

individuals and organizations. The next three chapters then provide the significant developments, experiences, key tensions, and intended and unintended consequences of three major music festivals. These more detailed chapters offer variations and nuances, and show different approaches to balancing competing agendas across city leaders, music fans, musicians, and corporate sponsors within three signature events. Critically, they identify the key players in these cities' festivalization—from Newport's wealthy benefactors to the union of Nashville's music industry and municipal growth organizations to Austin's countercultural scene—and critical moments in the process—from Newport's exile to the CMA's return to downtown to the Austin city government's embrace of South by Southwest. These chapters are ordered by their founding: from the Newport Folk Festival (since 1959), to Nashville's Country Music Association Music Festival (since 1972), and Austin's South by Southwest (since 1987). The chronology of these three chapters moves through the three patterns of citadel, core, and confetti and demonstrates a bit of a continuum, perhaps most easily differentiated by the decrease in the spatial consolidation and control of the aforementioned four resources. Chapters 5 and 6 build off these three chapters to compare across cases, analyzing the resulting costs and benefits to the different communities. The conclusion details the importance of festivalization as an urban cultural policy. An "encore" chapter reflects upon the findings of this book and uses Erving Goffman's call for a *sociology of occasions* to unpack how social scientists can see events as a more general sociological phenomenon, which situates this study and proposes a unique framework for analyzing mass social activity.



# 1

## The Unlikely Rise in Importance of American Music Festivals

### City, Song, and Symbol

Most of the early American music festivals were, ironically, showplaces for European music. There were classical music festivals highlighting Haydn, Handel, and the like in the late 1800s in places as scattered as Buffalo, Los Angeles, and Springfield, Massachusetts; perhaps the most successful was Aaron Copland's Yaddo Music Festival in upstate New York, a critical location for "serious" music from 1932 to 1952.<sup>1</sup>

The start of popular music festivals in the United States, however, could be traced to two people: Louis and Elaine Lorillard. The couple met in Italy during World War Two, fell in love, learned about jazz, and returned to their summer resort home in Newport, Rhode Island, resolute in their desire to add to the cultural fabric of their community. Rather than creating yet another festival in the European classical tradition, however, they decided to structure it around what is arguably the most distinctive of American cultural contributions: in 1954, they offered \$20,000 to fund a jazz event. They reached out to George Wein, owner of the Boston jazz

club Storyville, to manage and book acts. Five years later, with folksingers Pete Seeger, Oscar Brand, and Theodore Bikel and manager Albert Grossman, Wein cofounded the Newport Folk Festival to ride the growth of another distinctive American musical amalgamation: the mixture of blues, country, and pop that fueled the folk revival of the '50s and early '60s. Newport's twin events ushered in what music critic Leonard Feather called the *festival era* of large-scale, annual, outdoor events in the United States. Wein, who continued running the festivals for decades, came to be considered the patriarch of the American music festival.<sup>2</sup>

There followed a series of festivals that served as gatherings for, and the generators of, the American counterculture: the Philadelphia Folk Festival in 1962, the Monterey International Pop Music Festival in 1967, the Miami Pop Festival in 1968, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair in August 1969, and the Altamont Speedway Free Festival in December of that same year. Highlights from these events—the performances of Janis Joplin, Otis Redding, and Jimi Hendrix at Monterey; Richie Havens's improvised version of "Freedom" at Woodstock; and the descent into violence at Altamont—all serve as touchstones for a generation. These festivals served not just to promote particular artists and make money, but also to legitimate the countercultural music genres themselves.

Although the late 1960s and early '70s saw the founding of innumerable popular music festivals throughout the country, only a handful of them weathered the dramatic drop in attendance that took place in the 1980s and '90s: Milwaukee's Summerfest (established in 1968, a year before Woodstock), New Orleans's Jazz and Heritage Festival (1970), Seattle's Bumbershoot (1971), and Nashville's Fan Fair (1972). Austin's South by Southwest was founded during the dry spell in 1987, as was Chicago's Lollapalooza (1991–97, 2003, and 2005–present). By the 2000s, music festivals had started cropping up again, including the massive Coachella and Bonnaroo festivals (established in rural eastern California in 2001 and rural southern Tennessee in 2002, respectively), and bands themselves started organizing their own, smaller events. Phish periodically holds its own festival around the Northeast; Wilco runs the Solid Sound Festival in North Adams, Massachusetts; and Metallica briefly ran the Orion Music + More in Atlantic City in 2012 and in Detroit in 2013. And it's not only the number of festivals that is increasing—their attendance

is growing as well. In 2012, 80,000 to 85,000 people attended each day of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival; Bonnaroo, Lollapalooza, and Las Vegas's Electric Daisy Carnival all reached 100,000 attendees; 160,000 people attended Miami's Ultra electronic music festival; and even more attended Milwaukee's forty-fifth annual Summerfest. All were bigger than in years prior.

These alliances between art and commerce are reminders that the contemporary American music festival sits at the intersection of two major shifts in the broader cultural and economic context, a junction that serves as the core of this chapter. The first is the evolution of cities from being centers of production to centers of consumption. The second is the parallel change in the economics of music industry from the sale of durable products (records, cassettes, CDs) to the marketing of live music. Together, these trends further explain the relationship between these cultural events and the contemporary city.

