

HEAVY ON THE AIR: RADIO & PROMOTION  
IN THE HEAVY METAL CAPITAL  
OF THE WORLD

by

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## **DEDICATION**

For Delleney and Emmylou. Thank you for being by my side through it all.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

There was a time from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s when an influential segment of the music industry considered the city of San Antonio the “Heavy Metal Capital of the World.” In a December 1985 issues of *Texas Monthly*, journalist Joe Nick Patoski first recognized the city as the “Heavy Metal Capital of America” thanks to its uncanny reputation for “breaking” or popularizing new groups at its many concerts throughout the years.<sup>1</sup> While it is true that San Antonio certainly had a knack for discovering talent in the seventies and eighties, the story actually goes back much further.

While scouring newspaper articles and conducting interviews for this project, it quickly became apparent that this story could actually be traced back to the early 1930s, within the walls of a small radio station owned by an individual proprietor with the call letters K-M-A-C. It was from this weak-sigaled, and at times, derelict studio that a pair of disc jockeys (commonly known as “deejays”) would later begin playing heavy rock and roll that no other station in the United States was playing. An early freeform station, KMAC-630 featured a variety of programs ranging from heavy metal to country to opera. Though the station offered a wide range of content, its heavy metal and hard rock programming was certainly its most important contribution to San Antonio culture.

Programming their radio shows with obscure and little-known artists was a decision often based out of necessity for KMAC/KISS disc jockeys, as the station’s notoriously frugal owner preferred not to pay for the popular record label subscriptions of the day. Utilizing its status as a privately-owned, freeform station, KMAC (and later its FM sister station KISS) disc jockeys played virtually whatever they wished, regardless of

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<sup>1</sup> Joe Nick Patoski, “No Smokin’ in the Boys Room,” *Texas Monthly*, December 1985, 108.

time, genre, or popularity; a rarity for radio stations in San Antonio at the time. These new and exciting playlists can be directly attributed to a pair of forward-thinking and rebellious disc jockeys beginning in the early 1970s named Lou Roney and Joe “The Godfather” Anthony Yannuzzi.

Along with its highly popular and influential radio stations, San Antonio was also home to hippie-turned-businessman Jack Orbin, owner of the independent promotion company Stone City Attractions founded in 1972. Orbin, who was a regular at Austin’s psychedelic nightclub the Vulcan Gas Company while studying at the University of Texas during the city’s psychedelic heyday of the late 1960s, worked directly with both Roney and Anthony to bring the newest and most exciting bands to San Antonio. In the process, Orbin placed the city center stage in the hard rock concert industry, attracting many now-legendary bands to play the city’s venues over the years.

“Heavy on the Air” will demonstrate how the relationship between KMAC/KISS and Stone City Attractions led San Antonio to construct its identity as a haven for heavy metal for artists. Along with providing the histories of KMAC/KISS and Stone City, this study also examines how heavy metal was received and ultimately dismissed by San Antonio’s civic leaders, causing the city to lose its status as a live concert destination to its neighboring cities. Finally, this study will reveal how heavy metal shaped local youth culture. Long considered a musical style for wayward youths, heavy metal enveloped San Antonio subcultures and instilled in them a lifelong obsession with all things metal.

Chapter one, titled “Spread the Word,” directly addresses the intertwined biographies of influential deejays Roney and Anthony, while providing a comprehensive history of KMAC/KISS. I begin this chapter by exploring the often turbulent history of

the Howard Davis-owned station, from its initial purchase in the 1930s, to its transition to a corporate-owned station in the 1980s. For nearly fifty years, KMAC/KISS provided San Antonio with a freeform station, meaning station managers were able to schedule a variety of programs, and disc jockeys were able to select whatever they wished to play on these programs; a revolutionary radio format that developed out of the sixties counterculture. Over the decades, listeners heard a wide variety of content including rhythm & blues, country, rock 'n' roll, and even opera from the sister stations. Due to the station's freeform format, Roney and Anthony were able to play heavier rock and roll, and even early heavy metal, at a time when the latter was receiving very limited radio support.

Though Roney and Anthony's story does not appear in the narratives of American radio history (save for a few dedicated enthusiasts), their contributions to both San Antonio and Texas music history is undeniable.<sup>2</sup> Chapter two directly examines their influence, alongside that of Jack Orbin and Stone City Attractions. Orbin, an independent concert promoter in San Antonio, often times worked directly with KMAC/KISS to help promote and even "break" bands in San Antonio. The relationship between these two entities (KMAC/KISS and Stone City) are directly responsible for San Antonio's reputation as being the "Heavy Metal Capital of the World."

Chapter two provides a brief history and analysis of heavy metal, while examining the genre's influence on San Antonio youths and city leaders. As we will see, not everyone was excited for the reputation of being a heavy metal haven. Beginning in

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<sup>2</sup> Among these dedicated enthusiasts is Dr. Gregory Peek. Peek founded *The Joe Anthony Project* in 2016 in an effort to collect a variety of scholarly material from those associated with San Antonio's rock and heavy metal scene.

the mid-1980s, local leaders, including the city's up-and-coming mayor Henry Cisneros, were quick to dismiss this status and even sought to place strict regulations on the city's thriving concert industry, a decision Jack Orbin fought ferociously. Metal music is historically music for youths, yielding them loud, oftentimes brash expressions of power and independence. Chapter two explores the relationship between heavy metal and San Antonio youths and in the process answers the question of *why* this genre of music found such levels of popularity in the city.

The conclusion of this project, titled "Rock Forever," begins with the passing of a San Antonio legend and how their death inadvertently precipitated the end of the city's run as the heavy metal capital. This section also addresses additional events that caused San Antonio to lose its reputation as a heavy metal-centric city, including loss of venues and the meteoric rise of its sister city to the north, Austin. While at times dour, this chapter hopes to leave readers with an optimistic perspective of San Antonio's past as the "Heavy Metal Capital of the World."

### Review of Literature

Deena Weinstein's *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture*, originally published in 1991, is a comprehensive study of the cultural sociology of the heavy metal genre. Exhaustingly researched, this study solidified its author as a sort of authoritative voice in the world of heavy metal culture and sociology. Weinstein's primary argument centers around heavy metal being a cultural "bricolage," or a combination of a variety of influences. The author argues that the culture of heavy metal is the product of both the ideologies and memories of Woodstock (which symbolizes a peaceful existence) and

Altamont (a chaotic existence).<sup>3</sup> Painstakingly tracing the genre's history from its blues and psychedelic origins in America to its fruition in British working-class cities, Weinstein has created one of the first narratives that adequately explains the rise and appeal of the heavy metal genre.

Weinstein argues that heavy metal is a demonstration of power, often with use of loud guitars. "Loudness is meant to overwhelm, to sweep the listener into the sound," says the author, "Heavy metal's loudness is not deafening, irritating, or painful (at least to the fan), but empowering."<sup>4</sup> It is this sonic show of power and strength that, according to Weinstein, draws heavy metal fans to the music, fans that tend to be young, white and male. In the chapter "Digging the Music: Proud Pariahs," Weinstein states that "Masculinity, blue-collar sentiments, youthfulness, and to a lesser extent, 'whiteness' are values shared and upheld by the metal audience."<sup>5</sup> While there is some truth to the author's claims, particularly metal's resonance with themes of power and strength to those who have been denied each, as my research will determine, for much the same reasons heavy metal was not *only* white music in San Antonio.

Robert Walser's *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* is an examination of heavy metal most valuable for its content on the appeal of heavy metal to the male gender. "Heavy metal is, inevitably, a discourse shaped by patriarchy," says the author.<sup>6</sup> Building on Weinstein's argument regarding heavy metal

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<sup>3</sup> Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2000), 104.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: University Press of New England), 109.

being equated to power, Walser argues that it is the feeling of hopelessness often felt by youths that acts as a draw to the genre. “Metal fans tend mostly to be young because much of metal deals with experiences of powerlessness,” writes Walser in his chapter “Forging Masculinity: Heavy Metal Sounds and Images of Gender.”<sup>7</sup>

Along with Weinstein and Walser, Robert Waksman has made some undeniable contributions to the study of heavy metal. 2009’s *This Ain’t the Summer of Love* builds on the work of the two aforementioned authors, while addressing heavy metal’s relationship to punk rock music. “Metal and punk have enjoyed a particularly charged, at times even intimate sort of relationship,” states the author.<sup>8</sup> This point was briefly touched on by Weinstein, however Waksman furthers the discussion over the course of *Summer of Love* through his comparisons of the two genres.

Using the work of journalists from popular music publications like *Creem* and *Hit Parader*, Waksman takes his reader on explorations into the heavy metal and punk genres, effortlessly intertwining the two in the process. The author comments that while the two genres tended to be antithetical of each other (at one point the author makes the distinction that while metal viewed loudness as power, punk rockers viewed loudness as noise), there was actually a number of similarities between metal and punk. These similarities are never more evident than when understanding the late seventies New Wave of British Heavy Metal. In 1979, British metal bands including Def Leppard and Iron Maiden began adopting the grassroots methods of punk rock. This meant self-releasing

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 110).

<sup>8</sup> Steve Waksman, *This Ain't The Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 7.

seven-inch singles (as opposed to going through a label), designing their own album covers, and even incorporating the sped-up tempos of punk music into their own compositions. “The significance of punk to the reformation of British metal had both a positive and a negative charge to it,” writes Waksman, “that metal bands of the time were as likely to be reacting against punk as incorporating its values and features.”<sup>9</sup> Waksman argues that with the influence of punk, British heavy metal was able to transcend into the eighties and beyond.

A range of works have tackled the narrative of this popular genre. The primary publications utilized for this project were Ian Christie’s 2003 book, *The Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal*, and Jon Wiederhorn & Katherine Turman’s *Louder Than Hell: The Definitive Oral History of Metal*, published in 2013. *Louder Than Hell* is notable for its collection of oral histories from influential heavy metal artists and was particularly useful for comprehending how early metal musicians regarded their roles within the genre. Christie’s work in *Sound of the Beast* has made the book a must-read for anyone attempting to study the genre of heavy metal. Christie is known for being a fan of heavy metal and his love of the genre is evident on every page.

Marc Fisher’s 2007 book *Something in the Air* heavily informed my research for this project. The chapter “No Static at All” was particularly beneficial to my research. Dedicated to the history and development of free form radio stations in North America, Fisher presents a highly readable account of a pivotal moment in American radio history,

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<sup>9</sup> Steve Waksman, *This Ain't The Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 209.



wherein disc jockeys took advantage of frequency modulated or “FM” radio like never before.

Fisher argues that the rise of FM radio coincided with the evolution of the long-playing album. “FM opened up thousands of hours of new programming in 1967,” writes the author, “just as long-playing albums were liberating musicians and record companies to produce songs that might not fit on a 45 single.”<sup>10</sup> According to Fisher, it was the Doors’ 1967 opus “The End” that inspired one of the first free form disc jockeys, Tom Donahue, to begin thinking outside the box while programming his shows. Donahue, who started his career as a top 40 radio host, became “bored out of his mind” with the format and eventually relocated to San Francisco, where he began broadcasting for the small station KMPX. It was on this station that Donahue, along with his wife Raechel, pioneered the free form radio format.

Kim Simpson’s *Early 70’s Radio: The American Format Revolution* is a study into the evolution of American radio formats during the titular decade. *Early 70’s Radio* examines five popular radio programming styles during the 1970s: Top 40, middle of the road (MOR), progressive/free form, soul radio and country. A valuable read for those attempting to comprehend various radio formats, Simpson’s chapter on progressive radio, “All the Young Dudes: Progressive Rock Formats and the Taming of the American Male,” proved to be particularly beneficial to my research. Simpson argues that the music found on progressive radio stations (a lot of it hard rock and heavy metal) tended to attract white male teenagers as listeners. Simpson’s narrative of heavy metal on FM radio

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Fisher, *Something in the Air: Radio, Rock, and The Revolution That Shaped a Generation* (New York: Random House, 2007), 160.

and its appeal to young male listeners echoes the arguments of Weinstein and Walser, both of whose works appear on Simpson's "Five Key Books" on the sociology of metal.

### Methodology

Due to the lack of scholarly documentation of San Antonio's radio *and* concert histories, I was tasked with piecing together whatever fragments of information I could locate in order to construct the narrative for this thesis.<sup>11</sup> I utilized a variety of online databases, the most important of which include the *San Antonio Express News* and *The San Antonio Light*.

Much of my research involved oral histories conducted with former disc jockeys, promoters and members of the early 1980s scene. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was not able to actually set up in-person interviews with any of my interviewees and relied heavily on interviews conducted via telephone and Zoom. These oral histories, reinforced with both primary and secondary sources, provide the reader with an intriguing tale of heavy rock and roll, one told from the perspective of those that lived and embodied the spirit of metal.

Thanks to the efforts of a pair of rebellious disc jockeys, along with the business-savvy of a local promoter, the city of San Antonio, albeit for a brief period of time, was considered the center of the heavy metal and hard rock universe. Attracting artists from across the world on their journeys to superstardom, San Antonio became known in the music world as the "Heavy Metal Capital of the World." Though much of American

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<sup>11</sup> Christina Michelle Wood's 2009 thesis "Heavy Metal Capital of the World: San Antonio's Hard Rock History," might be the *only* academic paper written on the subject matter. While a well-researched and written, Wood focuses primarily on the years 1982 to 1985, while the primary narrative of this project begins in the mid-1970s.

radio/live music history focuses on cities like San Francisco, Cleveland and New York, the reality is that the story of Lou Roney, Joe Anthony, KMAC/KISS and Stone City Attractions is just essential to the narrative of rock and roll and heavy metal.

## II. SPREAD THE WORD

This chapter recounts the history of San Antonio’s KMAC-AM/KISS-FM radio stations while paying particularly close attention to two of its forward-thinking and rebellious disc jockeys, Joe “The Godfather” Anthony and station manager Lou Roney. Culled from a combination of oral histories and San Antonio newspaper clippings dating back to 1926, this narrative describes how KMAC/KISS’ status as a privately-owned, free format station, introduced the city, and arguably much of the United States, to a myriad of musical artists, many of whom would go on to achieve superstar status.

The stories of KMAC/KISS, its owners and its employees are absolutely paramount to the comprehension of *how* and *why* San Antonio was able to construct an identity of being the so-called “Heavy Metal Capital of the World.” The genre, known for its loud guitars, pounding drums, soaring vocals and often fantastical lyrics found a fast home on both the KMAC and KISS airwaves, and in the process, defined the zeitgeist of San Antonio beginning in the early-seventies, and continuing onto the mid-eighties. Though the station would become known worldwide for its prolific and often times cutting-edge programming of rock and roll, its humble beginnings as a small, weak-signal independent operation provides evidence of a station that was simply *always* thinking outside the box.<sup>12</sup>

The key framework of the chapter lies in the phenomenon of the aforementioned free format, or “freeform” radio formats that became popular in the late 1960s. First popularized by radio personalities in cities like New York and San Francisco, freeform (often referred to as “progressive”) radio formats empowered disc jockeys with the ability

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<sup>12</sup> Programming is the process of selecting what music would be played on air for certain programs.

of programming whatever music they wished, regardless of genre, length, and perhaps most importantly to the KMAC/KISS story, popularity to play on their shows. As we will see, Anthony and Roney's decision to deviate from the programming paths of other popular San Antonio radio stations afforded KMAC/KISS a notoriety that placed the city, albeit briefly, at the center of the rock and roll universe.

### Freeform Radio

In his 2011 book, *Early 70's Radio: The American Format Revolution*, author Kim Simpson writes that the concept of radio "formats" first developed in the 1920s. Formats essentially describe a station's daily programming, which according to the author, was usually filled in a "patchwork manner."<sup>13</sup> Popular examples of radio formats seen throughout the twentieth century include top 40, album oriented rock, and of course, freeform/progressive. Over time, the format of a radio station came to describe the station's *entire* output. Developed and pioneered by Nebraskan broadcaster Todd Storz, the "Top 40" radio format was among the most popular, albeit repetitive, formats during the fifties and sixties. "Top 40 showed that rigid programming had more of a commercial payoff," stated Simpson in an email to the author, "but even until the 1970s, some AM Top 40 or MOR (middle of the road) stations would shift gears at certain times of the day to reel in other types of listeners."<sup>14</sup> Though playing the most successful songs of the day often meant higher ratings for the station (and usually popularity and success for those

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<sup>13</sup> Kim Simpson, Email interview with author, October 27, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

peddling the music), there were some in the AM-radio world who yearned for something new.

