around the bedroom and I finally had bought a bass a year before. So in 1991, I guess, I heard that Doug Jones and Stirling Robertson and Rennie Squires had a band and they were looking for a bass player, so I volunteered and then learned how to play. So we started out jamming in Stirling's parents' basement, his dad would come down playing the bagpipes. It was good, classic Newfoundland basement, stucco and wood and fishing nets and things hanging up. (Younghusband 2008)

Other introductions to musicianship were more incidental than that. Singer Steve Hennessey recalled the humble beginnings of his vocal career with sHeavy.

I went to a party in Shea Heights, which is where [sHeavy guitarist] Danny Moore lives. It was one of these sort of parties where there were a lot of musicians and there was like, drums and stuff set up so anybody who wanted to play could get up. So I got to see Festered Corpse for the first time at a kitchen party set, which was pretty interesting. And so I met a lot of those guys and from there, Dan asked me if I liked to sing - if I could sing - and I thought, well, I think I can, but I never really had. So he'd already been jamming with Ren Squires and he said they were getting together like up in Cowan Heights with Paul Gruchy and stuff. That was like, '93, and they were getting together there. So they invited me along on Saturday and I went from there. (Hennessey 2008)

Once bands were formed, having practice space was essential. Ideally, a basement or a garage would do the trick, but the older and more active musicians

would seek out their own spaces to jam without worrying about incurring the wrath of neighbours, roommates, and families. 333 Duckworth Street (Appendix C) was one such space. Affectionately dubbed "Halfway to Hell" on account of its numerical address, 333 was home to a number of local bands in the early-to-mid 1990s. Like so many of the spaces discussed here, its time was limited, but its creative output was impressive nonetheless.

According to Liz Solo, songwriter Ron Hynes had rented a floor at 333 Duckworth Street for an office and rehearsal space, and brought in other bands to help with the rent. Other than that, the building was abandoned. "We always had the rundown spaces," she mused, "right down to the bitter end." Eventually Hynes moved out and 333 became a musical home to Bung, Lizband, Potbelly, and others. Liz explained how the space operated.

That's where the procedures for how we ran jam spaces after that got developed. Everybody paid an equal share on the rent, there was a schedule, you go up on the schedule. That place did end up kind of getting a bit destroyed [laughs]. But man, we recorded records in there, all those bands jammed there, a lot of work got done in there, we had a lot of laughs in there. So that was our first jam space and then eventually the building got sold and we had to move on, but we were there a number of years. (Solo 2008)

Phil Winters also mentioned 333 as an important space in the evolution of the St. John's independent scene, and is worthy of recognition in itself.

333 Duckworth Street is legendary, really. How many records were recorded there? Potbelly, Potmaster - I think Hardship Post recorded in there, Lizband, I mean, you can just go on and on and on. There's a heritage designation up there for...I think an architect lived there or something like that. I'm not sure what it was, but the amount of music that was made in there should certainly be on that plaque, as far as I'm concerned. (Winters 2008)

333 Duckworth Street would not merely serve as a jam space; it served as an important social space. It also served as a recording studio, with songs recorded and mixed by local sound engineers like Don Ellis and Wallace Hammond. As of the mid-1990s, bands like Lizband, sHeavy, and Afterforever were all releasing tapes and CDs independently (Younghusband 1994).

A lot of things had changed in the preceding decade. John Fisher remembered the DIY assembly of the cassette *Tough Justice* released in 1985 or 1986, years before 333. The band could not afford to buy cassettes, but according to John, a band member's father was a local rep for Pfizer Canada. The *Tough Justice* recording was dubbed over a box of arthritis education tapes. "So the demo will end and the song will finish – dadadadadada – Your joints are feeling uncomfortable right now, blah blah blah," John recalled, "We weren't even smart enough to completely wipe the tapes so that when the song is finished there'd be no evidence of what it was." The band got *Tough Justice* stickers and a stamp made at Dicks and Company and stamped them, "Totally by hand, and every cassette was recorded one at a time" (Fisher 2008).

A decade later, John would have a different experience with DIY recording and releasing. At that time, John was playing guitar in another band, Potmaster, who released their full-length album, *Freak Me Out to the Deluxe* in October 1995. The album had been recorded in December 1994, and the recording process was hastened by a province-wide blackout that lasted a few days, colloquially referred to around the province as "Blackout '94" (Vaughan-Jackson 1995e). John recalled,

We had a blackout. It was recorded in two different studios. We recorded it at Halfway to Hell, you know, our wonderful stinky smelly jam space on Duckworth Street. And yeah, we lost the first two days to a blackout. I remember having a bottle of Screech. Me and Tony [Tony Tucker, Potmaster drummer] passing the Screech back and forth, and then when the power came back on, we went to it. Recorded the stuff with Don over the course of a day and a half and then later on – maybe a few months later – Geoff [Younghusband, Potmaster bassist] exchanged some of his artistic ability with Ward Pike and we recorded the other half of the record with Ward for a weekend. (Fisher 2008)

The CD release was held at the Star of the Sea Hall on Henry Street (Appendix C). "I've been told by many people to this day, that at that CD release party, we sold the most CDs at a CD release party ever. To this day I've heard that, from bands that are still putting out CDs. We sold 270 CDs that day," John said. "And we haven't sold 270 CDs since!" (Fisher 2008).

Band Economics and Band Politics

Once musicians acquired the necessary tools (instruments) and the necessary people (bandmates), there were still additional expenses to be incurred if they wanted to rent or share a jam space, record albums, and tour. Few of the musicians or bands mentioned in this thesis fit the perception of "professional" musician in the sense that their music making sustained them financially. Substantial monetary payoffs were scarce, and the artists all supplemented their income through a number of other outside jobs and artistic projects. "For the most part, 97% of everything I ever did was for free," said John Fisher, adding, "or it cost us" (Fisher 2008). Ritche Perez explained how his band, Potatobug, kept going:

We would save up or use our band money. Computers were lo-fi at the time but you were still able to use them to make posters. We

would use four track gear and whatever junk gear we could find to capture our sound. We would run to either Wallace [Hammond] or Don Ellis to get better produced recordings. Board tapes from live shows would be copied and distributed as part of merch. We only toured once, that was one ECMA show in PEI. Postering was prime way of promoting a show at the time. No Facebook, or user groups that would really work like today. (Perez 2008)

Though some of the bands did attract attention from outside the scene, few had delusions of stardom. "You can't just say 'Oh we're a band now, we're going to sign a record deal and we're going to make billions of dollars. It just doesn't happen," said Phil van Ulden of Ched in a 1996 article in *The Evening Telegram*, "We're just going to do what we're doing and if something happens it happens and if it doesn't happen, it doesn't. It's no big deal" (Hoyles 1996).

Heavy metal band sHeavy was one of the bands from the scene to have outside recognition. Steve Hennessey gave a lot of credit to sHeavy drummer Ren Squires, who worked at Fred's Records, on Duckworth Street (Appendix C). Ren was involved in tape trading with other music enthusiasts via mail. "Before we knew it, some record label in Britain wanted to sign us," said Steve, adding that although the band has since left the label, "for four albums or five albums we were with Rise Above, all because Ren just sent off a tape, which was pretty cool" (Hennessey 2008).

While bands like sHeavy were attracting attention from independent labels in other places, major record labels were also showing interest in St. John's during their search for the next big thing. Mark Paddock of *The Express* wrote:

Bung was chosen as one of the top unsigned bands in the country by Impact magazine last year – but the band wasn't overly excited about their presence. "We got a pile of cards from music industry reps," [Bung guitarist Arthur] Haynes says offhandedly. "The first

time we were out we talked to a bunch of notable musicians who said, "Everybody's got a card, and everybody (claims they're) going to be your friend and make you rich." (Paddock 1994a)

In her interview, Liz Solo also discussed the air of distrust around these people, as well as her distaste for the major labels' dominance over commercial radio. Liz said,

At that time, there was also this whole bullshit thing of the record labels, and the record labels and the artists, the A&R guys showing up at all the festivals. It was ridiculous, and we always saw it as ridiculous and used to laugh and mock from afar, right? But at that time, too, they had radio sewn up, like, getting a song on the radio was, I mean, it's still hard in commercial radio because they still exert enormous amounts of control over the airwaves. It was incredible, really. These corporations. And so that's been the great thing about the digital revolution, shall we say, cause I can send my stuff everywhere and I do, and it gets played everywhere – it's great. (Solo 2008)

This correlates with Stacy Thompson's observation that "It is worth noting that, for many (but not all) punks, the corporate music industry stands in for the whole of capitalism, for it is when they confront the major labels' business practices, music, and bands that punks best understand themselves as opposed to capitalism" (Thompson 2004, 4). One might think that for any band, the prospect of signing to a record label and finding commercial viability would be the height of success. The idea of living off your art is definitely part of that appeal, but it is rarely that simple. "Bung had all kinds of interest," said John Fisher, "but I think they were too caught up in their own motion to allow anybody else to get involved in helping" (Fisher 2008). Bung guitarist Phil Winters explained his own stance.

Your label is usually calling the shots, right? And they've got the demographics of all this sort of stuff and they'll give you the

money, but you got to pay it back. For myself, like I said, once I saw what the industry was sort of like on the inside, the decision for myself was "I just wanna play music for myself" and certainly that's been quite satisfying for me, just playing music because I like to play music. Personally, I wouldn't believe I'd be able to do anything under those circumstances. Not that I'm doing much now out of those circumstances [laughs] but it's totally on my terms. (Winters 2008)

Even after signing with a stable independent metal label, as sHeavy did with Rise Above, the continuation of that agreement, and the provision of funds for touring and recording, rides on the ability of the band to draw and maintain an audience and move their merchandise, especially when the band is touring outside their scene. It is strictly a business deal. "If there's only three people at the show they're losing money," said Steve Hennessey, "and they're not in the business of losing money." At another point in the interview, he said, "If you're ever in a band and you make your own CDs, chances are for a period of time, you will have a lot of your own CDs in the basement." When I asked if he did, he replied, "I have a box of albums and a box of CDs, not too many because we had distribution so we're kinda getting it out there" (Hennessey 2008).

