

FAR OUT IN TEXAS: COUNTERCULTURAL SOUND AND THE CONSTRUCTION  
OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE CAPITAL CITY

by

Jennifer E. Ruch, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of  
Texas State University in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
with a Major in History  
August 2016

Committee Members:

Patricia Denton, Chair

Gary Hartman

Jason Mellard

**COPYRIGHT**

by

Jennifer E. Ruch

2016

## **FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT**

### **Fair Use**

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgment. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

### **Duplication Permission**

As the copyright holder of this work I, Jennifer E. Ruch, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

## **DEDICATION**

*For Poppy*

*You are more than a grandfather.*

*You are my world.*

*For everything, I thank you.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am forever indebted to and grateful for my professors in the Department of History at Texas State University. It has been a true privilege to learn from each and every one of them. I am grateful for my friends, colleagues, and mentors within the department who have motivated, guided, and relentlessly supported me throughout this journey.

I want to express my most heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Lynn Denton, thesis chair and mentor, for the profound impact she has had on me as a scholar and professional in the last four years. Ever since I stumbled into her office as an undergraduate, she has steered my passion for the field of public history with overwhelming patience and wisdom. I am particularly thankful for her unbelievable wealth of knowledge, her kindness, and the time she commits to her students. It is with the upmost respect and admiration for her that I express how fortunate I have been to learn from one of the greats. I am a better student, a better person, and a better woman for knowing and working with her.

I would also like to extend gratitude to Dr. Gary Hartman for his unwavering and seemingly endless amount of encouragement and motivation. He has guided my interest in popular music history at Texas State and abroad in Britain. I thank him for being both my biggest advocate and my toughest editor. It is due in large part to his mastery, generosity, and his genuine belief in me that I have thrived as a graduate student. I would especially like to thank Dr. Jason Mellard for piquing my interest in popular music

history early on as an undergraduate. His enthusiasm in the classroom and his dedication to music scholarship greatly influenced my decision to pursue a graduate degree. In addition to my thesis committee, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Dr. Nancy Berlage, Mr. Dan K. Utley, Dr. James McWilliams, Dr. Mary Brennan, Dr. Bryan Mann, Dr. Peter Siegenthaler, Dr. Ellen Tillman, Dr. Rebecca Montgomery, and Lara Newcomer for their informed counsel and moral support. Special thanks is due to the archivists and staff of the Wittliff Collections at Texas State University, the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin, and the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library and Museum for their assistance and historical prowess.

I would not have survived this process without the encouragement and intellectual support of my colleagues in the graduate program. Our graduate students work to cultivate meaningful and enduring relationships in and out of the classroom. I consider myself extremely lucky to have been a part of this professional cohort. Special thanks to Rachel Brown, Leanne Cox, Kimberly Diedrich, Kathleen DesOrmeaux, Savanha Esquivel, Heather Haley, Kent Hemphill, Joey Kaiser, Rachael Lunsford, Ethan Raath, Jacob Troublefield, Jon Watson, and many others for their genuine compassion and academic mastery.

I would also like to express my gratitude and love for my family and friends. My mother, Roxanne, always bravely supported my intellectual curiosity and dared to let me be fiercely independent, inquisitive, and stubbornly persistent. I am especially thankful

for my grandparents, Wesley and Barbara, who constantly exposed me to the vast spectrum of American music and history from an early age. This thesis is the product of their lifelong influence and unconditional love. I am grateful for the support of my brothers, John and Adam, my sister, Savannah, my sister-in-law, Stacy, and my stepfather, Henry, for their constant belief in my academic ambition. A very special thanks to the entire Miskovsky family for their enthusiasm and loving support of my scholarly interests. I am forever appreciative of their inclusivity and warmth throughout my life.

Finally, I would like to thank my closest friends for putting up with me throughout this process. I thank them for understanding how important this research is to me. Taylor Hiller, River Holley, Jordan Koop, Matthew Sanchez, Michael Sanchez, and Carmel Vatani have all provided me with the love, motivation, and confidence to pursue my graduate degree.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. NOW DIG THIS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF CAPITAL CITY SOUND.....	11
III. “YOU’RE GONNA MISS ME”: NOSTALGIA, REGIONAL IDENTITY AND THE MEDIATION OF COUNTERCULTURAL MEMORY .....	26
IV. COSMIC TOTEMS AND COUNTERCULTURAL IDOLS: MASTER SYMBOLS AND THE ICONOGRAPHY OF AUSTIN MUSIC .....	41
V. REVERBERATION: THE DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGNATION OF POPULAR MUSIC AS CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE CAPITAL CITY .....	53
VI. CONCLUSION .....	68
LITERATURE CITED .....	72



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Scholz Garden photographed in 1965.....	13
2. 1934 realty map of Austin that illustrates racial divisions.....	17
3. T-shirt from the 1976 International Armadillo Confab and Exposition in Victoria, Texas .....	44
4. Willie Nelson T-shirt with the caption "Austin is Willie Weird." .....	47
5. 2006 Commemorative plaque at the site of the Armadillo World Headquarters .....	59
6. Austin Motel sign photographed in 2013.....	62

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION

“There’s something happening here, but what it is ain’t exactly clear.”<sup>1</sup> Little did Stephen Stills, the guitarist for the late 1960s rock band Buffalo Springfield, know when he penned the evocative lyrics for “For What Its Worth,” that the first line of the song would later come to encapsulate a generation’s feelings of restlessness during this time period in American history. The cultural environments that came to characterize the 1960s and 1970s have become present day sources of fascination for the creative imagination of popular culture. “Few dispute that popular music was a powerful cultural, social, and economic force in the period,” but music also played an integral role in shaping how later generations would come to remember these eras.<sup>2</sup> The impact of popular music on the collective memory of the 1960s and 1970s frequently generates a romanticized, sometimes diluted, historical narrative.

This thesis is designed to highlight the ways in which the memory of counterculture forged contemporary applications of cultural heritage both in fact and myth. Cultural heritage is the “result of human interaction with the environment and one another.”<sup>3</sup> The value that groups and communities assign to both tangible and intangible forms of cultural heritage cannot be systematically predicted. Cultural heritage is then,

---

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Stills, “For What Its Worth,” Stephen Stills, MP3, Atco Records: 1967.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Ward, “What’s That Sound? Teaching the 1960s Through Popular Music,” (New York: The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2016), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Dirk Spenneman, “Beyond Preserving the Past for the Future: Contemporary Relevance and Historic Preservation,” *CRM Journal* (Summer 2011), p. 8.

essentially, a “human construct.”<sup>4</sup> Specifically, this thesis explores the development of countercultural music scenes from the late 1960s until the early to mid 1970s within the regional context of Austin, Texas.

Within this project, the term counterculture is used to describe a group or community whose ideals and beliefs do not mirror those of mainstream society. The wider application of the word is usually synonymous with youth subculture in the late 1960s; however, this original definition highlights the social clash and tension of the time period. Today, the word is viewed as safe, fun, and even nostalgic and is frequently used to describe a highly romanticized historical narrative of hippies. This case study is similar in that counterculture refers to the minority of young people who actively engaged with the psychedelic and progressive country music scenes in Austin music history. Today, Austin is the self-proclaimed “Live Music Capital of the World.”<sup>5</sup> The city actively uses this identity to establish and maintain national and international attention as a music hub and an eclectic empire of creative expression.

The counterculture that developed in Austin from the late 1960s through the mid 1970s produced new perceptions of regional identity and forged music subcultures, such as the psychedelic rock and progressive country music scenes, which became integral to Austin’s subsequent cultural identity. Barry Shank, a professor of comparative studies and popular music scholar at Ohio State University, explains that Austin became a “center of cultural possibility” where young people could “live a bohemian, beatnik,

---

<sup>4</sup> Spenneman, “Preserving the Past for the Future,” p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> “Austin Music Office,” Austin City Visitor’s Bureau, <http://www.austintexas.org/music-office/>, accessed May 31, 2016.

proto-hippie life and mark their own difference from the Texan cultural mainstream.”<sup>6</sup>

Shank’s assessment introduces the concept of the city as a mecca for young people who grew disillusioned with a wide array of cultural, social, and political norms.

To understand the relationship between youth culture and popular music during this time period, it is necessary to note music’s modern role as a mass consumed commodity in American culture. The music of twentieth-century America underwent rapid technological and cultural transformations. Recorded music and the evolution of the music industry throughout much of the early twentieth century gave way to a steadily increasing demand for music as a commercial commodity within American mainstream culture. As a result of this industry, people had the opportunity to consciously choose which music they purchased and listened to. Demographic and regional restrictions no longer dictated which forms of American music people had access to.

During the onset of the post-Depression era people began to spend their disposable income on new forms of recreation and leisure, a privilege not afforded to most of the American population in the early years of the twentieth century. Mass production of music presented a new arena of consumption for Americans where accessibility and affordability intersected. Before this, radio was the primary means of music consumption and listening in the home. Radio featured a range of both national and regional programming that included music, lectures, and weekly variety shows.<sup>7</sup> Popular music quickly became part of that leisurely consumption and a unique American

---

<sup>6</sup> Barry Shank, *Dissonant Identities* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994), pg. 49.

<sup>7</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, “Radio,”

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/abr01>, accessed June 01, 2016, uploaded on June 15, 2010, Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

past time of the twentieth century. Popular culture during the 1940s and 1950s changed drastically. Television, music, and technology all became integral characteristics of mid-twentieth century America. Increased wages provided families with discretionary income that allowed upward mobility. The increased purchase of automobiles and the recreation associated with them became outward expressions of economic well-being. Fast food chains developed as a reaction to this mobility. Theme parks, resorts, and tourist vacation spots grew in numbers and popularity during this time period and are additional evidence of the country's economic prosperity. Convenience, consumerism, and the budding concept of immediate gratification sum up the cultural environment of the mid-twentieth century.

Leisure and recreation time, concepts often unavailable to previous generations, allowed teenagers and young adults to construct their own subcultures rooted in popular music. Friends got together to listen to records with one another. Young people established an innovative sense of community and cultural cohesion through the simple act of listening to popular music with each other. The cultural effects of music in twentieth-century America "seeped into the social lifeblood" of people and ideas.<sup>8</sup> The music of the late 1960s and the 1970s was reflective and generative of the cultural, political, and social upheavals that epitomized this period in American history. Popular music scholarship analyzes twentieth-century American history through the lens of music and specific music subcultures. Over time, however, music histories become generalized due to contemporary and changing perceptions of popular culture, film representation, and other cultural stereotypes.

---

<sup>8</sup> Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 6.

David Glassberg, a professor of public history at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, identifies this pattern of generalization as the product of methodological tension between academic and public relationships with popular representations of history. People make connections to popular music that are “rooted in emotion and a firm sense of place,” whereas academics, motivated by the pursuit of sterile objectivity, sometimes fall victim to musical analyses “bereft of personal voice and divorced from local geography.”<sup>9</sup> As the study of mid-twentieth century popular music became accepted as an academic endeavor by the 1980s, it also became necessary to contest more embroidered versions of this music’s history. The “perils of over-generalizing” remind us that we need “to take seriously the sheer range of popular music that struck a chord with different audiences” and understand that there was no monolithic musical experience shared by American people throughout this period.<sup>10</sup>

A pivotal decade for music, the 1960s also marked a turbulent and controversial era for American history. Brian Ward, a music scholar at Northumbria University, identifies a running debate that divides opinions about this era between those who “condemn the decade as the source of much that is wrong with contemporary America” and those who revere it as the “last time the nation made a concerted effort to realize its best ideals.”<sup>11</sup> Ward’s examination creates a strict dichotomy with which to assess social change during this era. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that radical revolutions of political order, feminism, music, drugs, and sexual liberation were all key indicators of pivotal

---

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Filene, “Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life by David Glassberg,” *Minnesota History* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, Fall 2001) Vol. 57, No. 7, p. 382.

<sup>10</sup> Ward, “What’s That Sound? Teaching the 1960s Through Popular Music,” p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

cultural upheaval.

On the national scale, events such as Woodstock in 1969 and San Francisco's Summer of Love in 1967 are archetypal representations of the national countercultural environment of the late 1960s. Countercultural scenes such as Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco or Greenwich Village in New York City remain consistent paradigms of nonconformist culture. Austin's bohemian heyday, however, is a narrative within regional popular memory that equals, if not rivals, the iconic scenes most associated with counterculture.

Popular memory morphs counterculture into a romanticized narrative that exaggerates it as the dominant cultural environment of the 1960s. Contemporary cinema and music continue to bolster the misconception that the late 1960s were all about sex, drugs, and a widely shared eagerness to lead a countercultural lifestyle. While the countercultural phenomenon of the late 1960s is a valuable vehicle with which to begin exploration of this era's music and youth subcultures, it is the popular memory of the decade that resonates the most in contemporary cultural heritage.

Instead of reinforcing the typical historical narrative of counterculture that focuses solely on Austin's psychedelic and progressive country music scenes, this thesis is a counter narrative that includes the earlier music history of Austin by examining it and building upon it within the context of memory and heritage scholarship. This research dispels the idea that Austin music, and the countercultural phenomenon of the late 1960s, sprung up overnight. Additionally, key pre-countercultural narratives of Austin's music evolution throughout the early twentieth century accentuate the idea that the memory of the psychedelic and progressive country music scenes were retrospectively selected,

mobilized, and re-constructed to act as contemporary cultural heritage.

Austin music is a stew of styles, sounds, ethnic influences, and sonic tradition. The city continues to promote its reign as the “Live Music Capital of the World” as music festivals such as Austin City Limits, established in 2002, and South by Southwest, established in 1987, increasingly draw thousands into Central Texas each year. Still, there is a pervasive attitude among those who shaped early music scenes and those who have come to associate Austin’s musical past with nostalgia that the authenticity of Austin music is long gone. Musical authenticities aside, what remains are the cultural remnants of past music scenes that, layer by layer, are used to construct new meaning in Austin music.