The concept of a “freeform” radio format was first developed in the late 1960s by radio personalities who had grown tired and unfulfilled by the monotony of the Top 40 format. In 1967, thanks to the Federal Communications Commission’s freeing up of large amounts of airspace (accomplished after the commission paused applications for new AM stations), there were now greater programming opportunities available through all new frequency modulated or “FM” stations.<sup>15</sup> In her 1999 book *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination*, historian Susan Douglas argues that at the center of what is considered the “FM Revolution” of the late sixties, lay an “intensified quest” for deeper and more nuanced listening.<sup>16</sup> Though there had been previous experiments with a type of freeform/progressive format,<sup>17</sup> where according to Simpson, “Song lengths, playlists, genres, and all the fastidious clock-watching were basically thrown out the window,”<sup>18</sup> the freeform format was seemingly perfected (or at least popularized) in the late sixties by Tom and Rachael Donahue, a husband-and-wife broadcasting team working for radio station KMPX-FM in San Francisco.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Invented by Howard Armstrong in the early 1930s, FM or “frequency modulated” radio stations are characterized by their “wider banded” frequencies, which provide a clearer, less static sound for its listeners.

<sup>16</sup> Susan J. Douglas, *Listening in: Radio and the American Imagination: From Amos “n” Andy and Edward R. Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 257.

<sup>17</sup> Most notably “Murray the K” Kaufman on WOR-FM in New York.

<sup>18</sup> Kim Simpson, email interview with author, October 27, 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Fisher, *Something in the Air: Radio, Rock, and The Revolution That Shaped a Generation* (New York: Random House, 2007), 161.

In his 2007 book *Something in the Air*, journalist Marc Fisher writes that after a night of substance-infused recreation, top 40 radio-veteran Tom Donahue became entranced by The Doors' nearly twelve-minute 1967 epic, "The End." Determined to get the Los Angeles band's full, unedited song (the lyrics of which, penned by front man Jim Morrison, include references to psychedelic imagery) on the air, Donahue began contacting FM radio stations in San Francisco, looking for anyone to give him an opportunity to program a show unbounded by the strict programming schedules of top 40 stations. Finding KMPX, a failing FM-station broadcasting from a "warehouse on the San Francisco Bay," Donahue made a deal with the station's owner to give him a four-hour timeslot that he would fill with his own music.

The higher-quality transmissions produced by FM stations was an early appeal of the broadcasting format, especially with the evolving artistry of the time. In the 1960s, popular artists began to experiment with their recordings, often times pushing the sonic capabilities of their music in the recording studio. The clearer, less static broadcasts emitted by FM stations appealed to devoted listeners as their favorite artists began to broaden their sounds.

Surely one of the most appealing aspects of FM freeform stations was the freedom of no longer being restricted to playing shorter songs made specifically for rotation in the Top 40 format. Newfound artistic freedoms in the recording studio no longer hindered artists to the standard two-to-three-minute singles often found on seven-inch, 45 RPM records.<sup>20</sup> Popular artists including the Doors, Bob Dylan, the Velvet

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<sup>20</sup> "RPM," or, "revolutions per minute," is an indicator for how many times a record spins in one minute while on a turntable.

Underground and the Beatles started producing songs much longer than the standard single length, many of which found success on freeform stations.

Aside from the allure of finding a variety of new, high-quality music on freeform stations, the success of this new format could arguably be indebted to the man or woman selecting, introducing and ultimately playing the music: the disc jockey. The disc jockey was the trusted voice heard through the speakers, guiding their listeners on journeys of both musical and often even self-discovery. “Underground broadcasters prided themselves on the relationship they established with their listeners,” argues Michael C. Keith in his essay “Turn On... Tune In: The Rise and Demise of Commercial Underground Radio.”<sup>21</sup> In building these relationships over the airwaves, the disc jockey’s audience became loyal and trusting followers, even brandishing t-shirts and bumper stickers bearing their favorite radio station’s name. “That made the deejay a powerful fellow,” writes Fisher in *Something in the Air*, “and the more audiences attached themselves emotionally to deejays, the more freedom station managers gave their announcers to express their personality and pick their own records.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Michael C. Keith, “Turn on... Tune In: The Rise and Demise of Commercial Underground Radio,” in *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*, ed. Michele Hilmes and Jason Lovigli (New York: Routledge, 2002), 391.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Fisher, *Something in the Air: Radio, Rock, and the Revolution that Shaped a Generation* (New York: Random House, 2007), 48.



## KMAC: Spread the Word!

*“Everything has a beginning,  
and the beginning of radio station KMAC  
is an interesting story.”*

- “KMAC to Make Debut to the World.” *San Antonio Light* Article (1930)

“Announcing the formal opening of KMAC,” reads an advertisement in a July 1949 issue of the *San Antonio Light* newspaper, “Now 5000 watts on 630 with great coverage.”<sup>23</sup> A map of Texas accompanies the headline, complete with illustrations depicting the new range of the San Antonio-based AM station. Cities as far west as San Angelo, north as Dallas, east as Orange and south as Corpus Christi are shown to be the lucky new recipients of KMAC’s broadcasting.

Seven years prior to this 1949 ad, KMAC’s owner, Missouri-native Howard W. Davis, had purchased the 250-watt station from its founder, businessman Walter Williams McAllister. Davis had both worked alongside and even co-owned the station with McAllister beginning in 1933.<sup>24</sup> The station, whose original call letters were KGCI, was first established with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 1926 and originally broadcasted out of San Antonio’s St. Mary’s University.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> “KMAC Advertisement,” *San Antonio Light*, July 28, 1949, <https://newspaperarchive.com/san-antonio-light-jul-28-1949-p-33/>.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Williams McAllister (1889 – 1984) was the founder of the San Antonio Savings Association (1921), served as the chairman of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, held the office of Mayor of San Antonio from 1960 to 1971, and perhaps most important to the story of KMAC/KISS, co-founded the San Antonio Union Junior College District in 1925.

<sup>25</sup> According to its website ([www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov)), the Federal Communications Commission, founded in 1934, is a government agency tasked with regulating “interstate and international” communications by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable.

The origins of the radio station known as KMAC-AM trace to 1930, when Jack Wallace, an assistant manager working for the San Antonio-based radio station WOAI, reached out to businessman Walter Williams McAllister in an effort to sell on-air radio advertisement time to promote McAllister's San Antonio Building and Loan Association. Though selling radio time was paramount to Wallace's position at WOAI, the assistant manager's efforts were simply not enough to convince McAllister to invest in on-air advertisements. Determined to make the sale, Wallace returned to McAllister in another attempt to have him invest in radio time on WOAI. According to the 1930 article "KMAC to Make Debut to the World" in *The San Antonio Light*, McAllister stated that the only way he would possibly be interested in using radio broadcasts for advertising, was if he actually "owned a station."<sup>26</sup> Wallace, never one to be deterred, countered by offering to find and sell McAllister a radio station.

"Who would I get to run it?" asked McAllister. "Suppose I told you that I would run it," countered Wallace. Finally, McAllister gave his future partner an ultimatum: "Let's quit supposing," said McAllister, "You get the radio station. I'll put up the money and we'll go into the thing."<sup>27</sup> With those words, KMAC was born.

McAllister and Wallace formed the Walmac Company (derived from the two owner's last names) and purchased the aforementioned KGCI from San Antonio radio pioneer "Radio" Sam Liberto in 1930. The station's call letters were then changed to

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<sup>26</sup> "KMAC to Make Debut to the World," *San Antonio Light*, November 11, 1930, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-nov-11-1930-2003886/>.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

KMAC, after McAllister.<sup>28</sup> The two owners rebranded and moved the station to 204 E. Pecan Street, the site of the Bluebonnet Hotel in San Antonio, where it remained until 1933, when the station was relocated to the twenty-seventh-floor of the Smith-Young Tower on the banks of the San Antonio River.

In a November 1930 issue of *The San Antonio Light*, well-wishers congratulated the new radiomen by taking out various advertisements in the newspaper. Most notable among these congratulatory statements was one made by the Apache Packing Company. In its ad, the company thanked KMAC for providing San Antonio with such a “marvelous toned radio transmitter,” one that provided, “well selected and diversified entertainment.” Apache ends its congratulations by writing, “Viva la K.M.A.C.”<sup>29</sup>

Though advertisements from sponsors and supporters wished the new station success and prosperity, to say KMAC’s early days in 1930 were uncomplicated would be false. Tragedy struck the station weeks before its formal reopening when chief technician Lemoyne B. Cornelius was electrocuted while performing routine maintenance on a transmitter atop the Bluebonnet hotel. Cornelius’ body was discovered by KMAC announcer A.S. Bessan after McAllister phoned the station to inquire why there was no programming on air. Unbeknownst to Bessan, his program had been off the air for more

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<sup>28</sup> “KMAC to Make Debut to the World,” *San Antonio Light*, November 11, 1930, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-nov-11-1930-2003886/>.

Though its name would be changed to KMAC by its new owners, Sam Liberto’s KGCI occupies a significant place in San Antonio radio history. In 1928, the station began broadcasting its Spanish-language “International Goodwill Program” at the behest of executive Edward C. Buckley. The show, which ran nightly, was the first complete Spanish-language radio broadcast in Texas.

<sup>29</sup> “Advertisement for Apache Packing Company,” *San Antonio Light*, November 11, 1930, <https://newspaperarchive.com/san-antonio-light-nov-11-1930-p-12/>.

than an hour before being alerted by McAllister.<sup>30</sup> To honor the deceased technician, KMAC made the decision to go off air for 24 hours.

Barely a month after opening, the Walmac Company faced legal issues when an Austin-based radio station presented them with a lawsuit regarding their transmitting towers at the Bluebonnet Hotel. M.A. English, manager of Austin's KUT radio station, claimed that the transmitting towers used by KMAC located atop the Bluebonnet Hotel were actually property of the Austin-based station, after it had acquired a radio corporation that had previously operated out of the Bluebonnet.<sup>31</sup> A restraining order was placed on English by Bexar County Judge S.G. Tayloe in order to prevent the removal of the towers, before a ruling was made in favor of the Walmac Company.

In March of 1935, McAllister requested a meeting with the Federal Communications Commission in an effort to make an update to KMAC's facilities. The owner's primary goal was the relocation of KMAC's transmitters from the Bluebonnet Hotel to a site located outside the city.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately for McAllister, his request was swiftly denied a month later by the Communications Commission.

In September 1936, McAllister would once again petition the FCC on behalf of KMAC, this time for the permission to increase the station's daytime power from 100 to 250 watts.<sup>33</sup> The station-owner's luck had changed when two months later he received

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<sup>30</sup> "Radio Operator Electrocuted in San Antonio," *Port Arthur News*, October 24, 1930, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-oct-24-1930-2003877/>.

<sup>31</sup> "Hearing is Held in Radio Suit," *San Antonio Light*, December 9, 1930, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-dec-09-1930-2003896/>.

<sup>32</sup> "Broadcasting Station to Increase Facilities," *San Antonio Express*, February 14, 1935, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-feb-14-1935-2003912/>.

<sup>33</sup> "Increase in Power Sought by KMAC," *San Antonio Express News*, September 29, 1936, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-sep-29-1936-2003864/>.

permission for the increase in wattage from the FCC. Along with this increase in wattage, McAllister was also granted the permission to both remove KMAC's transmitters *and* build a new tower at a new location.

The following summer found the station owner and his new manager, Howard W. Davis, once again appealing to the FCC, this time for permission to operate a new high frequency broadcast station, one of the first of its kind, in San Antonio. Davis, a Missouri-native, had moved to San Antonio in 1931, and worked for the Southwest Broadcasting Company as vice-president of sales, before stepping into the station manager position at KMAC in 1933.

Five years later, in the summer of 1938, an arrangement was made with the FCC for the sale of half the ownership of KMAC between McAllister and station manager Davis. The station manager would also join McAllister in the ownership and management of the Walmac Company.<sup>34</sup> The purchase and division of ownership was completed nearly three months later in early September. This event set in motion Davis' eventual acquisition of the radio station in 1942, when the manager bought out his former partner in November of that year.<sup>35</sup>

Though at the time of his purchase Davis anticipated "no changes in personnel or operating policy," the new owner of the station would soon set out to broaden the appeal of KMAC.<sup>36</sup> In September 1946, after receiving approval from the FCC, Davis

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<sup>34</sup> "Approval is Given in Station KMAC deal," *San Antonio Light*, June 10, 1938, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-jun-10-1938-2003961/>.

<sup>35</sup> "Purchase of KMAC Approved by FCC," *San Antonio Light*, March 17, 1943, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-mar-17-1943-2004004/>.

<sup>36</sup> "Howard Davis Buys KMAC," *San Antonio Light*, November 26, 1942, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-nov-26-1942-1984113/>.

announced that he would establish a 50,000-watt FM sister station to KMAC. With the call letters “K-I-S-S,” the FM station was the second of its kind in Texas, with only Houston’s KTHT-FM being in operation at the time of Davis’ announcement.<sup>37</sup>

On Monday December 9, 1946, Howard Davis’ new frequency modulated station broadcasted for the first time on station 99.5, simulcasting (or duplicating) its content from KMAC-AM from its studios in the National Bank of Commerce building.<sup>38</sup> At first the station was temporarily operating at 250 watts, before being increasing its wattage to 3000 the following February. According to the 1947 *San Antonio Light* article, “Radio Station Increases Power,” Davis planned to increase KISS’ power to 10,000 watts in the summer, and finally, to the proposed 50,000 watts in November, nearly a year after the FM-station's first broadcast.<sup>39</sup>

A month after KISS reached its maximum wattage, Howard Davis began construction on a new transmitting plant complete with four new towers *and* a new underground system consisting of over forty-two miles of copper wiring.<sup>40</sup> The towers of the new transmitting plant were completed in February 1949, with the station’s initial test runs taking place the following month. Finally, on May 18, 1949, nearly a year and half

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<sup>37</sup> “Davis Plans FM Station,” *San Antonio Light*, September 15, 1946, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-sep-15-1946-2108633/>.

<sup>38</sup> “KISS New FM Station.” *San Antonio Light*, December 8, 1946, <https://newspaperarchive.com/san-antonio-light-dec-08-1946-p-14/>.

<sup>39</sup> “Radio Station Increases Power,” *San Antonio Light*, February 13, 1947, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-feb-13-1947-2023847/>.

<sup>40</sup> “KISS Has FM Here,” *San Antonio Light*, July 28, 1949, <https://newspaperarchive.com/san-antonio-light-jul-28-1949-p-33/>.

from the start of the project, Davis' KMAC took to the airwaves using the new transmitting facilities.<sup>41</sup>

Though the station owner had just launched his new FM station KISS, much of the local coverage remained focused on KISS' sister station, KMAC. This may be due to the fact that many households possessed radios that only received an AM signal. A 1949 article "New KMAC Serves Many," written for *The San Antonio Light*, stated that the AM station had the potential to reach over 852,000 homes with its 5,000-watt broadcasts.<sup>42</sup> The station's listeners were not restricted to only San Antonio, or even Texas for that matter. Cities across Texas were recipients of KMAC's 1940s broadcasts. The signal from the station even reached across borders, and found listeners in Mexico, Guatemala and even New Zealand.<sup>43</sup>

While KMAC was part of the Mutual Broadcasting System (MBS), and later the Central Broadcasting System (CBS), the station continued, as it always had, to carry a variety of daily content. Along with popular fare from both MBS and CBS, KMAC featured daily programming consisting of a multitude of genres, all hosted by their very own radio personalities, or, disc jockeys. One of KMAC's popular "Big 5" disc jockeys, "Hillbilly" Charlie Walker, found success on the station when he joined the KMAC staff in 1951. Walker, a future member of the Grand Ole Opry known for his 1958 recording of "Pick Me Up on Your Way Down," and inductee into both the Country Radio DJ and

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<sup>41</sup> "KISS Has FM Here," *San Antonio Light*, July 28, 1949, <https://newspaperarchive.com/san-antonio-light-jul-28-1949-p-33/>.