The newfound popularity of the scene made homegrown album releases more feasible by the mid-1990s. According to Mark Vaughan-Jackson of *The Evening Telegram* in April 1995,

Of the 20 or more bands currently playing in and around the city, several have had recordings produced and marketed: the Lizband's EP was released in early 1994. Afterforever's album *Death of One* was released late last year, and Bung's album *Whole* hit the streets about 10 months ago (Bung has sold almost all of the 1,000 CDs and most of the 1,000 cassettes of the first run). (Vaughan-Jackson 1995b)

Best Dressed Records and the *Danger: Falling Rock* Compilation

In what seemed to be the natural progression of things, an ambitious independent record label emerged in St. John's. In 1994, Geoff Younghusband, Jon Swyers, and Fred Gamberg formed Best Dressed Records. The label launched in December 1994 with the release of *Danger: Falling Rock*, a cassette compilation of eighteen St. John's bands. According to Geoff Younghusband,

Each of the bands involved paid \$100 to be on the tape. With this money a temporary recording studio was set up for a weekend and the bands were able to go in for a couple of hours each and record a few tunes. Only one of these songs will appear on the compilation but the band may choose which one they wish to include and use the others for their own purposes such as demos, grant application, and East Coast Music Award showcase applications (Younghusband 1994)

In an interview with *The Telegram*, Fred said, "We've never done this before, no one in Newfoundland has ever done a true compilation of all the current alternative bands," to which Geoff added, "It deserved it, it needed it two years ago, but it's only now that we're realizing that nobody's going to do it for us. The bands are excellent, very healthy" (Vaughan-Jackson 1994c). Local musician Jody Richardson praised their efforts as well, writing, "Best Dressed decided to follow through with some long-needed representation of our mystery island's best kept secretions" (Richardson 1994).

The musicians behind the label realized the implications in providing a document of the scene at a certain time. "Somebody told me last night that the album was like a Polaroid of the St. John's underground scene, the independent



Figure 11: Bar show poster, The Loft, mid-1990s. Collected by Leslie Pierce.

scene at this moment," said Geoff in the interview. "We did our best to cover every band that was available" (Vaughan-Jackson 1994c). The bands included on the compilation were Lizband, Bung, Potatobug, sHeavy, Giver, Potmaster, Stirlingslacks, Pasht, The Cabmen, Adlib, Ditch, Darshiva, Potbelly, Afterforever,

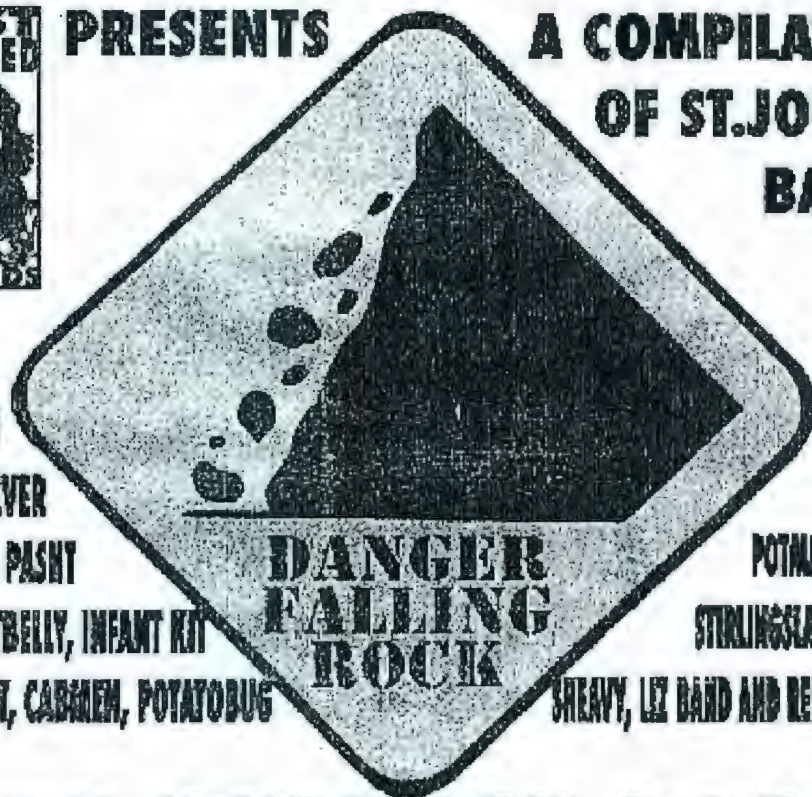
Resistorhead, Ched, Infant Kit, and Dredheavy (Vaughan-Jackson 1994b). The compilation allowed Best Dressed to move on to other projects, including the Potmaster album *Freak Me Out to the Deluxe*, released the following fall. It was intended to give local bands much needed support to promote record, distribute, and tour. It also provided exposure for the bands outside of St. John's, but not necessarily in a national or international sense. As Fred Gamberg told reporter Mark Paddock in 1994, "There's people listening to this type of music throughout the province (but) it's hard to follow the alternative scene in St. John's if you live in Bay de Verde" (Paddock 1994c).

The compilation was, as Geoff suggested, a significant snapshot of the scene, of the way things were progressing back in mid-1990s downtown St. John's. Within the next year, the downtown arts community would suffer a terrible loss, one from which many argue the scene, as it was back in 1995, never fully recovered.



PRESENTS

**A COMPILATION
OF ST. JOHN'S
BANDS**



FEATURING

AFTERFOREVER

DARSHIVA, PASNY

DITCH, POTBELLY, INFANT KIT

DREDHEAVY, CABARET, POTATOBUG

BUNG,

POTMASTER, CHED

STIRLINGSLACKS, AD LIB

SHEAVY, LEZ BAND AND RESISTORHEAD

TAPE RELEASE PARTY

THURS. DEC. 15 AT JUNCTIONS

WITH PERFORMANCES BY POTATOBUG, GIVER, INFANT KIT

STIRLINGSLACKS & CHED

9PM - 2AM 

Figure 12: Danger: Falling Rock compilation tape release party, Junctions, December 1994.
Collected by Darryl Bennett.

Chapter Five Fred Gamberg

If you stand facing west on the corner of Duckworth Street and Prescott Street, one of the busiest intersections in downtown St. John's, you will notice a mural painted on the exterior wall of the LSPU Hall steps (Appendix C). The mural bears a painted image of a young man's face, with the words "Fred" spray-painted underneath. There are a number of names added to the mural. The other walls flanking the Hall steps have been painted and repainted countless times over the years with murals advertising various artistic productions taking place there. But this particular one remains through it all.



Figure 13: Fred Gamberg mural, corner of Prescott and Duckworth, circa 2006. Photograph by Leslie Pierce.

I walk by the mural every day. In mid-2009, it is in terrible disrepair. The Newfoundland elements have taken their toll, and a recent shot of yellow spray paint has all but obscured the face. The almost fourteen-year-old painted shrine may be fading from that wall, but despite his death in 1995, the memory of Fred Gamberg is alive and well. Fred was known to nearly everybody in the downtown independent music scene as a tireless promoter of local bands, music, and the arts. In his short life, he organized and promoted many all-ages and bar shows. Fred's friend and bandmate Rene Rubia remembered his contributions and his personality.

One thing about him is that he'd chew your ear off if you let him. He'd always be talking about politics. But the main thing about Fred is that he was the largest supporter of the all-ages music scene in his day. He would be the center of a lot of the performances downtown. He probably did the most bookings of any bands on the go at the time. He was the drummer of our band Giver. He was also a bass player in another band. He also started a record company of sorts that generated the compilation *Danger: Falling Rock*. (Rubia 2008)

Besides booking, playing, and promoting shows, Fred hosted a radio show at the Memorial University campus radio station, CHMR, sang in Nailgun/Noon Day Gun, played drums in local band Giver, started an independent record label that released a successful compilation, and shouted the virtues of the local music scene to anybody who would listen. A body of narratives have emerged focusing on his contributions to the music scene, as well as his untimely death and the legacy he left behind.

While researching this project, I discovered Fred's life and death had been deemed significant enough to warrant a vertical file at the Centre for

Newfoundland Studies at the MUN library. The file contains a handful of newspaper articles about Fred's death, but his face appeared again in other articles I found in different places (Paddock 1994b; Vaughan-Jackson 1994c). In addition to local print media coverage, Fred has been memorialized through spontaneous shrines, web memorials, the above-mentioned mural, and perhaps most appropriately, a number of well-attended memorials gigs that celebrated his life.

I have heard stories about Fred Gamberg for years, plus some additional ones told to me by my informants during our interviews. I realized fairly early in this research that Fred's contribution to the scene was going to be a significant discussion. One of the questions I asked in interviews was, "Who do you think are/were the most influential people in the downtown St. John's music scene?" Among other accomplished local scene stalwarts like Jody Richardson, Geoff Younghusband, Liz Solo, John Fisher, Don Ellis, and Wallace Hammond, nearly everybody said Fred Gamberg. All of the stories told related to his life, his accomplishments, his character, and his death. "You can't talk about the music scene in the nineties without talking about Fred," said his friend Lesley Reade. "He *was* downtown" (Reade 2008). While his friends provided much information about his contribution to the scene, details of his early life were not discussed in the interviews. For this information, I looked to Fred's older sister, Aileen O'Keefe, who provided me with much of what I needed.

Fred might have been the perfect informant for this project. He knew everybody and by all accounts, he never shut up. "Fred was a rallying-the-troops kinda guy," observed Paul Gruchy. "He'd get people to go to shows, to tell people

about shows, 'cause a lot of it was word of mouth – and he was the mouth" (Gruchy 2008). Rick Power remembered, "I talk a lot and I couldn't get a word in edgewise with him" (Power 2008). Unfortunately, I will never have the chance to ask him what he thought of it all. Fred drowned in a swimming hole in Flatrock in the early hours of July 10, 1995, after going there with a group of friends. He was only twenty-four years old. The consensus is that his time here was too short, but remarkable nonetheless, as he fulfilled a staggering number of the scene roles discussed in the previous chapters, both on and offstage.