In order to understand how Austin’s music history has been used to create a vibrant and enduring cultural heritage in the present, it is necessary to approach this counter narrative in four parts. The following chapter, “Now Dig This: A Brief History of Capital City Sound,” outlines the key music scenes and developments that ultimately led to the emergence of the countercultural music of the late 1960s through the mid 1970s. Specifically, this chapter highlights the impacts of German folk music tradition, the emergence of folklore as a field of academic study and the related resurgence of folk music, African American music styles, and the combined influence of these forms on the development of the psychedelic and progressive country music scenes.

This chapter evaluates the effect of Austin’s racial environment from the early to mid twentieth century on the music of the area. Austin’s music history vividly illustrates the breakdown of racial boundaries both socially and sonically. Groups of white university students, most of who were enamored with the Folk Revival of the late 1950s



and early 1960s, eagerly sought direct experience of locally available black musical styles, whether in recorded form or by sneaking off to the East side of Austin to hear black musicians play at the Victory Grill or Ernie's Chicken Shack. The emergence of later music scenes grew out of this interracial interaction. From the early twentieth century to the mid 1970s, this chapter examines the distinct set of interconnected social and cultural conditions that facilitated the city's growth as a music center.

Chapter Three, "You're Gonna Miss Me: Nostalgia, Regional Identity and the Mediation of Countercultural Memory" utilizes memory studies methodology to look at the ways countercultural memory in Austin resonates today. Other major cities in Texas such as Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio all boast deeply rooted music histories. While these urban centers have diverse and deep-rooted music histories in jazz, blues, conjunto, zydeco, and many other regional styles, they do not rely on music as a major marketing tool for heritage tourism or as a civic identity marker. This chapter will first identify the ways in which the music of Austin during the late 1960s and early 1970s allowed for a new assertion of regional identity and, second, will examine how the memory of popular music produces nostalgia for a somehow more authentic time period in the Austin music narrative.

Just as memory of popular music in Austin worked to construct new perceptions of regional identity and mark new definitions of musical authenticity, mediated narratives of the psychedelic and progressive country music experience created subsequent forms of iconography. In this project, iconography is loosely defined as the selected images and slogans that came to represent a collective experience. Chapter Four, "Cosmic Totems and Countercultural Idols: Master Symbols and the Iconography of Austin Music,"

analyzes two of the most widely recognizable examples of the city's iconography. The image and meaning of the armadillo as a countercultural symbol and the emblematic presence of Willie Nelson as a local icon and national ambassador of Austin music serve as powerful remnants of music subculture and explain the contemporary civic positioning of music in the capital city.

Chapter Five, "Reverberation: The Development and Designation of Popular Music as Cultural Heritage in the Capital City," will use both the history of Austin music and the mediation of memory and nostalgia to explore the city's present day application of cultural heritage. This analysis will trace how cultural heritage has conventionally been defined in the academic sphere, both ideologically and methodologically, in the past. While it is crucial to point out that there is no one definition of cultural heritage, it is essential to think of the practice of heritage as one that raises important questions about the "mediation of the past" in the present.<sup>12</sup> The construction of cultural heritage helps to define tangible and intangible connections to local history and informs historians of the ways in which communities establish a collective sense of place and historical familiarity in relation to national narratives.

Popular music historiography thoroughly covers Austin's countercultural narrative, but analyzing Austin's countercultural music scenes with an emphasis on memory and cultural heritage application will work to explain the state of the city's contemporary cultural environment. There is a noticeable gap in scholarship directly related to the recent emergence of popular music as cultural heritage. Heritage has conventionally been thought of as something completely detached from popular music.

---

<sup>12</sup> N.C. Johnson, "Framing the Past: Time, Space, and the Politics of Heritage Tourism in Ireland," *Political Geography*, vol. 18 (1999), p. 204.

Popular culture and music have been labeled as “commercial, inauthentic, and so unworthy” of official designation as significant aspects of cultural heritage.<sup>13</sup> In recent years, however, popular culture and music history are increasingly productive topics among cultural historians and an avid general public. The earlier academic attitude that popular music does not belong in heritage discourse no longer adequately addresses emerging trends in local heritage application.

The construction of contemporary cultural heritage in reaction to Austin’s countercultural music scenes is a relatively unexplored narrative that will add depth to both academic and public understanding of memory’s role in popular music heritage practices. Exploring how Austin retroactively utilized its countercultural sound to construct a particular cultural heritage accentuates the multiplicity of roles that music played within twentieth-century American culture.

---

<sup>13</sup> Andy Bennett, “Heritage Rock: Rock Music, Representation, and Heritage Discourse,” *Poetics*, vol. 39 (2009), p. 477.

## CHAPTER II.

### NOW DIG THIS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF CAPITAL CITY SOUND

Texas music is a vibrant culmination of ethnic and musical influences. Each and every corner of the state boasts a distinct sound. The cultural mosaic that makes up Texas music today ranges in styles that originated from the African American, German, French, Polish, Native American, Tejano, and Anglo communities of the Lone Star State.

Although this thesis is designed to highlight the ways that Austin's counterculture history serves as the city's foundation for contemporary cultural heritage, it is important to underscore that Austin music did not spring up spontaneously in the late 1960s.

There are several scenes, genres, and narratives that formed the foundation of the rich history of the city's signature sound. However, there are five major developments in the Austin music narrative that built upon one another to define the city's present day reputation as a music hub. Beginning with the area's early reverence for German folk tradition in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the establishment of folklore as an academic study followed not long afterward. As folklore studies gained traction in universities nation wide, so did national interest in American folk music and, specifically, African-American and Southern styles of music. By the early to mid 1960s, musical interests among some university students produced a subculture that revolved around folk, blues, and later, rock 'n' roll. By the 1970s, country music and rock 'n' roll fused to generate a dynamic and regionally distinct form of Austin music that, ultimately, led to the city's national attention as a music hotbed.

German immigration into Central Texas during the nineteenth century produced

one of the most deeply rooted music subcultures in Austin and endures in the Hill Country region of Texas. The oldest drinking establishment in Austin is Scholz Garten opened by August Scholz as a beer garden and restaurant in 1866.<sup>14</sup> Other German beer gardens and restaurants in the area included Jacoby's, Pressler's, Turner Hall, and Bulian's.<sup>15</sup> Unlike bars and saloons of the time that "skated outside the periphery of respectability," these establishments were tightly woven into the social fabric of Austin's German community and welcomed the entire family.<sup>16</sup> Beer gardens represent paradigms of German music subculture where patrons celebrated heritage and preserved traditional German folk music.

Scholz Garten was also the meeting space for the Austin Saengerrunde, a German singing society, by the early twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> German communities throughout Texas established singing societies to encourage the continued preservation of cultural tradition through song.<sup>18</sup> A Scholz Garten advertisement in the 1881 Austin City Directory guaranteed a "place where you can go, at all times, and enjoy a quiet retreat with your friends."<sup>19</sup> These establishments sought to provide a sense of ethnic cohesion and also served as educational links, giving the community the opportunity to actively engage with German folklore and classical music. The majority of German immigrants were literate, and they diligently used this literacy to preserve their own culture and traditions

---

<sup>14</sup> Eyerman and Jamison, pg. 35.

<sup>15</sup> Rachel Feit, "Gardens of Eden: How Austin Used to Celebrate," *The Austin Chronicle*, accessed April 16, 2016, <http://www.austinchronicle.com/food/2001-01-26/80303>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Georgia Ruiz Davis, "German Singing Societies," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/xag01>, accessed April 16, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Scholz Garten Advertisement, Austin City Directory, 1881.

through “German schools, newspapers, sports clubs, agricultural cooperatives, and literary and arts organizations.”<sup>20</sup>



Figure 1: Scholz Garten photographed in 1965. Courtesy UNT Portal to Texas History.

Even though German singing societies had a tendency to adhere to more traditional representations of their music where classical, folk, and opera were often celebrated, evidence of southwestern cultural transfusion took root in Texas German communities. By the early twentieth century, German folk music sometimes exhibited characteristics often associated with cowboy culture. References to “shotguns, horse-drawn wagons,” and other elements of life on the “frontier prairie” infiltrated the repertoire of German folk music.<sup>21</sup>

The second key development in Austin’s music history is the establishment and

---

<sup>20</sup> Georgia Ruiz Davis, "German Singing Societies."

<sup>21</sup> Gary Hartman, “The Roots Run Deep,” in *The Roots of Texas Music* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2003), p. 19.

emergence of folklore as a reputable area of academic study. Folklore based studies bolstered the area's already thriving appreciation and preservation of traditional American folk music. University of Texas scholars Leonidas Payne and John Lomax established the Texas Folklore Society in 1909.<sup>22</sup> By 1933, Lomax became an honorary curator of the Archive of American Folksong at the Library of Congress due to his lifelong pursuit of American music preservation. While he maintained a strong connection to Austin and to Texas folklore studies, his recognition at the national and federal levels highlights both the widespread interest and enthusiasm for preserving folk culture at this time.

While it is true that folklorists aimed to preserve what they believed to be uniquely American and authentic music, the emergence of folklore as an academic study introduced heavily mediated perceptions of white and black music. Music scholarship of the last two centuries reveals "every aspect of popular music that is today regarded as American in character has sprung from imported traditions."<sup>23</sup> European, African, and Latin streams of music tradition all played an integral role in developing the cultural amalgam of American music. The imported dynamic of Texas music is no different.

The "selective blending" of musical traditions, or "syncretism," derives from combining African and European streams of music during the slave trade.<sup>24</sup> While the genesis of African-American music grew primarily from the slavery experience, the process of syncretism inevitably occurred by simple means of cultural exposure to the

---

<sup>22</sup> Wayne Gard, "Lomax, John Avery," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/flo07>, accessed December 06, 2015, Uploaded June 15, 2010, Published by the Texas State Historical Commission.

<sup>23</sup> Larry Starr, Christopher Waterman, *American Popular Music: The Rock Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

music of other immigrant groups who came to the United States by choice. Whether on purpose or by happenstance, no “streams of musical influence existed in isolation” from one another.<sup>25</sup> However, the cultural environment of the Jim Crow South facilitated rigid racial, class, and ethnic divisions in musical tradition and, later, folklorists perpetuated this concept. The social and racial environment of the early twentieth century slowly compressed American music into genres marked by race and ethnicity.

Southern music demonstrates these racial dichotomies. By the mid-twentieth century sharp divides in Southern music identified blues as strictly an African-American music and country as ‘hillbilly’ music. Texas music adds another layer of complexity to the racial characterization of music. The number of ethnic influences in Texas challenged the concept of American music categorized according to racial dichotomies.

Folklorists in the early twentieth century continued to mediate regional music tradition through assigning standards of musical authenticity and ethnic purity within Southern and Southwestern music. John Lomax, one of the most notable folklorists of the twentieth century, sought out what he believed to be authentic American folklore as a means to preserve American culture. His work, along with others, contributed a wealth of recorded music and scholarship to the field of folklore on both local and national scales in the early twentieth century.

These scholars sought out music that did not belong in the popular music category. They collected obscure, rural folk music that they believed was somehow untouched by commercial trends and relatively unchanged by time. John Lomax carefully selected which songs and styles to include in his collection. In doing so, folklorists in

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 15.



Texas and throughout the country created an incomplete narrative of American music that failed to exhibit the full range of ethnic influences. Just as folklorists mediated musical authenticity over time, so did listeners and musicians. The development of the “folkloric paradigm” in the Austin area created a distinction between the personal and idealized construct of authentic music, somehow untouched, isolated, and pure, and the commercial, profit driven music industry.<sup>26</sup>

The third key development in the Austin music story accentuates the role that race played in Texas music. The rise and fall of the East Austin blues scene provides a unique physical and ideological intersection between segregation, race relations, and white exposure to black music during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1928, the city developed a “Negro District” on the east side of East Avenue (which is the present day location of Interstate Highway 35), further away from the central business district centered along Congress Avenue.<sup>27</sup> The establishment of a separate district specifically for African Americans is probably one of the boldest examples of institutionalized racism in the city’s history. Blacks in East Austin developed a flourishing community complete with educational and cultural institutions, black-owned businesses, and other commercial establishments. At one time East Austin had “two colleges, lots of churches, barber shops, theatres, hotels,” and many other businesses that highlight the evolution of a

---

<sup>26</sup> Karl Hagstrom, *“Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 257.

<sup>27</sup> Fraser, Catherine, and William Bacon, “Segregation and Civil Rights in Texas, 1865-1965,” George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center, City of Austin, <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/carver/africanamerican.htm>, accessed April 20, 2016, uploaded November 19, 2008.