<sup>42</sup> "New KMAC Serves Many," *San Antonio* 28, 1949, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-jul-28-1949-2108627/>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

San Antonio Radio Hall of Fame, hosted a popular morning show on KMAC.<sup>44</sup>

According to the 1951 *The San Antonio Light* article “Disc-Jockey Hillbilly Style,” written for, Walker was a “personal friend” to many popular hillbilly entertainers, and as a result of these friendships, brought many entertainers to perform in San Antonio.

Along with Walker’s hillbilly program, one of the early defining shows on Davis’s station was a nightly rhythm and blues show called *Harlem Serenade* hosted by another member of KMAC’s Big 5, disc jockey “De Luxe” Flip Forrest. Forrest, a popular African-American disc jockey, played records from ten to midnight for those that preferred their music “Red Hot” and “Low Down.”<sup>45</sup> The disc jockey, who was known for hosting competitions in search of San Antonio’s “Mr. and Miss Rhythm and Blues,” was beloved by his young fans, many of whom established fan clubs in his honor. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of Forrest’s tenure at KMAC was that the jockey’s audience and most-dedicated fans appeared to be unbounded by race. This is evidenced in various articles found in *The San Antonio Register* dedicated to the on-goings of Forrest’s fan club. Often times, the club is referred to as an “interracial organization,” whose members were known to meet in celebration of their favorite jockey, even throwing him surprise parties and providing him with gifts.

*Harlem Serenade* is an early example of KMAC’s ability to connect with their listeners and build lasting relationships via the airwaves through a freeform-based format. Owing Howard Davis’ relaxed approach to ownership, and KMAC/KISS’ reputation for

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<sup>44</sup> “Grand Ole Opry Member Charlie Walker Dies at Age 81,” CMT News, accessed November 30, 2020, <http://www.cmt.com/news/1594705/grand-ole-opry-member-charlie-walker-dies-at-age-81/>.

<sup>45</sup> “Advertisement for Harlem Serenade,” *San Antonio Express*, August 8, 1953, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-aug-08-1953-1983381/>.



providing a variety of content, disc jockeys like Forrest and Walker were able to program their shows with whatever material they desired. Just as Tom Donahue would do nearly a decade later with psychedelic rock and roll, *Harlem Serenade* would soon earn KMAC the reputation of being *the* go-to station for the most exciting music.

Sometime in the mid-1950s, Flip Forrest departed KMAC. Though it is uncertain what the radio personality did next, disc jockey Henry Carr states that Forrest left to take a better-paying job as American gospel singer Mahalia Jackson's valet.<sup>46</sup> The DJ-turned-valet returned to San Antonio sometime in 1961 to work for the radio station KBER, before eventually becoming program manager at KAPE.

Forrest's departure from KMAC and *Harlem Serenade* left a sizeable hole in the station's programming, one that Davis would want to fill swiftly and effectively. Forrest's replacement would not only have to continue playing the hottest rhythm and blues music, but also have to match the charisma of the *Harlem Serenade* disc jockey. Little did Davis know that his new hire, a local man of Italian and Mexican descent by the name of Joseph Anthony Yannuzzi, would not only have an uncanny ear for rhythm and blues, but would also one day achieve worldwide acclaim and adulation as one half of KMAC/KISS' influential broadcasting duo in the 1970s.

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<sup>46</sup> Andrew Brown, "No Color In Poor: San Antonio's Harlem Label," *Wired-For-Sound*, September 25, 2011, <http://wired-for-sound.blogspot.com/2011/09/no-color-in-poor-san-antonios-harlem.html>.

## Joe Anthony: The “Godfather” of KMAC/KISS

*“If you can’t change with the music, you’re a has-been DJ.  
The music that hits comes from the youths’ minds.”*

- Joe “The Godfather” Anthony

Joseph “Joe” Anthony Yannuzzi (known professionally as Joe Anthony) was born in San Antonio, Texas on October 9, 1936 to parents Sebastiano and Georgina Yannuzzi. Joe Anthony, the youngest of three sons, attended Brackenridge High School where he participated in the school’s football and band programs. Upon graduating high school, Joe Anthony formed a short-lived, yet successful, puppeteering duo with fellow San Antonian Walter Evans. At the height of their success, Yannuzzi and Evans took their show to New York to film a segment for singer Richard Hayes’ television show on ABC before disbanding in 1958.

After briefly attempting a career in acting, Anthony returned to San Antonio to seek employment at Howard Davis’ KMAC. Flip Forrest’s recent departure from the station left a vacancy in one of San Antonio’s most popular radio programs that only a personality like Joe Anthony could fill, and no one knew that more than Joe Anthony himself. According to an interview with former disc jockey Henry Carr for the blog *Wired for Sound*, Anthony convinced Davis that he could fill Forrest’s shoes and continue the success of *Harlem Serenade*. The fact that Anthony offered to take the job

for twenty-five dollars a week less than his predecessor made the deal too good for Davis to pass. Joe Anthony was in at KMAC.<sup>47</sup>

Joe Anthony found great success as the new host of *Harlem Serenade*, even going on to host weekly “Joe Anthony Hop” dances every Saturday from 9 PM to 1 AM for young fans of his show. According to an interview conducted with journalist Jim E. Beal, the “sensational night time deejay”<sup>48</sup> would become known for playing music from rhythm and blues artists such as Jay McNeilly, Little Sunny,<sup>49</sup> the Isley Brothers and even up and coming Texan artists like Freddy Fender during his ten-to-midnight time slot.<sup>50</sup>

Though Joe Anthony would eventually become known across the world in the 1970s for using his shows to “break,” or help artists breakthrough to a larger audience, the disc jockey had begun making it a habit of playing the newest music from rhythm and blues artists early on in his career at KMAC. A 1961 advertisement showcasing Joe Anthony’s hot “sides,” or popular songs played by the disc jockey, include early material from influential Texas bluesman Freddie King (1961’s instrumental “Hideaway” on the Federal Label), Ike & Tina Turner (“I’m Jealous,” off the duo’s 1961 debut album, *The Soul of Ike & Tina Turner*) and Aretha Franklin (1961’s “Won’t Be Long,” from Franklin’s debut album, *Aretha: With the Ray Bryant Combo*).

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<sup>47</sup> Andrew Brown, “No Color in Poor: San Antonio’s Harlem Label,” *Wired for Sound* (blog) September 8, 2019, <http://wired-for-sound.blogspot.com/2011/09/no-color-in-poor-san-antonios-harlem.html>.

<sup>48</sup> “Ad for Joe Anthony Hop,” *San Antonio Express and News*, May 23, 1959, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-may-23-1959-1987911/>.

<sup>49</sup> In the original article for *It’s Only Rock ‘n Roll*, the interviewer wrote the artist’s name as “Sunny.” The artist Anthony was referencing was more than likely blues recording artist, Little Sonny.

<sup>50</sup> In the in the interview, Anthony recalls that one of his earliest musical memories involved putting on a show at San Antonio’s Mission Drive-Inn with the San Benito-born Fender around the time the artist released his smash hit, “Wasted Days and Wasted Nights.”

### Baby Tell Me: Harlem Records

After years of playing groundbreaking rhythm and blues on KMAC, Joe Anthony joined former wrestler Emil Henke to found Harlem Records in 1959. With the primary goal of recording talent “no one else would consider,” Anthony and Henke would eventually record many artists that would come to define San Antonio’s “West Side Sound.” In his article, “Talk to Me: The History of San Antonio’s West Side Sound,” historian Alex La Rotta states that Harlem Records was one of the first doo-wop and rhythm & blues labels in San Antonio, made even more significant by the fact that many of the label’s groups were comprised of members of different races.<sup>51</sup>

“Our original purpose was to record Texas talent,” said Joe Anthony to journalist Jim E. Beal for the fanzine *It’s Only Rock ‘n’ Roll*, “It was primarily to be rock talent, but we even got into some gospel recordings.”<sup>52</sup> Artists on Harlem Records included doo-wop group The Lyrics, The Royal Jesters, Charley and the Jives and early groups fronted by iconic Texas musicians Sunny Ozuna (Sunny and the Sunglows) and Doug Sahm (Doug Sahm and the Pharaohs). Though the label was short-lived (La Rotta states Harlem stopped producing records in 1961), its legacy has lasted much longer. With a sound that exemplified the diverse natures of San Antonio and Texas music, Joe Anthony and Henke referred to their artists as “The Texas Sound.” Many of the artists on Harlem hailed from

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<sup>51</sup> Alex La Rotta, “Talk to Me: The History of San Antonio’s West Side Sound,” *The Journal of Texas Music History* 13, 25.

<sup>52</sup> Jim Beal Jr., “Joe Anthony – Rock ‘N’ Roll Rembrandt,” *It’s Only Rock ‘N’ Roll*, August 1978, The Wittliff Collections.

the city's heavily Mexican American west side, thus helping to define the West Side Sound.<sup>53</sup>

Unafraid to take advantage of his occupation as one of San Antonio's most popular disc jockeys to further his record label, Joe Anthony would cautiously play Harlem's newest recordings on *Harlem Serenade*, making sure to keep his ownership of the label discreet. According to *Wired for Sound* author Andrew Brown, once a Harlem artist had finished recording, Joe Anthony would pay to have two acetate copies of the records pressed: one to play on his show, one to preserve to make additional pressings. Only when a record proved to be a hit would there be additional pressings.

Joe Anthony would also use his record hops at The Arthur Murray Dance Studios as a way to discover new local talent. "We played a hot spot called the Arthur Murray Dance Studio on any given Sunday after-noon with wall-to-wall teens," recalled Sunny and the Sunglows leader Sunny Ozuna in an email to the author, "Joe Anthony was a very big celebrity because of his radio program, and we needed him to help our career," he continued.<sup>54</sup> Sunglows drummer and manager Manuel Guerra, the eldest of the group, struck up a friendship with the disc jockey, and together they decided to make a record for *Harlem*. In February 1960, the Sunglows made their first and only recordings with the label: "From Now On," and "When I Think of You."

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<sup>53</sup> A popular genre of music developed on both the west and east sides of San Antonio, the West Side Sound was horn-driven, rhythm & blues music produced by groups comprised of intercultural members.

<sup>54</sup> Sunny Ozuna, email interview with author, October 19, 2020.

### Enter Mr. Pizza: Life after KMAC and Harlem Records

In 1966 the “commercialization” of popular rhythm and blues music produced by labels like Detroit’s Motown proved to be too much for the disc jockey, leaving him feeling uninspired. Anthony, who was known for playing what he considered the grittier sounds of R&B artists including Chubby Checker and Fats Domino, could not count himself as a fan of the polished production of Motown artists like the Supremes and the Four Tops. “I lost interest in music,” recalled Anthony to journalist Jim E. Beal Jr., “The Motown sound came in, became very commercial and lost its meat.” After spending over a decade of his life discovering, producing and promoting bands, Joe Anthony decided to step away from the boards in 1964. During his time away from the radio, Anthony focused on his restaurants Mr. Pizza and Villa Italia, two business ventures that would contribute to the mythos of one of San Antonio’s most popular disc jockeys.

In early 1965, Anthony decided to run for city council. The twenty-nine-year-old candidate found himself running against mortician Frank Cortez and credit manager Douglas White, after councilman Jack Kaufman decided not to seek re-election.<sup>55</sup> Initially, Anthony ran under his legal name, Joseph Anthony Yannuzzi, only to quickly refile under his radio name, Joe Anthony. The former disc jockey hoped that running under his radio name would help him in the polls, even quipping “Can you imagine printing ‘Yannuzzi’ on a bumper sticker?”<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, Anthony’s time in politics was short-lived, as it appears that he dropped out of the race that Cortez ultimately won.

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<sup>55</sup> “White Seeks Council Seat,” *San Antonio Express*, March 5, 1965, NewsBank: Access World News—Historical and Current. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-16200BF618F026FE%402438825-161E542E3834689F%4043-161E542E3834689F%40>.

The love of music proved to be too strong for the disc jockey, and in 1967, after applying for a job as an R&B disc jockey at station KAPE, Joe Anthony returned to man the boards and play records for his old employer, Howard Davis. Well aware of the fact that San Antonio had known him as the man behind *Harlem Serenade* for nine years, Joe Anthony continued producing content under his former show's title, sticking to middle of the road fare from his personal record collection.<sup>57</sup> KMAC/KISS had changed however while the disc jockey was away pursuing his other passions, for Howard Davis had hired a new station manager with the same interest in cutting-edge music as Joe Anthony. Little did Joe Anthony know that his new manager at the station would be a kindred musical spirit, one who would help Joe Anthony change the course of music history.

#### Lou Roney: The Soul of KMAC/KISS

Born in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, Lou Roney first came to San Antonio in the early 1960s to work at a station known for primarily playing Dixieland Jazz. From there, Roney went to work for San Antonio's only country and western station at the time, KBER-AM. Working at KBER provided the young disc jockey the opportunity to work directly with country legends such as Bob Wills and even a young Willie Nelson.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> "Mayor Seeks GGL Filing Completed," *San Antonio Express*, March 6, 1965, NewsBank: Access World News—Historical and Current. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-16200C19CE4C5D4A%402438826-161E542E83A7A098%407-161E542E83A7A098%40>.

<sup>57</sup> "Middle of the road," or, "MOR" is a type of radio format that is comprised of safe, melodic and popular genres of music.

<sup>58</sup> W. Scott Bailey, "The Ballad of Rockin' Roney," *San Antonio Business Journal*, accessed November 15, 2020, <https://www.bizjournals.com/sanantonio/stories/2001/05/28/story8.html>.

Wishing to return closer to home (Roney's wife was from Indiana), Roney found work at a successful Cleveland country radio station. Though he had received a significant pay increase at the Cleveland station, the biting weather proved too much for the couple to bear. Though it meant taking a large pay cut, Roney and his wife made the decision to return to the warmth of the Alamo City. "We hated the climate," says Roney, "so we ended up back here in San Antonio."<sup>59</sup>

Upon arriving in San Antonio, Roney took a job as station manager at Howard Davis' KMAC/KISS, where he quickly learned how the notoriously frugal Davis operated. "He [Davis] didn't want to subscribe to any of the big major record companies, which at that time, you'd have to send them like \$500 a year, or something like that and they would provide you [with records] all year," says Roney, "major pop stuff."<sup>60</sup> Without having the biggest acts of the day to rely on for programming, and with the desire to program his shows unlike any other popular station in town, Roney was often forced to rely on records provided to him by smaller labels and promotional companies, as well as records purchased on his own. "We had to rely on new acts that they would send free, that would come the promotional company, or from the group itself," continues the former station manager, "We both started buying imports, and playing the long-cuts."<sup>61</sup>

Early examples of Roney's experimentation with album long-cuts (songs included on albums that were much longer than conventional pop songs) included Creedence

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<sup>59</sup> Interview with Lou Roney, September 17, 2020.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.



Clearwater Revival's eleven-minute cover of the Norman Whitfield/Barret Strong-penned number, "I Heard It Through the Grapevine." The decision to focus on the longer cuts of albums often times benefitted the station in more ways than one. According to Roney, not only were the longer cuts usually the finest material produced by an artist, they also filled more airtime, which came in handy when other jockeys were either late, or simply did not show up.

Playing records and discovering exciting new bands was actually a side job for Joe Anthony. The disc jockey was known throughout San Antonio as the proprietor of popular Italian food restaurants Villa Fontana and Mr. Pizza, and it was at these establishments that the disc jockey made the majority of his money. "His main way to make money was through his restaurants," states Roney, "he [Anthony] didn't show up about two or three days a week."<sup>62</sup>

According to Roney, it was not unusual to discover last minute that Anthony would not be coming into the station on a certain day. "When he didn't show up, whatever the newest album was, I would stick it on the air and play a taped intro from Joe, 'Hi this is Joe Anthony,' and then we'd play the whole album through," recalls Roney with a laugh.<sup>63</sup>

The station manager's choice to play progressive and more experimental music inspired Joe Anthony to change the format, and even the name of his long-running show, *Harlem Serenade*. "Everyone thought Joe Anthony meant rhythm and blues," said the

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with Lou Roney, September 17, 2020.