Who was Fred Gamberg? That is a question I do not quite feel qualified to answer. I knew who he was when he was alive – everybody who went to shows did – but I did not know him personally. What I do know is that his death hit the arts community of downtown St. John's like a tidal wave and that a folk history has developed around his memory in the interim. Local music writer Russell Bowers wrote an article about Fred in the weeks following his death.

If you didn't know Fred Gamberg, you should have. He was intriguing and infuriating. Remarkable and boring. Inexhaustible and tiresome. Courageous and careful. Knowledgeable and naïve honest. Fred's style (and I use the word deliberately) was singular. No matter what you'd say or do to him, he would carry on, same as ever. After a while, you got used to the fact that was how Fred was and you either took it for granted or ignored it. We shall not be able to DO either again. (Bowers 1995)

Fred certainly made himself known in the downtown community.

"Everyone knew Fred," Aileen wrote to me. "He had many, many friends and acquaintances. We were astonished at how many people came forward after his death to tell us they had known him and offer stories about him" (O'Keefe 2009).

Fred in Life

On March 23, 1971, Frederick Gerard Gamberg was born in St. John's, Newfoundland, to Patricia (Healey) and Gerard Gamberg. He had one sibling, his older sister Aileen. His family called him Freddie. According to his sister, as a young boy, "he liked typical things like trains, dinosaurs, and Star Wars. His bedroom was all decorated in Star Wars. He collected hockey cards, rocks, and bottle caps." Fred grew up in St. John's and the family lived at the Janeway apartments while his mother worked at the Janeway Children's Hospital. When he was a year old, the family moved to Poplar Avenue, close to downtown St. John's, where he would live for the rest of his life (O'Keefe 2009).

Fred attended St. Pius X School and then Brother Rice High School, both Catholic boys' schools. Although he was not very athletic, he played on the rugby team. He worked at Robert Caines' store on Duckworth Street for a while in his teens, and then at Shannahan's Security. "A strange fact is he never left the island of Newfoundland, not even for a holiday," added Aileen, "Not on purpose, it just worked out that way."

Aileen told me that Fred "discovered" music when he was 13 or 14. He had a large music collection, and his sister remembers, "Some of his early favourites were the Who, the Sex Pistols, and the Clash. He got into alternative stuff later on. He was a regular at Fred's music store." Some time in the late 1980s, Fred started hanging out at CHMR with a friend who did the late show. "Somehow Fred offered or was given the opportunity to host a show after that last show," Aileen wrote. "He was on air at some ungodly hour with just a few

dedicated insomniac listeners. He eventually progressed to slightly better time slots" (O'Keefe 2009). According to long time CHMR station manager Kathy Rowe, when asked why he wanted to work at CHMR, Fred answered, "I love it here. I would be here all the time if I had a bed here." Kathy went on to write that, "It wasn't just music for Fred. He did sports, comedy, and even read newscasts. He just loved the social-ness of the station. He helped with the record/CD fundraisers and worked for me on the door of concerts the station hosted" (K. Rowe 2008).

Kathy also mentioned to me that Fred had tried to get a part-time job with the station, but he could not because the Council of the Students Union (CSU) at Memorial University would not hire a non-student for the position. Not surprisingly, he continued to volunteer. "He [Fred] was almost impossible to get off MUN's campus radio station" reported a 2005 article in *The Express* (Welsh 2005). In the same article, Geoff Younghusband recalled doing the eleven pm to one am time slot on Sunday nights in 1989. At CHMR, a disc jockey doing the last time slot could technically just keep going if they wanted to. Geoff told *The Express* in 2005:

Inevitably Fred, who I recognized from some of the early all-ages punk rock shows, would be lingering around the station, sleeping in the studio, rummaging through the records, killing time until I was done and he would broadcast music the rest of the night instead of shutting down. He was not into the shut down way of thinking. There was no stopping him. He talked incessantly. And all thirteen of those four a.m. Monday morning CHMR listeners were glad he was there to talk and play obscure punk rock for them. So was I. (Welsh 2005)

Fred's show would become a popular one on Memorial University's campus and community radio station in the early-to-mid 1990s, projecting local music and obscure punk rock across the city to those who knew. "I was an avid listener of Fred Gamberg's show, *On the Edge*," my friend Matthew Furlong wrote to me. "I learned almost everything about music from it." In the Peace-a-Chord 1995 newsletter, Matthew wrote a memorial to Fred, which detailed their first meeting.

The first time I ever saw Fred was at a Potbelly and Potatobug gig about two or three years ago. I noticed this guy with a shaved head running around screaming his guts out to everyone. "Move back! You are violating fire regulations!" and "Stop pushing, get to the back of the line." He tried to get me to buy the Potbelly tape at that show, saying, "Do it. If you buy it here, you can tell those fat cats up in Ottawa, 'Screw you, man. You're not getting' taxes off me!'"

Phil Winters also recalled his first meeting with Fred, yet another testament to Fred's outgoing personality.

The first time I met Fred, honest to god, I was working at Yancy Street comic book shop, which was on King's Road at the time. I knew who Fred was, he came into the store and he was looking around for the longest time, and he came over and said, "Yeah, so anyways..." and just started talking to me. But the way he started was if we had been talking for ages. He just went in there and did it. And he did that a lot, once he sort of found his feet in the scene and stuff, you know. God love him. He would talk to anybody, he was very gregarious, and he believed in the independent spirit. He believed in taking the young bands and putting them onstage. (Winters 2008)

Fred lived close to downtown and never got a drivers license. "He never saw the need to when he could walk or take the bus," remembered Aileen, "He was always out and about, especially downtown." Fred "discovered" Ched while

walking downtown from his house. Ched guitarist and singer Phil van Ulden recalled,

Ched got a chance to start playing regularly mostly because of Fred Gamberg. He walked by our house on his way downtown one sunny Saturday afternoon and heard us making a racket in the basement. Around that time, he had started to organize and book shows at the LSPU Hall. Given that opportunity, we set off to writing more songs and getting a lot more involved in the scene. (van Ulden 2008)

Fred was featured with two friends, Shawn Maloney and Scott French, in a 1994 article in *The Express* as a "Part of the Scene," specifically focused on their roles in the scene as fans or musicians. In it, Fred made clear his motivation for being involved in the St. John's scene.

That punk rock ethic blows your mind away when you hear it. But you don't want to sit back and stare at the Mainland. You don't want to sit around and dream you're in New York. This is St. John's, Newfoundland. You're hundreds of miles away from spots like that, so you may as well do it here, now, your own way. (Paddock 1994b)

By the time of that article, Fred was observing that ethos wholeheartedly, booking successful all-ages and bar shows at the LSPU Hall, the Loft, and other venues. Fred may have organized lots many successful shows, but there was little profit to be made. His friends maintain that he did it for the music. "Fred was a merciless music promoter, but I don't think he ever did it for money – he just loved music, and loved the idea of seeing certain bands together" wrote Bob Earle. Fred was willing to take a personal financial loss to do so. Shawn Maloney said,

Fred was a dynamo. Fred was in bands and he was the biggest fan in the world and he started organizing shows. I remember at one Sound Symposium show – the show that was the last Potbelly and

Darshiva show and the first show with Potmaster and Stirlingslacks – and I don't think I ever saw him happier because it was, I think, the first time he actually managed to make enough money to pay all the bands a decent amount of money. (Maloney 2008)

Fred was no passive organizer, and took his CHMR jack-of-all-trades approach to shows as well. "At shows, he'd do whatever was required. He'd do lights or he'd do security, he'd lug gear, he'd stay at the door to take money, he'd promote shows, you name it," recalled Paul Gruchy. My informants talked about Fred's propensity for doing the less-glamorous work involved in gigs, like lugging gear into the venue, or, as Lesley Reade, Rick Power, and Steve Hennessey all remembered, putting up show posters on unseasonably cold days.

It is not the least bit surprising that Fred also delved into musicianship. Despite his other positive attributes, Fred was never painted as a gifted or prolific musician in anybody's recollection, but in the DIY punk spirit, that likely was not his intention in participating in the first place. It meant more to be a part of it. Fred played in two bands. His former bandmate Darrell Grace wrote to me:

I don't know if I would ever have played on a stage if it wasn't for Fred's initiative, enthusiasm, and encouragement. Our band, "Nailgun" (me, Fred, Dave Andrews, and fourteen-year-old Gina Ryan, soon to be re-christened "Noon Day Gun") was about the shittiest band you ever heard, but that hardly mattered. Fred was the singer (let's say "vocalist") and manager, and looking back on it, it was really his vehicle for contributing to the local music scene and making sure he was involved when shows happened. Either way, it meant that a few kids who had otherwise NO IDEA how to get in a band that played shows did just that. (I have to speak only for myself here - "a few kids" really means me.) We played some shows, recorded a two-track demo tape at CHMR with Todd Pardy, and then broke up when me and Dave thought we could do better without Fred. (Grace 2009)

At the time of his death, Fred was the drummer for Giver, along with his friends Rene Rubia and Frank Nolan. According to Frank, Fred's limited skill level suited them just fine.

One day Rene was singing adlib while I was playing (I use this word loosely) the bass. The drums were just sitting there. I put down the bass, told Rene I'd be back, and walked down to Coca Manga (coffee house). When I walked in the door, there was Fred, tapping out some beat on the table, talking with some friends. I briefly mentioned that he was needed, grabbed him by the arm and dragged him, literally, out the door, up Prescott Street, and refused to let go of him until we had reached Rene's house, and were inside. I told him we were starting a band, and we needed a drummer. He told me that he couldn't play drums. My reply was that I couldn't play bass either, and we'd figure it out. He said, "cool." Twenty minutes later, we stopped playing a bad version of a song that later come to be called "The Last Laugh." And Fred said "Giver." It sounded fitting at the time. He booked us for a show he had set up at the Hall two weeks later. (Nolan 2009)

According to Frank, Fred's involvement with Giver led to a theatre role as well. "Giver also wrote and performed a main stage theatre play called 'Treaties of a Band,' in 1994 at the LSPU Hall," remembered Frank, "The actors consisted of Rene Rubia, Fred Gamberg, Frank Nolan, and John O'Mara."