“functioning community” within segregated Austin.<sup>28</sup>

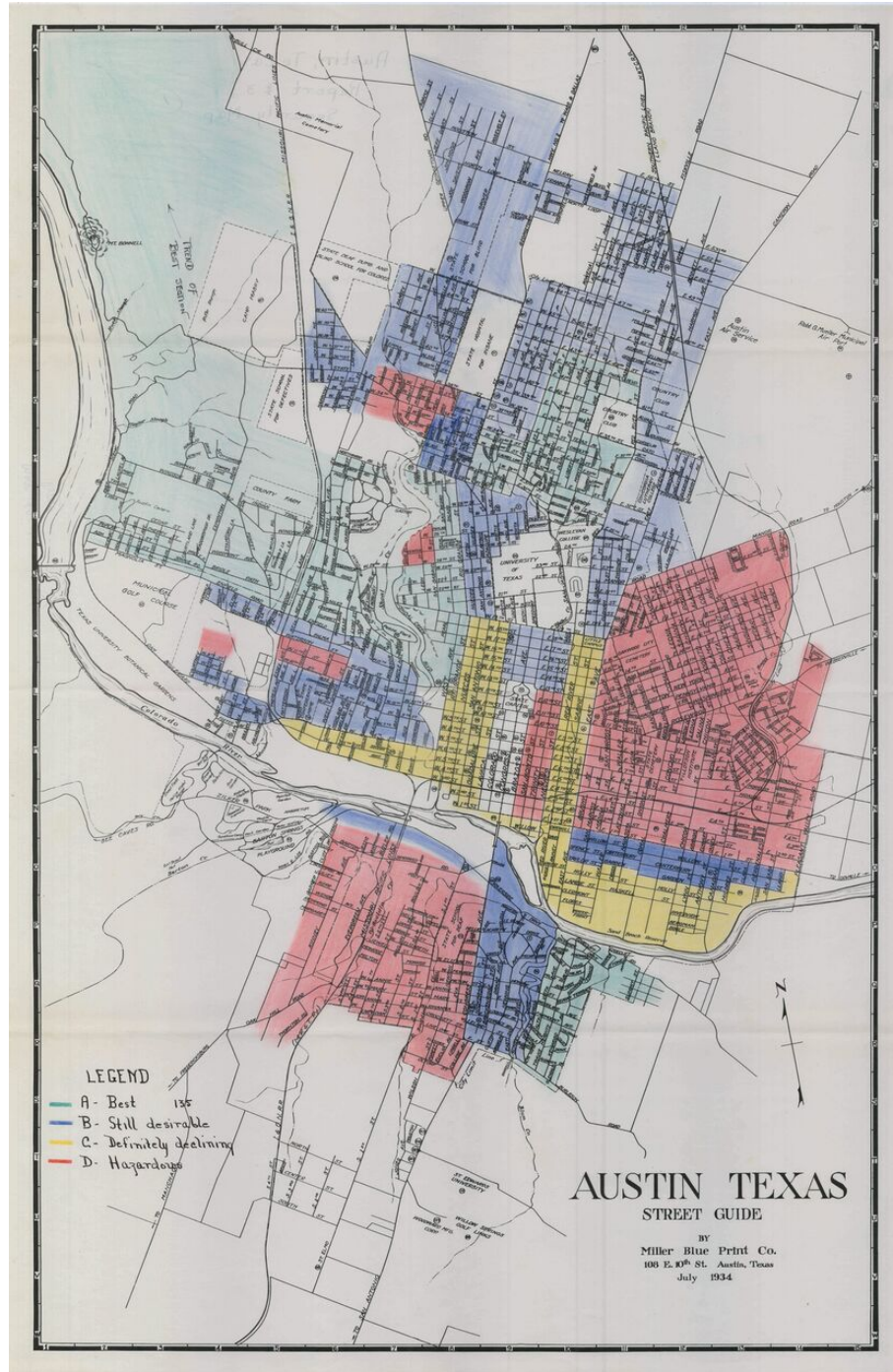


Figure 2: 1934 realty map of Austin that illustrates racial divisions. Courtesy HOLC.

<sup>28</sup> Harold McMillan, Life History Interview, transcript of an oral history conducted in 2006 by Mark W. Downs, African American Texans Oral History Project, The Project in Interpreting the Texas Past (Austin: University of Texas, 2006).

At the heart of East Austin's musical evolution was its connection to the Chitlin' Circuit. The Chitlin' Circuit was a "network of African-American juke joints that stretched across the segregated South and into the Midwest."<sup>29</sup> Black performance venues, most of which were situated along the East 11<sup>th</sup> Street area, such as Charlie's Playhouse, Ernie's Chicken Shack, and the Victory Grill emerged as music hubs for the community after the end of World War II. Some of the biggest names in blues music such as Chuck Berry, B.B. King, and Bobby "Blue" Bland all played the stages of East Austin juke joints.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, white students from the University of Texas ventured into the East Side seeking out black music. Their curiosity was largely sparked by the folk music resurgence among young people across the nation. The influx of white patrons into black clubs was so drastic at one point that Henry "Bluesboy" Hubbard, an Austin blues musician, recalled that if "you went to Charlie's Playhouse on a Friday or Saturday night, the place was completely white."<sup>30</sup> White college students eagerly seeking out and experiencing black music might seem like the early onset of desegregation in Austin. However, this was not the case. Instead, a sort of racial displacement in black music venues on the East Side unfolded in which Whites called ahead and reserved seating in black clubs, leaving African Americans who regularly frequented the clubs without a seat and without a say in the matter. White patrons were usually welcomed into East Austin blues venues, but black musicians did not receive the

---

<sup>29</sup> Whitney Milam, "Victory Grill," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/xdv02>, accessed February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Uploaded May 29, 2013, Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>30</sup> Henry "Bluesboy" Hubbard, Life History Interview, transcript of an oral history conducted in 2008 by Roger Gatchet, African American Texans Oral History Project, The Project in Interpreting the Texas past (Austin: University of Texas, 2008).

same welcome if they played across the East-West divide.<sup>31</sup>

The fourth key development in the city's music history is the resurgence of American folk music's popularity throughout the country and in the Austin area during the early 1960s. Nationally renowned musicians such as Bob Dylan, Odetta and Joan Baez popularized folk ballads. The field recordings conducted by John and his son Alan Lomax from the 1930s and 1940s also played an integral role in the discovery and revival of many artists who may have otherwise fallen into obscurity. Because of their diligent archiving and collecting of folk culture in the Deep South, the Lomaxes and a number of other folklorists introduced Southern folk music to a newer, younger generation of listeners and aspiring musicians in the 1960s.<sup>32</sup>

Locally, some University of Texas students, usually white, took passionate interest in this form of music subculture. The best example of folk music bridging both generational and cultural gaps is the establishment of Threadgill's Tavern. Kenneth Threadgill bought an old service station, still located on North Lamar Boulevard, in December of 1933.<sup>33</sup> Threadgill enjoyed the country music of Hank Williams and Jimmie Rodgers and held weekly hootenannies, which were social gatherings that usually included folk music and the occasional dance. By the mid 1960s, however, Threadgill attracted a younger generation of college students from the University of Texas who were enamored with American folk music as a part of the national resurgence.

Threadgill's became the local hangout for young folk music aficionados looking

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> John Szwed, *Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded the World* (London: Viking Penguin, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Alan Lee Haworth, "THREADGILL, JOHN KENNETH," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fth58>, accessed December 6, 2015, Published by the Texas State Historical Commission.

for a cold beer. One of those folkies happened to be a young University of Texas student named Janis Joplin. This is where the tradition of a connection between the Austin counterculture and its earlier history as a folk music haven is rooted. Some of the college students and young people who frequented Threadgill's beer joint later became participants in the psychedelic music scene in Austin. Kenneth Threadgill became the most recognized "unifier of Austin's past and present."<sup>34</sup> In a 1973 *Texas Monthly* article by Jan Reid and Don Roth, Threadgill is given credit for the city's "easy-going mix of musical styles."<sup>35</sup> By the mid 1960s, however, rock and roll had come to the Capital. Austin's folk patriarch welcomed just about any form of music in his little filling station, but his little bar could no longer "contain all the musical excitement that seized the country" as rock and roll dominated the landscape of American music.<sup>36</sup>

The fifth and final key development in Austin music that ultimately provided the city with its contemporary cultural heritage moniker is the emergence of both the psychedelic and progressive country music scenes. The psychedelic countercultures that thrived in San Francisco and New York City in the late 1960s continue to serve as popular embodiments of non-conformist subculture. Rockers in the Lone Star State were definitely influenced by the British Invasion of rock 'n' roll that swept the country during the mid 1960s, but they still "reflected the distinct ethnic influences of the Southwest" in their interpretation of psychedelic music by donning "blue jeans, sweaty shirts, and

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Jan Reid and Don Roth, "The Coming of Redneck Hip," *Texas Monthly*, November 1973, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

cowboy boots.”<sup>3738</sup> Compared to the better-known scenes, Austin’s psychedelic scene created a unique Texas identity for its participants. This element of Texas psychedelic music adds richness to the distinct geographical context of Austin counterculture.

Popular culture tends to romanticize the counterculture of the late 1960s and 1970s as a time of free love, peace, and mind-altering LSD trips. Historians and scholarly experts of the period contribute a less embroidered illustration of the counterculture narrative. In *Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin*, Alice Echols successfully lays the exaggerated romance of the counterculture to rest.<sup>39</sup> An expert of the 1960s and professor of history at the University of Southern California, Echols paints an elegant portrait of the Austin that Janis Joplin experienced while she was a student at the University of Texas. While a number of young people participated in psychedelic culture and music, the counterculture did not make up the majority of young people in the Austin area. Also, Echols discounts the popular misconception that the era was a “party in perpetual progress.”<sup>40</sup>

Contrary to current popular belief, psychedelic counterculture had a menacing dark side. Psychedelic music relied heavily on the combined influence of hallucinogenic and psychotropic drugs. Even though LSD was not available in the Central Texas area until 1964, it was popularized by 1965 and was not made illegal until 1968. Locally, it was not uncommon for users to purchase peyote plants from local nurseries or gain

---

<sup>37</sup> *Dirt Road to Psychedelia: Austin, Texas during the 1960s*, DVD, Directed by Scott Conn (SRC Productions, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Gary Hartman, *The History of Texas Music* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2008) p. 206.

<sup>39</sup> Alice Echols, *Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

access to psilocybin mushrooms that grew naturally in regional pastures.<sup>41</sup> Drugs within psychedelic counterculture were seen as a “path to self examination and spirituality” and the belief that psychotropic drugs could open up the mind to new ideas and dimensions fueled the psychedelic music scene of Austin during the late 1960s.<sup>42</sup>

Retired Austin police officer Harvey Gann recalled his experiences with the emergence of psychedelic drug culture in Travis County. Gann was accustomed to hardened criminals who used harder drugs such as morphine and heroin. The introduction of psychedelics into the city of Austin overwhelmed the police force. Gann remembered dealing with young people on bad trips telling him that “snakes were coming out of the walls” and that they were seeing “chewing gum men.”<sup>43</sup> Unlike the sentences for possession given to those with existing criminal records, Gann believed that the “courts were sympathetic to the young people” engaging in psychedelic drug use since they were usually college students.<sup>44</sup>

At the heart of the psychedelic music scene in Austin was the Vulcan Gas Company. The Vulcan Gas Company opened as a performance venue in 1967 and hosted musicians such as Johnny Winter, the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Elevators, Shiva’s Headband, and Muddy Waters. In addition to its role as a concert space, the Vulcan became a popular hangout for participants in the psychedelic music scene.<sup>45</sup> The goal of the Vulcan Gas Company, according to co-founder Don Hyde, was to bring the ideas and trends of San

---

<sup>41</sup> Shank, *Dissonant Identities*, p. 49.

<sup>42</sup> *Dirt Road to Psychedelia*.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

Francisco to Austin.<sup>46</sup>

The Vulcan mimicked the aesthetic of other psychedelic music venues such as the Avalon Ballroom and the Fillmore East in San Francisco. Psychedelic music, bright colors, and light shows characterized the environment of the venue. Psychedelic poster artist Gilbert Shelton designed the eight by twelve foot long logo on the outside of the building. He created the logo in the San Francisco style that he had seen at the Fillmore East and the Avalon but he wanted to make sure it was “larger, because this was Texas.”<sup>47</sup> Having never obtained a beer license, the Vulcan’s only financial gain came from charging patrons at the door for entry.<sup>48</sup> However, entry fee collection was sometimes inconsistent due to the popular practice of not charging friends and friends of friends. The Vulcan closed in 1970 due to financial hardship and along with it, the psychedelic era of Austin music faded.

The early to mid 1970s gave way to the progressive country music scene. In *The Improbable Rise of Redneck Rock*, Jan Reid illustrates the birth of the hippie cowboy within Texas counterculture.<sup>49</sup> By hippie cowboy, Reid means the development of a countercultural demographic that still embraced elements of the earlier psychedelic music scene but was unique to Texas. This phenomenon, more commonly known as progressive country, was a product of Austin musicians intertwining rock ‘n’ roll, marijuana, and social inclusion with traditional, yet revived and upbeat, country music.

Mainstream country music during the early 1970s often followed the Nashville sound, which was smooth, polished, and pop driven. Although the 1970s was a highly

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Reid and Roth, “The Coming of Redneck Hip,” p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Jan Reid, *Improbable Rise of Redneck Rock* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).



experimental and creatively productive time for country music, the sight of “cowboys in suedes or hippies in Levis” initially baffled mainstream industry and caused hesitation to “accept the talented outsiders who were forging new country sounds.”<sup>50</sup> In Austin, counterculture recognized and accepted country music as a form of Texas heritage but also incorporated elements of counterculture into local identity to establish a music subculture highly specific to sense of place. Participants in the progressive country scene created a new local identity by combining earlier countercultural ideology with more traditional southwestern identity.

Within the progressive country music scene, the Armadillo World Headquarters remains one of the most notable concert venues. Similar to the earlier Vulcan Gas Company, the Armadillo was “all about the music and a shared tolerance for marijuana and psychedelic drugs.”<sup>51</sup> The followers of the progressive country scene, however, were partial to “Lone Star and Pearl Beer and country music as part of their twisted heritage.”<sup>52</sup> Opened in 1970, the Armadillo played host to a wide variety of musical acts that spanned several genres, both locally and nationally known. Of all the musical fusion that the Armadillo nurtured, the “most dramatic mixed traditional country music culture with that of urban blues and rock” that produced a “Texas hybrid” called the “cosmic cowboy.”<sup>53</sup> The venue operated on a “shoestring budget” and with a mainly volunteer staff, so when the demand for commercial and residential development in the area

---

<sup>50</sup> Archie Green, ““Austin’s Cosmic Cowboys: Words in Collision,” *And Other Neighborly Names: Social Process and Cultural Image in Texas Folklore* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 161.

<sup>51</sup> Jan Reid, *Improbable Rise of Redneck Rock*, p. 226.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>53</sup> John Wheat, “Armadillo World Headquarters,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/xda01>, accessed December 5, 2015, uploaded June 9, 2010, Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

became too much for the Armadillo to financially endure, the concert hall closed its doors on New Years Eve in 1980.<sup>54</sup> Not long after the venue closed, the old National Guard armory that housed the Armadillo was demolished to make way for a high rise office building.

The history of Austin's countercultural sound remains one of the most vital sources of influence for the city's current eclectic mythos. The key developments in Austin's music history that facilitated the emergence of the psychedelic and progressive country music trends interweave the stories of German folk tradition, the national preservation of American folk culture, and the development and resurgence of black music. While some of the narratives associated with the city's earlier sound faded into obscurity, these particular stories worked to carefully craft the identity of Capital city sound. Austin continues to mobilize particular music memories of its past to selectively re-work definitions of local nostalgia and re-invent regional identity. The next chapter will analyze the role of nostalgia and memory mediation associated with popular music and, specifically, will identify the ways in which people use memory and music to reconstruct perceptions history.