### Coketown to Circus City

In *Hard Times*, Charles Dickens describes the fictitious industrial city of Coketown in shades of black and gray, and fills his characters' ears with the shriek of the train and the wheeze of the steam engine. The book served as a critique of the rise of the modern city, as its characters struggled in the grip of a cold and practical world. Novelists weren't alone in criticizing the industrial city. Early sociologists matched Dickens's fears of the modern city as a center for factory and marketplace, increasingly dominated by bureaucracies and rationalization.<sup>3</sup>

This understanding presents the industrial city as a center for political and economic forces colluding for their growth-focused agendas, and envisions manufacturing as promoting development in other sectors, such as housing, retail, and public infrastructure. These coalitions of real estate investors, financial institutions, government agencies, civic institutions, and the media—what Harvey Molotch called a city's *growth machines*—shaped urban life by increasing land values.<sup>4</sup> This led to an increased privatization of public assets (mass transit systems, public utilities, etc.), which has placed limits on civic life. Although there are some differences of opinion on the relevance of the growth-machine theory,

such mixtures of public and private holding of assets deeply affect the public culture found on the streets, parks, and sidewalks.<sup>5</sup>

Although this stage of urban development still exists within the United States and in many places around the world, new forces emerged toward the end of the last century. Trends in technology and communication led to increased globalization of banking, manufacturing, and management, while at the same time, US cities in the Midwest, Northeast, and Great Lakes regions were hit by deindustrialization, disinvestment, and capital flight. Jobs moved to suburbs or “Edge Cities,” to the Sunbelt or out of the country altogether, deserting labor markets and emptying onetime bustling factories and mills.<sup>6</sup> In a few other places, however, cultural activities have moved into that vacuum.

New York City’s Soho district often serves as a kind of classic case for understanding the shift from production to consumption. Light manufacturing abandoned the neighborhood in the 1960s, leaving behind large, empty, cheap spatial resources. Politicians developed a zoning plan in 1961 to deindustrialize Manhattan as a whole, and banks disinvested in the area by not offering mortgages.<sup>7</sup> Artists—often poor, young, and happy to occupy the big raw spaces for little to no rent—moved in, sometimes squatting. Instead of textiles, they made art. Sensing a scene developing, more artists relocated, and other institutions came along to cater to the burgeoning community that included artists whose work expanded to fill those big empty spaces, such as Donald Judd, Walter De Maria, and Gordon Matta-Clark; these spaces also influenced minimalist composers like Philip Glass. In the 1970s, there were first the bars, cafés, bodegas, and art galleries—not to mention the nearby music venues like CBGB’s (founded to the east, on Bowery) and the Mudd Club (to the west, in Tribeca) that launched New Wave bands like Television, the Talking Heads, Blondie, and the Velvet Underground—then more stores and restaurants (even one, Food, that was operated by Matta-Clark). And soon, building off the hipness of the neighborhood, luxury lofts and higher-end boutiques arrived. The Guggenheim Museum opened a branch at Broadway and Prince Streets in 1992. Rather than growing up around traditional production and manufacturing, the neighborhood redeveloped through culture and consumption.

In the 1990s, scholars and municipal organizations alike learned the

lesson that local art, music, and history can be valuable assets in other cities too, leading Richard Lloyd and Terry Nichols Clark to critique and amend Molotch’s theory to suggest that “entertainment machines”—coalitions of finance, technology, and media workers—now excavate the more ephemeral element of culture as a resource.<sup>8</sup> In the face of suburbanization and disinvestment, the contemporary city-as-entertainment-machine attempts to churn out places for exciting consumption rather than material production. Luring corporate relocations, new residents, and tourists requires refashioning cities as appealing locales that can be marketed via strategic planning by additional quasi-governmental agencies like chambers of commerce (concentrating on promoting growth) and convention and visitors bureaus (focusing on enticing out-of-town visitors). Together, these efforts aim at packaging and selling an attention-grabbing set of amenities, services, and experiences.

The continued privatization of urban spaces and the rise of the city-as-entertainment-machine led to clusters of eateries, theaters, and bars as the new cauldrons of urban development. Gentrified neighborhoods like Chicago’s Wicker Park, Brooklyn’s Williamsburg, and East Nashville became home for new gentrifiers and businesses. Dormant manufacturing zones (“brownfields” like Pittsburgh’s SouthSide Works and parts of Glasgow and Manchester, England) and even unique and unused places (like the spaces left over after the Berlin Wall or Manhattan’s defunct elevated train trellis) are transformed into entertainment zones.<sup>9</sup> Where cities once used big industry and big projects to generate growth within those inner rings, they now looked for ways to utilize those same spatial resources of vacant mills and factories by combining them with the social + cultural resources of clusters of cultural activity. Under this new regime of cultural revitalization, this story played out in deindustrialized cities like London, Dublin, Newark, Boston, and San Francisco, where dormant smokestacks and mills became ironic symbols of industriousness rather than decaying reminders of a bygone production era.

Shortly after he left office in 2010, Austin Mayor Will Wynn provided a more detailed account of his view of the relationship between cities and culture—one that was grounded in exactly this historical context. In his words, the urban development model in the United States for the past century was to “build big stuff”—industries would collocate and

construct harbors and airports and industrial parks, hoping employees and smaller businesses would follow. Manufacturing industries settled in cities in the Northeast and the Great Lakes area and exploited local resources, both physical and social. Chicago's iron deposits along Lake Superior and its large immigrant worker population, for example, gave it a competitive advantage against the steel companies in Pittsburgh.