In 1994, as previously mentioned, Fred started a record label, Best Dressed Records, along with Jon Swyers and Geoff Younghusband. By early 1995, the *Danger: Falling Rock* compilation was a success, and the music scene was steadily moving along in St. John's. Gigs were plentiful. According to Fred,

Best Dressed relies on the health of the music scene but Best Dressed is also going to urge the scene into being more healthy, we'll work off each other. More people are going to start bands, the bands that are playing are actually going to feel like they're actually getting somewhere instead of playing gig after gig and not recording anything. (Vaughan-Jackson 1994c)

At the time, it seemed as though the hard work of the St. John's music scene was finally producing an adequate yield. In the summer of 1995, everybody expected the scene to continue its upward trajectory.

Fred in Death

The scene was irrevocably changed on the evening of July 9, 1995. Fred joined a group of friends at a local swimming hole in Flatrock, about a thirty-minute drive from downtown St. John's. Local music writer Russell Bowers wrote about the tragic turn of events: "Around 11:00 pm the group of friends started heading back from the pool. A while later, someone noticed Fred wasn't with them. In the interim, something had gone terribly wrong" (Bowers 1995).

Fred's sister Aileen remembered the accident and its lasting impact on their family.

Apparently he was last seen sitting by himself while the others went on ahead. We believe he stumbled and struck his head on a rock and tumbled into the water. He wouldn't dive in, that just wasn't like him. The friends he was with were just devastated. And of course so were we. My father was in Corner Brook attending a Boy Scout Jamboree and meeting him at the airport the next day was the hardest thing I've ever done. I don't think my mother ever got over his death. She passed away October 6, 2005 of brain cancer. (O'Keefe 2009)

Remarkably, given the time elapsed since the accident, I found a CBC news *Here & Now* clip from July 10, 1995 on YouTube (CBC 1995). The short clip put Fred's death in the context of reckless cliff-jumping at the local swimming hole in Flatrock. CBC interviewed local jumpers and one young man commented on it being risky for tourists and people "from town" who did not know the cliffs and the river (CBC News *Here & Now*). However, Fred's friends

firmly maintained that he would have been responsible around the water (Vaughan-Jackson 1995d). A memorial in *Granite* put it this way, "The media has made it sound like Fred's death could have been prevented. Fred wasn't a dare-devil around water, he couldn't swim very well and would have stayed away from the water" (In Memory 1995, 3). Fred's sister Aileen gave the same opinion. "Fred wasn't a strong swimmer," she wrote, "he and I didn't learn as children and had only picked it up as adults." Since Fred died alone, the last moments of his life can only be imagined, so speculation of that nature is understandable. The fact remains that I have never heard anybody close to Fred suggest a sinister cause of death, and no suggestions that Fred may have been, either directly or indirectly, responsible for his own death. By all accounts, he was a lover of life, who had a positive and long-lasting influence on many people.

I remember downtown St. John's in the days following Fred's death. In coffee shops, bars, and apartments, Fred's friends (and hangers-on) were huddled together in absolute shock. The local print media ran articles about his life and death (Bowers 1995; Vaughan-Jackson 1995) and a memorial show was quickly organized at the Loft a few days later. I was an observer in all of this. Although I understood the devastating significance of his passing, I could not take part in the mourning process on that personal a level. "There were two or three weeks of mourning downtown," said local musician and fan Peter Harbin in the 2005 article in *The Express*: "Everybody dressed in black, seriously. We all looked like Goth kids. But after that people came to celebrate Fred and celebrate what he actually done for the music scene. And use that to band us together and it sort of has"

(Welsh 2005). Fred was memorialized in a number of ways following his death. There was the aforementioned mural on Duckworth Street, website memorials, and a number of memorial shows in his honour. sHeavy's 1996 album *Blue Sky Mind* is dedicated to Fred's memory (sHeavy 1996).

Doug Rowe remembered Fred's eagerness to get people involved in the scene, even if it meant getting pushy.

If you weren't at a show, he was policing the fact that you weren't there. He'd call you up and ask you why you weren't there or he'd call you up during a show and ask, "What are you doing home?" I've had that happen. I remember he called me from the Loft one night, he was like, "Why the fuck are you home when Hardship Post are playing down here and Bung and everybody?!" (D. Rowe 2008)

Doug was not the only one who expressed this sentiment about Fred. The Peace-a-Chord 1995 newsletter contained a poem written about Fred and his passing, and the mourning of his absence in the downtown community. It is worth reprinting in full and appears here in its original typed format, with the full permission of the author.

"Where The Fuck Were You Last Night, Motherfucker!"

by Andrew McKim

I missed the gig,
I knew I'd run into him sooner or later.
He'd be wearing big leather boots,
leather jacket, sun glasses, and a bandana.
He'd look like he should be hanging out with
Monster Magnet or the Grateful Dead.

He walked up to me,
tapped me on the shoulder twice
with a pointed finger.
Pulled off his sun glasses,

and asked:
"Where the fuck were you last night, motherfucker?"

It's evening again.
Duckworth Street is quiet.
You see the regulars start
piling towards their favorite
coffee or booze bar.
I light up a smoke,
sip some coffee.

It's still pretty quiet.
The others light their cigarettes,
and drink their coffee,
while a few stare down at the bottoms,
of empty cups.
Someone whispers, "How?"
I just think to myself,
"Where the fuck were you last night, motherfucker?"

It is appropriate that Fred was memorialized near the entrance steps leading to the LSPU Hall (Appendix C). It is the only such memorial in downtown St. John's, even though other active members of the arts community have passed away in the interim. Fred's image stays there, year after year, close to the space where people used to enjoy so many of his shows. Unlike spontaneous shrines left at the site of accidents, it is the site of his life, not his death. However, as Jack Santino asserted, "Spontaneous shrines place deceased individuals back into the fabric of society, into the middle of areas of commerce and travel, into everyday life as it is being lived" (Santino 2006, 13). People told me that following Fred's death, there were spontaneous shrines left at the site of the accident in Flatrock. Due to the ephemeral nature of such shrines and the time

elapsed since Fred's death, no known remnants exist, but there is a small plaque marking where his life ended on that July night back in 1995.

MONUMENTAL CONCERT *in honour of FRED GAMBERG*



featuring
the return of **STIRLINGSLACKS & TOUGH JUSTICE**

also appearing
**GIVER CHED LIZ BAND
AFTERFOREVER BUNG
POTATOBUG POTMASTER
WHEADEATER SHEAVY**

**at
the LOFT SUNDAY JULY 16, 1995**
ADMISSION: PAY WHAT YOU CAN (\$5 RECOMMENDED DONATION)
ALL PROCEEDS GO TOWARDS THE PURCHASE OF A HEADSTONE

Figure 14: Fred Gamberg memorial show poster. July 16, 1995. Collected by Ray Walsh.

Perhaps the most apt of these memorials were the shows, those occasions when bands and people got together to celebrate Fred's life and accomplishments. The first of such shows was a memorial bar show at the Loft on Sunday, July 16, 1995, six days after his death. The show featured the city's most popular independent bands: Fred's own band Giver, Ched, Lizband, Afterforever, Bung, Potatobug, Potmaster, Wheadeater and sHeavy. According to the show poster, the lineup also featured "the return of Tough Justice and Stirlingslacks" and that the proceeds would go towards the purchase of a headstone.

On September 1, 1995, an all-ages memorial show was held at the LSPU Hall. According to a few people, including Darryl Bennett and Rick Power, Fred already had the date booked for a show anyway. While the memorial bar show back in July had seemed like more of a "friends-only" affair in the devastating days after the fact, this show was an all-ages event dedicated to the person who used to organize them. By St. John's standards, it was of epic proportions. Hundreds of people showed up that day to check out the music and pay their respects to Fred. Known to this day as "The 12-Hour Show," it started around noon, but continued well past midnight. Cover was \$5.

On July 10, 2005, the tenth anniversary of Fred's passing, old and new scene members got together for "See You at the Show – A Tribute to Fred Gamberg." The lineup included bands from the Fred era, such as Ched, Giver, Lizband, and JKW, as well as new bands comprised of members of some of the old bands, including A Boy Named Tragedy, Faster Miles Per Hour, and Jigger. Craig Welsh of *The Express* commented, "It might seem like a strange thing to a

casual bystander. Gamberg never achieved the level of fame and success that made him well known to the general public. Yet, back in the late 80s and early 90s, he was seemingly everywhere in the St. John's music scene" (Welsh 2005).

Since Fred's death, a number of online memorials have appeared. Ray Walsh posted a copy of the show poster for the July 16, 1995 memorial show on his Deviant Art web page, along with an explanation of Fred's importance (Walsh 2004). I found another web page containing one local artist's account of Fred's death, as well as a beaded portrait of him, although that person has since taken the page down. In the late-1990s, Kent Burt started the Gamberg List, a listserv and discussion group for scene members, named, obviously, in honour of Fred.

A number of folkloric narratives emerged following Fred's death, and some have supernatural elements. In Dale Jarvis's book *Haunted Shores*, he tells of sightings of Fred's ghost in different parts of the LSPU Hall, describing one such encounter in detail. The story goes that a female visitor sat next to him at a theatre performance and he disappeared when the house lights came on. According to the story, "Later she recounted the story to someone familiar with the Hall, and as she described the young man's appearance, his long hair and his black leather jacket, it became obvious that she was describing the man who had drowned months earlier" (Jarvis 2004, 144). Although his book does not actually name Fred, the description in the book of the young man made it very clear.

A couple of years ago, a young St. John's man drowned tragically one night in a pond outside the city. While young in years, the man was a tireless supporter of the arts and local music, organizing community events and concerts. The suddenness of his death left a tangible hole in the downtown arts community. It is possible,

however, that his energy and dedication to the scene have not completely dissipated. (Jarvis 2004, 143)

If one believes in ghosts, it is not exactly a stretch; Fred Gamberg, watching over the LSPU Hall, enjoying the offerings of the arts community for all eternity. Dale Jarvis also includes this story on his popular Haunted Hike Ghost Tour. Still, it is not exactly what people focused on when I asked them about Fred Gamberg. Rick Power told me a similar version of this story, but openly acknowledged recognition of the version in Jarvis's book. However, Rick told me another story with supernatural tones, this one a personal experience narrative relating to the night Fred died.