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

### CHAPTER III.

#### “YOU’RE GONNA MISS ME”: NOSTALGIA, REGIONAL IDENTITY AND THE MEDIATION OF COUNTERCULTURAL MEMORY

Velvet Underground, Janis Joplin, Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, and The Rolling Stones are just a few of the names immortalized within 1960s and 1970s popular music. A contemporary survey of the best-selling albums in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s would undoubtedly include some of the aforementioned artists. Individual Motown records, Bob Dylan, Jefferson Airplane, or Creedence Clearwater Revival might also be included. These are the names and musical brands that became emblematic of these decades.

In reality, the majority of the best-selling albums of the 1960s were the soundtracks for cinema box office hits such as *Mary Poppins*, *West Side Story*, and *The Sound of Music*.<sup>55</sup> This data presents intriguing questions about what we choose to remember of popular music and why we choose to remember it in a particular way.<sup>56</sup> Contemporary film also adds complexity to the memory of 1960s and 1970s popular music. Movies such as *Almost Famous*, *Pirate Radio*, and *Forrest Gump* all carry time period-specific themes and storylines that, accompanied by meticulously compiled soundtrack selections, shroud music history in contemporary perceptions of

---

<sup>55</sup> “Year End Charts – Year End Albums – The Billboard 200,” *Billboard*, Nielson Business Media, Inc., Accessed May 4, 2016.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

countercultural nostalgia.<sup>57</sup>

The ways in which actual record popularity of the period contrasts with current constructed memory is informative of the ways in which popular culture works to reshape the memories of popular music in each decade of twentieth-century American music. The way that people remember a time period or a specific event is affected by the music that accompanies those experiences, both individually and collectively. People imbed memories within the music and music subculture that they surround themselves with. The countercultural music scenes that developed in Austin are no exception. The music subcultures that emerged in Central Texas from the late 1960s through the 1970s not only gained Austin national notoriety, but they also changed the way Austinites chose to remember themselves, both regionally and musically.

This chapter focuses on the role that memory plays in the history of Austin's countercultural music scenes. It also examines how both the collective and individual memories of the music were employed to develop new definitions of musical nostalgia, establish regional identity, and ultimately, mold powerful examples of local music iconography. Situating Austin's countercultural music scenes within a memory studies framework permits the dissection of the ways in which communities utilize popular music and associated subcultures to reconstruct memories, local identity, and meanings of the past.

Themes of an imagined past are consistently dispersed throughout music. Nostalgia for a better time and place are musical archetypes for humans constructing

---

<sup>57</sup> All three of the films cited depict romanticized versions of late 1960s and early 1970s cultural environments through the strategic employment of popular music soundtracks and the nostalgia popular culture assigns to these experiences in the modern day.

collective memory and historical narrative to contemporarily suit their cultural needs. Decade after decade new groups with new ideas reconstitute meanings in music in order to transform or tweak collective identity.

Nostalgia is a common theme within popular music, deployed within songs themselves and as a relationship between the listener and the perceived past. With new musical trends and with every passing decade, the human construct of nostalgia is usually present. In the scope of this research, nostalgia refers to listeners and musicians using themes of an imagined past to re-work perceptions of history in order to serve cultural needs of the present. Similarly, the participants in Austin's countercultural music scene formed relationships with the music, the people, and the environment in which the music scenes thrived. Memories of those countercultural music scenes shaped the delightfully odd cultural heritage that Austin boasts today.

At the very primary basis of memory processes is the physiological and neurological response to music. In the last decade, numerous scientific studies have illuminated the neurological response to music within the human brain.<sup>58</sup> Specifically, many of these studies focus on the powerful connection between music and memory. We hear music differently than we hear spoken word. Neurologically, more parts of our brain are stimulated by music than any other audible experience. Because of this response, we attach ourselves to music and internalize it in such a way that it has the power to elicit highly personal modes of memory. While this work is positioned to examine historical

---

<sup>58</sup> See psychological studies of popular music and memory by Krumhansl and Zupnick, "Cascading Reminiscence Bumps in Popular Music," Department of Psychology at Cornell University, *Psychological Science*, October 2013, vol. 24. and Blais-Rochette and Miranda, "Music- Evoked Autobiographical Memories, Emotion Regulation, Time Perspective, and Mental Health," Department of Psychology at University of Ottawa, *European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music*, March 2016, vol. 20.

modes of memory, acknowledging the relationship between the human brain and music provides a foundation by which historians and other social scientists can understand why and how people use music subculture to gain cultural bonds.

In popular music scholarship, assigning historical significance to any music trend or movement relies heavily on the value placed on it by human experience, memory, and nostalgia. People are able to select which and whose memories to utilize and which memories to discard or forget. Without the mobilization of tradition and memory within music, historians would not be able to extract cultural context. Older generations of historians see conceptual tension between definitions of modernity and tradition where the latter is positioned as an idea that denies progress. On the contrary, tradition in music is a cultural “process of diffusion” that reuses ideas and memories from a particular time to rework and reconstruct systems of belief.<sup>59</sup> Viewing memory as a stagnant mode of historical narrative is outdated. Instead, memories and traditions are mobilized and reassembled over and over again to give new meaning to music and to the cultural context associated with it.

The countercultural music scenes of Austin during the 1960s and 1970s are excellent evidence of people mediating memory and mobilizing tradition. During the mid-twentieth century, young people renewed their interest in American folk music. Even though young people believed that this early folk music was somehow more culturally authentic, it was still a product of previous human mediation of tradition and memory. Early folklorists mediated which forms of music were of value to retain and pass on. By manipulating and selecting which forms of folk music to revere and study, these

---

<sup>59</sup> Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 27.

academics excluded a number of uniquely American forms of music early on.

During the 1930s and 1940s the Library of Congress employed folklorists to conduct field recordings throughout the southern and western United States to preserve African-American music and cowboy songs. These recordings played an integral role in the renewed discovery and revival of many blues artists who might have otherwise fallen into obscurity. As a result, these folklorists brought blues and folk music to a new, younger generation of listeners and aspiring musicians during the 1960s.<sup>60</sup> The new generation infatuated with this music assigned new meaning to early American folk by actively reassembling traditions and memories in the music to contextualize history and understand the world they lived in by channeling musical nostalgia.

With each generation of music lovers comes a new group of listeners ready to, whether consciously or subconsciously, reconstruct tradition and memory to suit their contemporary needs. The countercultural music scene in Austin did just that. Participants in the scene had a reverence for artists such as Mance Lipscomb, a blues artist discovered by folklorists during the folk revival. Young people that belonged to the countercultural music scene in Austin were enthralled with the unfamiliarity of Lipscomb's cultural upbringing. For example, Tary Owens, a musician and folklorist who went to college at the University of Texas and considered himself a part of the Austin counterculture, remembers Lipscomb as a father figure.<sup>61</sup> Counterculture musicians utilized the memories of older, supposedly more authentic, folk music influences to construct an imagined past to yearn for.

This process, one that takes particular forms of popular culture, popular music in

---

<sup>60</sup> John Szwed, *Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded the World*.

<sup>61</sup> *Dirt Road to Psychedelia*,

this case, and mediates the memories associated with it to create new perceptions of history, is related to memory frameworks posed by historians Pierre Nora and Alison Landsberg. Nora, an early pioneer of memory studies, regards memory as a mode of historical interpretation that “informs and is informed by lived experience.”<sup>62</sup> However, Nora asserts that there is an “irrevocable break” that occurs between history and memory processes.<sup>63</sup> By break, Nora means to say that history practices should aim to be more critical, detached from emotion, and analytical. However, his writing laments a “vanished form of relation to the past” in the face of modern mass culture where people no longer have the luxury of remaining “unconscious” to memory’s “successive deformations.”<sup>64</sup> Nora may claim historical objectivity, but his concern reveals his own application of nostalgia.

Alison Landsberg, a memory studies scholar at George Mason University, presents a somewhat similar framework to Nora’s in that Landsberg agrees that the process of memory aids historical interpretation. Landsberg’s framework, however, does not insist that historical interpretation of memory should strive for complete objectivity. She does not see mass culture and media as modern inventions designed to ruin the historical value of memory but, instead, see them as technological conduits through which new forms of memory are created. Even more remarkable, Landsberg proposes the idea that, through means of technological media, people are able to “experience an event

---

<sup>62</sup> James Berger, “Which Prosthetic? Mass Media, Narrative, Empathy, and Progressive Politics,” in *Rethinking History*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (December 2007), p. 598.

<sup>63</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *les lieux de memoire*,” in *Representations*, No. 26 (Spring 1989) p. 7.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.



or a past without having actually lived through it.”<sup>65</sup> She calls this idea prosthetic memory. The primary evidence that she uses directly related to popular culture is cinema, specifically films that are adaptations of historical events. Through the production of contemporary historical film, viewers are able to “inhabit” or “take on” other people’s memories regardless of lived experience.<sup>66</sup>

Several widely recognizable film titles, cited earlier, are perfect examples of Landsberg’s framework in action. All three of the films, *Almost Famous*, *Pirate Radio*, and *Forrest Gump*, have running thematic relationships with the 1960s, the 1970s, popular music, and popular culture. While none of these claim authentic ownership over any single historical narrative, each reinforces a time period’s perceived cultural environment through means of language, fashion trends, and most important to this scholarship, the carefully curated music soundtrack.

Landsberg’s framework works to extract the cultural context of history by means of film and memory, however, her framework is also applicable to the relationship between popular music and memory, and specifically, the countercultural sound of Austin during the 1960s and 1970s. Landsberg uses modern film as the form of popular media to understand memory reconstruction, but her concept is also widely applicable to the constantly changing terrain of American popular music trend. The countercultural music of Austin drew influence from earlier genres and trends to create new perceptions of musical nostalgia and new definitions of musical authenticity.

The rise of the folk scene during the early 1960s among university students

---

<sup>65</sup> Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 48.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

created a sense of community for musicians and those interested in the resurgence of old fashioned American music. Powell St. John, a regular folk musician at Threadgill's and one part of the folk trio called The Waller Creek Boys, recalls that his sparked interest in American folk stemmed from pure personal enjoyment. Unlike the beat generation before them, St. John claims that they "played guitars and banjos for their own amusement," and that the music was just a "way to pass the time."<sup>67</sup> The folkies of the early 1960s had just missed the beat movement, but still possessed a great yearning for what they considered true and authentic American folk music.

Thanks to the folklorists who recorded cowboy ballads and traditional African-American folk music, the folkies of Austin utilized this material to establish a new standard of cultural nostalgia by means of earlier trends in popular music. Just as Allison Landsberg asserted that contemporary film provides viewers a lens through which perceptions of unlived historical experience are formed, the early participants in the Austin scene used the unlived experience associated with traditional folk music to carry out the same sort of tradition mobilization. By 1964 and 1965, the young folkies at the university began organizing formal concerts in the student union featuring many of the musicians they had come to revere as "true blues musicians."<sup>68</sup> Texas blues and folk musicians such as Mance Lipscomb, Robert Shaw, Grey Ghost, and even Kenneth Threadgill himself headlined these performances.

Although usually a singularly white experience, it is important to note that many young people who came of age during the 1960s encountered a new, unfamiliar sense of autonomy and independence. The young adults of the 1960s were a new breed of

---

<sup>67</sup> *Dirt Road to Psychedelia.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

American youth. They grew up during one of the most economically prosperous eras in American history. Young adults had time for leisure, owned automobiles, and increasingly sought post-secondary education. The emergence of the teenager as a new demographic introduced a sociological tension where young people had no generational guidance in terms of memory and could not easily recycle the traditions and memories of their parents to contextualize the world around them. Instead, young people turned to music to understand historical memory.

Even as electrified rock and roll gained traction in the Austin area, reverence for elements of traditional American folk still remained integral in psychedelic counterculture. Aside from sound, the most obvious disconnect between the earlier folk scene and the psychedelic scene was a shift in drug culture. Psychotropic and hallucinogenic drugs and rock and roll gained popularity among musicians and young people in the area by the mid 1960s, but some local psychedelic musicians, specifically the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Elevators, managed to continue active engagement with folk culture. The Elevators' signature sound stemmed from the use of an electric jug, an instrument traditionally used in folk music. Essentially, the instrument is an empty jug played by pursing the lips and making a low-pitched buzzing sound.<sup>69</sup> The Elevators amplified the jug and pioneered a louder, highly distinct, almost alien-like sound.

Although the sound of Austin music shifted towards a harder, funkier, electrified version of its folk predecessor, the strong connection to and love for blues music never faded from the psychedelic scene. At the Vulcan Gas Company, many of the biggest names in blues graced the stage of Austin's psychedelic rock dance hall. Muddy Waters,

---

<sup>69</sup> *The Jug Bands*, Smithsonian Folkways Records, Liner Notes Edited by Samuel Charters, 1963.

Jimmy Reed, Freddie King, Fred McDowell, and Big Mama Thornton are just a few of the blues greats who played at the Vulcan. The eagerness to include these earlier blues figures in the psychedelic scene of Austin is evidence of musical nostalgia for non-lived historical experience.

Although the national collective memory of late 1960s countercultural music scenes extend a somewhat exaggerated and romanticized historical narrative, there is value in their cultural context because they reveal which idealized forms of historical memory people choose to regularly employ. Regardless of factual validity, collective memory divulges the “history-making practices we have inherited from the past” and reveals how humans make sense of the world around them, both past and present.<sup>70</sup>

National collective memory of the counterculture also serves as a general historical framework within which historians can situate other versions of countercultural collective memory to add dimension and complexity to what is often an over-simplified historical portrait.

The psychedelic music scene in Austin that developed in the late 1960s and the memories associated with it both add to and challenge the national narrative of counterculture. The story of countercultural music in Central Texas poses a unique angle from which to examine the larger landscape of American music at this time, but it also works to point out how unique these music scenes were in comparison to their regional context. Local memory of counterculture helps dispel wider contemporary myths about how widespread and acceptable it was to be a participant in these music scenes, particularly in Texas. Even during the early years of the folk revival scene, Powell St.