Stating that people used to follow jobs, Wynn explained, "I'm proud of myself, that pretty early on I realized in this current century it's just the opposite: the jobs follow the people." Put another way, although using existing resources and attracting new ones remains at the heart of all city growth, today's cities draw as much—if not more—from their cultural resources as from their natural ones. Just as they once competed for heavy industries like automobile and steel manufacturing, US cities are now in a fierce contest for tourists, technology jobs, and service-industry businesses. Chicago today crafts its development strategy with a different ore, mining the rich historical and cultural traditions of the blues, signified by the Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events' free annual Blues Festival.<sup>10</sup> As cities transform into postindustrial centers, this view contends that culture can crystallize city identity and, conversely, a city's identity can crystallize its culture. This posits that municipalities like Austin need to develop their cultural assets: the physical resources (or amenities) of clubs and venues in close proximity, the social + cultural resources of local musicians (provided they are supported), and the economic resources of money spent by locals and visitors all reinforce the city's symbolic brand as the "Live Music Capital of the World." Having worked with dozens of colleagues through the US Conference of Mayors, Wynn is quick to legitimize his belief in the importance of creating an exciting city to attract the mobile social + cultural resources of young, educated people. Although this had always been, in his words, an "organic" and "imperfectly crafted process" in Austin, it grew into a more intentional policy over his time in office.

Wynn was not alone in this perspective. The mayor of Nashville, Karl Dean, echoed these positions on how he seeks to harness Nashville's creative community as part of his agenda. Only a few hours before he hit the stage to welcome tens of thousands of fans to his town's country music festival, Dean spoke happily about urban culture in his Nashville City

Hall office, flanked by a large signed poster of Neil Young on the wall and a crisp copy of Harvard economist Edward Glaeser's *Triumph of the City* on the coffee table. With the classic politician's combination of formality and warmth, Dean laid out his plan for Nashville in the coming decades, a vision that manages to combine the input of both the musician and the urbanist.

That mayors Dean and Wynn reached similar conclusions is no coincidence. Both have been energized by the thought of exploiting their cities' musical communities. While campaigning for mayor, Dean said he felt Nashville "really needed to do more to emphasize the city's music industry and to make sure they understood we want [businesses and musicians] to flourish here." Like Wynn, Dean felt that continuing to attract talent is crucial to Nashville's success. "Songwriters and musicians come in droves," Dean told me, "and their capital is their ability to write a song, their ability to play a song, their ability to produce a song." Perhaps thinking of his hero, Neil Young, he summed up his goals for Nashville by saying: "Artists and musicians. Those are the types of people we want to attract."

Both Wynn and Dean relied on this "jobs follow people" argument to explain why some places, like Detroit, fail, as others, like San Francisco, succeed: jobs in the new mobile age follow where people want to go. Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* (and the battery of articles that followed) advanced the theory that urban growth in the postindustrial age requires attracting creative types and a professional managerial class. Dean's coffee-table book, Glaeser's *Triumph of the City*, follows the lead, in part, by championing the immense power of cities in their ability to foster growth and entrepreneurialism through face-to-face interactions and increasing density, something urbanists have embraced since Jane Jacobs's tribute to Lower Manhattan's neighborhoods, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Glaeser calls cities our "greatest invention" for the job they do in improving social + cultural resources by providing good schools and then nurturing rich entertainment.<sup>11</sup> People, in other words, go to interesting places.

City power brokers embrace the "amenities/creative class" model when it suits them. Both Wynn and Dean cited it and talked to me about their intent to draw residents and tourists who are, in Florida's words,

on a “passionate quest for experience.”<sup>12</sup> And yet, places like Detroit, St. Louis, and Kansas City all have their rich cultural heritages too, from Motown to jazz. It is unlikely that becoming attractive locales alone will save places ravaged by deindustrialization and depopulation in ways that Sunbelt cities like Austin and Nashville were not. The “jobs follow people who go to interesting places” perspective is hardly generalizable, then. Even Florida himself has hedged on the creative-class argument, noting that not all cities can use his formula; the resulting growth he prophesied is often unevenly allocated among urban communities, and not all cities will benefit in the same fashion.<sup>13</sup> Economic geographer Michael Storper’s book *Keys to the City* concedes that a certain measure of success relies on the “buzz” that face-to-face interaction generates and is what attracts many people to cities; Storper insists that cities are assuredly “workshops, not playgrounds” that must have a “minimum threshold” of employers that provide the kinds of networking for ideas and interactions that Florida promised.<sup>14</sup>

Rather than culture supplementing industry, culture is now interlocked with growth, and some see it as a marriage worth promoting.<sup>15</sup> One can now think of city leaders in government and members of quasi-government agencies, such as CVBs or chambers of commerce, realtors and property owners, as place professionals eager to brand and hype their economic, spatial, social + cultural, and symbolic resources to those desired ends. City branding and the promoting of locales is hardly a new strategy, of course. Pittsburgh was not the only town that manufactured steel, but it promoted itself as “Steel City.” Rochester, New York, was not the only place producing flour, but it was “Flour City” (and then, after becoming a center for producing and packaging seeds, “Flower City”).<sup>16</sup> Manufacturing-age branding was once used as a way to attract industry, and branding today has been adapted to developing *place character* as a strategy for attracting businesses, residents, and tourists.<sup>17</sup> Some city images arose organically, like the one contained in the slogan “Keep Austin Weird.” Others were carefully crafted promotional tools, like New York City’s 1970s “Big Apple” campaign in which the CVB resuscitated to great effect an image of unknown and confusing origin.<sup>18</sup> Although Providence is more like other former manufacturing cities than Austin

or Nashville, it still attempts to align itself with these trends in hopes of attracting and retaining youthful residents: Mayor David N. Cicilline commissioned a study that resulted in rebranding Providence in 2009 from the Beehive of Industry to the Creative Capital. (Later chapters will show the mixed results of this endeavor.)