I remember the night when the accident happened. Frankie Paul Nolan called me, 'cause I was living in Pouch Cove [a community near Flatrock] at the time. He called me - I think it was five o'clock in the morning. He wanted to know if Fred had shown up at my place. I said, "Uh, no b'y." It was five in the morning.

He goes, "'Cause Fred was with people who went swimming down in Flatrock and they can't find him, and we were hoping that he might have made his way to your house," and I said, "Man, let me know what's going on." He goes, "I'll call you."

Then it poured rain for about ten minutes straight in a cloudless sky and an hour later Frankie called me and they had found his body and he had drowned. (Power 2008)

Rick's version of events agrees with CBC's reporting that Fred's body was recovered by divers at "around 5:30 this morning" (CBC 1995). This story form is recognizable to the folklorist as a memorate, defined by David Hufford as, "A story told as personal experience and believed to be true" as it relates to a supernatural personal experience (Hufford 1982, 15). "Memorates are very good guides to living traditions," suggested Gillian Bennett. "They are less influenced

by the stereotypes of literature and popular culture than legends and more likely to reflect concepts current in the narrator's home community" (G. Bennett 1999, 39). Unlike the ghost in the Hall story, this narrative belongs specifically to Rick, and this particular telling reflected Bennett's observation that "Memorates grow out of discussion and fade back into it" (G. Bennett 1999, 117).

Fred Remembered

Fred Gamberg has become something of a folk hero within the downtown St. John's music scene. Some people waited around for things to happen. Fred was known as one of those people that made things happen. There are elements of what Diane Goldstein and Diane Tye have called the "narrative constructions of the heroic." Goldstein and Tye were referring to the drowning deaths of three teenage boys in Pouch Cove, Newfoundland, in March 2001. The boys' deaths were constructed as heroic by community members, the police inspector in charge, and the local media, especially in light of the fact that two of the boys who perished (another lived and ran for help) were trying to help a third friend who had been swept out by the waves (Goldstein and Tye 2006).

While it has already been established that Fred died alone and there was no actual heroism involved in the death, the response to Fred's death had similar elements. His community - that is, the downtown music community - mourned together. He was spoken of in the highest regard. Bung singer Jon Whalen was quoted in Granite as saying, "Losing Fred was like losing two or three of the rest of us" (In Memory 2006, 3).

Of course, this valorization of the dead is fleeting, and enough time has elapsed to allow people to think critically about what Fred was really like. Although it was well established that Fred had many favourable qualities, his friends do not place him on a pedestal, and they acknowledge that things were not always amicable. "Here's the thing," said John Fisher, "if these people have nothing bad to say about Fred, they didn't know him. As much good as I'll say about him, you know, there's really annoying things about him." Rick Power described him as, "A guy who hurt nobody and was hurt by a lot – because a lot of people treated him bad." Another friend and former bandmate, Darrell Grace, gave a very honest assessment of Fred's personality in light of his death.

Something that has kind of gotten lost, because Fred died so suddenly and tragically - is that Fred talked a lot. I mean, A LOT. He always had schemes, most of which were just talk. The fact is, he could be a real pest. It's like he was omnipresent, and always talking and talking. With the passage of time, now it seems like a funny quirk and part of what we loved about him, but it could be a real problem, and a big part of why I hardly saw him the last year he was alive. Because he could really drive you nutso. (Grace 2009)

Aileen offered one explanation for Fred's hyperactivity, but did not construct it as a negative aspect. She wrote, "He was a true individual. He had ADHD as a child and was kind of an underachiever at school but he was very gregarious and could talk to anyone" (O'Keefe 2009).

In correlation with the end of the time period this thesis has investigated, one of the standout threads in my fieldwork was the construction of Fred's death as an end to the scene. Fred's death sent a shockwave through the music scene, leaving behind a role that many agree was left unfulfilled. Consider the following

examples. Siobán Quicke and Ray Walsh both referred to Fred's death as "The Day the Music Died" and Bob Earle called him "the glue that held the scene together." Fred's friend Rick Power said,

The shows really honestly did start slowing down after Fred passed. It wasn't cause the scene died, but it did take a big cog out of the music machine because he was the one who booked the Hall the most and put off shows with new bands, so there was always new blood coming into it. But now these new bands didn't have a clue what to do because Fred done everything and it stagnated for a long time. (Power 2008)

Bob alluded to this as well. "I don't think a lot of us realized how important Fred was to our music scene until his death," he wrote to me. "There was a marked difference in the music after that – it didn't have the same drive behind it. It's hard to explain, but it really seemed to lose direction." Lesley Reade agreed. She said to me, "I swear to God there was a different feeling in the air, like, everybody felt it."

It would be foolish to say Fred's death was the hard-and-fast end of the 1990s scene in St. John's, but there was a significant decline in interest occurring at the same time. Matthew Furlong, sixteen years old at the time of Fred's death, insisted,

It doesn't have the same kind of power it did when I was 14 or 15, although part of me thinks that it's just because the time is gone. But I really do believe that from around 1992 to 1994 or so, the indie rock scene was a juggernaut. I think that if Fred Gamberg had not died in 1995, things would look a lot different now. Like I said to you the other day, I think you could really divide up the history of the St. John's music scene in the 1990s according to that event. It was - to me anyway - almost like the fight went out of it. In a way, he was probably the single most important person in the scene, period. (Furlong 2008)

On his Deviant Art tribute web page, Ray Walsh shared this sentiment, "Unfortunately when Fred passed away, a large part of that spirit that drove the local underground music scene all those years ago died, too, and even though it did have a few years left in it, I really don't think that scene was quite the same, and now it definitely isn't" (Walsh 2004).

While opinions like those above are personal and subjective, they still carry a kernel of truth, providing a narrative thread that serves to explain why the scene has changed so markedly in the interim. Two things are fairly certain: Fred Gamberg made an indelible mark on the local music scene and he left a huge hole in it when he passed. People still talk about him. They miss him. I end this chapter with a quote from Fred's sister Aileen.

He was my only sibling. And...he was my little brother. I think about him every day and wish he were still here. I wish we could have had more time to develop a relationship as adults. But I'm glad to have known him. He was loyal, kind and loving. He was always true to himself.

Chapter Six “Fuck the Glory Days!”

Darryl Bennett commented to me that at a recent rock show downtown, a younger friend of his had asked him which venue had been the most popular for shows in his adolescence. Naturally, he replied, "The Hall," to which the young woman asked, "*What* hall?" We both laughed at this, but we knew what it meant. There was a younger crowd that did not know what we knew.

As a teenager, it seemed to me that this scene would thrive indefinitely. In many ways, it did. Stylistically different bands now draw completely different crowds. I live downtown and I have had plenty of time in the interim to observe and think about how much the music scene and arts community has grown from the underground days of the 1980s and the first busy years of the 1990s. As Wendy Fonarow wrote, "A part of the 'youth' phenomenon, which is by definition a transitory category, indie music requires an understanding of the youth community, why people enter it, why people leave it, and what it means when it has been left behind" (Fonarow 2006, 2).

Despite the folk construction discussed in the previous chapter, the scene did not end with Fred Gamberg's death. It took on new members, new spaces, and new styles, until it evolved into something else. Musician Paul Gruchy made a valid point when he said, "I think that's sort of the underlying current of this thing. Everyone was growing, growing up, and the scene was never the scene, beginning and end, it was always this fluid thing, and everyone growing older with it, and growing out of it in some cases. In most cases, maybe" (Gruchy 2008). The late 1990s and 2000s saw a newer, larger scene emerge – or perhaps an interlocking

series of scenes – with live music available in St. John's on a nightly basis, with multiple shows occurring on weekends at venues all over downtown.

The "End" of the Scene

By the mid-to-late 1990s, the scene was living on borrowed time and space. Shows at the LSPU Hall were becoming less frequent. "It started to become financially unfeasible to do it," recalled Phil Winters, "They were getting a lot of noise complaints. Of course, the LSPU Hall is in a residential neighbourhood and the lateness of the hour that we would finish and stuff like that." Phil added that bands often needed to bring their own equipment into the space, and pay to rent the building and the sound man (Winters 2008). John Fisher agreed with this, saying, "You gotta pay for the sound man, you gotta pay for the PA system, you gotta pay for the rental of the venue. In some cases, it even got to the point where we had to pay for security. Lot of times, it was pay to play" (Fisher 2008). When talking about the ability of underage people to execute successful all-ages shows, Paul Gruchy put the situation into the context of economics.