<sup>63</sup> During his early days at KMAC/KISS, Roney was enrolled in classes at San Antonio College. After completing his morning courses, the station manager would come into the studio where he prepared for his twelve to six 'o clock shift.

disc jockey to journalist Beal Jr., “I started inserting a little hard rock into the show and it caught on.”<sup>64</sup> Roney also comments on the evolution of their shows, “I was still doing my progressive pop thing playing stuff like Creedence Clearwater,” says the former station manager, “and that’s where Anthony sort of worked in some weird ‘way out’ stuff.”<sup>65</sup> By the early 1970s the two disc jockeys radically changed the formats of their shows, pushing the boundaries of their content, and in the process, introduced San Antonio to a slew of brand-new bands, many of which no one else in America had heard.<sup>66</sup>

“Lou and I are able to hear a sound,” said Joe Anthony, “We have a feeling for a job we have to do.” The primary goal for Roney and Joe Anthony was to never, under absolutely any circumstances, be lumped in with San Antonio’s other radio stations. “We never really tried to integrate ourselves with the other radio stations in town, we were pretty much mavericks doing our own little thing,” recalls Roney, “As soon as they would put something on, off it would go! We did not want to be the same as anyone else in town.” Due to KMAC/KISS’ status of being a privately-owned station, the programming possibilities were entirely based on the tastes of its deejays, rather than whatever the best seller of the day was. “Our shows are not printed out somewhere and

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<sup>64</sup> Jim Beal Jr., “Joe Anthony – Rock ‘N’ Roll Rembrandt,” *It’s Only Rock ‘N’ Roll*, August 1978, The Wittliff Collections.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Lou Roney, September 17, 2020.

In our interview Roney made mention of Joe Anthony playing eclectic blues musician Taj Mahal while beginning to broaden his programming.

<sup>66</sup> Some of these artists include AC/DC, Judas Priest, Thin Lizzy, Black Sabbath and Aerosmith.

we do not have to wait for a song to appear on Billboard's charts before we can play it," said Anthony in his interview with Jim Beal Jr.<sup>67</sup>

Roney refers to the programming at KMAC/KISS as AOR, or "all over the road" when talking about his and Joe Anthony's shows.<sup>68</sup> The daily schedules for the station were filled with a wide variety of content. Opera, traffic reports, heavy metal, progressive rock, country, and even programming by local music legend Augie Meyers. "It started out as trying to survive in a world where we weren't a pop station," says Roney, "we didn't want to be a pop station."<sup>69</sup>

According to Roney, who not only acted as station manager, but as a salesman for advertising as well, finding advertisers in local businesses that spoke to their listeners was paramount. A "hands-off" boss, Howard Davis would allow his employees at KMAC/KISS to program their shows any way they please, just as long as money was being made. "The only reason Howard Davis allowed us to continue doing our programming is because all of a sudden, I was getting advertising from bars, clubs, strip joints, head shops, waterbed companies, etc.," says Roney, "The money started coming in, and the station started getting more popular, and the record companies began to start noticing us," continues the former station manager.<sup>70</sup> Overtime, KMAC/KISS became

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<sup>67</sup> Jim Beal Jr., "Joe Anthony – Rock 'N' Roll Rembrandt," *It's Only Rock 'N' Roll*, August 1978, The Wittliff Collections.

<sup>68</sup> "AOR" typically stands for "Album-Oriented Rock," a popular radio format that succeeded freeform in the 1970s and 1980s. Album oriented rock stations, like top 40, had a set list of songs from which stations could play from.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Lou Roney, September 17, 2020.

<sup>70</sup> Head shop refers to a type of business that, among other things, sells goods related to the consumption of marijuana and tobacco.

*the* source of advertisement for a variety of merchants that tended to cater to, as former KMAC/KISS disc jockey Wayne “Donnie” Meals refers to as “teens in black t-shirts.”<sup>71</sup>

KMAC/KISS had made dedicated fans out of not only San Antonians, but of other radio stations in major markets around the country. Program directors from cities including Cleveland, Los Angeles and Chicago would call the small station regularly to ask what bands Roney and Joe Anthony were playing next. “We never consulted anybody,” says Roney proudly, “everybody called us.”<sup>72</sup>

Though KMAC/KISS had received national recognition from its peers, the North American radio narrative neglects the station’s influence in favor of other notable stations. An example of this can be found in Cleveland’s WMMS-FM, a radio station (not unlike KMAC/KISS) often credited with kickstarting the careers of many legendary rock and roll artists. Among these artists is Canada’s Rush, whose song “Working Man” debuted on WMMS’ airwaves in 1974, much to the excitement of its listeners.

Though WMMS is often recognized as Rush’s earliest North American supporter (Donna Halper, the disc jockey credited with first playing “Working Man,” has long been considered a close friend by the band), Lou Roney and Joe Anthony can also count themselves among the group’s earliest supporters.<sup>73</sup> In 1975, after receiving abundant radio support from KMAC/KISS, Rush booked their very first show in San Antonio, thanks to Lou Roney and handful of investors. “I had never done a concert,” recalled

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<sup>71</sup> What Meals is referring to here, is to what many might argue is the stereotypical outfit of choice for fans of heavy rock and roll.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Lou Roney, September 17, 2020.

<sup>73</sup> Matt Wardlaw and Jeff Niesel, “An Oral History of WMMS, Cleveland's Legendary Radio Station,” Cleveland Scene, August 15, 2018, <https://www.clevescene.com/cleveland/an-oral-history-of-wmms-clevelands-legendary-radio-station/Content?oid=22023548>.

Roney, “I went around and got about ten different partners to throw in a hundred bucks a piece, and the record company said they would bring Rush down here.”<sup>74</sup>

“When Rush first came to town, this is how wacky it was,” remembers former KMAC/KISS disc jockey Donnie Meals, “Joe Anthony gets on the air and says, ‘Hey Rush is in town, and we need someone to give them a ride from the airport!’”<sup>75</sup> A few dedicated fans heard Anthony’s call and assisted the trio to Randy’s Rodeo, their venue for the evening. In his 2006 book, *Roadshow: Landscape with Drums – A Concert Tour by Motorcycle*, Rush drummer Neil Peart recalls his band’s reception in San Antonio. “As we arrived in town, we were amazed to hear them playing nothing but Rush songs all day and night.”<sup>76</sup> The October 1975 performance was a complete success, one that would entice the Canadian trio to return to San Antonio for 21 performances over the course of the next thirty-seven years. “With all that radio hype, the tiny roadhouse was packed,” writes Peart of the band’s debut concert, “that performance was the seed of an enduring popularity for the band in San Antonio.”<sup>77</sup>

Along with other radio stations around the country, local concert promoters considered themselves fans of the station. Stone City Attractions, owned and operated by San Antonian Jack Orbin, considered himself a close friend of KMAC/KISS, and often consulted with its disc jockeys to find out what new bands they were playing in an effort

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<sup>74</sup> Interview with Lou Roney, September 17, 2020.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Donnie Meals, September 28, 2020.

<sup>76</sup> Neil Peart, *Roadshow: Landscape with Drums: A Concert Tour by Motorcycle*. (Toronto: ECW Press, 2011), 80.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

to book them the acts for performances. It is this relationship with Orbin and Stone City, that helped solidify KMAC/KISS' legacy as radio pioneers.

On August 1, 1979, nearly 37 years after becoming the sole owner of KMAC-AM, Howard Wingfield Davis passed away due to complications from colon cancer, leaving the beloved sister stations to his wife, Maidell. The following April, Mrs. Davis shocked the city of San Antonio by selling both stations to Raleigh, North Carolina's Capitol Broadcasting Company Inc. for 4.65 million dollars.<sup>78</sup> The station, no longer under individual ownership, was subject to a corporate control, complete with new personnel and playlists. Much to the dismay of its listeners, the freeform sets once programmed by Joe Anthony and Lou Roney were now replaced with a safe, album-oriented rock playlist chosen by their new corporate owners.

The days of Joe Anthony's belching and smashing disco records on air were over. KISS officially became an album-oriented rock station, no longer playing the longer and edgier cuts they became famous for under Roney and Joe Anthony's tenure. KMAC, the AM station that started it all fifty years earlier, was sold to a Christian radio organization in the 1980s, and had its name changed to KSLR. Today, only KISS-FM remains on the air in San Antonio, the sole reminder of the city's 1970s heavy metal radio heyday.

For a brief period in time beginning in the mid-1970s, San Antonio radio took centerstage, literally and figuratively, in the world of heavy rock and roll. "Rather than play the game that the other two rock stations were playing, says former KMAC/KISS disc jockey Tom "T-Bone" Schepke, "they forged their own sound."<sup>79</sup> This sound

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<sup>78</sup> "Company Buys Radio Stations," *Odessa American*, April 22, 1980, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-apr-22-1980-1981681/>.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Tom Schepke, November 25, 2019.

eschewed top 40 popularity for the unknown; bands from across the world that many had never heard before. This effort was made possible thanks to KMAC/KISS' status as a privately-owned station. Howard Davis' approach to owning the station provided his disc jockeys the opportunities to play, quite literally, whatever they wished, as long as some form of income came in of course.

Joe Anthony and Lou Roney helped define San Antonio as a fertile ground where cutting-edge hard rock and roll could be nurtured and even flourish. The music the two men played on their shows was welcomed by the city's youths and made them legends to their listeners. Even after Joe Anthony's untimely death in 1992, stories still circulate of the man now known as "The Godfather." An architect first of the West Side Sound, only to reinvent himself as a pioneer in the world of heavy rock with the help of Lou Roney in the seventies, Joe Anthony was unlike any disc jockey San Antonio had seen before, and frankly, since.

### III. LIVE MUSIC IN THE HEAVY METAL CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

#### Prologue

Nearly 50,000 fans packed into the Alamodome, the iconic arena, on June 14, 2017. A sea of black t-shirts flooded the floors and seats of the venue. The Dome's cavernous hallways filled with eager concertgoers attempting to buy merchandise and beer for the night's headliner: heavy metal icons, Metallica.

For the first time since 2009, the legendary hard-rocking quartet had made their way back to San Antonio, touring in support of the 2016 album *Hardwired... To Self-Destruct*. The city, which hosted the band on its very first tour 34 years prior, was brimming with anticipation for the night.<sup>80</sup> Fans of all ages stood shoulder to shoulder as the stadium lights dimmed and the group took the stage.

For nearly two hours the quartet, led by lead singer and guitarist James Hetfield, pummeled the loyal thousands of fans, playing songs from its legendary 40-year career. Addressing the crowd throughout the concert, Hetfield effortlessly held the attention of every attendee. "Metallica is no stranger to San Antonio," the front man said to a massive amount of applause, "People in San Antonio like their music heavy."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The band played the long-defunct venue *Daddy's* on August 25, 1983.

<sup>81</sup> Hector Saldana, "Review: Metallica Makes Thunderous Return to San Antonio," My San Antonio (Express-News, June 15, 2017), <https://www.mysanantonio.com/entertainment/music-stage/article/Review-Metallica-makes-thunderous-return-to-San-11222214.php>.



## Introduction

This chapter provides readers with the second answer to the question of how and why San Antonio would come to be known as “The Heavy Metal Capital of the World.” As previously mentioned, the relationship between KMAC/KISS disc jockeys Joe Anthony and Lou Roney, and local promoter Jack Orbin would prove to be a powerful and influential partnership beginning in the mid-1970s and extending to the early 1980s. While Anthony and Roney are important to the story for their role of introducing the music to the city, Orbin would prove to be just as significant for booking and bringing the bands to San Antonio.<sup>82</sup> Simply put: There is no “Heavy Metal Capital” without Stone City Attractions.

Along with discussing how the relationship between KMAC/KISS and Stone City Attractions established San Antonio as a premier destination for heavy metal artists, this chapter will also examine the music’s influence on the city’s citizens, in both its rebellious youth subcultures and its confounded leaders. The music, heard on either the KMAC/KISS airwaves or at a concert put on by Stone City Attractions, had an undeniably profound influence on San Antonians. As we will see in this chapter, both the popularity and infamy of heavy music lead to everything from local bands being established to new city ordinances placing restrictions on the live music industry.

If Joe Anthony and Lou Roney were the spark that ignited San Antonio’s affection for heavy metal, Jack Orbin’s Stone City Attractions was the powder keg whose explosive promotional ability provided both the music, and the musicians that created it, audiences of eager listeners. Orbin, whose philosophy involved keeping ticket prices low

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<sup>82</sup> “Booking” essentially means scheduling a band to perform at a certain place and time.

in order to entice concertgoers to return for future performances, worked closely with Roney and Anthony in an effort to bring the most exciting and popular musical groups to San Antonio, often when the same groups were struggling to sell tickets in other markets. The promoter's success in San Antonio quickly caught the attention of agents from around the country, leading them to seek Orbin's advice and guidance in an effort to emulate his success.<sup>83</sup>

It was not long before these same agents began presenting Orbin with new artists, hoping to try their luck with Stone City in San Antonio. These relationships granted the promoter the opportunity to “package” and present now-legendary artists like Black Sabbath, Judas Priest and Iron Maiden to name a few to rabid audiences of heavy metal fanatics. Each time a new or returning artist visited San Antonio, they would receive massive airplay on KMAC/KISS thanks to Roney and Anthony. This radio play often increased the demand for tickets, which of course allowed promoters like Orbin to book bands into larger venues. All of these occurrences led to the one thing young artists seek most: exposure. To quote the legendary promoter, “The more they played in front of people, the more airplay they got, the bigger they became. That’s how San Antonio became the heavy metal capital.”<sup>84</sup>

Though Jack Orbin and Stone City Attractions brought hundreds of bands, provided jobs and generated a great deal of income for the city, not all San Antonians were excited for the title of “Heavy Metal Capital of the World.” As we will see, city leaders were quick to reject this title, and even present ordinances to ban rock music

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<sup>83</sup> Not unlike the way KMAC/KISS consulted with radio stations on what was popular in San Antonio.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Jack Orbin, November 27, 2019.

entirely from the city. Orbin, a lifelong believer in the power of rebellion and protest, became an anti-censorship activist and would find himself going toe-to-toe with the city's leading officials to argue in defense of his beloved rock and roll in the era of Tipper Gore's Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC).

Chapter two begins with a brief explanation as to what exactly heavy metal is, beginning with the late 1960s founding of the genre through its explosive growth in the early 1980s. This explanation contextualizes the subsequent content in the chapter. The reader will also be provided with various examples of influential heavy metal musicians and performances in an effort to communicate a better understanding of the genre and its influence.

The question of why heavy metal was so popular in San Antonio beginning in the mid-1970s will also be addressed in this narrative. Considered by many as a historically working-class, blue collar city, San Antonio was fertile ground for heavy rock and roll. The music, which according to sociologist Deena Weinstein, is known for conveying its messages of power through "sheer volume," immediately connected with members of the city's working class.<sup>85</sup>

Though Weinstein and Walser consider heavy metal a white male, blue collar artform, the genre seemingly had no demographic or gender-related restrictions in San Antonio. As my research will show, Mexican American youths, especially but not limited Mexican American males, played a vital role in the success of heavy metal in San Antonio. Heavy metal is a musical statement of power and strength, often filled with hyper-masculine tales of the male gender. These characteristics of the genre greatly

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<sup>85</sup> Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2000), 23.

appeal to the “machismo” aspect of Latino culture, wherein great emphasis is placed on masculinity. At the same time, these themes of power and strength enlivened women in the subculture, leading to the formation of all-women bands such as Heather Leather. The rebellion of youths, along with the emphasis placed on masculinity by the Latino culture, provided heavy metal with more than enough rich soil to grow.

### Heavy Metal Thunder... Or Something Like That

Before discussing heavy metal’s success in San Antonio, perhaps it would be best to provide readers with a definition of this popular genre of music. The term “heavy metal” first entered the popular culture lexicon in William S. Burrough’s 1959 novel *Naked Lunch*, and was sometimes used as a sort of cult term by popular music publications in the late 1960s.<sup>86</sup> It was in 1968, however, that the words “heavy metal” first appeared in a popular song with the Canadian band Steppenwolf’s “Born to Be Wild.” The song, which included the lyric, “I like smoke and lightning, heavy metal thunder,” was featured prominently in the influential counterculture movie *Easy Rider*.<sup>87</sup>

Defining heavy metal music (often abbreviated simply as “metal”) is certainly no easy task, as there are many schools of thought regarding its origins. In the groundbreaking 1991 book, *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture*, sociologist Deena Weinstein states that heavy metal began as essentially a combination of psychedelic rock

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<sup>86</sup> Describing music as “heavy metal” was often meant as an insult for groups. In Wiederhorn and Turman’s *Louder Than Hell: The Definitive Oral History of Metal*, Black Sabbath bassist Geezer Butler recalls first hearing term describing his band’s music as the sound of “a load of heavy metal crashing to the floor.”