---

<sup>70</sup> David Glassberg, “Public History and the Study of Memory,” in *The Public Historian*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) p. 23.

John remembers how the majority in the university environment saw them as “proto-freaks” and “non-conformists.”<sup>71</sup> Don Taylor, a sound engineer for the Vulcan who also worked at San Francisco’s Avalon Ballroom, expressed the social severity for young men who chose to take on the countercultural aesthetic by explaining that if, “[you] grow your hair out twelve inches long, you find out what it means to be a second class citizen.”<sup>72</sup>

One of the best examples of this marginalization occurred in the caption of a photograph in the University of Texas yearbook in 1963. Janis Joplin is pictured with the Waller Creek Boys, Powell St. John and Kirk Lanier, during an organized sing-sing in the student union. St. John holds a harmonica while Lanier plays the guitar, a banjo leaning against the wall behind him. Holding her guitar in one hand, a cigarette in the other, and her voice pointed upward in mid-song, Joplin looks rather disheveled. Her hair is messy and frizzy and she wears pants and a dark baggy sweater. At the bottom of the photo the caption reads, “These non-conformists are the Wednesday Night Folk Singers.”<sup>73</sup> This caption works to highlight the institution’s perception of those who fell outside of the societal mainstream.

The progressive country music scene of the 1970s followed the same pattern of memory mediation using musical nostalgia. Patrons of this music subculture still revered early American folk tradition, but a renewed interest in country music and cowboy culture dominated this shift in Austin music. This period in Austin music, however, is one where bold assertions of regional identity begin to make national waves in the music community. The return of Willie Nelson to Texas, the countercultural melting pot of the

---

<sup>71</sup> *Dirt Road to Psychedelia*.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> “These non-conformists are the Wednesday night Folk Singers,” *The Cactus Yearbook of the University of Texas*, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, photo, 1963.

Armadillo World Headquarters, and eventually, the emergence of Austin as a nationally renowned center of musical creativity jolted new life into capital city sound.

Elements of countercultural fashion and marijuana tolerance were still embraced in the progressive country scene. While cowboy boots, gingham, and western-dress became popular fashion choices within the scene, it was not uncommon to see “naked midriffs” and “bare hippie feet” or to catch the passing of a marijuana cigarette from one person to another out of the corner of your eye at the Armadillo World Headquarters.<sup>74</sup> What performers in this music scene managed was to “distill a blend of music that reflects the background, outlook, and needs of a unique Austin audience.”<sup>75</sup>

Young people within this scene used the subculture to address the ideological tension between coming of age in a Texas version of counterculture while, at the same time, yearning for an earlier, simpler time. For example, at a 1973 Willie Nelson concert at the Armadillo World Headquarters, onlookers Jan Reid and Don Roth illustrate the crowd’s nostalgic presence:

The audience is largely comprised of middle class youth who hail from Texas cities yet are rarely more than two or three generations removed from more rural times; they came to Austin because the feel of those rural times still lingers there. In a way, they are a new breed of conservative who despair over big-city hype and 20<sup>th</sup>-century progress and romanticizes “getting back to the land.” However, they are inescapably children of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. They grew up with their fingers on radio dials and stereo headsets clamped over their ears. Their need for music is insatiable.<sup>76</sup>

This description perfectly aligns with Landsberg’s concept of prosthetic memory while also highlighting this group’s newly constructed assertion of regional identity. Patrons of progressive country used music to collectively reconstruct memory of non-lived

---

<sup>74</sup> Jan Reid and Don Roth, “The Coming of Redneck Hip,” p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

historical experience and, in doing so, established a contemporary understanding of the past. Progressive country music served as the cultural medium through which people were able to “inhabit” or “take on” another’s memories in order to experience a part of the past without actually living through it.<sup>77</sup>

Participants within music subcultures, particularly the counterculture of 1960s Austin, use music to internally differentiate between the “psychological self and the self as a social entity.”<sup>78</sup> In Austin’s countercultural music scenes, young people participated to produce cultural cohesion and a sense of communal identity, but in turn, they also utilized this form of social interaction to make their own highly personalized connections with the past.

The individual memories associated with Austin’s countercultural music scenes also help historians identify narrative detractions that challenge both the regional and national collective memories of the 1960s and 1970s. While collective memory is helpful to contextualize the larger ideas of a time period or group of people, individual memory serves as a reminder that recollection is not monolithic. Over time, the collective memory associated with popular music trends to create cultural scripts that have the potential to generalize or dilute historical narrative. Cultural scripts are the constructed and widely accepted versions of stories that groups use to shape personal memories to fit a largely recognized narrative.<sup>79</sup>

It is important to acknowledge the memory of those countercultural participants

---

<sup>77</sup> Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, p. 48.

<sup>78</sup> Aaron Fox, *Real Country: Music and Language in Working Class Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) p. 125.

<sup>79</sup> Lindsay Dodd, “Small Fish, Big Pond: Using Single Oral History Narrative to Reveal Broader Social Change,” *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject* (London & New York: Routledge Press, 2013), p. 37.

who do not look back on their younger days with a yearning need to return to the supposed golden age of Austin music. Stephen Harrigan, long-time writer at *Texas Monthly*, recalls his time in the Austin counterculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s without any twinge of starry-eyed longing. He admits that the city had “an offbeat pulse of energy that was intoxicating,” but describes the social environment of Austin as one that had “an insistence on its own laid-back wonder.”<sup>80</sup>

Harrigan feels that the excitement of Austin’s countercultural music scenes facilitated his own personal stagnation. His individual memory recollection reveals a point of view that others might have experienced as well, but because of pre-constructed cultural scripts that propagate a more nostalgic collective narrative of Austin counterculture, Harrigan’s memory falls by the wayside of contemporary historical perception.

The countercultural music scenes of Austin during the 1960s and 1970s are both a unique case study of popular music history and of memory studies. Music scenes and the memories that people attach to them certainly reveal generational relevancy and the fluid nature of popular music trends, but they also unveil human patterns of memory reconstruction and behavior. This chapter focused on Austin as a case study to examine ways that people use popular music to rework definitions of nostalgia, and as a result, create new perceptions of regional identity. The countercultural music scenes of Austin are long gone, but the memories of these subcultures serve as intangible cultural remnants upon which present day cultural heritage is established.

As memory re-shaped the historical memory of popular music in Austin, over

---

<sup>80</sup> Stephen Harrigan, “We’ll Always Have Austin,” *Texas Monthly*, June 2010, p. 6.



time new symbols of collective experience emerged. The next chapter focuses on the dominant forms of iconography that grew out of the psychedelic and progressive country music scenes. From the emblematic image of the armadillo to the internationally recognizable profile of Willie Nelson's braids and bandana, the iconography associated with Austin music serve as remnants of mediated countercultural memory.

## CHAPTER IV.

### COSMIC TOTEMS AND COUNTERCULTURAL IDOLS: MASTER SYMBOLS AND THE ICONOGRAPHY OF AUSTIN MUSIC

The previous chapter examined the role of nostalgia, memory, and regional identity in the legacy of Austin's countercultural music scene. Out of that mediation grew widely recognizable and enduring images and icons. Boots, longhorns, and other images of cowboy culture tend to dominate as the most emblematic versions of Texas within Southwestern iconography. Meant to be representative of particular cultural experiences, these symbols developed as a type of shorthand to highlight selected historical memories. This chapter explores the development of iconography directly related to Austin music through the analysis of the armadillo as a countercultural totem of the late 1960s and of Willie Nelson as a local and national symbol of 1970s Austin music.

The analysis of music iconography reveals the ways in which people choose to package an era or subculture in a way that creates widespread and easily accessible recognition. The iconography of Austin music helps historians understand which memories and narratives are brought forward and which ones are set aside. The analyses of the aforementioned icons in Austin music will work to highlight the socially constructed, sometimes fabricated, meanings ascribed to the city's story of counterculture.

Years before the armadillo was an officially designated mascot for the state of Texas, the hard-shelled critter became a countercultural icon in Austin. The armadillo did

not show up in Texas until the mid-nineteenth century and migrated into the Hill Country region by the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>81</sup> Less than a century after the creature made its debut in the Austin area, local poster artist Jim Franklin, later called the “Michelangelo of armadillo art,” began using illustrations of the animal in his artwork.<sup>82</sup> Throughout the late 1960s Franklin drew armadillos for his designs on cover art, handbills, and even used the animal as a map marker for points of interest in Austin for a local underground newspaper. He drew the map as an aerial view with “gigantic armadillos wandering around” to mark destinations.<sup>83</sup>

While Franklin’s creativity gave life to the illustration of the armadillo, it was not until Eddie Wilson, co-founder of the Armadillo World Headquarters, adopted the name for his rock and country performance venue that its role as a countercultural symbol took form. The Armadillo World Headquarters, located in a former National Guard armory, played host to a wide range of musical acts, but at its core, served as the “nexus for the cosmic cowboy sound of Austin.”<sup>84</sup> Wilson admits that the selection of the armadillo as the namesake of the space “had no significance at first” and that the name “just came to him as he was walking in downtown Austin.”<sup>85</sup>

However, when Jim Franklin became the “resident artist” of the Armadillo World Headquarters, he used the building’s namesake to create bold and colorful murals filled

---

<sup>81</sup> Larry L. Smith, “Armadillo,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/tca02>, accessed June 05, 2016, uploaded on June 9, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Hendrik Hertzberg, “The Armadillo Man,” *The New Yorker*, December 11, 1971, p. 41.

<sup>84</sup> Seth Bovey, “The Texas Armadillo: From Psychedelic Totem to Regional Icon,” *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2003, p. 10.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

with armadillos throughout the interior and exterior of the space.<sup>86</sup> Franklin “took the image of the Texas rodent” and “made sure that the people of Austin knew what it stood for” by making the “familiar little mammal synonymous with this new place to hear music.”<sup>87</sup> Whether Eddie Wilson and Jim Franklin knew it at the time or not, their version of the Texas nine-banded armadillo would soon take on new life as the countercultural mascot for redneck rock subculture throughout most of the 1970s.

The image of the armadillo showed up on album covers, on clothing, in beer commercials, and by the late 1970s the imagery’s graphic influence had “spread like a virus” to express “that which is Texan.”<sup>88</sup> The use of the animal as a countercultural symbol of Austin music even managed to transcend the regional context of the Hill Country. One of the most interesting and surprising cases of this occurred in the form of the International Armadillo Confab and Exposition hosted by the city of Victoria from 1971 until 1976. Victoria, a city one-fourth of the size of Austin during the majority of the 1970s, is roughly a two-hour drive southeast of Austin towards the Gulf of Mexico.

The festival utilized the armadillo motif to create an eclectic array of themed activities from armadillo racing to crowning the Armadillo Queen.<sup>89</sup> The schedule of events listed body-painting contest and even allotted a time slot at the end of the night specifically for street dancing.<sup>90</sup> Aside from a slew of souvenirs such as t-shirts embellished with cartoon armadillos, the event also featured a diverse range of live music

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Rush Evans, “Home with the Armadillo: Austin’s Legendary Armadillo World Headquarters,” *DISCoveries*, March 1996, p. 25.

<sup>88</sup> Bovey, “The Texas Armadillo,” p. 8.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>90</sup> John Roberts, “Its That Time Again: Here Come De Armadillo Man,” *Victoria Advocate*, June 09, 1972.

including country, rock, and German polka and, of course, the festival offered patrons a wealth of cold beer.



Figure 3: T-shirt from the 1976 International Armadillo Confab and Exposition in Victoria, Texas.  
Courtesy Jennifer Ruch.

By its third year, the Victoria Armadillo Confab and Exposition had even gained some national attention. One attendee remembers his sadness in missing the 1973 festival after a family death forced him to move to upstate New York. To his dismay, however, a radio host in Binghamton, New York did a live broadcast of the festivities.<sup>91</sup> The former

---

<sup>91</sup> Tom Kovach, "Piece of Victoria's History Missing," Letter to the Editor, *Victoria Advocate*, September 10, 2010.

festival attendee never thought the Armadillo Confab, held in the relatively small city of Victoria, would get attention from the media across the country. Seth Bovey, a professor of English at Louisiana State University at Alexandria, recalls his expectations for attending the Confab and Exposition as a teenager in 1973 by exclaiming that he and his buddies believed they were headed from Louisiana to the “Texas equivalent of Woodstock.”<sup>92</sup> While the festival might not have rivaled the intensity of Woodstock, it was an offshoot of the regional environment cultivated by Austin’s Armadillo World Headquarters and a taste of capital city counterculture.

Retrospective iconographic analyses of the armadillo provide sociological and personal parallels between counterculture and Austin music. Looking back on the music and social environment of the late 1960s and early to mid-1970s in Austin, the contemporary role of the armadillo as an ambassador to nonconformist culture provides a far more embellished and carefully constructed narrative. In a later interview, Eddie Wilson points out strong, albeit retrospectively reconstructed, connections between the Austin counterculture and the armadillo:

Armadillos and hippies are somewhat alike, because they’re maligned and picked on. Armadillos like to sleep all day and roam all night. They share their homes with others. People think they’re smelly and ugly and they keep their noses in the grass. They’re paranoid. But they’ve got one characteristic that nobody can knock. They survive.<sup>93</sup>

Although Wilson admits early on that his decision to use the armadillo as the namesake of his performance space was pure happenstance, his contemporary perception of the armadillo as a countercultural icon reveals the fluid nature of iconographical designation.

Other contemporary analyses of the armadillo assert the idea that the nature of the

---

<sup>92</sup> Bovey, “The Texas Armadillo,” p. 12.