That comes back to what we were saying about when you're sixteen, seventeen years old. The bars are out of the question, so you're kinda wondering where to put off a show. And the Hall now is really expensive. It wasn't too bad back in the early 90s. And for someone sixteen years old, like teenagers, it may as well be \$10,000, really. So I guess that's why you get places further abroad than the downtown core, I guess. (Gruchy 2008)

Not only did it cost the musicians money to rent the venue, sound person, and equipment, they gradually had to increase the cover charge to make things viable. Bob Earle, keyboardist for Draize Eye Test, explained,

By the mid-nineties, multi-band shows were the norm, and the price of admission went up because everyone needed to get paid. Whereas in the early 90s you could usually get in to see a band for \$2-\$3, by the mid-nineties, no gig was less than \$5, and often it was more. It was seldom that you would ever go out to see just one band. Bands would start later as well – 11 pm or midnight. A lot of clubs seemed to start turning away from local original acts – placing greater emphasis on dance music that could draw large crowds. (Earle 2008)

It was not merely the expense that contributed to the decline of the Hall shows. Not only were the shows getting more expensive to put off, a small number of people were wearing out that welcome for everybody. When somebody posted on local web forum "NF Locals" asking why the Hall was no longer a viable venue for rock shows, an LSPU Hall employee replied, "We no longer entertain the idea of having the rocking all-ages/bar shows in the theatre that were the substance of my own youth. Too grimy and drunk and damaging to the facility" (LSPU 2005). In our interview, Shawn Maloney put it a little more bluntly:

They stopped having them because people started stealing shit and busting the place up. One night, somebody lifted a painting in the gallery. I don't think they ever got that back. I know they had a fundraiser a couple of weeks later. Whoever put that show off had a fundraising show to make up the money for the painting getting stolen, and I think the girls' bathroom got trashed. And it was getting too hard to control the crowd. (Maloney 2008)

Again, the scene did not "end" here, nor did the shows stop, but there was a noticeable shift, especially with the influx of newer, younger bands. In his study of the St. John's scene, Stephen Guy observed,

The grunge-heyday era essentially ended at around this time. All ages shows happened with less and less frequency at the LSPU Hall, bands were breaking up or reconfiguring, and another generation of musicians was moving away. Fur Packed Action, the

city's most popular turn-of-the-century band, formed as a Bung/Potmaster side project in 1994. Mount Pearl's nu-metal pariahs Buckettruck started attracting attention and derision, and JKW played their first shows as an overdriven, ghoulish blues punk band. The contemporary punk and hardcore scene's roots can be traced to a few of the bands from these years (Dogma, Ratfish, Molotov Smile, Good to Go). Attention from the national media evaporated and the scene began to fragment. The underground effectively resubmerged in the mid-nineties. (Guy 2004, 66-67)

Now, with all-ages and bar shows at the LSPU Hall long over, there is a consensus that the city is still holding out for its next great venue. "We've had a real venue crisis for about ten years here – horrible!" said Liz Solo. "We had the Loft, we had the Hall – one of the best rock venues of all time – and as things have changed and shifted, these spaces have become inaccessible to bands" (Solo 2008). Still, Liz and others did commend bars like Distortion, CBTGs, Junctions, the Ship, and the Rose and Thistle, for having regular shows and staying active.

The End of Peace-a-Chord

The Peace-a-Chord festival also met its end, although years later than the Hall shows. In the early-to-mid 2000s, the free, two-day music and social justice awareness festival, held in Bannerman Park every summer since 1985, would be the subject of controversy both inside and outside the scene. Some people were not surprised. "The last few Peace-a-Chords I remember, or at least the last three, it was mostly like punk bands and hardcore and people tearing shit up and just being reckless and disrespectful and so it went downhill," remembered Siobán Quicke. "But in the early days, it was one of the highlights of my year" (Quicke 2008). Former festival volunteer co-ordinator Erin Whitney expressed her disappointment in the demise of something that she had put so much personal

stock into, writing, "Meanwhile, Bannerman Park was becoming a stronghold of skeets who liked to smash bottles and set banners on fire. In 1999, I left the festival disheartened. I had heard too many bands whine about their set times, too many speakers decline because no one was listening, and had too many fights with drunks intent on destruction" (Whitney 2006). By 2003, Peace-a-Chord was on life support. It soon became clear that the powers-that-be in St. John's were not buying the "peace" in Peace-a-Chord. Support for the festival had waned substantially but most significantly, the City of St. John's wanted to shut down the festival altogether.

After negotiation, the festival was allowed to continue until the scheduled 11 p.m. finish, but that may not be the end of it. Organizers say the city overreacted, but Mayor Andy Wells says the annual festival is becoming a threat to public safety. Peace-A-Chord spokesman Jeff Baggs says a city official mistakenly thought fires and riots erupted at the festival. "There was a member of the city's special events committee who did attend part of an event (Saturday) night," he says. "He thought there were things like riots, fights and fires going on, which hadn't actually taken place. They presented the council with a petition spurred by reports of illegal drug and alcohol use and rowdy behavior at this month's event. (CBC 2003b)

This moral panic, to borrow Stanley Cohen's term (Cohen 2002), found its way to St. John's City Hall and was given substantial coverage by CBC. Andy Wells, then mayor of St. John's, was all too willing to shut the festival down permanently. Wells was quoted by CBC as saying, "As far as I'm concerned, it's time to put an end to it in the interest of public safety and in the interest of property owners before some innocent child is hurt" (CBC 2003a).

In an August 2006 press release, festival co-ordinators stated that the City of St. John's had imposed security measures, requiring thousands of feet of

fencing and barriers, a professional security team, and other requirements made by the City's Special Events Advisory Committee totalling around \$10,000. Although the city did help with security costs in 2004, the organizers added that, "To add insult to injury, the City is slowly pulling away from providing works and services that are available in the private sector (such as staging, extra washrooms and garbage removal), keeping expenses on a steady increase" (Peace-a-Chord 2006).

There was another concern in the community that the festival was becoming a summer rock music concert, eschewing the discussion of social justice issues, the very thing the festival was designed to encourage above all else. Realistically, it was an argument that had existed for years. "It was sad to see Peace-a-Chord close," remembered Ritche Perez. "I remember it starting off as less band-oriented and more sending the message out for peace and rights from performers and public speakers. I do understand why it closed. I've seen kids get more rough and it becoming more of a showcase of local bands" (Perez 2008).

John Fisher was also one of the people who thought the audience members were getting more aggressive, both at the festival and in the scene in general.

That's one thing I can say about our scene or our group of people. No matter how stoned or drunk or fuelled by Satan we were, [laughing] we weren't violent, you know? It's funny now, still – like, to this day – I still try to preach my peace and love viewpoint to some of the younger kids and they just, they aren't having it. They aren't having it! They call me a dirty old hippie punk and tell me to go crawl under a rock and smoke some more weed. I'm serious, I get all kinds of shit from the kids! (Fisher 2008)

In February 2007, I interviewed the co-ordinator for the 2007 Peace-a-Chord festival for a term paper. Unlike my interviews for this project, this was no

positive lament about the glory days. While we did talk about past festivals, the frustrated emphasis was clearly on the decline of interest. Volunteers were scarce, relations with the City of St. John's were still strained, and many past organizers and volunteers had already returned to help out in recent years, to little avail. The 2007, Peace-a-Chord would take place on its smallest scale yet, with a few hours of entertainment scheduled in the parking lot of the Eastern Edge Gallery on Harbour Drive, leaving the festival absorbed into and somewhat replaced by a newer, larger celebration of art, the 24-Hour Art Marathon. There was no 2008 festival and there is no festival in the works for 2009.

Getting Older

Although the downtown music scene in St. John's is thriving now, many people have argued for a definite decrease in interest the late 1990s, even though new bands were emerging and gaining a new – and often younger – following. Liz Solo made an interesting popular culture connection, mentioning the change in popular styles and the popularity of rave culture late in the decade. "Disco did kill the bar scene for live musicians," she said of the 1970s. "And it sort of happened again with the whole resurgence of dance music for us" (Solo 2008).

All of my informants ruminated on growing up within the scene in one way or another and reflected on how their degrees of involvement had changed.

Neil Butler wrote:

It makes me feel old. I hardly ever see bands anymore. I think working in a bar [The Ship Inn] eventually wore me out in terms of late nights, loud music, getting wasted, and being part of a scene. Shit, that sounds cynical, don't mean it to. Seems like the scene now is going very strong. I just don't feel like a part of it anymore. (Butler 2008)

Neil's point of view contrasted highly with thirty-year-old Siobán Quicke's attitude toward continued participation in the local scene. She said,

I go to shows all the time – all the time! I live for it. If it wasn't for live music and like, indie punk rock or folk or I don't know, country or whatever, rap, any local indie music – I love it! Even when I was in Toronto in the last year [2007-2008], I went out to shows all the time. I just wanted to see local bands and hear the talent and feel the scene and what people were experiencing there, in that place, and that's kinda been – it's a huge hobby, I guess. (Quicke 2008)

Many of the members of the 1980s and 1990s scenes are still involved in it, but with all the added responsibility of adulthood. Still, as Joanna Davis noted in her work on identity and aging in punk rock scenes, "Becoming an adult is hardly a sign of the end of one's participation in music culture" (Davis 2006, 64). Phil Winters, who still makes the occasional onstage appearance in Jigger, viewed the situation pragmatically.

When we were younger, it was a family. Really, it was. It wasn't a huge scene, like now, it's spread out, there's more people, but it's not as tight-knit as it used to be. Of course, a smaller crowd is certainly a tighter crowd, you know? Really, we were a family. Bung, the Lizband, there was family there. I guess you just get to a certain point and you don't need that safety blanket or that sort of thing anymore. (Winters 2008)

Again, one's level of participation depends on personal circumstances.

Phil's Jigger bandmate Geoff Younghusband, still a presence on the scene, said,

For me, it slowed down when I stopped playing with Fur Packed Action, but then I stopped going out every weekend because I wasn't playing every weekend and shortly thereafter, had a child, who's just getting to the age where it's easier for me to go out all the time. So, I've started playing some more again, but I certainly don't have the crowds out like there used to be. But it's still just as much fun to go out and play. (Younghusband 2008)

Shawn Maloney offered a simple explanation for his own withdrawal from the scene, "You're younger. You just go out and have fun 'cause you don't have as many worries. You're not thinking about the future. You're just thinking about the moment" (Maloney 2008). Steve Hennessey said of his band sHeavy, "We don't tour very much because guys have babies and jobs and houses and mortgages and cars and so we can't tour very much. Except me. I have no house, no babies, no cars, and all I wanna do is tour!" (Hennessey 2008).

Despite the influx of the next generation of young independent rock music fans, the old fans still participate, even as members of Newfoundland diasporas elsewhere. Liz Solo explained,

The scene is very different now but of course, I'm, there's a whole other crop. The all-ages thing is another thing to talk about. If you look at how that all works. We had a really big all-ages scene for us, our stuff, back in the day, and when we go on tour, a lot of the people that come out are people that were at our all-ages shows when they were kids and moved away. (Solo 2008)

Geoff Younghusband also recognized that the all-ages crowd of the previous decade had grown up, and they had anticipated that.