For Dickens, the circus serves as the thematic counterpoint to the rationalized industrial and educational machines of Coketown. In the opening pages of *Hard Times*, protagonists debate the allure of the “fancy” versus the colder, economical “fact.” Certainly, cities have always balanced between these two poles, with fairs and carnivals mixing with the marketplace in the public sphere, and balladeers and clowns performing in European squares even through the modern industrial era. Today, however, the circus no longer serves as the contrast to the marketplace. Urban entertainment-based revitalization policies shape a new sort of industry town, filled with colorful lights and experiences quite unlike Dickens’s Coketown factories. This kind of circus, as those who study culture know, is now big business.

### “The Bowie Theory”

This move from the manufacturing of durable goods to the creation of memorable experiences finds its mirror in recent developments in the US music industry. Economists who study the music industry have found that live concerts have superseded album sales as the primary source of income for the industry. According to a 2005 study on “rockonomics,” the ratio of touring income to record sales income was 7.5 to 1 for the top thirty-five performers in 2002, and these data, paired with a quote by David Bowie—“You’d better be prepared for doing a lot of touring, because that’s really the only unique situation that’s going to be left”—caused the authors of the study to dub the move to live music as “The Bowie Theory.”<sup>19</sup> A survey of over 5,371 musicians by the Future of Music Coalition found that respondents received only 6% of their income from recorded music over the last year, with 66% of respondents saying they received *no* income from recorded music at all while, collectively, 28% of their income came from live performances.<sup>20</sup>

Of course, for the vast majority of human history, music meant live music. As the frontman for the seminal punk band the Pixies, Charles Thompson (aka Frank Black), mused:

There's something ancient about gathering around a bonfire and someone getting up to tell a story, or lead the dance, or sing a song. Those kinds of things are very old, and very natural. Much more so than anything else we think is natural: iPhones, artificial light, and electricity. . . . Business changes, this goes away, that goes away. . . . But the live thing, it doesn't change, ever.

Yet, despite the unchanging appeal of what Thompson calls "the live thing," the changes in the business of music—the industry, scope, and technology that surround it—have had an enormous impact on how listeners receive and enjoy music since Edison's invention of the phonograph in 1877.

With the rise of the Edison, Victor, and Columbia music labels around 1900, the recorded-music industry was born, and it in turn spawned myriad small and large record companies over the next half century. By the 1950s, this cacophony had resolved into five major labels (Decca, RCA, Columbia, Capitol, and Mercury), but before long further changes—in the law (e.g., regarding copyrights), in technology (e.g., amplification and then electrified instruments, the rise of 45s and pocket transistor radios, etc.), in market demand (i.e., having radio stations cater to white and black audiences due to changes in migration), and in the organization of the music industry itself—opened space for greater diversity in content.<sup>21</sup> With the popularity of rock 'n' roll and the introduction of the album format at the end of the 1960s, dozens of labels popped up again. The 1980s brought the high-water mark for album sales, with eighty-four albums selling more than five million copies each, and nineteen albums selling over ten million each. Yet, by the end of the century, even more technological developments, like the compact disc in the 1980s and the MP3 in the 1990s, caused instability in the recorded-music market again, and there was another consolidation of labels.

More than any change since Edison's phonograph, the digitization of music has significantly altered how music is produced and consumed. On the one hand, programs like Pro Tools and Auto-Tune revolutionized

audio recording and processing in the 1990s, eventually allowing sound engineers to reach into recordings and slightly adjust a guitarist's mistake or tweak an off-key performance to make even the most "pitchy" singer sound perfectly in tune.<sup>22</sup> For listeners, digitization of music made it easy to pass pirated songs from one person to another. File sharing (or "peer-to-peer" or "P2P") services and software like Napster quickly cropped up, making nearly all the world's music available to anyone with Internet access. Despite a significant rise in single-song sales, an overall decline in album sales started after 1999—the year Napster was launched, music industry personnel will point out—as piracy generated another wave of instability for major recording labels and altered the power dynamics in the industry further.<sup>23</sup> Online vendors iTunes and Amazon continued their ascent as premier sources for digital music (iTunes became the world's biggest music vendor in 2008, accounting for 25% of all digital and physical sales, and selling over ten billion songs by 2010). Traditional radio lost market share as satellite radio stations like SiriusXM and Internet streaming radio and, in 2013, Apple's iTunes Radio offered their music content either free with commercials or commercial free with a subscription.<sup>24</sup> These new forms of digital-music distribution and promotion eroded the Artist → Record Label → Radio → Record Store → Consumer model that had dominated for half a century. Internet music sites as a whole, for example, surpassed CDs as Americans' second source for discovering new and rediscovering old music, and they may soon eclipse radio as the primary source.<sup>25</sup> In 2014, only one artist's album achieved "platinum" status (selling over a million copies) for the first time since tracking in 1974: Taylor Swift (her earlier, more country persona appears in chapter 4) released a full-on pop transformation and chart domination with 1989, an ascent that required pulling all her music from the streaming service Spotify and developing innovative marketing and packaging for her physical CD.