<sup>87</sup> The term “heavy metal thunder” came to symbolize the sights and sounds of motorcycles speeding down the highway. Songwriter Mars Bonfire claims that the term came to him when he remembered the heavy metals on the periodic table while waiting out a particularly intense thunderstorm.

and American blues music. Weinstein refers to this combination of cultures as a “bricolage,” or a “loose organization of diverse elements.”<sup>88</sup> While a case can certainly be made for American rock bands uncovering the central elements of the genre, heavy metal, in its purest and most earnest form is most certainly a product of the British musicians.<sup>89</sup>

Though the number of opinions on the origins of heavy metal might be as varied as the artists that comprise the genre, there is no question that the earliest examples of metal music can be found on records produced by British musicians beginning in the late 1960s. The earliest British prototypical metal bands were usually comprised of four to five members: a bass and drummer (the rhythm section), lead-guitarist, and a vocalist. Early hard-rocking quartets employing this lineup include London’s Led Zeppelin and Birmingham’s Black Sabbath. This is not to say that this lineup is *the* definitive metal lineup, however. Some groups, like Hertford’s Deep Purple, included an organist in their earliest efforts, adding an additional, more psychedelic-infused element to their sound. Judas Priest also augmented their sound by adding an additional guitarist to their lineup, increasing their already impressive sonic capabilities.

Historians and fans have debated for decades over who was the first heavy metal band and the conclusion usually comes down to two groups: Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath. Though the two quartets have had an undeniable influence on the genre, only the latter has actually embraced heavy metal. In fact, as Robert Walser points out in

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<sup>88</sup> Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2000), 6.

<sup>89</sup> Early examples of American proto-metal performances include 1968’s “Rock Me Baby,” from San Francisco’s Blue Cheer, the same year’s “Ball and Chain,” from the Janis Joplin-lead Big Brother & The Holding Company, and 1967’s “Manic Depression,” by The Jimi Hendrix Experience.

*Running with the Devil*, Zeppelin vocalist Robert Plant dismisses his band's contribution to heavy metal by stating that the group's 1969 self-titled album, was "ethereal" rather than heavy.<sup>90</sup> Led Zeppelin is not the only early proto-metal group to renounce their influence on the genre. Despite the fact their amplified blues rock has most certainly inspired early heavy metal recordings, the members of English rock trio Cream also distanced themselves from the genre, with singer/guitarist Eric Clapton going so far to say "People say we started the heavy metal thing. Which is quite an indictment."<sup>91</sup>

Though Zeppelin downplays their contributions to heavy metal, Black Sabbath bassist Geezer Butler disagrees. "Zeppelin paved the way for us," states the bassist, "they very much started the genre, and we cashed in on it."<sup>92</sup> For author Ian Christe however, it is Birmingham's Sabbath that can lay claim to the title of the very first heavy metal band. "There were scant few stones an investigator could overturn to find precedent for how complete Black Sabbath brought and embodied a revolutionary new beginning," wrote Christe in his 2003 book *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal*.

While there were most certainly metal performances captured by artists beginning in the mid-to-late sixties, it wasn't until Sabbath's 1968 self-titled debut that a musical group fully-embodied and embraced many of the tropes of the heavy metal genre as we

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<sup>90</sup> Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: University Press of New England), 6.

<sup>91</sup> Johnny Black, "How Led Zeppelin Invented 'Heavy Music'," Metal Hammer Magazine (Louder, April 14, 2014), <https://www.loudersound.com/features/how-led-zeppelin-invented-heavy-music>.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

know it today.<sup>93</sup> Taking their name from a 1963 horror film starring Boris Karloff, Black Sabbath distinguished themselves from contemporaries like Led Zeppelin by being more than a hard rocking electric-blues group who found fame after reinterpreting songs written by American blues artists. “In the beginning, we decided to write scary music because we really didn’t think life was all roses,” recalls Sabbath front man Ozzy Osbourne, “So we decided to write horror music.”<sup>94</sup> Through making the decision to write songs specifically about the macabre (early song titles included “Wicked World,” “Paranoid,” “Electric Funeral,” and “Rat Salad”), Sabbath laid the groundwork for the entire heavy metal genre, of which artists, including fellow Birmingham natives Judas Priest, would build upon for the next 50 years.

Perhaps the single most defining feature of heavy metal is the guitar riff. Often appearing at the beginning of a song, the guitar riff is a combination of notes that sets the pace for the composition to follow. In terms of heavy metal, there is no greater composer of the riff than Black Sabbath’s Tony Iommi. “You will never find another soul who comes up with better hard rock riffs than him,” says bandmate and singer Ozzy Osbourne, “When we’d be together, I’d always be like, ‘There’s no way he can top that riff.’ Then he’d beat it every time,” he continues.<sup>95</sup> After suffering a factory-related work injury, wherein the tips of his fingers were severed by machinery, Iommi was forced to fashion homemade prosthetic fingertips to continue playing guitar. Perhaps the most

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<sup>93</sup> Early metal performances include the Kinks’ “You Really Got Me,” released in 1964, the Beatles’ “Helter Skelter,” released in 1968 and Blue Cheer’s “Summertime Blues,” released in 1968.

<sup>94</sup> Ian Christie, *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal* (New York: It Books, 2004), 39.

<sup>95</sup> Jon Wiederhorn and Katherine Turman, *Louder than Hell: The Definitive Oral History of Metal* (New York, New York: It Books, 2014), 34.

important repercussion of the guitarist's injury, however, was his decision to detune his guitar in an effort to loosen his strings. With a detuned guitar, not only could Iommi bend notes (the act of plucking a note on the neck of the guitar, and "bending" it to produce a higher tone), but he could also produce a much lower, almost droning tone for Sabbath's songs. Iommi's guitar tone added an intensity to Sabbath songs like "Children of the Grave," "Supernaut," and "Sabbath Bloody Sabbath."

As far as definitive metal bassists go, one must look no further than Black Sabbath's Geezer Butler. Originally a guitarist before joining Sabbath, Butler tackled the strings of his bass with a fury that has inspired countless imitators, but very few equals.<sup>96</sup> Often times mimicking Iommi's guitar riffs, Butler helped provide Sabbath with a droning wall of sound, one that perfectly suited their horror anthems. Along with his contributions on bass, Butler also wrote much of the band's lyrics, the subject matter of which would be built upon by metal lyricists for generations.<sup>97</sup>

Heavy metal vocalists are the emotional centerpieces of their bands. Interpreting fantastical lyrics in often highly dramatic fashion, early metal singers borrowed directly from American blues artists like Big Mama Thornton and Howlin' Wolf by mimicking their distinct, highly emotional and swagger-filled performances.<sup>98</sup> Along with influential blues singers, metal vocalists almost certainly found inspiration in the frantic and

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<sup>96</sup> Other notable heavy metal bassists include Metallica's Cliff Burton (1962 – 1986) and Iron Maiden's Steve Harris.

<sup>97</sup> Some of Butler's most notable lyrical contributions are the anti-war anthem "War Pigs" off the band's the 1970 album ("Politicians hide themselves away, they only started the war. Why should they go out to fight? They leave that role to the poor"), and the demonic-love song "Nativity in Black" ("Look into my eyes you'll see who I am, my name is Lucifer please take my hand").

<sup>98</sup> Howlin' Wolf's "Killing Floor," and Big Mama Thornton's "Ball and Chain" are two primary examples of the blues singing tradition's influence on the heavy metal genre.



unhinged singing styles of American psychedelic rock groups formed in the 1960s. Artists including Michigan's MC5 (with whom Led Zeppelin toured with in the late sixties), the Janis Joplin-led Big Brother and the Holding Company and Austin's psychedelic rock pioneers the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Elevators have all had an undeniable impact on the genre of heavy metal with their raucous vocal performances.

The quintessential example of heavy metal singing can be found in Led Zeppelin vocalist Robert Plant. Plant draws heavily from the blues singing tradition on early Zeppelin tracks "You Shook Me" and "I Can't Quit You Baby." The banshee-like wail of Black Sabbath's Ozzy Osbourne is another distinctive voice in early heavy metal, adding an element of dread to songs like "Black Sabbath" and "The Wizard."

This narrative primarily addresses three eras of the genre. The early to mid-seventies (what Weinstein refers to the crystallization period of metal), the so-called "golden age" of heavy metal (which began in 1975), and the New Wave of British Heavy Metal, which began in the late 1970s and continued until around 1985. These three eras were particularly influential to San Antonio's ascension to the center of the hard rock and metal universe, as many of the artists associated with these eras found early notoriety as artists thanks to either receiving radio exposure or performing in the city.

### Working Man: A Brief History of Heavy Metal and the Working Class

Rock and roll, even from its earliest forms, has long been considered an almost degraded artform, one reserved for blue collar/working-class listeners. In 1957 legendary crooner Frank Sinatra swiftly wrote off young fans of rock music as "cretinous goons," and that the music itself was the "martial music of every side-burned delinquent on the

face of the earth.”<sup>99</sup> The genre, which is an amalgamation of artistic elements from music performed by rhythm and blues artists, gospel singers and country pickers (among others), gained popularity with youth during the 1950s and 1960s. According to sociologist Deena Weinstein, who uses the lyrics of Australian heavy metal band AC/DC’s 1977 song “Let There be Rock” as a reference, black musicians provided the blues, while white musicians provided the “schmaltz” to create rock and roll. “In AC/DC’s vision, the unassuming and straightforward blues are given a shot of emotional hype,” argues Weinstein, “resulting in a hybrid music with emergent qualities that are all its own.”<sup>100</sup>

Since his groundbreaking recordings with Sam Phillips and Sun Records, Elvis, the so-called “King of Rock and Roll,” was able to introduce a whole generation to the music of African Americans. Performing the music of southern blues artists like Arthur “Big Boy” Crudup and driving crowds to near insanity with his sexually charged dance moves, Presley endeared himself to a generation of young would-be rockers from all over the world. Among those most enamored with Elvis’ look and music were young men part of a British subculture known as “Teddy Boys.” These youngsters, who were often considered part of England’s working class, idolized Presley, and helped make rock and roll a working-class phenomenon in the UK.

Two of heavy metal’s most dominant and influential groups, Black Sabbath and Judas Priest, both hailed from the industrial/working class city of Birmingham, a fact that

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<sup>99</sup> Randall J. Stevens, ‘Where else did they copy their styles but from church groups?’: Rock ‘n’ Roll and Pentecostalism in the 1950s South, *Church History* 85, no. 1 (March 2016): 98, <https://www-doi-org.libproxy.txstate.edu/10.1017/S0009640715001365>.

<sup>100</sup> Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2000), 12.

some argue contributed directly to the music pioneered by both groups.<sup>101</sup> In a 1974 issue of British music magazine *Melody Maker*, Journalist Rob Partridge compared the city to Detroit and stated that its “strong working class community” produced a culture that found “contemporary substance in high-energy rock and roll.”<sup>102</sup> Judas Priest vocalist Rob Halford echoed Partridge’s argument in a 2014 interview with British publication *Business Live*. “When I would go to school, I would walk past the metal foundries, before metal [music] was invented,” the front man continues, “we were living and breathing it before a note was played.”<sup>103</sup>

In North America, the love affair between rock and roll and the working class began after the World War II. Author Brett Lashua argues that rock and roll’s popularity in cities like Memphis, Cleveland and Philadelphia was a direct result of “wartime migration,” where millions of African Americans ventured north in an effort to find work.<sup>104</sup> Sensing the potential to make money by broadcasting music that would appeal to African American listeners, disc jockeys in industrial cities began playing artists from the rhythm and blues genre, introducing their white listeners to the genre in the process.

The city of San Antonio was no different from other blue-collar cities. “San Antonio was an area like western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio,” states Lou Roney,

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<sup>101</sup> Both Led Zeppelin vocalist Robert Plant and drummer John Bonham also hailed from cities surrounding Birmingham.

<sup>102</sup> David Simonelli, *Working Class Heroes: Rock Music and British Society in the 1960s and 1970s* (Lanham: Lexington Book, 2013), 179, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost).

<sup>103</sup> Sarah Probert, “Judas Priest: An Unbreakable Metal That Was Forged in the Black Country,” *Business Live*, January 12, 2015, <https://www.business-live.co.uk/retail-consumer/judas-priest-unbreakable-metal-forged-7426553>.

<sup>104</sup> Brett Lashua, *Popular Music, Popular Myth and Cultural Heritage in Cleveland: The Moondog, The Buzzard, and the Battle for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2019), 51, <https://doi-org.libproxy.txstate.edu/10.1108/978-1-78769-155-120191006>.

“working man.”<sup>105</sup> Owing much of its economy to its military bases (at one point the city possessed four different bases), as well as its tourist industry, San Antonio has long held the reputation of being a blue-collar working class city, with a median household income of \$52,000 as of the 2019 Census.<sup>106</sup>

Show promoter Jack Orbin argues that the genre offers fans a much deeper listening experience than others might realize. “Heavy metal gave music lovers a place to release their frustration and feel empowered individually,” states the promoter, “kind of like therapy.”<sup>107</sup> Halford echoed Orbin’s beliefs in a 1977 interview by commenting on metal’s ability to act as a relief for those who need it. “If you are working at British Leyland for eight hours a day putting nuts on machinery,” said Halford to journalist Anne Nitingale, “you need *some* relief.”<sup>108</sup>

### Heavy Metal in the Alamo City

“I think San Antonio had several things going for it,” says photographer Al Rendon “First of all we had a very progressive music station, KISS/KMAC, that was playing all this music that nobody else was playing”<sup>109</sup> The influence of disc jockeys Lou Roney and Joe Anthony on the San Antonio music scene simply cannot be overstated.

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<sup>105</sup> Lou Roney Interview with the author, September 17, 2020.

<sup>106</sup> “U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: San Antonio City, Texas; United States,” Census Bureau QuickFacts, accessed March 24, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sanantoniocitytexas,US#>.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Jack Orbin, November 27, 2019.

<sup>108</sup> David Simonelli, *Working Class Heroes: Rock Music and British Society in the 1960s and 1970s* (Lanham: Lexington Book, 2013), 180, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost).

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Al Rendon, September 11, 2020.

They introduced their listeners to bands from across the globe, many of which happened to produce heavy music. These hard-rocking bands connected instantly with the largely working-class community of 1970s San Antonio. “There were all these young men that love that music,” continued Rendon, “It kinda spoke to them.”<sup>110</sup>

Along with its working-class reputation, San Antonio’s historically large Latino population could have potentially been a catalyst for heavy metal’s popularity in the city.<sup>111</sup> When asked why heavy metal was so popular in San Antonio, nearly all interviewees for this project responded by saying it had something to do with the city’s Mexican-American population. According to a 1981 article for the *San Antonio Express News*, Jack Orbin stated that San Antonio’s average heavy metal fan is “primarily Mexican-American, male, and young.”<sup>112</sup> Though much of the narrative surrounding heavy metal history tends to focus on its appeal to young, white and male fans, the experience of the Hispanic heavy metal listener in San Antonio from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s certainly deserves recognition.

“Hispanics rarely joined the heavy metal subculture until the late 1980s,” writes Weinstein, “In communities in the United States where Mexican youth are in the majority, notably in South Texas, the audience for heavy metal is rapidly growing and the metal subculture is taking root,” the author continues while acknowledging Texas as

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<sup>110</sup> Interview with Al Rendon, September 11, 2020.

<sup>111</sup> According to the 2019 Census, the Hispanic/Latino population comprised 64.2% of San Antonio’s total population.