It was a pop culture movement to do all-ages shows. Because they certainly weren't like that before. We certainly talked a lot about the transfer of the all-ages to the bar scene show – of trying to make that, trying to take our audience between the two, knowing that our audience was the all-ages crowd, but also knowing that they were going to get older, or that they were on the verge of being old enough to come into the bar shows, and wanting to be able to play, get that audience out to us, and I think we did a pretty good job of taking it with us when we made that move for real. We managed to foster an audience that lasted quite a while. (Younghusband 2008)

There seemed to be an overriding opinion expressed by many that at least one of these bands should have "broken out" of the scene and that some bands,

like Hardship Post, came close. Everybody involved in this project was united in their confidence that our scene was as good as any other and worthy of due recognition. John Fisher inferred that maybe the bands did not aspire to such measures of success, or that maybe they balked at the possibilities. He referred to it as a "culture of self-sabotage." He added, "It's like we wanna see if we can get there. It's like, we wanna get there but once we find out that we probably can, it's like, argh, I think I'll go back home now" (Fisher 2008).

Geoff Younghusband recalled the sets Fur Packed Action played at the East Coast Music Awards in 1999 in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. They first played on national television as part of the awards show. Even though they did not win an award, the band was chosen to close the after-party show. "We played an absolutely stellar set," Geoff remembered. "We just went all out, we were so tight, and we did our thing as good as we ever did it that night, with a huge beautiful PA, to a room full of music industry people and it still didn't get us anywhere," he added with a laugh. Again, he expressed his contentment at playing music locally.

Measuring success in numbers or mainland recognition negates one very important fact: these bands were extremely influential, if only to a certain group of people. A few of the people in my age group remembered being intimidated or awed by the older people in bands, but the passage of time has changed the dynamic. Long time Lizband fan Lesley Reade remembered,

It's so weird, 'cause the bands were never not approachable, but I would never go up and talk to them because I idolized them so much. Like Liz, I idolized her. A few years ago now, two or three maybe, I was at Distortion and we were all pretty drunk, and Liz was talking. She knew who I was and I remember feeling like, "You know who I am?" And she was like, "Yeah, sure, you used to

come to all of our shows." And then we chatted about it and I told her how much I idolized her and respected her for being the one woman that I knew that sang, played guitar, and learned the drums – just because she could and she was good at it. (Reade 2008)

Siobán also cited Liz as an influence, "Liz had a huge influence on me," she said. "I even asked her once if she gave singing lessons, 'cause I wanted to sing like her. And of course, I bought an electric guitar and tried to learn how to play – I'm still trying...twelve years later." In one of many moments the interview questions turned back to me, Darryl asked, "Was she not one of your people you looked up to when you first started going to shows? She must have been because there were no females." I am hesitant to say there were "no females" because singers like Liz, Natalie Noseworthy, and Raquel Hoekman were very well-liked and respected within the scene. Although there were fewer female performers than males in this particular scene, women were encouraged to join bands and participate. Looking back on the interviews, the issue of gender was not discussed, correlating with the fact that you did not have to be a particular "type" of person to fit in.

Since that time, some of the shows and bands would become as much the stuff of legend as the music itself. Darryl Bennett used the example of local hard-rockers Bung.

And look at Bung – not for the faint of heart. They were almost like a metal band at times. So, and not necessarily mainstream type of stuff, right? Probably the band with the biggest amount of legend and hearsay and rumour and gossip and nobody ever really knows the full stories about what happened at this show, or what they did this night. I mean, my god, there's so much myth around that band. (Bennett 2008)

When I asked Phil Winters if he was aware of all the stories of debauchery surrounding his band, he laughed and told me they were probably all true. Again, time offers the chance to think critically about things. Rick Power said,

I remember a show at the Loft where we were literally hanging from the rafters, the place was packed, you could literally see the steam rising off the bodies to Bung. But the next day, if you heard it, it was twice the crowd, even though you couldn't hold 2000 people in the Loft, you could only hold 1000...that they played 'til five am. I heard about shows that went 'til five in the morning and I was like, no, cause I took down all of the gear at about four o'clock. They were more legendary than anything. Some of the shows, yes. Some of the shows deserve the legend, some don't. (Power 2008)

For many, this passage of time has given them time to hone their craft, branch out artistically, and form new alliances. "We intersect with other parts of the arts community," said Liz Solo, "we've done stuff for the dance festival, the film festivals, we've acted in movies as a band, I've designed posters for other people and shot video for other people and so there's a lot of ways to find places to make money." There are artists making a living in St. John's, Newfoundland. "It's hard as fuck," said Liz, "But it is possible. What you need to really make money or make a living, really, you gotta work your damn ass off and you gotta be really organized." Liz, who is involved in the Independent Artists' Coalition and Rock Can Roll Records and Media, has shifted her attention online, promoting herself and her music through the virtual world of Second Life (Solo 2008). Most of the artists, as always, have day jobs to supplement their income from playing music.



Figure 15: sHeavy bar show, The Edge, May 1997. Collected by Leslie Pierce.

Other bands from that era are still playing together occasionally. Giver still plays the occasional gig. "I strongly urge you to go see Giver if you ever get

the chance," John Fisher said to me. He added, laughing, "I wouldn't go out of your way, but I have to say: Giver are like a fine wine that has aged correctly." Since his Potmaster days, John has played guitar for Jupiter Landing, Giver, and is currently playing with the Teenage Terrorists, as well as appearing sporadically with Tough Justice.

sHeavy are also still active and well respected locally and in heavy metal circles. Singer Steve Hennessey estimated in our interview that they have sold about 20,000 albums. Doug Rowe, formerly of Ditch, and currently singing and playing guitar in Two Guitars Clash, expressed his respect for the band,

sHeavy had like, shitloads of success. Recording with [founding Black Sabbath member] Tony Iommi, Steve was, you know? This is big shit, you know what I mean? And you know, half a dozen albums, they're still around today, fifteen years later, so I think sHEAVY should be regarded as a breakthrough group. (D. Rowe 2008)

Reunion shows have been another way to pull the old crowd together for a night of nostalgia. Bung played a show every year or so until around 2006, always to a sold-out crowd who were as excited as ever to sing along and rock out. Fur Packed Action played back-to-back sold out reunion shows at Junctions back in early 2006. Singer Jody Richardson humorously said in an interview, "It's sort of like sleeping with an ex-girlfriend. You say, 'I can't do it anymore, I gotta go.' But you're thinking it's fine. Then she's like, 'I'm into it if you're into it'" (Simpson 2006). While I was researching this thesis, Potatobug played a reunion show at Distortion the day after my 29th birthday. Steve Hennessey, who had also been at the show, asked me:

But how'd you feel watching Potatobug? 'Cause it was like a blast from the past for me, like the songs just came out just like instantly, oh my god, that song, and I could transform myself back to the LSPU Hall sitting in the back row with Wallace Hammond right there and kids and Ron Anonsen going around waiting to play with Necropolis or whatever and all the things happening. (Hennessey 2008)

In December 2008, another take on the "reunion show" idea took place at the Rock House on George Street. "It Came From the Harbour" featured established scene members covering songs from St. John's independent bands of the 1980s to 1990s time period.

Technology and Communication

The technological advances in communication are not to be discounted here either. In 1971, folklorist Dan Ben-Amos observed,

A folk musician nowadays can perform for millions of people on a television network, in a style and manner that approximate his own singing and playing in the midst of his own small group, thus extending his art far beyond his social circle. In sum, the materials of folklore are mobile, manipulative, and transcultural. (Ben-Amos 1971, 4)

A lot has changed in the almost forty years since Ben-Amos made that statement, and "folk music" as defined in Chapter One, is exponentially more mobile, manipulative, and transcultural than it has ever been. These days, we bridge the gap between our own space and the rest of the world with ease. In 2009, anybody with access to the internet can discover a staggering amount of music beyond the mainstream, major-label, Top 40 world of my not-too-distant adolescence. Michael Azerrad summed up the technological changes in music scenes in the last couple of decades.

At the end of the Nineties it became apparent that digital distribution of music was to be the future. Digital recording, laser printers, and home CD burners, not to mention MP3 software, had already become readily available, meaning that anyone – even (gasp) *musicians* – could achieve an unprecedented vertical integration by making, recording, packaging, and distributing their own music. And the networking and word-of-mouth potential of e-mail and linked Web sites is almost too vast to comprehend. This dwarfs the empowering breakthroughs in technology of the early Eighties, when people were suddenly able to photocopy their own magazines, and make their own multitrack recordings and dub them off on their home boom box. The Internet allows DIY to range far beyond anyone's wildest dreams. (Azerrad 2002, 500)

During this time period of this thesis, we were just starting to get a taste for compact, user-friendly entertainment technology. These days we are positively immersed in it, with many people communicating electronically through text messaging on cellular phones, home computers, wireless devices, gaming consoles, instant messaging, and social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace. I have seen these developments happen through the course of my own patronage of this music scene. For example, in the mid-1990s, I would have heard of an all-ages show through my own social network. Being "in-the-know" through word-of-mouth, a telephone call, or a poster downtown would have been my only clues that such an event was taking place.

These days, you can record and promote your music on a global network, all without leaving the house. I argue this is not a replacement for the experience of discovering and enjoying music through real-life social networks, but it does make it easier to filter your choices and decide what music you want to see. It is getting easier to produce and promote music, but there is one thing technology can neither predict nor replicate – the short attention span and often fickle nature

of its audience. In a world of too many bands, too many genres, too many websites, too many events, and too much access, those who make a weak effort may be left behind. There is not merely one scene, but many interconnected bands, fans, and events. To John Fisher, the current scene in St. John's is not a merely an updated version of an old formula – it is something altogether different.

What I think is different now, about "the scene," quote, is there's no scene. What it is, is you have a bunch of different bands who all do their own thing. They don't need a scene because they can promote themselves on Myspace, they can promote themselves on Facebook. The internet is there, which didn't exist during my heyday. So they do self-promotion, they get all of their fan base through sending out invites on Facebook, whereas when we were growing up, I mean, we had to build a scene. (Fisher 2008)

There are now more local bands than there ever were in the 1980s and 1990s, but, as the attitude often goes, the next generation has it too easy and needs to pay its dues. Doug Rowe gave his opinion on the matter.