<sup>93</sup> Eddie Wilson, interview with Rush Evans for “Home With the Armadillo,” p. 25.

animal itself is representative of bigger and broader social and political agendas within the counterculture. Seth Bovey argued that those within the Texas counterculture made a conscious decision to imitate the inherent nature of the armadillo as creature of passive, non-violent tendencies. His argument goes as far as to suggest that just as hippies “relied upon gathering power by amassing huge numbers of individuals who all held the same values,” armadillos represented strength in numbers and, because of their swift migration into North America, emulating the armadillo somehow paralleled “their hopes for a revolution of the masses.”<sup>94</sup>

Bovey’s ideas about the armadillo as an icon, while seemingly far-fetched, add another layer of complexity to the way people use historical generalizations to reconstruct perceptions of musical narratives. He takes the image of the armadillo and creates an analysis based on retrospective collective memory of the Austin countercultural music experience. Today, the armadillo has become an undeniable element of Texas culture, but its humble symbolic beginnings as a countercultural mascot exemplifies the evolution and fluidity of cultural iconography.

When the progressive country music scene took Austin music by storm in the early 1970s, one figure in country music dominated as the subculture’s cosmic ambassador both locally and in the national media. Willie Nelson, legendary country music artist and songwriter, serves as probably the most widely recognizable form of Austin music iconography. Today, Willie Nelson’s name calls forth visions of long braids accompanied by a neatly folded bandana tied around his forehead. His laid back attitude, carefree demeanor, and particularly, his open use of marijuana are all characteristics now

---

<sup>94</sup> Bovey, “The Texas Armadillo,” p. 12.



synonymous with the redheaded stranger. When Willie began his songwriting career in the early 1960s, however, he was a far cry from the countercultural music icon that Austinites, Texans, and the rest of the country came to embrace by the end of the 1970s.



Figure 4: Willie Nelson T-shirt with the caption "Austin is Willie Weir." Courtesy Jennifer Ruch.

Nelson began his songwriting career at the young age of six, jotting down lyrics in his composition books. He played with a polka band as a young boy and, later, with a



western swing band before he joined the Air Force. There, he had ample time to refine his mastery of songwriting.<sup>95</sup> It was not until the early 1960s, however, that Nelson found high profile recognition for his songwriting abilities within the Nashville country music scene. Many of his early hits such as “Night Life,” “Hello Walls,” and “Crazy” earned him an exceptionally large salary and a notable run as a talented songwriter in the Nashville country music machine.<sup>96</sup>

Despite the money and notoriety as a songwriter, other artists made Nelson’s early songs famous. Patsy Cline and Faron Young are two of the artists who recorded Nelson’s songs and gained national attention for their renditions. The country music that came out of Nashville during the early 1960s had an “assembly line” feel to it.<sup>97</sup> Artists had a smooth sound and a polished look. Given Nelson’s unconventional sound and appearance, the task of achieving commercial success as a recording artist and performer in the Nashville music machine was not an easy one.

In 1972 Willie Nelson re-located to Austin and, upon surveying the cultural and musical terrain of the city, he believed that “something is going on down here.”<sup>98</sup> That something was a reference to the emerging progressive country scene among a younger generation of music fans. He was not ignorant to the fact that this new audience was “a little younger” and a “little crazier about drugs than he was,” but Nelson wanted to “tap into their audiences” and create a unique musical experience within the Texas

---

<sup>95</sup> Alan Light, “Lone Star Superstar,” *The New York Times*, June 01, 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/01/books/reviews/Light-t.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/01/books/reviews/Light-t.html?_r=0), accessed June 05, 2016.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Joe Nick Patoski, *Willie Nelson: An Epic Life*, (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2009) p. 233.

counterculture.<sup>99</sup>

By 1972, Nelson was the “talk of the town” as the “new hot act at the Armadillo.”<sup>100</sup> With Nelson at the forefront of the progressive country scene, Austin began to experience regional and national attention. He joined forces with a local Austin radio station, KOKE-FM, to get progressive country on the radio alongside the nationally recognized rock music of the day. Through Nelson’s music, he also promoted Lone Star beer. Although he did not receive direct payment for the endorsement, Lone Star agreed to promote Nelson’s performances through concert posters and ads.<sup>101</sup> Even though he already drank Lone Star off stage, Nelson understood that by promoting the beer in his songs and during concerts he could potentially eliminate the lingering stigma that Lone Star was the beer of the generation before them. By establishing relationships with local industries for promotion and exposure, Nelson defined the cultural elements that accompanied participation in the progressive country scene in Austin.

Willie Nelson transcended the musical sphere in Austin to create enduring business connections that ultimately reinforced perceptions of regional identity, countercultural memory, and Texas culture. He came to represent an experience in Austin and his image is still one of the most recognizable forms of iconography within the city’s music history. However, it is important to point out that there is a specific version of Nelson that became iconography. Long braids, a folded bandana tied around the head, and unruly facial hair are the primary physical characteristics attributed to his signature style. Today, this is the most identifiable image of Nelson and serves as the

---

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 238

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 239

iconographical version.

A 1973 interview at Aqua Festival, a then annual event in Austin that attempted to promote tourism, showed a clean-shaven, relatively shorthaired Willie Nelson in a cowboy hat and a burnt orange University of Texas T-shirt.<sup>102</sup> Despite his growing presence in the Austin music scene and emerging role as a spokesman for progressive country, Nelson does not begin to exhibit elements of his more recognizable style until around 1975 when he started to wear the tied bandana and don longer facial hair. A braided Willie Nelson does not become a consistent image until almost 1980.

Even though the Armadillo World Headquarters shut down in 1980 and the progressive country scene began to fade from Austin's music radar, the iconographic vision of Willie Nelson had only just begun taking shape. Although his style evolved over the course of a decade, the way that Austin chooses to visually remember Nelson reveals how a community engages in retrospective memory mediation to construct a particular form of iconography that is both widely recognizable and accessible beyond geographical context.

Today, Willie Nelson's facial profile is internationally recognizable. His braids alone have become their own form of thematic representation regularly employed to embody the spirit of 1970s country music. Nelson illustrated a subculture rooted in Texas tradition and elements of counterculture that, as a result, established a unique brand of country music specific to a time period and a specific sense of geography. His modern day cultural role breaches those confines to represent a generalized and selectively

---

<sup>102</sup> Interview and Performance by Willie Nelson, No. 2, Aqua Fest, The Wallace and Euna Pryor Collection, Texas Archive of the Moving Image, 1973.

constructed definition of all that is “decidedly American.”<sup>103</sup>

Imagine the irony when New York fashion designer, Mara Hoffman, used Willie Nelson’s braid aesthetic as a theme for her Spring 2016 clothing line. Dressing runway models in thirty inch braided extensions accessorized by tied bandanas across their foreheads with “1970s Americana” as the designer’s sole creative inspiration presents an odd juxtaposition in contemporary culture.<sup>104</sup> Nelson’s image shifts from one synonymous with a particular musical experience in the specific regional context of Texas to one that becomes representative of American cultural heritage and folklore grown out of the 1970s. In 1983, Waylon Jennings received Nelson’s snipped braids, still red at the time, as a gift from Johnny Cash and June Carter to celebrate Jennings’ sobriety.<sup>105</sup> While iconic enough in 1983 to cut and give as a celebratory gift to a fellow musician, those same braids sold at Waylon Jennings’ estate auction in 2014 to an anonymous bidder for an astonishing \$37,000.<sup>106</sup> As a performer who has long represented rural, working-class country music embellished with a twist of hippie heritage, his present-day identifier as a commercial commodity adds complexity to his contemporary cultural status.

From T-shirts to Halloween costumes, his now iconic look is a distinguishable element of twentieth-century American popular culture. The moment that visitors touch down at Austin-Bergstrom International airport Willie Nelson merchandise is widely

---

<sup>103</sup> Katheryn Erickson, “Deep Question: Would You Wear Willie Nelson’s Braids?,” *Glamour Magazine*, September 23, 2015, <http://www.glamour.com/story/fashion-week-willie-nelson-braids>, accessed June 9, 2016.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Daniel Kreps, “Willie Nelson’s Braids Sell for \$37,000 at Auction,” *Rolling Stone*, October 08, 2014, <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/willie-nelsons-braids-sell-for-37-000-at-auction-20141008>, accessed June 09, 2016.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

available for purchase throughout souvenir shops. The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin dedicates a section of their gift shop to the red headed stranger. In figure four, Nelson's image is made up by an illustration of his face in bold, psychedelic coloring. His long braids hang as the words "Austin is Willie Weird" float over the entirety of the cowboy hat atop Nelson's head. This combination of elements, printed on a T-shirt, is an iconographical representation of Austin's self-designated perception of its countercultural and musical history.

The iconography associated with popular music divulges a number of intricate history making practices within regionally and nationally recognized subcultures. The ways that groups choose to retrospectively brand or package an experience tell historians a story that interweaves historical narrative and modern day cultural perceptions of those narratives. The images and symbols that come to represent music scenes are the selected products of interconnected historiography and memory mediation. The armadillo and Willie Nelson are only a few of the city's most identifiable examples of Austin music iconography, but these are carefully curated forms of visual representation that inform and continually reinforce a community's contemporary sense of place.

Ultimately, the establishment of iconography plays an integral role in the construction of cultural heritage. The next chapter draws upon the tangible and intangible remnants of Austin's countercultural music history to understand the development and application of cultural heritage in the capital city. The next and final chapter also works to reveal the interconnected and dependent nature of musical nostalgia, memory mediation, the emergence of selected iconography, and the subsequent construction of cultural heritage.

## CHAPTER V.

### REVERBERATION: THE DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGNATION OF POPULAR MUSIC AS CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE CAPITAL CITY

The contemporary cultural landscape of Austin reveals the ways in which popular music history and memory are re-manipulated to produce both regional identity and an established sense of heritage rooted in the city's countercultural sound. The previous chapters worked to connect the general popular music historiography of Austin with memory, identity, and iconographical processes. While each chapter examined those roles individually, the construction of cultural heritage based on countercultural music is the culmination of these methodological relationships. Today, Austin is an international hub for music that consciously presents itself as a cultural mosaic rooted in countercultural sound. This chapter is a contemporary analysis of Austin's popular music history as cultural heritage.

In the introduction, heritage is loosely categorized as a practice where the present day "mediation of the past" poses important questions about why and how localities preserve any one particular historical experience and use it to employ a regional or collective sense of tradition.<sup>107</sup> It is important to note, however, that as practitioners of public history continue to grant vocal agency and historical inclusivity to a wider audience, heritage discourse in the twenty-first century cultural landscape increasingly

---

<sup>107</sup> N. C. Johnson, "*Framing the Past*," p. 204.

becomes a pluralistic entity that “all but defies definition.”<sup>108</sup> This developing reality within heritage discourse creates challenges for the ways historians and the public choose to identify, “represent, curate, or package” popular music history as an emerging form of cultural heritage.<sup>109</sup>

Preservation Austin, formerly known as the Heritage Society of Austin, is a non-profit organization that serves as an extension of city preservation efforts. This organization attempts to save “the good stuff” in Austin’s architectural, social, and cultural history by means of historic preservation.<sup>110</sup> Their efforts include the designation of historic homes, local historic districts, and offer self-guided historic tours of the city, however, the organization is focused on navigating the preservation of the built environment. In order to understand the preservation challenges associated with popular music as heritage in Austin, it is necessary to examine the ways in which the concept of heritage evolved methodologically and how its discourse conventionally treats the concept of popular music and culture as a valid form of heritage. There are several heritage experts whose research molded the conceptual frameworks for heritage discussion. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the work of David Lowenthal, Raphael Samuel, and Dirk Spennemann accentuate the wide range of scholarly heritage discourse and help explain some of the long-standing definitions of cultural heritage within the academic sphere.

David Lowenthal, a heritage historian and geographer at the University College

---

<sup>108</sup> David Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), p. 94

<sup>109</sup> Les Roberts, “Talkin Bout my Generation: Popular Music and the Culture of Heritage,” (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 265

<sup>110</sup> Preservation Austin, <https://www.preservationaustin.org/>, accessed June 20, 2016.

London, spent the majority of his scholarly career exploring the relationship between popular forms of heritage, nostalgia, and the academic processes of traditional history. Lowenthal insisted that heritage is the tool by which humans create personal connections with the past and shape their collective identity. He drew a distinct line between heritage and history where the academic practice of historical methods is superior to that of popular heritage. Lowenthal understood the popularization of heritage as a kind of cultural fetish, its value incalculable by scholarly standards, where its worth is “gauged not by critical tests but by current potency.”<sup>111</sup> While Lowenthal viewed popular culture as heritage as a trend, he pointed out that this particular form of heritage possesses a collective sense of contemporary relevancy. History and its practitioners thrive on primary evidence and consistency, yet heritage is no more than the human need to contextualize and personalize history. Lowenthal created a bold separation between heritage and history, but the usefulness in his theory is based in identifying the subjective nature of popular heritage as a result of social pressure and commercial popularity.

Lowenthal’s perception of the relationship between traditional historical practice and the emergence of popular music heritage was pessimistic at best, but his theoretical views reveal how earlier heritage discourse viewed forms of popular culture, including popular music, as reputable cultural heritage. Raphael Samuel, a historian of heritage and memory, understood the fluid nature of heritage application positively. He focused on bottom-up history and sought to “re-discover the lives of millions overlooked by historians of big names and big events.”<sup>112</sup> To Samuel, “heritage is a nomadic term,

---

<sup>111</sup> David Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past*, p. 127.

<sup>112</sup> Mervyn Jones, “Raphael Samuel,” *The Times*, December 11, 1996.



which travels easily, and puts down roots” in “seemingly uncompromising terrain”<sup>113</sup> He celebrated the pluralistic nature of heritage application and, furthermore, applauded its growing social inclusivity.

Dirk Spennemann, a cultural heritage scholar in Australia, proposed a future framework for cultural heritage scholarship. Spennemann specializes in the study of future heritage. This emerging subfield of heritage addresses the issues surrounding conceptual contextualization of current and emerging forms of cultural heritage in order to predict future trends. Compared to Lowenthal and Samuel, Spennemann’s definition of heritage does not intrude upon the traditional process of history making but is simply the “result of human interaction with the environment and one another.”<sup>114</sup> Spennemann’s strength is twofold. He acknowledges that cultural heritage is a human construct but he also he introduces the idea that heritage practices are not for future generations. Spennemann emphasizes that historians should be careful regarding that assertion in the name of preservation, and instead, practitioners of history should view heritage preservation as evidence of current historical relevancy and cultural potency.