These changes greatly affected the position of the actual musicians within the recorded-music industry. Early record labels, with varying ability and success, would discover talent, record and promote music, and develop careers. Labels would often pay for the recording and production of a record (renting a studio, arranging and paying for backing musicians and engineers, etc.) and consider it an advance on future sales.<sup>26</sup> Over the last

twenty years, however, better and cheaper technology has made it easier for musicians and bands both to make music and to produce and promote it outside the label system. Digitization allows even unsigned and self-produced music to be distributed to most corners of the earth.

As a touring musician and co-owner of a small label, Kristin Thomson realized by the early 2000s that emerging technologies and Internet-based platforms were leading to a “new age” in music creation and distribution, where “almost all the barriers to the marketplace had broken down.” Simultaneously, she told me, the conversation about music and creativity had expanded to include “lawyers, tech people, and policy wonks.”

With these rapid changes, Thomson felt that “musicians needed to be stakeholders in the discussions about rights and compensation. They also needed guides that could distill and translate information in a musician-friendly way.” These were the core reasons she, along with bandmate Jenny Toomey, cofounded the nonprofit Future of Music Coalition in 2000, which advocates for musicians on the issues at the intersection of music, law, technology, and policy. “If there’s a way to sum up what we’re concerned about,” she told me, “it’s the challenge of the balance between art and commerce.” Their group is one of several organizations helping musicians navigate this new landscape.<sup>27</sup>

Subscription-based music webcasting and streaming services like Pandora, Spotify, Rdio, Rhapsody, and Google Play now offer music fans a variety of ways to discover and listen to huge amounts of musical content online. Though the industry has vastly improved consumers’ options, Kristin Thomson told me that this shift from an “ownership model” to an “access model” quickly altered traditional payment and compensation structures. These services negotiated deals with labels. In 2014, Spotify, for example, offered the four major labels an equity stake totaling around 20% and now can pay \$0.005 per a single play of a song to songwriters and publishers—a rate that is adjusted based upon factors like the region it is played in and the kind of listener or subscriber.<sup>28</sup>

Many musicians have balked at these changes. The frontman of indie rock band Galaxie 500, Damon Krukowski, broke down his earnings in the rare and “best case” position of a band retaining all its royalties and rights. One of their songs, “Tugboat,” was played (or “streamed”)

7,800 times on Pandora in three months, for which the three members earned twenty-one cents—or seven cents each—in songwriting royalties. In comparison, “Pressing 1,000 singles in 1988 gave us the earning potential of more than 13 million streams in 2012. (And people say the Internet is a bonanza for young bands . . .)”<sup>29</sup> Although others claim that independent artists like Krukowski misconstrue the intricacies of compensation from these new digital sources as severely damaging to music careers, artists who have seen a measure of success—such as Chan Marshall of Cat Power, JD Samson of Le Tigre and MEN, David Lowery of Camper Van Beethoven and Cracker, and the band Grizzly Bear—have penned articles or blogs or have been quoted in interviews stating that they don’t have health insurance and are, essentially, poor because of these changes.<sup>30</sup>

And yet, just as in the early part of the last century, these technological changes did not diminish live music. As the *recorded*-music industry struggles—July 2013 marked the lowest album sales since Nielsen began tracking them in 1991—the live-music industry carries on.<sup>31</sup> A study of concert data from 200,000 performances by 12,000 artists from 1995 to 2004 and album sales data from over 1,800 bands finds a sharp rise in the number of concerts occurring at the same time as a steep drop in album sales.<sup>32</sup>

According to Nashville rock musician Jack White, the proliferation of digital music only heightens the importance of live performance. In an interview, he said that he wasn’t “anti-Internet” but instead “pro-real experiences” of face-to-face performances.<sup>33</sup> White’s perspective is echoed by an aspiring musician named Sam that I interviewed at Austin’s SXSW. “The performance *means* something. To be *here* means something to these folks,” he said as he looked out onto the crowds walking down Austin’s Sixth Street Entertainment District. “I mean,” he continued, “there may have been historic moments in recorded-music history, but could they possibly compare to the heat generated by the Beatles live on the Ed Sullivan show in ’64, Dylan at Newport, Hendrix at Woodstock, or Queen at Live Aid in ’85?” Like Sam, many musicians feel that the relevance of live performance is only heightened in the age of digital media, in both experiential and financial terms. With fewer labels making less money and a diminished ability to support new bands and nurture

mid-career ones, artists I spoke with talked about the value of the live concert.<sup>34</sup> Newport Folk Festival alumnus Erin McKeown told me that gigging is the major focus for mid-career, established-yet-not-superstar-level artists, as “the most important way for us to make any money.” According to a Nashville-based manager of top-selling artists, only the top 10% of artists make money selling records, and everyone else goes on tour;<sup>35</sup> however, Fred, the manager for another major household-name artist, states that live touring for even very established musicians like his client is “the most lucrative part of the business, where it wasn’t the case twenty years ago.” Talking Heads frontman David Byrne, in his book *How Music Works*, writes that the idea that musicians lose money on a tour is an “old lie . . . that really doesn’t hold true anymore.”<sup>36</sup> Touring used to be a part of the marketing for an album, as a way to generate press and build an audience. For many, it is now the primary focus.