I think there's too many bands nowadays, younger groups. I don't know what's happening exactly at this moment, because I think there's a couple of decent ones on the go now, so, but I know, like, in the last, say, ten years, or maybe not that long – seven or eight years – there seems to be a lot of sloppy groups going around, like, groups that need to do their practicing before they practice at the venue. (D. Rowe 2008)

As Doug suggested above, performance is still a skill to be crafted and refined, as is the art of recording. Sound recording programs on personal computers cannot replicate the sound of a well-engineered professional recording, according to informants like Rick Power, who argued, "Bands are putting out CDs now, they're a dime a dozen, but there's no production value to them. Yeah, you can record on a computer, but it still sounds like shit. No matter how good the program you got, you still need an engineer to make it sound good." Of course,

the scene has always had its share of terrible and forgettable bands, but many people remain nostalgically focused on the best aspects of the past.

Despite his reputation for carefully documenting the scene in the past, combined with his love of the old bands, Darryl Bennett has learned to love the new stuff. "You know, everybody's saying 'Darryl Bennett's going to talk about the glory years again.' No, Darryl Bennett's saying, 'Fuck the glory years!'" He went on to say that he was not as hung up on those days as people might think.

Yes I'm nostalgic, I'm a nostalgic bastard. I'm terrible that way. I mean, I'm watching, I watch old videos, I listen to old stuff sometimes and stuff, but I don't get as kinda teary-eyed as I might have gotten. It's not that I'm getting detached from it, it's just that you can't go around worrying about 1993 for the rest of your life and then you end up painting – if you're like that, you don't let anything new be any good because you sit there and go "Well, fuck, they're not as good as Potatobug were." (Bennett 2008)

Not only have the music, media, and audience changed, the downtown landscape has changed as well. This is due to gentrification, "the conversion of socially marginal and working-class areas of the central city to middle-class residential use" (Zukin 1987, 129). Water Street and Duckworth Street are now flush with upscale restaurants, clothing boutiques, coffee shops, and specialty shops, while housing prices climb steadily. But the arts community continues to make its home there regardless. These days, artist-run collectives like the Eastern Edge and A1C galleries, the Independent Artists' Coalition, and Rock Can Roll Media are contributing to a healthy arts scene, while promotion groups like Mightypop have been bringing touring artists into the province. In 2008, it is often difficult to pick an event to attend on the weekends. As local music fan Krissy Holmes wrote to me, "The level of excitement and support for our local

music scene is rising back up to where it was in the early 90s, when the east coast of Canada seemed to be umbilically connected to Seattle" (Holmes 2008).

So where will the next big thing be? Or will it even be attached to a specific region? Consider Michael Azerrad's point of view:

Since pop history repeats itself with regularity, another underground scene was surely brewing in response to kiddie pop's hegemony, just like it did last time. So where would the "next Seattle" be? Some thought it would be Chapel Hill. At one point it looked as if maybe it was Chicago, or perhaps Berkeley. But maybe the next Seattle will be both nowhere and everywhere – maybe it will be on the Internet. (Azerrad 2002, 500)

The question of "Was it better back then?" also seems more and more subjective. When I asked John Fisher this, he replied,

I don't know. It's a tough question for me. As a scene, for me, as a 14 to 34 year-old, that twenty-year span, as a scene, it was wonderful for me, it was a great experience. I had a lot of friends and everyone seemed to be connected to each other in one way or another, you know, musically, bands were progressing the way they should be. We all started out kinda garage band-like and eventually some of the bands were actually as good as anything you'd hear on the radio. (Fisher 2008)

New bands emerge all the time. Some stick around and hone their craft, and others go scarcely remembered. I have often heard slightly younger people refer to the early 2000s as the most exciting time in the local music scene. In other words, these might not be the good ol' days for some of us, but they likely will be for someone else, in the not-too-distant future.

Conclusion

This thesis has investigated how and why a thriving independent rock music scene existed in downtown St. John's from the 1980s to the 1990s. In line with contemporary folkloristics, it is an examination of the vernacular construction of a musical scene and its folk group expressions.

My research for the thesis was primarily constructed through interviews and online correspondence with the musicians and fans who made it viable. First, through an examination of the language used in the study of music and youth culture, the thesis placed the scene in the scholarly context of independent rock music scenes. Next, it put the scene into the context of Newfoundland music and culture, as well as discussing its relationship to downtown St. John's and the strong artistic community that has existed there for decades. Focusing on the emergence of the bands, I discussed the influence of popular culture, as well as detailing the live gig experience. How the music scene extended into everyday life and how fans and musicians made their place within it was further investigated. The life of prominent scene participant Fred Gamberg, whose tragic death in 1995 has been constructed as an end to the scene, was provided as a case study central to the contemporary memory culture of the scene. This led into the final chapter, which examined the past in the context of the present, asking how – and if – people are still participating in the local music scene.

As stated at the onset, I felt it necessary to limit the time frame of my thesis roughly between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, based on my informants' focus on those years. Many bands have emerged in the city since the last decade,

gaining followings in venues new and old, and existing as a larger series of interconnected scenes and genres. There is much potential for the next generation of scholars and artists to discuss any number of contemporary genres on the local level. As Beverley Diamond and Glenn Colton observed,

First nations music, sacred music, secular art music, jazz, and popular music remain underrepresented in the literature, although the fresh treatment of several of these topics in this volume may give cause for guarded optimism. Slowly but unmistakably, stereotypes of the past are being cast off and the musical world is awakening to the reality of a Newfoundland and Labrador music scene of remarkable diversity and imagination. (Diamond and Colton 2007, 1)

There are plenty of other possible research directions here. An in-depth analysis of song structure and lyrics would be a welcome addition to the dialogue about St. John's independent rock music, as well as oral histories of the bands, fans, or modes of participation mentioned in this thesis. Being a focused look at a comparatively short period of cultural activity in the city of St. John's, this thesis is a contribution to the literature on Newfoundland and Labrador music and more generally, the cross-influences of global and local culture.

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- , 1995a. And the Winner Is... *The Evening Telegram*, February 2.
- , 1995b. Alternative Rules. *The Evening Telegram*, April 27.
- , 1995c. Bung and Restless. *The Evening Telegram*, April 27.
- , 1995d. Artist's Death Rocks Music Community. *The Evening Telegram*, July 14.
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Appendix A – Bands

The following is a list of alternative rock bands active in the 1980s and 1990s St. John's scene, as compiled from interviews and secondary sources.

Adlib	Lizband
Afterforever	Malpractice
Artificial Joy	Mark Green Blues Band
Asthmatics	Martial Law
Band From Hell	Molotov Smile
Bellybutton Window	Necropolis
Black Void	Nemesis
Bottom Dogs	Noon Day Gun/Nailgun
Bucket Truck	Pasht
Bung	Potatobug
Cabmen	Potbelly
Chain Mail Grip	Potmaster
Ched	Pressure Drop
Clobberhog	Raquel Hoekman
Cromwell	Ratfish
Darshiva	Red Scare
Da Slyme	Resistorhead
Dead Reckoning	The Riot
Devastator	Ron Hynes
Ditch	Sacrament
Dogma	Schizoid
Dog Meat BBQ	sHeavy
Draize Eye Test	Six Day War
The Dreadbeats	Spunk
Dreadheavy	Staple
Drive	Stirlingslacks
Drop Kick Jesus	Tapehead
Festered Corpse	Thomas Trio and the Red Albino
Fish 'n' Rod	Thumb
Fleming Street Massacre	Tough Justice
Fur Packed Action	Tumblebug
Gearbox	WAFUT
Good to Go	Wheadeater
Giver	
Hardliner	
Hardship Post	
Hung Up	
Infant Kit	
JKW	
Johari Window	
Jupiter Landing	
Killjoy	

Appendix B

Interview Questions

As stated in Chapter One, these questions were opening points for interviews that became very free-ranging, individualized conversations.

1. Where did you grow up?
2. When and how did you first get involved in the local rock music scene?
3. What made you go back after your first experience?
4. Did you hang out downtown on a regular basis?
5. How did you participate in/support the local scene?
6. What were your favourite local bands?
7. Did you collect material culture objects connected to the scene?
8. Did you play in any bands?
 - (a) How did you start playing?
 - (b) Who did you play with?
 - (c) Did you record?
 - (d) Did you tour?
 - (e) Where was your jam space?
9. What were your favourite venues for shows?
10. Do you still go see live bands often? If so, what bands do you go see?

Appendix C
Venues and Places of Interest in Downtown St. John's Music Scene,
circa 1985-1995.*



Map by Leslie Pierce

- A – The Cornerstone
- B – Oxfam**
- C – **Star of the Sea Hall, Henry Street**
- D – 333 Duckworth Street (Halfway to Hell)
- E – **Hava Java**
- F – **Junctions (Bar None)**
- G – **Atlantic Place (Ports of Food)**
- H – Funland Games Arcade
- I – Perkup Coffee & Tea Room
- J – **The Ship**
- K – **LSPU Hall**
- L – **Fred Gamberg memorial mural**
- M – Cocomanga Café
- N – The Loft
- O – Fred's Records**
- P – War Memorial**
- Q – Harbourside Park**
- R – The Grad House

* **Bolded** entries still exist as they did during the time period of this thesis.

Appendix D
Contemporary Websites with Sound Relevant to This Thesis

Bung

<http://www.last.fm/music/Bung>

Ched

<http://www.myspace.com/chedband>

Da Slyme

<http://abandonstream.net/slyme/>

Dog Meat BBQ

<http://www.abandonstream.net/dogmeatbbq/>

Fur Packed Action

<http://www.myspace.com/furpackedaction>

Giver

<http://www.myspace.com/giveriscool>

Hardship Post

<http://ogami.subpop.com/bands/hardshippost/hardshippost.html>

JKW

<http://www.myspace.com/johnkennethwilkes>

Lizband

<http://www.lizsolo.com/lizband.html>

Potmaster

<http://www.myspace.com/officialpotmastermyspacehotbox>

sHeavy

<http://www.myspace.com/sheavymetal>

<http://www.sheavy.com>

Thomas Trio and the Red Albino

<http://www.thomastrioandtheredalbino.com/index2.shtml>

Tough Justice

<http://www.myspace.com/toughjustice>