Lowenthal, Samuel, and Spennemann provide strong theoretical foundation in their argument for the place of cultural heritage in historical practice and preservation. However, these scholars do not examine the role of heritage in direct relation to popular music subculture. Their impact for the purposes here lies in confirmation that humans construct cultural heritage by selecting elements that they deem valuable or symbolic of the past, “expressive of desire rather than necessary continuity,” and relate them to

---

<sup>113</sup> Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso Press, 1994), p. 205

<sup>114</sup> Dirk Spennemann, “Beyond Preserving the Future for the Past: Contemporary Relevance and Historical Preservation,” *CRM Journal* (Summer 2011).

contemporary culture and society.<sup>115</sup>

There are four major methodological tensions within cultural heritage scholarship that historically prohibited the conceptualization of popular music as a viable and reputable form of cultural heritage. First, heritage is conventionally treated as something completely detached from popular culture. Popular culture and music are excluded from the heritage categories because they are somehow constructed in opposition to the traditional definitions of cultural heritage and labeled as “commercial, inauthentic, and so unworthy” of official designation as significant aspects of cultural heritage.<sup>116</sup>

Second, a major tension within heritage discourse is that of shared authority. Discussions of heritage and the authority to designate cultural value trace a hierarchy ranging from institutionalized consensus-driven versions of historical narrative to what is categorized as the “multi-vocal nature of subaltern and dissenting heritage” within localities<sup>117</sup> This hierarchy highlights the juxtaposition of standardized, institutionalized versions of heritage discourse and its regional counterpart that relies on the expression of individual and unofficial heritage designation.

Third, heritage is often researched in terms of duality. For example, localism versus globalism, regional versus national, and resident versus tourist are all versions of heritage discourse that accentuate how the “positionality of their agency” plays an

---

<sup>115</sup> J. Blake, “On Defining Cultural Heritage,” *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, vol. 49 (2000), p. 68.

<sup>116</sup> Andy Bennett, “Heritage Rock: Rock Music, Representation, and Heritage Discourse,” *Poetics*, vol. 39 (2009), p. 477.

<sup>117</sup> Amanda Brandellero and Susanne Janssen, “Popular Music as Cultural Heritage: Scoping Out the Field of Practice” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (London: Routledge, 2014) p. 225.

integral role in shaping, reconstructing, and reproducing heritage practices.<sup>118</sup> Popular music as cultural heritage requires abandoning this dualistic approach and, instead, accentuating the value of local and national narrative interplay. The larger collective memory of popular music history serves as a frame of reference and context where general aspects of popular music such as genre, place, and widespread music trends inform a broader aesthetic framework. At the local level, music subcultures incorporate elements of the broader framework to provide a nurturing creative environment that breed “home-grown talent” where both individualized and collective popular memories are reconstructed and reworked to foster a distinct sense of regional identity.<sup>119</sup> To conceptualize both formal and informal realms of popular music heritage, it is vital to think of heritage as a “reflection of a chain of popular memory.”<sup>120</sup>

The fourth and final flaw that often poses challenges for the inclusion of popular music as heritage in conventional academic discourse is the requirement of materiality. Materiality of heritage refers to the tangibility of the cultural heritage in question. Conventional heritage discourse tends to designate structures, objects, and other physical embodiments associated with the cultural terrain as reputable forms of heritage. Tangible cultural heritage, in the case of Austin music, becomes the human relationship with both the built environment and the material objects associated with the countercultural music scenes.

---

<sup>118</sup> C.G. Ashworth and J. Tunbridge, “Whose Tourist-Historic City? Localizing the Global and Globalizing the Local,” in *A Companion to Tourism (Massachusetts: Wiley & Blackwell, 2004)* p. 212.

<sup>119</sup> Brandellero and Janssen, “Popular Music as Cultural Heritage,” p. 226.

<sup>120</sup> David C. Harvey, “Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents: Temporality, Meaning, and Scope of Heritage Studies,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (2001), p. 322.



Figure 5: 2006 Commemorative plaque at the site of the Armadillo World Headquarters. Courtesy Larry D. Moore.

Unfortunately, many of the physical remnants in the built environment related to the psychedelic and progressive country music scenes either no longer exist or have been repurposed. The Vulcan Gas Company shut down in 1970, however, the physical structure is intact and is in use today as the present location of a clothing store, but the cultural value of its music history is difficult to physically preserve or commemorate without access to its original context. The building in which the Armadillo World Headquarters operated was demolished not long after the venue closed. A high-rise office building replaced the old National Guard armory. The only indicator of the site's history is a small commemorative plaque, dedicated by the City of Austin in 2006, where the iconic venue once stood. Ten years after its dedication, the plaque is faded, unmaintained, and yellowed from sun exposure.

Structural designation of music heritage, particularly performance spaces, is a difficult task simply because of fluidity in music trends and the changing use of urban structures over time. Even for performance spaces in Austin that still operate today, officially designating a site as cultural heritage is a complex process. For example, the Victory Grill in East Austin is still operational and the site, which serves as one of last remaining physical remnants on the chitlin' circuit, holds both a national and state heritage designation.

The National Register of Historic Places listed Victory Grill in 1998 and the Texas Historical Commission dedicated a subject marker to the performance space in 2009.<sup>121</sup> The primary reason that the venue has a subject marker is to avoid maintenance obligations that come with the state protection of a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark. Under this legal protection, any alteration or renovation made to a structure that might compromise the structural or historical integrity of the building must be reported the Texas Historical Commission within ninety days or risk the loss of designation.<sup>122</sup> This condition reveals the contemporary tension between legally designating performance spaces related to Austin's popular music history and the changing demands of running a commercial establishment.

The heritage of popular music in Austin is mostly intangible, however. The concept of intangible cultural heritage "can be a difficult one to pin down" because it is a "recognition of the innate heritage value of the culture that people practice as a part of

---

<sup>121</sup> Victory Grill, Texas Historic Sites Atlas, Historical Marker, <https://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/>, accessed June 14, 2016.

<sup>122</sup> "Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks," Texas Historical Commission, <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/recorded-texas-historic-landmarks>, accessed June 14, 2016.

their daily lives.”<sup>123</sup> Intangible music heritage usually refers to a set of traditions or cultural legacies employed by the mediated memory of music history. By re-manipulating the cultural power of Austin’s countercultural sound and consciously employing it as a “vibrant, intangible expression of contemporary culture” poses challenges for a monolithic process of delineating this kind of music heritage.<sup>124</sup> Conventional heritage discourse that focuses on the materiality of heritage are not applicable in the analysis of popular music as heritage.

The previous chapter identified two of the city’s most popular examples of music iconography and analyzed their creation based on a select set of historical narratives and the mediation of that collective musical memory. Similarly, there are examples of intangible cultural heritage in Austin that, while an indirect extension of countercultural music, are products of “strategic creative agency.”<sup>125</sup> The “Keep Austin Weird” slogan is a prime example of contemporary civic positioning that also works to reinforce collective regional identity and a distinct sense of place based on the popular music history of Austin during the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> R. Kurin, “Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the 2003 UNESCO Convention: A Critical Appraisal,” *Museum International*, p. 67.

<sup>124</sup> Brandellero and Janssen, “Popular Music as Cultural Heritage,” p. 225.

<sup>125</sup> Les Roberts, “Talkin Bout My Generation,” p. 265

<sup>126</sup> James Jeffrey, “Weirdness at Play in Austin Businesses,” *Austin Business Journal*, July 2012.



Figure 6: Austin Motel sign photographed in 2013. Courtesy Opal Divines Restaurant.

The slogan began with Red Wassenich, a longtime Austin resident and Austin Community College professor, as a local call to action in reaction to big business and urban sprawl in twenty-first century Austin. In 2000, Wassenich called into one of his favorite local radio shows and made a donation because he felt that he was helping Austin hold on to a better part of its history. He saw the growth of Austin as inevitable decay of local tradition and “watched unhappily as Austin, his funky, once affordable hometown, had been transformed into a high-tech boomtown.”<sup>127</sup> Wassenich and his wife

---

<sup>127</sup> Jim Yardley, “A Slogan Battle Keeps Austin Weird,” *New York Times*, December 08, 2002.

printed bumper stickers with the slogan on them and, soon, the phrase was a popular staple of Austin culture. A few years later, however, a local apparel company applied for the trademark rights to the slogan and a lawsuit ensued. Wassenich called the situation a “perfect illustration of everything that’s unweird about Austin.”<sup>128</sup>

Later, the Austin Independent Business Alliance adopted the slogan to promote support for local and small businesses in the area and even used the armadillo symbol on the organization’s logo.<sup>129</sup> The image and meaning of armadillo are doubly constructed as a form of iconography and, yet again, its imagery is re-appropriated to convey a connection to the countercultural past of the city. The use of the slogan and the image of the armadillo as the logo of the organization also imply a sense of immediate cultural familiarity, one that reinforces a sense of safety in spite of its modern role as a contemporary form of commercialization and commodification.

“Keep Austin Weird” is not directly linked to the history of psychedelic and progressive country music subcultures, but the propagation of the slogan as a form of contemporary cultural localism is only possible by calling on the city’s countercultural past. Therefore, this form of civic positioning selectively utilizes a particular version of its popular music history to invoke a new form of intangible cultural heritage. The slogan is an example of the way Austin mediates its past in order to facilitate constructed nostalgia as a reaction to present day concerns over the condition of regional and cultural identity.

The state of Austin’s present day cultural identity regularly calls upon well-known

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Austin Independent Business Alliance, <https://www.ibuyaustin.com/>, accessed June 15, 2016.



and generalized forms of countercultural language to demonstrate, knowingly or not, a form of intangible cultural heritage. Figure six shows the sign of the Austin Motel that reads, “So close, yet so far out...” A nod to the eclectic cultural environment of the city today, the use of this language is also an exhibition of intangible cultural heritage. It makes use of widely recognizable and decade-specific verbal cues to point to and facilitate the area’s complex appointment of countercultural history as a contemporary cultural root.

The concept of music as heritage poses challenges for conventional processes of tangible and intangible categorization. Because popular music history encompasses assigned cultural value, reconstruction of memory, and the establishment of regional identities, its heritage is a culmination of intangible and tangible elements. In its simplest form, “music is intangible, as indeed are people’s musical memories. But, neither music nor memory exist in an ontological vacuum.”<sup>130</sup> As discussed in the previous chapters, the popular music history of Austin is a powerful source of memory recollection and mediation that produced highly personalized historical narratives and carefully crafted examples of regional iconography. The idea that intangible music heritage exists in complete “isolation from the tangible and material makes little sense.”<sup>131</sup>

Popular music trends are fluid and along with that perpetual fluidity comes the reality that its physicality or permanence in national or regional contexts is temporary. To accurately preserve a music history and, at the same time, provide a distinct sense of place is a difficult process. It is also important to note that the city of Austin does not have an officially designated music district. As a result, its music heritage is spatially

---

<sup>130</sup> Les Roberts, “Talkin Bout My Generation,” p. 271.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

dispersed with no definitive boundaries to where and how Austin's music and its history live. Because many of the structural remnants of Austin's psychedelic and progressive country scenes no longer exist, the history's legacy or memory is "enacted and practiced in material environments" and, ultimately, becomes a tangible form of cultural heritage.<sup>132</sup>

Some of the best examples of intangible music heritage in tangible form are Austin's many wall murals and other forms of urban graffiti. These art forms are tangible expressions of an intangible musical legacy that either directly address the music history of Austin or make use of generalized forms of countercultural imagery and language to invoke the city's musical past. A bold and direct assertion of international music dominance, the mural on 6<sup>th</sup> street near San Jacinto Street proudly flaunts the city's self-designated title as the "Live Music Capital of the World."<sup>133</sup> Above that wording are five circles, and within each of them are the illustrated portraits of musicians Stevie Ray Vaughan, Willie Nelson, Janis Joplin, Townes Van Zandt, and Roky Erickson. Of the five musicians illustrated, Nelson, Joplin, Van Zandt, and Erickson are all musical icons associated with counterculture. It is also worth noting that Nelson is depicted as his iconographic self, complete with long braids and bandana. The mural is a tangible expression of musical ownership that attempts to reinforce Austin's place in contemporary popular culture by employing the intangible legacies of notable musicians who, at one time, called Austin home.

Another example of purposeful reconfiguration in Austin's music heritage is one

---

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> "Austin Music Office," Austin City Visitor's Bureau, [://www.austintexas.org/music-office/](http://www.austintexas.org/music-office/), accessed May 31, 2016.

of many graffiti murals, this particular example is spray painted on the wall of an underpass near Lamar Street. A Texas native and long time Austin resident, Oscar winning actor Matthew McConaughey is shown in his role as Wooderson in the 1993 cult classic film “Dazed and Confused,” which follows the last day of high school for a group of Texas teenagers in the mid 1970s.<sup>134</sup> The words “Keep ATX Weird” are painted at the bottom of the illustration. Above his head, in a word bubble, is the phrase, “It’d be cooler if you did,” a now iconic line from the film. At first glance, this mural seems to pay tribute to the actor and also works to link him to Austin. However, the illustration also works as an indirect nod to the city’s countercultural past by the use of McConaughey as Wooderson, a character in a film that reconstructs and packages cultural and musical experiences of youth culture in 1970s Texas, in order to propagate a selected contemporary cultural identity.