Not that tour money comes easy. The live-music experience serves as a more direct economic exchange between an artist and her audience, with its own difficulties. Musicians who aren’t at the same level as Byrne have a starker perspective. After paying for recording, publishing, publicity, lawyers, agents, and management, performing still requires funding for transportation, gas, lodging, a tour manager (or doing it yourself), and paying music publishers for the recorded material sold. Then ticket sales and distribution companies (e.g., Ticketmaster, Brown Paper Tickets) get their percentage of the price.

The most straightforward profits on tour come from selling merchandise, or “merch.” A musician told me: “I feel like I’m a T-shirt business with a band on the side.” “If you ever want to help out a band like mine,” another told me, “buy a shirt at our table.” In like fashion, 2013 Newport Folk Festival singer Father John Misty’s website humorously shouts:

T-SHIRTS ARE CHIEFLY HOW THE MODERN MUSICAL ARTIST DIVERSIFIES HIS INCOME. THERE’S QUITE A BIT OF OVERHEAD INVOLVED IN TOURING. GAS, HOTELS, PURE CUT COCAINE, PITA, HUMMUS, CARROT STICKS, CHERRY TOMATOES, ETC. AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, IT ALL ADDS UP! SO HOW DO I GET YOU TO PART WITH YOUR HARD EARNED DOLLARS, WHEN MUSIC IS FREE ON YOUTUBE?

And even then the profits are reduced: the music venues usually get a cut of the band’s in-house sales, and the musicians usually have to coordinate and compensate someone to hold down the merch table.

Mention of Ticketmaster should not be missed, as it is itself a major player in the music business that demonstrates how, just as the recorded-music industry consolidated, so too did the live-music industry. Many local concert promoters coalesced into SFX Entertainment, which was then bought by Clear Channel. Clear Channel then sold its concert arm in 2005, becoming Live Nation. Live Nation branded itself as Live Nation Entertainment when it purchased Ticketmaster in 2010, which sells tickets for over 80% of major venues (the next closest competitor was under 4%), and over a hundred concert venues like the House of Blues, which it acquired in 2006.<sup>37</sup> The company is expanding further, pulling musicians like U2, the Rolling Stones, Madonna, and Jay Z (to the tune of \$10 million each for three albums) away from conventional record labels by signing them to “360° deals” offering a full-service combination of artist management, promotion, ticketing, and events production. As live music takes primacy as the centerpiece of a musician’s fiscal foundation, and in a time of losses in the recorded-music industry, concert revenues have ballooned: in 2000, concert revenues were \$1.7 billion, and despite an economic downturn they reached \$4.4 billion in 2009, up 10% from the previous year.<sup>38</sup> The ascent of Live Nation was, in fact, one of the brighter spots in the music business.

In the digital age, live music is a force.

### Festivals as Collective Activity

With this sense of urban placemaking dovetailing with the rise of importance of music performances, these larger cultural and economic forces must be understood in terms of the festival as a collective activity: the product of groups that create, maintain, legitimize, promote, and challenge these large-scale events.

Festivals depend upon this vast network of people. In the words of Dom Flemons, whose Grammy Award-winning string trio the Carolina Chocolate Drops has performed at dozens of festivals of bluegrass, Celtic, blues, jazz, folk, Americana, classical, and rock, these events are



“a whole bunch of people coming together—musicians, fans, producers, media people—but there are a whole lot of *other* people and groups that are there long before and a long time after I’ve packed up and left.” That communality of cultural work makes it important to flag what groups play their parts: (a) *cultural individuals and organizations* (e.g., arts patrons, people from the recorded- and live-music industry, media, entrepreneurs, etc.), (b) *musicians*, (c) *government* (e.g., municipal, state and local, fire and police, etc.) and/or *quasi-governmental entities* (e.g., convention and visitors bureaus), (d) *for-profit entities* (e.g., local or major corporate sponsors, vendors, venue owners, etc.), (e) *audiences*, and (f) *local communities*.<sup>39</sup>

Although I suppose one could say that there could be no music festival without musicians, these groups all rely upon one another and organize differently in different cases. Some festivals are created by local arts groups, and others are founded by city officials. Local communities serve to promote these events, but they can also challenge them. Connections among these groups determine expansion and contraction, valorization and contestation. These relations make what estimable music scholar Simon Frith described as a series of “interminable negotiations” over any number of topics, including “who will appear and in what size type on the posters, who will perform when and for how long on which stage; on detailed arrangements with local fire and police services; on calculated logistics of sewage, food and first aid.”<sup>40</sup> Appreciating these events means understanding the relationships within this social ecology—the festival’s social + cultural resources, if you will—but also with an eye to how these relationships shape the festivals themselves.

First, there are the cultural individuals and organizations. Although the Lorillards used significant economic resources to found their Newport Jazz Festival, they also relied on a board of directors that included corporate sponsors and media advisors who were able to marshal resources and positive coverage of those early festivals. Austin’s South by Southwest was born of friendships between people who worked at the city’s alternative newspaper, the *Austin Chronicle*, and folks working in local music venues.<sup>41</sup>

Second, there are the musicians themselves, who have to be attracted to perform at events, too. Festivals often pay a “guarantee,” a set payment

that could be sizable for more established acts, as compared with the smaller gigs in venues, where musicians could be paid a percentage of the ticket sales instead. Fred, the aforementioned manager for a major artist, described to me how festivals work as a part of the overall business but also serve as “anchor points” for a tour. “They pay pretty good,” he told me, “particularly during the peak summer festival season, and work out well for everybody.” Erin McKeown echoed the idea that festivals are “an anchor you build a tour around,” but also notes that they serve an additional, critical function: “they allow you to play for people who already know your music and allow you to find new audiences too.” Festivals are “great for both” for McKeown because they introduce artists to different audiences with slightly different tastes.