<sup>112</sup> Richard Selinkoff, “Rock with Socks: Heavy Metal Sound Boils and Churns in S.A. Clubs,” *San Antonio Express News*, 79, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-16341181FB6A43EB%402444747-16330E5F16065286%4078-16330E5F16065286%40>.

hotbed for heavy metal culture.<sup>113</sup> Though Orbin believes it was San Antonio Mexican-American population that drew so many fans to metal, others believe that heavy metal was inevitable. “I don’t know if it was anything culturally here,” says San Antonio guitarist Art Villareal, “You can assume all day long that working-class radio listeners like rock and roll, they like hard rock, they like metal,” he continues.<sup>114</sup> Villareal believes that it was just a phenomenon of youth that drew him and so many of his friends to heavy metal. “I think it was very energetic music,” he says after pausing, “We had energy, we were young, and it was the music we were exposed to.”<sup>115</sup>

Since the May 1955 release of Richard Brooks’ seminal film *Blackboard Jungle* (which famously included Bill Haley and the Comets’ 1954 song “Rock Around the Clock” over the opening credits), rock and roll has been the symbolic music of youth rebellion. In keeping with the rebelliousness of rock and roll, the youths of San Antonio, a great deal of whom happened to be Hispanic, gravitated towards the increasingly heavier and faster sounds of KMAC/KISS. Echoing Villareal’s beliefs, scene historian Reuben Luna believes discovering heavy music was a rite of passage for young people. “That was the main type of music for teenagers in town back then,” recalls Luna, “San Antonio as a city, we got used to really being immersed in that type of music.”<sup>116</sup>

In his October 1985 review of a Mötley Crüe concert that took place in the HemisFair Arena, journalist Mike Greenberg comments that the audience was filled with

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<sup>113</sup> Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2000), 112-113.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Art Villareal, November 30, 2019.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Reuben Luna, November 30, 2019.

both male and female concert goers that ran the gamut of local teens. Young music fans from all walks of life (Greenberg wrote that members of the sold-out crowd included teens that fall under the “pachuco,” “preppy,” “angelic,” and even “a little lower than the angels” categories) had purchased tickets to see the so-called “Bad Boys of Rock” perform in their hometown.<sup>117</sup> Greenberg’s account of these attendees contributes to the argument that metal in San Antonio was not only a male phenomenon, but a regional one. “That was the music of the youth of San Antonio at that time,” recalls Luna, “it just developed and became an inherent part of the fabric of the youth of San Antonio.”<sup>118</sup> Not unlike Flip Forrest’s fan club and Joe Anthony’s sock hops during the 1950s, both of which crossed racial and social boundaries with their fans, heavy metal music had the ability to bring together youths from all over San Antonio, from all backgrounds.

#### Jack Orbin and Stone City Attractions

*“Hard rock and heavy metal started happening in the late seventies and eighties and we were in the middle of that.”*

- Jack Orbin, Stone City Attractions

At the age of ten, Jack Orbin and his family moved to San Antonio from Michigan so his father, Captain Earl Martin Orbin, could receive treatment for his cancer.

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<sup>117</sup> Mike Greenberg, “Religion of Rock ‘n’ Roll, *San Antonio Express News*, October 13, 1985, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-163564519B4BCC9E%402446352-1635016B80A3113D%40134>.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Reuben Luna, November 30, 2019.

Sadly, Earl succumbed to his illness in June 1957, and the family decided to stay in San Antonio after his death. Jack, or “Jackie” as he was known in school, attended Douglas MacArthur High School, where he was president of the school’s Beta Club, which focused on service to both the school, and its community. Aside from his dedication to community service (a belief he would carry for the rest of his life), Orbin, like many youngsters in the late 1960s, was very fond of rock and roll. “I was always into music back when I was a teenager in the late sixties,” recalled the promoter in an interview with the author.<sup>119</sup>

Upon graduating high school, Orbin enrolled at the University of Texas in Austin to study business. The burgeoning psychedelic music scene birthed at venues like the Vulcan Gas Company and pioneered by artists like Roky Erikson and the Thirteenth Floor Elevators, had a profound impact on the young Orbin. “They had an underground radio station out of San Antonio that did psychedelic rock at midnight,” stated Orbin, “So I put an antenna up on the house I was renting in Austin just so I could listen to it between midnight and two AM.”<sup>120</sup>

Orbin briefly joined a fraternity at the university, where thanks to his reputation for being a dedicated fan of music, he was made social director. As social director for his fraternity, Orbin was charged with booking bands for parties and events. “I booked bands that were playing Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton instead of the Beach Boys and stuff,”

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with Jack Orbin, November 27, 2019.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.



recalls Orbin with a laugh, “I didn’t fit real well, so I didn’t end up doing that for very long.”<sup>121</sup>

After graduating with his bachelor’s degree in business administration, Orbin moved to Colorado, where he settled into a cabin on a commune. A political activist on campus, the promoter had been involved in a 1970 protest, and according to the promoter, the best option for him was to relocate.<sup>122</sup> While living in Colorado, which according to Orbin was a hotbed for his beloved psychedelic music, the promoter met musicians who encouraged him to enter the entertainment business. “I was business-oriented, but I was also music-oriented,” recalled Orbin to journalist Nelson Allen in 1984, “they convinced me there was a void in the music business someone like me, who loved the music and had business sense, could fill.”<sup>123</sup>

Finally, after one of his associates in Colorado accidentally burned down his cabin, Orbin returned to San Antonio, where he and two friends founded Stone City Attractions in 1972. “I was into music and I was into anti-war, so we started doing benefits for the war resisters league and the food bank, and things like that,” recalled

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<sup>121</sup> Interview with Jack Orbin, November 27, 2019.

<sup>122</sup> Jon Ford, “Protestors Invade Capitol,” *San Antonio Express News*, May 6, 1970, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-1624A0396E76AE56%402440713-16249D88E810D35A%400-16249D88E810D35A%40>.

The protest, among the largest of the Vietnam era in Texas, took place in Austin on Tuesday, May 5, 1970, following the Kent State Massacre. It began outside the University of Texas’ main building, and culminated on the grounds of the capitol, where protestors gathered in an attempt to occupy the building.

<sup>123</sup> Nelson Allen, “Jack Orbin: Reeling in Rock ‘n’ Roll,” *San Antonio Express News*, August 19, 1984, 211, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-1638B78FA5D45DA7%402445932-1637AF29826A8210%40210>.

Orbin.<sup>124</sup> Though he initially planned to just hold concerts for benefit purposes, the rising popularity of heavy metal (thanks to KMAC/KISS disc jockeys Joe Anthony and Lou Roney) quickly thrust Stone City into the business of rock and roll.

“It was tremendous time of creativity musically,” recalled the promoter, “More and more bands wanted to get into the hard rock and heavy metal scene.”<sup>125</sup> Citing the bare-bones approach of heavy metal (no lip synching or backing tracks, and no popular choreography of the day for example), Orbin believed bands were “rebellious” against the popular musical styles of the 1970s.

The promoter, like many hard rocking San Antonians in the 1970s, was a regular listener of both Lou Roney and Joe Anthony’s free formatted radio shows. “He [Jack Orbin] got to realize that Joe and I were breaking some really big stuff,” recalled Roney, “and he started calling every week, Joe or myself, wanting to know who’s going to be our next star.”<sup>126</sup> The partnership between promoter and disc jockey provided the trio the opportunity to break a number of now-legendary rock groups before they found success in any other market. “It was kind of a mutual double shot to Lou, Joe and ourselves,” continues Orbin, “The music was on the air, people could hear it, I would bring the bands.”<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> According to *Stone City Attractions*’ website, their first benefit for the War Resisters League took place in 1972, had a budget of \$500 dollars, a featured an 18-year old Stevie Ray Vaughn on guitar playing for the musical group, The Crackerjacks.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Jack Orbin, November 27, 2019.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Lou Roney, September 17, 2020.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with Jack Orbin, November 27, 2019.

Booking a concert with Stone City Attractions was without question a lucrative opportunity for musical groups. Not only would artists get to play to large crowds in San Antonio, thanks to Stone City, they would often get the opportunity to play in other cities in Texas as well, though there was a difference in venue size. “The bands wouldn’t come down for one show,” recalls Orbin, “I’d have to have to book them in other cities as well to make it worth their while.”<sup>128</sup> Popular San Antonio venues used by Stone City to book bands included the Municipal Auditorium (now part of the Tobin Center for Performing Arts) and the San Antonio Convention Center, commonly known as the HemisFair Arena, both of which had anywhere between a 5,000 to 10,000 person capacity. “We’d sell out the Municipal Auditorium here, a 5,000-seat theater,” reminisces the promoter, “then we’d play the Opera [Opry] House in Austin, a 1,400 to 1,200 capacity [theater]. It was the same show, just a huge difference in attendance”<sup>129</sup>

The prospect of playing more than one well-attended show brought Jack Orbin and Stone City Attractions to the attention of agents from around the country. Representatives from elsewhere would reach out to Orbin to inquire about how he was booking such successful shows, when often times the bands struggled in other cities. “I would do something like [Oakland, California’s] Yesterday and Today, and do 5,000 tickets and they couldn’t do 350 tickets anywhere besides California where they were from,” recalled the promoter, “agents would call me and say ‘What’s going on? How did they [the bands] do that?’”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Interview with Jack Orbin, November 27, 2019.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with Lou Roney, September 17, 2020.

Once Orbin informed them about the special combination of radio airplay along with San Antonio's unquenchable appetite for heavy music, agents would present other artists they were looking to break. One of those artists was the English heavy metal band Judas Priest, who first visited San Antonio in 1977 while opening for middle of the road rockers, Foreigner and REO Speedwagon. "The first five dates were in Texas, where we had a following," recalls Judas Priest vocalist Rob Halford, "mainly because a local radio DJ, Joe Anthony, loved [1976's] *Sad Wings of Destiny* and played us to death."<sup>131</sup>

Judas Priest guitarist K.K. Downing also recalled the early support the band received thanks to Joe Anthony in his 2018 autobiography, *Heavy Duty: Days and Nights in Judas Priest*. "Outside of specific towns like San Antonio, only select parts of the East Coast and the Midwest were receptive to our kind of music at that time [the late seventies]." According to the guitarist, the band considered San Antonio one of their "strongholds," and would visit the city often for performances.<sup>132</sup> "It was a massive stronghold, mostly on the back of the KMAC radio station DJ Joe Anthony," recalls the guitarist, "the result in the [1980's] *British Steel* era was that in San Antonio we'd sell out an arena, whereas in other places where metal was not played on the radio, we'd still be playing clubs or smaller venues."<sup>133</sup> In a July 1980 issue of *It's Only Rock 'N' Roll*, when asked by journalist Clyde Kimsey why San Antonio was the city Judas Priest was "most

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<sup>131</sup> Rob Halford, *Confess* (New York: Hachette Books, 2020), 95.

<sup>132</sup> According to *Stone City Attractions*' website, the earliest Judas Priest show took place at the Municipal auditorium in 1977, where the band shared a bill with California rockers Journey opening for Illinois rock band REO Speedwagon. The band would play San Antonio a total of ten times between the years of 1977 and 1988, as both support and headliner.

<sup>133</sup> K.K. Downing, *Heavy Duty: Days and Nights in Judas Priest* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2018), 192.

popular,” vocalist Rob Halford commented “KMAC-KISS has a lot to do with it,” the front man continued, “Without them we couldn’t play to audiences of this size.”<sup>134</sup>

Another group that benefitted early on from the relationship between Stone City and KMAC/KISS was Australia’s AC/DC. An early fan of the quintet, Lou Roney had regularly played the band on his show, even though his partner, Joe Anthony, could not count himself as a fan. “Joe hated the album covers for the first AC/DC albums,” recalled Roney with a laugh, “and he wouldn’t play them until they started getting more and more popular.”<sup>135</sup>

In 1977, after hearing the band on KMAC/KISS, Orbin booked AC/DC for their very first North American performances opening for Toronto’s Moxy, another international group who found great popularity in San Antonio after sharing bills with acts including Black Sabbath. “Lou and Joe played them, and I wanted to promote them immediately,” states Orbin in author Jesse Fink’s 2013 book, *The Youngs: The Brothers who Built AC/DC*, “They were destined to become popular from the outset.”<sup>136</sup> According to the article “Let There Be Rock: AC/DC at the ‘Dillo,” Orbin booked the band for dates in Austin, San Antonio, Corpus Christi and Dallas, paying them one thousand dollars per date.<sup>137</sup> The band made their American debut on July 27, 1977 at the Austin venue the Armadillo World Headquarters.<sup>138</sup> Attendees of the concert included Joe Anthony, who

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<sup>134</sup> Clyde Kimsey, “Judas Priest: Razor-Edged Rock,” *It’s Only Rock ‘N’ Roll*, July 1980, pg. 7.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with Lou Roney, September 17, 2020.

<sup>136</sup> Jesse Fink, *The Youngs: The Brothers Who Built AC/DC* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2014), 150.

<sup>137</sup> Marky Billson, “Let There Be Rock: AC/DC at the ‘Dillo,” *The Austin Chronicle*, August 29, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/music/2008-08-29/666442/>.

<sup>138</sup> Tickets for the performance, which was in support of the band’s June 1977 album *Let There Be Rock*, cost \$5.50.

actually went to show to see Moxy, a band Anthony regularly played on his radio shows. “He thought Moxy would blow away everybody, and AC/DC blew away everybody,” says Roney, “he was convinced by that time that they [AC/DC] were something.”<sup>139</sup>

The band made their San Antonio debut the following night at the city’s Municipal Auditorium, playing for nearly 6,000 fans, many of whom like Joe Anthony in Austin, had come to the concert to see night’s headliner. According to Roney, the only reason San Antonio is unable to claim the distinction of hosting AC/DC’s first North America performance was because he and Orbin wanted to feature the band on a Saturday, as oppose to a Friday. Though they were the night’s opener, the band, led by guitarist Angus Young and charismatic lead singer Bon Scott, stole the show, leading Orbin to unprecedentedly book the band the following year as a headliner.<sup>140</sup> AC/DC, who were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2003, would go on to perform in San Antonio a total of eight times between 1978 and 1988.

#### You Can’t Kill Rock and Roll: Ozzy Osbourne v the City of San Antonio

Heavy metal was at the height of its popularity when Stone City Attractions booked iconic metal vocalist Ozzy Osbourne for his *Diary of a Madman* tour on February 19, 1982. The singer was no stranger to San Antonio, as he had regularly performed there as early as 1971 with his previous band, Black Sabbath.<sup>141</sup> After arriving in San Antonio,

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<sup>139</sup> Interview with Lou Roney, September 17, 2020.

<sup>140</sup> According to memories of the concert posted on <http://www.ac-dc.net>, fans consistently commented that while Moxy may have headlined the June performance, AC/DC easily eclipsed them.

<sup>141</sup> The earliest Stone City Attractions-booked performance of Black Sabbath occurred in 1976.

in an effort to curb the singer from getting into trouble before his performance that evening, his manager (and future wife) Sharon Levy rounded up all of Osbourne's clothes from his hotel room, a ritual she had done several times before.

Osbourne, undeterred by his manager's attempts, found a "dark green frilly" evening gown left behind by Levy, and, after some slight maneuvering, placed it on and took to the streets of downtown San Antonio. At some time between two to three in the afternoon, the vocalist unknowingly made the unfortunate decision to relieve himself on the Alamo Cenotaph, a monument erected to honor soldiers who had fallen at the Texas landmark. "I knew it was a big deal place where lots of Americans had been killed while fighting the Mexicans," Osbourne recalls in his 2010 autobiography *I Am Ozzy*, "But I hadn't made the connection between the old wall I'd been pissing on and the ruins of a sacred national monument."<sup>142</sup>

The vocalist was arrested by officer Bill Holbert at around three 'o clock for "causing a disturbance," charged with public intoxication, and placed in a holding cell in the Bexar County Adult Detention Center.<sup>143</sup> Levy then turned to the tour's liaison with the city, Jack Orbin, for assistance in retrieving the metal star from prison. "I got him out of jail," recalled Orbin to journalist Nelson Allen, "he didn't know what he had done, didn't understand the significance of it."<sup>144</sup> According to Orbin, who considered

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<sup>142</sup> Ozzy Osbourn and Chris Ayres, *I Am Ozzy* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2010), 229.

<sup>143</sup> Rodolfo Resendez and Patrick Keith, "Arena Crowd Shatters Doors," *San Antonio Express News*, February 20, 1982,  
<https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-163036C8A19E8C14%402445021-16302B0BC67E29EB%400-16302B0BC67E29EB%40>.