The concept of popular music as cultural heritage is complex, but as the cultural terrain of historical value widens, its inclusion in heritage discourse is absolutely vital if historians are to comprehend the full range of processes that construct it. Austin’s music history is complex and deeply diverse, but the analysis of this predominant cultural heritage marker in the capital city reveals the ways in which localities choose to selectively remember themselves and how they curate cultural legacies. As time passes, popular music history becomes shrouded in nostalgia and reconstructed to bolster present day ideas and belief systems. However, music’s application as heritage highlights the role

---

<sup>134</sup> “Dazed and Confused” is a 1993 comedy directed by Richard Linklater that follows junior high and high school teenagers on the last day of class before summer vacation begins. Set in a small Texas town in 1976, the film utilizes the “sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll” motif often employed in film to accentuate the coming of age experience during the 1970s.

that people play in the mediation of history and serve as a potent reminder that “the past is growing around us like ivy...The more dead the past becomes, the more we wish to enshrine its relics” in new forms that reinforce a sense of collective identity and contemporary historical relevancy.<sup>135</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen Press, 1987) p. 30, 139.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CONCLUSION

Austin's present day cultural environment showcases the growing importance and relevance of popular music history as a form of heritage. The history of capital city sound spans more than a century and encompasses a wide variety of styles. However, the process of heritage designation reveals the ways in which people reconfigure historical narrative to consciously propagate a particular musical experience as contemporary regional heritage. The countercultural music scenes of Austin are fascinating examples of regional youth subculture in "relation to a broader musical landscape, in which various styles, audiences, and institutions interact in complex ways."<sup>136</sup>

As a regional case study, the countercultural history of Austin music reinforces the idea that the American musical terrain "is not static" and is "always in motion, always evolving."<sup>137</sup> The concept of fluidity in American popular music is not solely applicable to genre trends or patterns of commercial consumption. Fluidity in popular music also reveals distinct representations of social and cultural conditions throughout twentieth-century American history. Similarly, Austin's psychedelic and progressive country music scenes, which dominated local music landscape throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, demonstrate a subculture's need to draw upon "popular expression to mark contemporary

---

<sup>136</sup> Star and Waterman, p. 2.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

social collision and convergence” in a regional and national context.<sup>138</sup>

These are the connections that popular music history scholars seek to identify and build upon. The field of popular music history gained rapid traction as a professionalized form by the 1970s and has continued to work its way into the widening repertoire of American history methodology. With popular music at the center of cultural analysis, historians are able to “write the history of ordinary anonymous people rather than the rich and the famous.”<sup>139</sup> Through the lens of popular music, scholars can examine patterns of social interaction, consumption behavior, and creative expression in order to contextualize the cultural conditions of a period. A highly valuable tool with which to reconfigure traditional understanding of twentieth-century American history, popular music scholarship, nevertheless, has its methodological limits if it is studied in isolation from contemporary collective consciousness.

There is great potential to distort what many considered the ordinary or most popular throughout the history of recorded and mass-produced music. The musicians who sold the most records in any particular era are not always necessarily representative of many larger, culturally complex ideas and, by the same token, the most obscure music of the twentieth century is not an emblematically accurate portrayal of the wider cultural terrain of popular music. This approach to popular music history poses a form of methodological dichotomy where cultural value and context might be unintentionally slighted. To avoid this, scholars must utilize the study of nostalgia, memory,

---

<sup>138</sup> Archie Green, “Austin’s Cosmic Cowboys: Words in Collision,” *And Other Neighborly Names: Social Process and Cultural Image in Texas Folklore*, p. 153.

<sup>139</sup> Eric Harvey, “Cool Records Don’t Make the Basis For Good History”: A Chat About the Perils of Record Collecting With Cultural Guru Karl Hagstrom Miller,” *The Village Voice*, April 22, 2010.

iconography, and heritage practice in order to fully grasp and analyze the relationship between music and society.

Nostalgia, memory, iconography, and heritage, all subtopics within the field of public history, add complexity and depth to the already dynamic and insightful analysis of American cultural history through the lens of popular music. These subtopics are interconnected points of examination by which an understanding of human mediation and cultural relevancy is produced within popular music scholarship. The process by which groups ascribe nostalgia to earlier forms of music or particular musical experiences reveals a retrospective mediation that constructs new, contemporary perceptions of musical narrative. As musical nostalgia is reconfigured and reassigned over time, collective and regional memory are informed by previous re-manipulations of musical experience. Finally, nostalgia and the memory of twentieth-century popular music history narratives become the basis for contemporary cultural heritage construction.

This approach, with Austin's countercultural music history as the center of this project's analysis, allows for careful and in depth dissection of the ways music imbeds itself within cultural environments to produce distinct forms of collective and local identity. By beginning with the examination of the larger context of a localities' music history, it is easier to identify which versions of memory and historical music narrative are brought forward and which are subsequently discarded in retrospect. As time passes, the evolution of popular music as regional heritage acts as a highly mediated cultural filter where particular musical experiences retain contemporary potency based on the manipulation of popular memory and the establishment of widely recognizable iconography.

Austin's music history contains a diverse range of styles and ethnic backgrounds, but based on the analysis of popular music as the city's primary form of cultural heritage, the psychedelic and progressive country music scenes of the 1960s and 1970s are the designated musical narratives upon which contemporary perceptions of heritage are based. Regardless of the area's multi-ethnic and multi-vocal history of popular music, the narrative of countercultural music is pulled forward as a regional identity marker. This designation is due to present day perceptions of musical nostalgia and public discourse of popular music memory.

Throughout the chapters of this project, the broader history of Austin music is the analytical starting point from which the relationships between nostalgia, popular collective memory, and iconography are highlighted. These concepts then become markers in the larger process of popular music heritage construction as the wider narrative of Austin's music history is filtered, reworked, and reconstituted over the course of the twentieth century. Although this work is a regional case study, popular music history continues to emerge as a form of cultural heritage nationally and internationally. In order to adequately understand and contextualize the value of this history as heritage, mapping popular music's cultural heritage development with an emphasis on nostalgia, collective popular memory, and iconography will add profound strength to its growing relevance within the field of American history.



## LITERATURE CITED

### PRIMARY SOURCES

Austin Independent Business Alliance. <https://www.ibuyaustin.com/>. Accessed June 15, 2016.

“Austin Music Office.” Austin City Visitor’s Bureau. <http://www.austintexas.org/music-office/>. Accessed May 31, 2016.

Charters, Samuel. *The Jug Bands*. Smithsonian Folkways Records Liner Notes. 1963.

Green, Archie. “Austin’s Cosmic Cowboys: Words in Collision.” *And Other Neighborly Names: Social Process and Cultural Image in Texas Folklore*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Hertzberg, Hendrik. “The Armadillo Man” *The New Yorker*. December 11, 1971.

Hubbard, Henry “Buesboy.” Life History Interview. Transcript of an oral history conducted in 2008 by Roger Gatchet. African American Texans Oral History Project. The Project in Interpreting the Texas Past. Austin: University of Texas, 2008.

Interview and Performance by Willie Nelson. No. 2, Aqua Fest. The Wallace and Euna Pryor Collection. Texas Archive of the Moving Image. 1973.

Jeffrey, James. “Weirdness at Play in Austin Businesses.” *Austin Business Journal*. July 2012.

Kovach, Tom. “Piece of Victoria’s History Missing.” Letter to the Editor. *Victoria Advocate*. September 10, 2010.

Kreps, Daniel. “Willie Nelson’s Braids Sell for \$37,000 at Auction.” *Rolling Stone*. October 08, 2014. <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/willie-nelsons-braids-sell-for-37-000-at-auction-20141008>. Accessed June 09, 2016.

McMillan, Harold. Life History Interview. Transcript of an oral history conducted in 2006 by Mark W. Downs. African American Texans Oral History Project. The Project in Interpreting the Texas Past. Austin: University of Texas, 2006.

Preservation Austin. <https://www.preservationaustin.org/>. Accessed June 20, 2016.

“Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks.” Texas Historical Commission. <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/recorded-texas-historic-landmarks>. Accessed June 14, 2016.

Reid, Jan and Don Roth. "The Coming of Redneck Hip." *Texas Monthly* (November 1973).

Roberts, John. "Its That Time Again: Here Come De Armadillo Man." *Victoria Advocate*. June 09, 1972.

Scholz Garden Advertisement. Austin City Directory. 1881.

Stills, Stephen. "For What Its Worth." Stephen Stills. MP3. Atco Records: 1967.

"These non-conformists are the Wednesday night Folk Singers." *The Cactus Yearbook of the University of Texas*. Dolph Briscoe Center for American History. Photograph. 1963.

Victory Grill. Texas Historic Sites Atlas. Historical Marker. <https://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/>. Accessed June 14, 2016.

Wilson, Eddie. Interview with Rush Evans for "Home With the Armadillo."

Yardley, Jim, "A Slogan Battle Keeps Austin Weird." *New York Times*. December 08, 2002.

"Year End Charts – Year End Albums – The Billboard 200." *Billboard*. Nielson Business Media, Inc. Accessed May 4, 2016.

### SECONDARY SOURCES

Ashworth, C.G. and J. Tunbridge. "Whose Tourist-Historic City? Localizing the Global and Globalizing the Local." *A Companion to Tourism. Massachusetts: Wiley & Blackwell, 2004*.

Bennett, Andy. "Heritage Rock: Rock Music, Representation, and Heritage Discourse." *Poetics* (2009). Vol. 39.

Berger, James. "Which Prosthetic? Mass Media, Narrative, Empathy, and Progressive Politics." *Rethinking History* (December 2007) Vol. 11, No. 4.

Blake, J. "On Defining Cultural Heritage." *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* (2000) vol. 49.

Bovey, Seth. "The Texas Armadillo: From Psychedelic Totem to Regional Icon." *Journal of Popular Culture* (2003) Vol. 37, No. 1.

Brandellero, Amanda and Susanne Janssen. "Popular Music as Cultural Heritage: Scoping Out the Field of Practice." *International Journal of Heritage Studies*. London: Routledge, 2014.

- Dirt Road to Psychedelia: Austin, Texas during the 1960s*. DVD. Directed by Scott Conn. SRC Productions, 2007.
- Dodd, Lindsay. "Small Fish, Big Pond: Using Single Oral History Narrative to Reveal Broader Social Change." *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject*. London & New York: Routledge Press, 2013.
- Echols, Alice. *Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin*. New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1999.
- Erickson, Katheryn. "Deep Question: Would You Wear Willie Nelson's Braids?" *Glamour Magazine*. September 23, 2015. <http://www.glamour.com/story/fashion-week-willie-nelson-braids>. Accessed June 9, 2016.
- Eyerman, Ron and Andrew Jamison. *Music and Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Feit, Rachel. "Gardens of Eden: How Austin Used to Celebrate." *The Austin Chronicle*. Accessed April 16, 2016. <http://www.austinchronicle.com/food/2001-01-26/80303>.
- Filene, Benjamin. "Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life by David Glassberg." *Minnesota Historical Society Press* (Fall 2001) Vol. 57, No. 7.
- Fox, Aaron. *Real Country: Music and Language in Working Class Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Fraser, Catherine, and William Bacon. "Segregation and Civil Rights in Texas, 1865-1965." George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center. City of Austin. <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/carver/africanamerican.htm>. Uploaded November 19, 2008.
- Gard, Wayne. "Lomax, John Avery." *Handbook of Texas Online*. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/flo07>. Accessed December 06, 2015. Uploaded June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Commission.
- Glassberg, David. "Public History and the Study of Memory." *The Public Historian* (1996) Vol. 8, No. 2.
- Handbook of Texas Online*. "Radio." <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ebr01>. Accessed June 01, 2016. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

- Harrigan, Stephen. "We'll Always Have Austin." *Texas Monthly* (June 2010).
- Hartman, Gary. *The History of Texas Music*. College Station: Texas A&M University, 2008.
- Hartman, Gary. "The Roots Run Deep." *The Roots of Texas Music*. College Station: Texas A&M University, 2003.
- Harvey, David C. "Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents: Temporality, Meaning, and Scope of Heritage Studies." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (2001).
- Harvey, Eric. "Cool Records Don't Make the Basis For Good History": A Chat About the Perils of Record Collecting With Cultural Guru Karl Hagstrom Miller." *The Village Voice*. April 22, 2010.
- Haworth, Alan Lee. "THREADGILL, JOHN KENNETH." *Handbook of Texas Online*. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fth58>. Accessed December 6, 2015. Published by the Texas State Historical Commission.
- Johnson, N.C. "Framing the Past: Time, Space, and the Politics of Heritage Tourism in Ireland." *Political Geography* (1999). Vol. 18.
- Jones, Mervyn. "Raphael Samuel." *The Times*. December 11, 1996.
- Kurin, R. "Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the 2003 UNESCO Convention: A Critical Appraisal," *Museum International* (2003).
- Landsberg, Allison. *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. New York City: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Light, Alan. "Lone Star Superstar." *The New York Times*. June 01, 2008. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/01/books/reviews/Light-t.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/01/books/reviews/Light-t.html?_r=0). Accessed June 05, 2016.
- Lowenthal, David. *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. New York: The Free Press, 1996.
- Milam, Whitney. "Victory Grill." *Handbook of Texas Online*. <http://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/xdv02>. Accessed February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Uploaded May 29, 2013. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.
- Miller Karl Hagstrom. *"Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow"*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: *les lieux de memoire*." *Representations* (Spring 1989) No. 26.
- Patoski, Joe Nick. *Willie Nelson: An Epic Life*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009.
- Reid, Jan. *Improbable Rise of Redneck Rock*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.
- Roberts, Les. "Talkin Bout my Generation: Popular Music and the Culture of Heritage." London: Routledge, 2014.
- Ruiz Davis, Georgia. "German Singing Societies." *The Handbook of Texas Online*. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/xag01>. Accessed April 16, 2016.
- Samuel, Raphael. *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*. London: Verso Press, 1994.
- Shank, Barry. *Dissonant Identities*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994.
- Smith, Larry L. "Armadill." *Handbook of Texas Online*. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/tca02>. Accessed June 05, 2016. Uploaded on June 9, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.
- Spenneman, Dirk. "Beyond Preserving the Past for the Future: Contemporary Relevance and Historic Preservation." *CRM Journal* (Summer 2011).
- Starr, Larry and Christopher Waterman. *American Popular Music: The Rock Years*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Szwed, John. *Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded the World*. London: Viking Penguin, 2010.
- Ward, Brian. "What's That Sound? Teaching the 1960s Through Popular Music." New York: The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2016.
- Wheat, John. "Armadillo World Headquarters." *Handbook of Texas Online*. <http://tshaonline.ord/handbook/online/articles/xda01>. Accessed December 5, 2015. Uploaded June 9, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.