Third, there are the aforementioned municipal governments producing, supporting and, at times, limiting the festivals. Although locals believe Seattle’s music culture grew in the ’80s and ’90s in spite of the municipal government’s help, the Bumbershoot festival, for example, was founded by the mayor’s office in 1971 as “The Mayor’s Arts Festival” and was intended to boost a local economy still reeling from its aerospace industry’s near collapse.<sup>42</sup> It is of note, actually, that each festival in this book began with little official blessing or recognition of its local government, thrived despite the lack of support—or in the case of Newport, being kicked out!—only to eventually be embraced. As festivals found success (individually, but also collectively around the United States), many city agencies came to recognize the importance of culture.<sup>43</sup> Around 44% of music festivals receive funds from city government, for example, in order to keep police and firefighters on hand, although it is support that pales in comparison with European and Canadian festivals, which have far greater financial backing from government agencies and cultural ministries.<sup>44</sup> (More on the comparison with other countries in chapter 7.) Even with public funding, festival producers still need money to hire staff (festival organizations themselves may be staffed by a handful of people throughout the year, but balloon to hundreds of temporary staff and volunteers during the festival), pay musicians, promote events, and secure venue space.<sup>45</sup> And in the absence of, and often in conjunction with, these public economic resources, for-profit entities can fill that gap.

Fourth, sponsors held an early presence at each of the festivals in this book. The local Narragansett Brewing Company, for example, sponsored the early Newport festivals. For the better part of the past two decades, US festivals have increasingly relied upon “headlining” corporate underwriting. Whereas Narragansett had an ad in festival programs, Dunkin’ Donuts sponsored the entire Newport Festival to get top billing over the city name itself. Today, 72% of today’s outdoor festivals have at least some corporate sponsors.<sup>46</sup> This kind of marquee-level sponsorship is often needed to bring major headlining acts to the festival stage. For artists like Charles Thompson of the Pixies, who has performed at countless festivals over his career, the money pouring into festivals was “getting fucking ridiculous.” “If you get in the upper slots, you get paid a lot of money. And the money got bigger and bigger and bigger, starting twenty-five years ago.” When asked how much, he shook his head and said, “For a headlining slot? You were getting half a million to a million dollars and for some of the big big bands? One five.” Even though he has remained wary of commercialism from the earliest stages of his career—he embarrassingly recalls even saying “no” to write the theme song for *Bill Nye the Science Guy*—he described how festival commercialization is made palatable by being funneled through the event itself, never compelling the artists to deal directly with sponsors. But Thompson also described changing perceptions of commercialism in music, and the festival’s role in it:

People’s comfort level with branding changed, whether it’s the artist or just people in general. The world of advertising and branding whatever, it has become more a part of our life. They [the festivals] spent the money. They’re branding the shit out of everything. And all the artists, we took the money. Happily. Because there’s no ostracization now. You’re up there performing. You’re not necessarily in a TV ad. I’m not representing Heineken, I’m just playing my songs.

Corporate interest may increase the money for the artists, or alter the visual landscape and experiences of the festivals. Behind the scenes, it can even influence the lineups themselves. At a SXSW 2012 music panel on festivals, David Silbaugh, talent buyer for Milwaukee’s large Summerfest music festival, talked about receiving “wish lists” and band names

they don’t want from sponsors, as well as requests to run the lineup past sponsors before finalizing their contracts. In response to a question from the audience, Silbaugh was unwilling to say he feels “pressure” but did say the “massive jigsaw puzzle” of booking a festival includes keeping sponsors happy: “Sometimes sponsors will be disappointed because a band they want isn’t on a certain stage, but ultimately the decision is ours.” The overall slowdown in the global economy, however, led to a significant drop in corporate sponsorship available for festivals after 2007.<sup>47</sup>

Chambers of commerce, powerful players in city operations, were slow to embrace festivals as meaningful expenditures for promoting their local business community. Although Nashville’s festival has existed since 1972, the president and CEO of Nashville’s chamber of commerce, Mike Neal, told me that strong ties between the mayor’s office, the chamber of commerce, and the CVB have only solidified over the last few years through a series of music-based “Blue Ribbon committees” (an informal term for appointed government-advising panels). Sitting a few blocks from Nashville’s famous strip of honkytonks on Lower Broadway, he told me that the committees were focused around the Country Music Association (the industry trade organization, or “CMA”) and were designed to “advance the relationships between the country music industry, represented by the CMA, the city, and the local business community,” not necessarily the wider public. As these groups combined interests, he recalled, the festival became the logical focus for collaboration. In 2012, Mayor Dean verified the continuation of this mission, telling me that the chamber of commerce and the mayor’s office often invite businesses to the festival and awards shows as part of their entertainment during their visit, so executives can “get a feeling of how exciting Nashville can be.” Assuredly, not all cities seek such strong linkages between culture and their municipal identities, but such legitimization could trigger greater governmental support.

Fifth, there are the attendees, both local and from out of town. According to the National Endowment for the Arts, American festival attendance surpasses any other cultural activity short of movie attendance, and audiences tend to be white and between thirty-five and fifty-four years of age, with slightly more women than men—this is representative of the US population as a whole, although with slightly less representation of



Nashville's "Lower Broad" closed off to traffic and opened to booths and activities, looking east toward Riverfront Park.