Osbourne a “marketing genius,” he had to explain to the singer just how beloved the Alamo was to Texans. Likening urinating on the Alamo to “urinating in the queens cup,” Orbin says that Osbourne later claimed that he had in fact defiled the cenotaph on purpose, and that the “White House was next.”<sup>145</sup>

The mayhem from the day’s activities only added to the excitement surrounding the front man’s performance that evening. The concert, which took place at the HemisFair Arena and featured English rock bands UFO and Starfighters, was completely sold out, much to the dismay of those unfortunate enough to not have a ticket. This did not stop a few hundred fans, desperate to be part of the night’s performance, from taking matters into their own hands. According to the article “Arena Crowd Shatters Doors,” written for the *San Antonio Express News*, nearly an hour after the show began, at approximately 8:30, fans shattered the glass doors and windows of the arena in an effort to gain entry.<sup>146</sup>

Many were injured and several were arrested as a result of the melee. In an attempt to protect concertgoers, police officers refused to allow any additional people into the performance, whether they had a ticket or not. When Osbourne took the stage

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<sup>144</sup> Nelson Allen, “Jack Orbin: Reeling in Rock ‘N’ Roll,” *San Antonio Express News*, August 19, 1984, 225, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-1638B78FA5D45DA7%402445932-1637AF297B14FB34%40209>.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Rodolfo Resendez and Patrick Keith, “Arena Crowd Shatters Doors,” *San Antonio Express News*, February 20, 1982, 9. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-163036C8A19E8C14%402445021-16302B0BC67E29EB%400-16302B0BC67E29EB%40>.



that evening, he regaled the audience with his exploits at the Alamo, stories that were greeted with cheers from the “teen-age” rock fans.<sup>147</sup>

The saga of that fateful Friday in February 1982 is necessary when attempting to understand heavy metal’s history in San Antonio. Though equal parts shocking and humorous, it nonetheless changed the course of not only how heavy metal was viewed and accepted in the city, but of the way rock music was accepted in general. One week after the incident at the Cenotaph and Arena, councilman Bernardo Eureste, who according to the 1982 article “Rock star’s banning from S.A. proposed,” was a reliable advocate for free speech and expression in San Antonio, called for a fifteen year ban preventing Osbourne from performing in any city facilities.<sup>148</sup>

Eureste’s February proposal did not pass however when rumors that an additional Osbourne performance would take place that June reached members of the city council, an ordinance to ban the vocalist was quickly passed. “We don’t need a bum like him in the city,” commented councilman Van Henry Archer about the idea of another concert from the vocalist. The proposal, which was passed unanimously, was made by councilwoman Helen Dutmer and banned Osbourne from performing in any city-owned facility, including the HemisFair Arena.

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<sup>147</sup> “Is Ozzy Ready to Apologize for Alamo Desecration?” *San Antonio Express*, February 28, 1982, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-163036E2A7EAA601%402445029-1630358DA6F3D42F%400-1630358DA6F3D42F%40>.

<sup>148</sup> “Rock Star’s Banning from S.A. Proposed,” *San Antonio Express*, February 26, 1982, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-163036D8B046A100%402445027-1630350F99B96E7A%406-1630350F99B96E7A%40>.

“If I were mayor of San Antonio,” wrote a concerned citizen in a 1982 “Letters to the Editor” column of the *San Antonio Express News*, “I would ban any rock groups from performing in this city,” they continued.<sup>149</sup> Some parents who were not fans of rock music were another group who showed little to no support for heavy music in San Antonio. Some, citing religious beliefs, felt that city leaders were failing in their responsibilities of preserving the virtue of the city’s youngsters. Paraphrasing a passage from the Bible, another concerned reader wrote that those misleading the young (a reference to Osbourne) should have a millstone tied their necks and be thrown into the sea.<sup>150</sup>

Three years later, on the heels of Osbourne’s ban from performing in city-owned arenas, the San Antonio City Council tightened its reigns on the city’s live music industry by banning smoking of all kinds in its arenas. Orbin, in an attempt to fight the council’s order, threatened to move his highly lucrative concerts to either the private Joe and Harry Freeman Coliseum located on the city’s east side, or north to Austin.<sup>151</sup> Along with the elimination of smoking in arenas like the HemisFair and the Municipal Auditorium, city

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<sup>149</sup> “Ban Rock Groups Letter,” *San Antonio Express*, February 26, 1982, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-163036D8B046A100%402445027-16302B0C93D058B6%4013-16302B0C93D058B6%40>.

<sup>150</sup> “Responsibilities to Youth Letter,” *San Antonio Express*, March 1, 1982, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-1631CFF8CA3219D8%402445030-16302B0FD4F52D2C%4011-16302B0FD4F52D2C%40>.

<sup>151</sup> Susie Phillips, “Rock Promoters Vow Legal Action,” *San Antonio Express*, September 20, 1985, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-16355E6D7239DEB3%402446329-16350162A2F14375%4020-16350162A2F14375%40>.

leaders also stated that they intended to hire a child psychologist in an effort to determine if heavy metal rock shows were having a negative effect on youths.

Groups of San Antonio parents like the “Community Families in Action” had long hassled council members for their allowing of heavy metal artists, some of whose lyrics focused greatly on sex, drugs and violence, to perform in city-owned venues. Finally, in November 1985, the Council answered their call. First, there was an attempt to prevent artists from performing their most controversial songs while in San Antonio. This proved to be unconstitutional and did not pass. Still, the city council, led by Mayor Henry Cisneros, did not stop from attempting to control the city’s concert industry.

San Antonio’s wars against Ozzy Osbourne and heavy metal, both of which had thrust the city into the national spotlight, were reinforced by the 1985 efforts of the Parents Music Resource Center. The group, founded by Tipper Gore, wife of then-senator Al Gore, and Susan Baker, wife of former Secretary of State James A. Baker, began advocating for a type of rating system for music, not unlike the MPAA ratings for motion pictures. Releasing a list of fifteen questionable songs, the infamously titled “Filthy 15,” the PMRC set out to argue that a rating system was necessary to protect the country’s youths from being exposed to suggestive/violent lyrics.

“The idea that teen-agers turn bad because of rock ‘n’ roll is ridiculous,” stated Joe Anthony in a 1986 interview with the *San Antonio Express News*.<sup>152</sup> Anthony, who did not support vulgarity in heavy metal (the disc jockey referred to this as “scrap metal”)

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<sup>152</sup> Diane Yount, “Dossier,” *San Antonio Express News*, April 27, 1986, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-1636648BB9DB8270%402446548-163662DD479BCEAD%40197-163662DD479BCEAD%40>.

found notoriety in the 1970s for playing artists included the PMRC's Filthy 15. "I think censorship is very stupid. It's uncalled for," he continued.<sup>153</sup>

In an attempt to prevent impressionable youngsters from attending salacious rock concerts, Cisneros and the city council proposed an age limit on concerts in San Antonio. The proposal, which according to the article "San Antonio May Ban Children from Some Rock," was the first of its kind, drew eyes from across America on San Antonio. As part of the new rule, anyone younger than thirteen years of age would be barred from attending any concerts that depicted "sadistic or masochistic sex, rape, incest, bestiality, and exhibitionism on stage."<sup>154</sup> Orbin, a lifelong believer in free speech, once again protested the proposed ordinances. The promoter claimed that imposing an age limit on concerts would have negative financial effects on the city and likened the repressive proposal to living in South Africa.<sup>155</sup>

Despite efforts from Orbin and like-minded organizations like PASS (Parents Against Subliminal Seduction), San Antonio became the first city in America to make it a criminal offense for promoters to allow anyone under the age of 13 into concerts featuring vulgar performances.<sup>156</sup> The ordinance, which passed with a 7-3 vote in

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<sup>153</sup> Diane Yount, "Dossier," *San Antonio Express News*, April 27, 1986, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-1636648BB9DB8270%402446548-163662DD479BCEAD%40197-163662DD479BCEAD%40>.

<sup>154</sup> Sheila Allee, "San Antonio May Ban Children from Some Rock," *Houston Chronicle*, November 14, 1985, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/0ED7ABBCC4F5DB5E>.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Susie Phillips, "S.A. Muffles Raunchy Lyrics, Dialogue," *San Antonio Express News*, November 15, 1985, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-163554B03938F84A%402446385-16350177D8A564DE%400-16350177D8A564DE%40>.

November 1985, would now require any youngster heavy metal concert attendee be accompanied by a parent. According to the article “Ordinance Restricts Language about Violence and Illicit Sex,” both promoters and directors were required to inform the public that certain performers might be “unsuitable” for children.<sup>157</sup>

### Prepare to Die: The Influence of Heavy Metal on Local Youths

The artists played by Roney and Anthony on KMAC/KISS, and later brought to town by Stone City had a profound effect on the youths of San Antonio. It was not long before local youngsters began forming their own groups to perform the songs regularly played by Lou Roney and especially Joe Anthony. “I would hear new bands I’d never heard before,” recalls San Antonio guitarist Art Villareal about KMAC/KISS, “These lower-tier bands that weren’t really on the radar.”<sup>158</sup>

Though these groups found early inspiration in both the crystallization and the golden age eras of metal bands (artists including Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath), it was the aforementioned late seventies/early eighties musical movement known as the “New Wave of British Heavy Metal,” or the NWOBHM, that had the most profound influence on local groups. The movement, pulling inspiration from the do-it-yourself ethic of British punk rock, found its bands self-releasing their own music, much of which found

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<sup>157</sup> Susie Phillips, “S.A. Muffles Raunchy Lyrics, Dialogue,” *San Antonio Express News*, November 15, 1985, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-163554B03938F84A%402446385-16350177D8A564DE%400-16350177D8A564DE%40>.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Art Villareal, November 30, 2019.

its way to San Antonio via record stores including Rick Ireland's Rock Around the Clock and Dave Risher's Hogwild Records.<sup>159</sup>

Inspired by NWOBHM artists, teens from across San Antonio, especially the city's south side, began forming groups of their own. Emulating the faster/heavier sounds of their new musical heroes, local bands including Wyzard, Syrus, Wicked Angel and Juggernaut formed, often times from the ashes of one another's former groups. Performing to ever-increasing crowds throughout the city, local shows became must-attend events, according to the scene historian Reuben Luna. "We had the crowds and people wanted to play here," recalls Luna about San Antonio's 1980s metal scene.<sup>160</sup>

According to Luna, in the early 1980s San Antonio, Austin, and Houston formed what he refers to as the "South Texas Triangle," with San Antonio acting as the epicenter. With their established local fanbases, these bands helped form a network between the three cities that provided each band with excited crowds and well-attended concerts whenever concerts were booked. Following in Stone City Attractions' footsteps, Omni Productions (founded by local teen Marc Solis) began booking underground metal bands onto shows between the three cities, with San Antonio being the central thanks to both KMAC/KISS and Risher's Hogwild Records, a popular pre-concert hangout for musicians.

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<sup>159</sup> Popular New Wave of British Heavy Metal Artists included Motorhead, Def Leppard, Raven, Saxon and Tygers of Pan Tang.

<sup>160</sup> Sanford Nowlin, "San Antonio Was Once the 'Heavy Metal Capital of the World.' Will It Ever Be Again?" San Antonio Current, April 24, 2018, <https://www.sacurrent.com/sound/archives/2018/04/24/san-antonio-was-once-the-heavy-metal-capital-of-the-world-will-it-ever-be-again>.

## A Tale of Two Slayers

Formed in 1981 out of a community of metal-loving teens hanging around the popular mini-golf course and venue Fun 'n Games/The Blue Room, Slayer, San Antonio's most popular heavy metal group was a force to be reckoned with from its inception. Its first lineup consisted of dual guitarists Art Villarreal and Robert "Bob Dog" Catlin, bassist Don Van Stavern, drummer Dave McClain and vocalist Chris Cronk. After performing at a now-legendary battle of bands showcase at the city's Eisenhower Road Flea Market, Slayer was offered a contract to record an EP for local label Rain Forrest Records in 1982.

After the band finished recording their debut EP, *Prepare to Die*, in 1982, the Rain Forrest label, for an unspecified reason, waited six months to release the album. It was during this six-month period in 1983 that another band named Slayer, hailing from Los Angeles, released its debut, *Show No Mercy*, on the influential Metal Blade Records label. Once *Mercy* was released, Metal Blade issued a cease-and-desist to Bob O'Neil, the owner of BOSS studios, where San Antonio's Slayer had recorded *Prepare to Die*. The lawsuit, along with other opportunities from different groups in the area, proved to be too much for the young band, forcing them to part ways in 1984.

On their first national tour in support of *Show No Mercy*, Los Angeles' Slayer were booked to perform at popular San Antonio multi-use venue, Villa Fontana. In an effort to gain anticipation for the show, Marc Solis and Omni Productions reunited San Antonio's Slayer (now known as "SA Slayer") and billed the concert as a "battle for the name" event. There was no name to be won however since Los Angeles' Slayer had owned the rights for nearly a year at that point.

The concert took place on the night of November 30, 1984, and by all accounts was a massive success. “It was a monster of a show,” remembers Reuben Luna of the now legendary concert, “It was a big deal. Even for Houston and Austin they [SA Slayer] were popular.”<sup>161</sup> The performance, which featured Austin favorites Militia, along with San Antonio’s Syrus, attracted excited metal fans from across Texas to Villa Fontana. “The Fontana was always packed, but that show there was like barely breathing room left,” remembers of Villareal of the night, “I’m sure the fire marshal would’ve had a field day. It was crazy, man.”<sup>162</sup>

The “Slayer vs Slayer” concert has gone down in history as one of heavy metal’s most infamous concerts, a battle for the name. Though there was no battle to fought, SA Slayer’s fans came out *en masse* to support their hometown Slayer. “SA Slayer were the kings,” recalls Luna. In a 2010 interview with the *Austin Chronicle*, Slayer front man Tom Araya was questioned whether he felt San Antonio had earned the reputation as being “one of the heavy metal capitals of the world.” The front man and bassist agreed that the reputation was earned, and even remembered the November 1984 show where his band “battled” for its name. “There was another band from that time that was from San Antonio,” he says, “We did a show with them and after *we* carried the name. That was done in San Antonio – the metal capital.”<sup>163</sup>

San Antonio’s early eighties metal scene is also notable for its incorporation of punk and hardcore bands into its shows. Villareal credits the “Slayer vs. Slayer” show as

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<sup>161</sup> Interview with Reuben Luna, November 30, 2019.

<sup>162</sup> Interview with Art Villareal, November 30, 2019.

<sup>163</sup> Raoul Hernandez, “Melodymaker: Texan/Slayer Tom Araya,” *The Austin Chronicle*, September 24, 2010, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/music/2010-09-24/1087014/>.



one of the first occasions where San Antonio punks began regularly attending local metal shows. Luna recalls a concert that served as both popular Houston metal band Helstar, and Austin hardcore punks The Offenders' first performances in San Antonio. "There was a Slayer, Helstar, Offenders show which was legendary," the scenester remembers, "that was the first time the punks came to metal shows. It was a weird vibe, but it went off well."<sup>164</sup> The punk and metal genres would eventually combine in the mid-to-late eighties to create the "crossover thrash" genre. This style of music, which incorporates the speed of punk rock and the riffs of heavy metal, was popularized by groups including Houston's D.R.I. (Dirty Rotten Imbeciles) and Suicidal Tendencies.

Much like the West Side Sound in the 1950s, where local bands often crossed racial boundaries when forming, San Antonio's local heavy metal groups also were not limited by race, or even gender, with many being made up of Mexican American and Anglo members, men and women.<sup>165</sup> Once again, contrary to Weinstein's argument, the San Antonio heavy metal scene provided an inclusive environment for all fans of the genre. "You would go to concerts back then and you'd have white guys from the north side, and they'd be sitting with the hardcore rowdy guys from the south side and west side, guys that you never in a million years would associate with each other" says Reuben Luna when describing what the usual scene at a concert was, "It was a brotherhood," he continues.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Interview with Reuben Luna, November 30, 2019.

<sup>165</sup> The group Heather Leather is notable for being San Antonio's first all women heavy metal group. Comprised of three sisters, Sylvia, Sandie and Ruth Garza, the band still continues to perform and release music today.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Reuben Luna, November 30, 2019.

Unlike Austin, Dallas and Houston, San Antonio failed to produce groups that would achieve much recognition outside of Texas. San Antonian musicians have certainly proved influential, however their discovery and breakthrough often occurred in other cities.<sup>167</sup> Hood argues that the city's "out of the way" location as well as its seclusion from other metal cities is to blame for its lack of musical recognition.<sup>168</sup>

While San Antonio's local metal failed to receive the same national recognition that their peers from larger markets had, this group of dedicated metalheads still believe in the power of the genre. Members from groups including Karion, Militia, S.A. Slayer and Juggernaut (among others) have come together to perform as a supergroup under the name of the "South Texas Legion." The band regularly plays to crowds of fellow metal lovers, covering their former band's music as well as that of various iconic metal groups.

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<sup>167</sup> An example of this phenomenon can be observed in the career of native San Antonian Doug Sahm. While he was discovered in San Antonio, Sahm is most often associated with Austin for his musical contributions. An additional example is adult contemporary artist, Christopher Cross, who also found success in Austin.

<sup>168</sup> Christina Michelle Hood, "Heavy Metal Capital of the World: San Antonio's Hard Rock History" (University of Texas, 2009), 3.

#### IV. ROCK FOREVER

On September 12, 1992, nearly a month before his 56<sup>th</sup> birthday, Joseph Anthony Yannuzzi passed away at the age of 55 after brief battle with lung cancer. After a career spanning three decades that first saw the disc jockey introduce the world to San Antonio's West Side Sound, only to reinvent himself in the 1970s to break numerous heavy metal and hard rock groups on KMAC/KISS, the man known affectionately as "The Godfather of Rock 'n Roll" was gone. Anthony's work on KMAC/KISS had directly impacted San Antonio culture, transforming the city into a haven for heavy metal. "Many people have felt the impact of that man because of what he's done for the entertainment industry," said vice president of Imagine Entertainment Scott Daly at the time of Anthony's passing, "Joe Anthony is someone who stuck his neck out for the entertainment industry many years ago like no one else," he continued.<sup>169</sup>

At a time when heavy metal received little support from radio (Weinstein argues that during its first decade of existence, the genre received "virtually no airplay"), Joe Anthony, along with Lou Roney, pushed the boundaries of hard rock radio.<sup>170</sup> With the freedom to program their shows as they wished, Anthony and Roney fulfilled San Antonio's appetite for hard rocking music, and in the process, took the music world by storm. "San Antonio is one of the leading markets in heavy metal music," said Atlantic Records representative David Fleischman in a 1986 article, "There's a national respect about San Antonio. Joe Anthony is responsible."<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Anthony S.A.'s godfather of rock.

<sup>170</sup> Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2000), 150.

The purchase and format change of KISS-FM by North Carolina's Capitol Broadcasting was an early indicator that the music scene in San Antonio was drastically changing. According to a June 1981 issue of *It's Only Rock 'n Roll*, Capitol Broadcasting took over the station in December 1980, and in the process, brought with them new program director Tim Spencer, a new general manager, and new consultants.<sup>172</sup> Though the new owners vowed to leave the station unaltered from its freeform format, listeners were quick to notice the changes in their beloved station. "Come on now KISS, the votes are in, you are boring us," writes a fan to *It's Only Rock 'n Roll*, "Let's go pioneer again, it's more fun."<sup>173</sup>

It was the lack of experimentation and risk in programming that ultimately led many away from KISS-FM. As stated by Lou Roney, the main goal of the station was to be completely unlike any other station in town, to the point where if any station was played a song KMAC/KISS had, it would immediately be pulled from rotation. This philosophy was not shared by the new station director Spencer. "There are a couple thousand songs that can be played, and only 14 have to played at a certain time," stated Spencer, "That way, there's a flow."<sup>174</sup> Joe Anthony certainly did not share in Spencer's programming methods. Believing KISS-FM was beginning to sound too much like every

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<sup>171</sup> Diane Yount, "Dossier," *San Antonio Express News*, April 27, 1986, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-1636648BB9DB8270%402446548-163662DD479BCEAD%40197-163662DD479BCEAD%40>.

<sup>172</sup> David Arthur, "The New Cat Syndrome: KISS Ch-Ch- Changes," *It's Only Rock 'n Roll*, June 1981, 3, Wittliff Collections.

<sup>173</sup> "Replies and Rhetoric," *It's Only Rock 'n Roll*, August 1981, 3, Wittliff Collections.

<sup>174</sup> David Arthur, "The New Cat Syndrome: KISS Ch-Ch- Changes," *It's Only Rock 'n Roll*, June 1981, 3, Wittliff Collections.

other radio station, Anthony stated “San Antonio used to be a hitmaker. Now it’s play the hits, don’t make them,” the disc jockey said in 1981.<sup>175</sup>

In June 1995, it was announced that the HemisFair arena, the city-owned venue that played host to hundreds of Stone City Attractions concerts would be demolished to make way for a new addition to the city’s Convention Center. This news came after supporters, led by Jack Orbin, failed to obtain the 48,000 signatures required to place the decision on a ballot for voters to decide the fate of the arena.<sup>176</sup> Supporters believed that the demolition of the Arena would mean losing a profitable venue, one that served a variety of functions including graduations, sporting events, and of course, concerts.<sup>177</sup>

The loss of the HemisFair Arena was a major blow to San Antonio’s live music industry. The venue, which hosted its share of influential artists over its 27-year existence, was *the* go-to large size venue for promoters like Jack Orbin, who regularly filled the arena to capacity. With the Arena gone, promoters were forced to hold shows in smaller, older venues such as the aforementioned Municipal Auditorium, the Sunken Garden Theater (built in 1930 with a capacity of 4,800), the Joe Freeman Coliseum (built in 1949 with a capacity around 11,000) and of course the city’s Alamodome.

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<sup>175</sup> David Arthur, “The New Cat Syndrome: KISS Ch-Ch- Changes,” *It’s Only Rock ‘n Roll*, June 1981, 3, Wittliff Collections.

<sup>176</sup> Joel Williams, “Effort to Save Arena Falls Short,” *San Antonio Express News*, June 7, 1995, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?>

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

## Sister Cities: Austin Ascends

Though it possessed iconic venues such as the Vulcan Gas Company and the Armadillo World Headquarters, the city of the Austin remained fairly quiet compared to Texas' larger cities during the 1970s. With a 1970 population of 252,000 (for comparison, San Antonio had nearly 655,000 citizens the same year), citizens of Austin enjoyed a relatively quiet existence.<sup>178</sup> This changed forever with the 1976 debut of the *Austin City Limits* television program. First showcasing popular Texas artists (the show's inaugural broadcast featured new Austinite Willie Nelson), *Austin City Limits* would eventually expand to include a variety of influential artists from all genres. For the first time ever, people from around the country were exposed to the city's vibrant music scene. This of course was only the beginning.

During the early 1980s, the city of Austin began to receive international attention for producing renowned local musical artists, the most popular of which was arguably guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan and his band, Double Trouble. Vaughan, who honed his skills at Austin venues The Soap Creek Saloon and Antone's, broke onto the international music scene after playing the 1982 Montreux Jazz Festival, catching the eye of songwriter Jackson Browne and British rocker David Bowie. Browne, taken by the band, offered the trio free recording time at his Los Angeles studio, where the group recorded their debut, *Texas Flood*. Bowie, after meeting Vaughn at the Montreux Festival, invited

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<sup>178</sup> "Everything Austin: Population Statistics," Austin History Center, accessed March 30, 2021, <https://library.austintexas.gov/ahc/everything-austin-population-statistics>.

the guitarist to record on his 1983 album, *Let's Dance*, ingraining Austin music into popular culture in the process.<sup>179</sup>

Throughout Austin during this time period (much to the excitement of music fans still hurting from the 1980 loss of the city's iconic Armadillo World Headquarters), smaller venues catering to underground and up-and-coming artists began to frequently appear. Venues such as Liberty Lunch (founded in 1975), Raul's (founded in 1977) and Club Foot (founded in 1980) began drawing punk, new wave and heavy metal artists from across the world, further constructing Austin's identity as a live music city. This identity was introduced to the world in 1985 when MTV's *The Cutting Edge* featured a variety of Austin's musicians, most notably singer-songwriter Daniel Johnston.

Johnston, performing solo, captured the attention and admiration of artists from across the world. Years after that fateful August 1985 episode of *The Cutting Edge*, Johnston's music was recognized and covered by artists including The Dead Milkmen and even Nirvana's Kurt Cobain. Two years after Johnston's television debut, the city of Austin held the inaugural South by Southwest Festival. Originally intended to be a platform for Austin-based artists, the festival would expand to include artists from across the world, eventually hosting such renowned artists as Beck and Johnny Cash in the festival's breakthrough year of 1994. Building on the popularity of South by Southwest, the Austin City Limits Festival debuted in 2002 followed by the Fun Fun Fun Fest in 2006 and others.

With the debut of *Austin City Limits*, the titular capital city was thrust into the international spotlight and developed a reputation as a haven for live music. Though San

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<sup>179</sup> Alan Paul and Andy Aledort, *Texas Flood: The Inside Story of Stevie Ray Vaughn*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2019), 128.

Antonio may have played host to many of the era's most popular artists, the lack of exposure (like that afforded to Austin) kept its influence shuttered to much of the music world. With the surge in popularity of Willie Nelson and Stevie Ray Vaughn, Austin's local scene quickly surpassed San Antonio in terms of recognition and influence, attracting even more talent to perform in the capital city. The early exposure of *Austin City Limits*, the city's vibrant local scene and its many influential venues allowed the city of Austin to construct the identity of being the "Live Music Capital of the World."

While Austin's status as a popular live music destination began to slowly surpass San Antonio's, an additional slight came as a fellow working-class metropolis won the national competition to house the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986. In May of that year, Cleveland, Ohio was named the winner of a three-year nationwide competition to host the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Though numerous other cities famous for their rock and roll histories competed for the hall (most notably among them New York City, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Memphis and San Francisco), it was Cleveland, home to disc jockey Alan Freed, the man widely credited with popularizing the phrase "rock and roll," that would house the hall of fame. "The city's support of rock is well known in the industry," read the narrator for a 1985 promotional video sent to the Rock Hall Foundation titled "Cleveland - The Heart of Rock 'n' Roll," "record sales and radio capture for rock are higher in Cleveland than in most major markets."<sup>180</sup>

Though Cleveland's contributions to rock and roll history cannot be disputed, some felt the hall should have gone to an alternate location. "San Antonio should've been

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<sup>180</sup> Brett Lashua, *Popular Music, Popular Myth and Cultural Heritage in Cleveland: The Moondog, The Buzzard, and the Battle for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2019), 63, <https://doi-org.libproxy.txstate.edu/10.1108/978-1-78769-155-120191006>.



the rock and roll capital of the world,” says Lou Roney wistfully.<sup>181</sup> It is not far-fetched to mention San Antonio in the same breath as rock and roll cities like Cleveland. The combination of radio exposure and concert promotion made the city a force to be reckoned with in the world of rock and roll. “Nobody believed what was happening down there (in San Antonio),” said Warner/Electra/Asylum promotion and marketing manager Rob Sides in 1992, “they could throw a record on the air and sell thousands of them.”<sup>182</sup>

Unlike Cleveland city leaders, San Antonio failed to embrace its rock and roll potential in the 1980s. With the city council’s restrictions on the concert industry, along with the national recognition San Antonio had received as a result these restrictions, rock and roll/heavy metal’s potential was limited at a time when other cities welcomed it to great benefit.<sup>183</sup> The city’s rejection of rock and roll, paired with the lack of venues diminished San Antonio’s status as a live music city. Though it may have remained a popular destination for many bands from the Joe Anthony/Lou Roney era of freeform radio (as previously mentioned, groups like Judas Priest and AC/DC regularly returned to the city over the years), the days of bands breaking in San Antonio were long gone. It is worth mentioning however that even though San Antonio missed out on the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the city was still represented in the exhibit “Don’t Knock the Rock.” The exhibit, which showcased the efforts of society to “condemn, censor, and destroy

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<sup>181</sup> Interview with Lou Roney, September 17, 2020.

<sup>182</sup> Diane Yount, “Dossier,” *San Antonio Express News*, April 27, 1986, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.txstate.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A10EEA20F1A545758%40EANX-1636648BB9DB8270%402446548-163662DD479BCEAD%40197-163662DD479BCEAD%40>.

<sup>183</sup> For example, the Sun Records Museum in Memphis was opened in 1987 and is a major part of the city’s cultural identity.

rock and roll,” prominently features a 1985 quote from an unnamed San Antonio Councilman that states, “The First Amendment should not apply to rock and roll.”<sup>184</sup>

In September 1992, over ten years after his swift banning from performances in any city-owned venues, Ozzy Osbourne announced that he would hold two San Antonio dates on the first and second of October 1992 for his *No More Tours* Tour. In an effort to build good will with the city, Osbourne made a donation of \$10,000 to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, the organization at time in charge of maintaining the Alamo. “We all have done things in our lives that we regret,” said the front man in a statement, “I am deeply honored that the people of San Antonio have found it in their hearts to have me back,” he continued.<sup>185</sup>

Not all San Antonians were excited for Osbourne’s return. Though it had been ten years since the incident at the Cenotaph, city officials were none too pleased to welcome the so-called “prince of darkness” as he performed not one, but two sold-out shows at the Joe Freeman Coliseum. “I think it stinks,” said San Antonio judge Nelson Wolff in regard to the upcoming performance.<sup>186</sup> In yet another effort to build more good will with city officials, Osbourne extended an invitation to Wolff for his October 2 concert, which the mayor accepted.

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<sup>184</sup> Jason Cohen, “What a Hall!,” *Texas Monthly*, January 1997, <https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/what-a-hall/>.

<sup>185</sup> Dan Solomon, “Ozzy Osbourne Is Formally Apologizing Today for Peeing on The Alamo,” *Texas Monthly*, November 5, 2015, <https://www.texasmonthly.com/the-daily-post/ozzy-osbourne-is-formally-apologizing-today-for-peeing-on-the-alamo/>.

<sup>186</sup> “Urine the Clear Now, Ozzy: Rocker Relieved to Perform Again in San Antonio,” *Austin Daily Texan*, September 4, 1992, <https://newspaperarchive.com/entertainment-clipping-sep-04-1992-2160264/>.

Some years later, in the fall of 2015, Black Sabbath announced the final North American dates for their farewell tour titled, *The End*. The popular tour, which saw the heavy metal legends performing to fans young and old across America, had its final date in San Antonio, a decision Jack Orbin felt was the proper way Sabbath could end their touring days in America. “I don’t think it should be any other way,” stated the promoter to the *San Antonio Express News*, “Black Sabbath is really one of the bands that broke out of San Antonio.”<sup>187</sup> In an interview with journalist Hector Saldaña, vocalist Ozzy Osbourne acknowledged the shared adulation between his band and San Antonio. “It’s always been a great rock for both Black Sabbath and myself,” he continues, “San Antonio really likes our music, which makes playing there a pleasure.”<sup>188</sup>

On the night of the performance, November 12, 2016, Sabbath, whom Orbin considers one of the most important bands to break in San Antonio, were welcomed by nearly 13,000 fans. The fan-favorite setlist, comprised primarily of material from the band’s first three albums, kept attendees on their feet for the nearly two-hour performance. After finishing “Dirty Women,” off of 1976’s *Technical Ecstasy*, Osbourne addressed the crowd as he had done throughout the night before launching into “Children of the Grave,” from 1971’s *Master of Reality*. “I will never forget San Antonio,” he continued, “How could I?”

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<sup>187</sup> Hector Saldaña, “San Antonio a Fitting Site for Black Sabbath’s Final U.S. Concert,” *San Antonio Express News*, November 11, 2016, <https://www.expressnews.com/entertainment/music-stage/article/San-Antonio-a-fitting-site-for-Black-Sabbath-s-10601830.php>.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

## APPENDIX SECTION

### Recommended Listening

“Baby Tell Me” – Dough Sahm & The Mark-Kays, 1960

“Won’t Be Long” – Aretha Franklin, 1960

“Hide Away” – Freddie King, 1961

“I’m Jealous” – Ike & Tina Turner, 1961

“Hello It’s Me” – Nazz, 1968

“I Heard It Through the Grapevine” – Creedence Clearwater Revival, 1970

“Guts” – Budgie, 1971

“Children of the Grave” – Black Sabbath, 1971

“Dream On” – Aerosmith, 1973

“Sail on Sail Away” – Moxy, 1975

“Fly by Night” – Rush, 1975

“The Ripper” – Judas Priest, 1976

“Problem Child” – AC/DC, 1977

“Stage Fright” – Legs Diamond, 1977

“Another Piece of Meat” – Scorpions, 1979

“Lay it on the Line” – Triumph, 1979

“Hot for Love” – Riot, 1979

“Let It Go” – Def Leppard, 1981

“Run to the Hills,” – Iron Maiden, 1982

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