Hispanics.<sup>48</sup> A 2012 *Rolling Stone* article notes that live-music revenues have doubled since 2000 due to the growth in attendance of summer music festivals, and quotes Charles Attal (coproducer of Chicago's Lollapalooza), who states: "All the major [festivals] that have been established for a while sold out faster than they've ever sold out."<sup>49</sup> In recent years, many US festivals sold out before the lineups were even announced.

Finally, however, festival audiences don't necessarily jibe with the last group: the local population. Sometimes these two communities have a positive relationship, but they often have a more contentious one. Long-brewing tensions between the festivals and their local communities exist at all three festivals studied here. The checkered relationship between Newport and festivalgoers, for example, has been marked by a number of tensions. Early festival lineups included African American artists and countercultural figures playing to audiences with a large number of beatniks and college students. None of these groups fit with the more tony elites of the Newport set, nor with the town's very large naval popula-

tion. Wein's move in the late 1960s to incorporate more rock-oriented performers resulted in much larger and rowdier audiences and, when crowds overwhelmed the small police force in a 1971 riot, he relocated the event to New York City for the next ten years. George Wein often expresses surprise that he and his festivals are embraced today. "I never would have thought," he said in an interview, "that we'd be so warmly welcomed by the Newport community as we have been since we returned." Today, these festivals are mostly appreciated as sources of attention and visitor spending for Newport residents. The festivals are no longer seen as oppositional because both they and the jazz and folk music they promote have become more mainstream.

Festivals originated from varied interactions between these groups, and those activities produced different results. Some festivals were sponsored by wealthy impresarios (as was the case in Newport), some were founded by alliances between local industries and the city's power elite (as I will show with Nashville's CMA Fest), and some came out of a city's subcultural music scenes that also linked up with the larger music industry (as I will show with Austin's South by Southwest). The group relations forged in any event's founding place a lasting impression on its future activities, what sociologists call *organizational imprinting*.<sup>50</sup> This is certainly true of each of the three festivals to be discussed in this book.

The early maneuverings of these groups—the behind-the-scenes influence of the sponsors, the role assumed by chamber of commerce members, the struggle of festival organizers to stay economically viable, the influx of attendees looking for a good time, and the participation of local business owners hoping for new customers—make an imprint on these events, sometimes even years later. These complex, complementary, and contentious negotiations determine the shape and feel of the festivals, and sit at the center of place marketing and urban culture today.

### Conclusions: Experiences and Communities

Rituals play a significant role in binding communities together and in communicating complicated systems of values and beliefs to both participants and outsiders. They are, according to Émile Durkheim's *The*

*Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, critical because they are what he calls *collective representations*: they channel complex ideas about the community, ideas that are forged in an ongoing collective process that is not the creation of any single individual or group.<sup>51</sup> Inspired by Durkheim, W. Lloyd Warner's ambitious community study of Newburyport, Massachusetts, showed how residents used their small town's tercentennial festival and parade to "collectively state what they believe themselves to be."<sup>52</sup> It is now clear that religious and secular occasions can reflect cultural values and help define community identity via coordinated social activity.

Today, as cultural events like festivals grow in scope and vitality, these rituals might have a more beneficial impact than any other kind of planned event in contemporary culture—for example, in comparison with the high-stakes strategies of building permanent theme parks, destination museums, retail zones, sporting arenas, and tourist-targeting open-air entertainment districts (some notable examples include New York's South Street Seaport, Baltimore's Inner Harbor, San Antonio's River Walk, Dallas's Victory Park, and LA's Universal CityWalk). With varying degrees of success and failure, these places have been criticized for their crass commercialization and indifference to local communities' needs. A troubling study by the University of Chicago's Cultural Policy Center offers this relevant metric: 725 arts and cultural facilities were built between 1994 and 2008 (on par with or even surpassing education and healthcare facilities), costing over \$15 billion but outpacing demand and straining public resources.<sup>53</sup> Even the Guggenheim's attempt to capitalize on Soho's emerging cool fizzled; the museum closed its downtown outpost in 2001 due to high operating costs and low attendance. Research on these "heavy" urban cultural moves has rightly criticized the exploitation and commercialization of public places and culture.<sup>54</sup> Festivals seem to offer cities a different option.

And yet, collective representations like festivals are also struggled over and, of course, do not sync up so perfectly with their communities. The resources festivals use and produce are contested. The way that festivals are lashed together with strategies of urban branding and become significant landmarks in these three cities is part of the story that lies ahead—but so too are the numerous ways that people actually act and use these

gatherings for their own purposes. Festivals are powerful forces for shaping urban and cultural landscapes—but so too should they be understood as shaping and being shaped by people's individual experiences.

As an urban cultural policy—when city agencies and organizations explicitly direct rituals as components of a city's planning, alongside other amenities like parks, museums, and waterfronts—festivalization may be an effective tool for branding and promotion in the postindustrial, experience-focused economy.<sup>55</sup> And when thought of as places for people's enjoyment and work, festivals can also be understood as the settings for individual action and meaning making. As increasing numbers of attendees come to see and interact with musicians, more musicians can use festivals in their attempts to build careers. As some urban players hope to hitch themselves to the successes of festivals, others choose to reject—or at least challenge—these representations of their communities.

The remainder of this book builds off four points made so far:

First: Contemporary festivals are often situated within a context of strategic urban placemaking and the increased importance of live performances for the music industries.

Second: Festivals are the result of collective action by participants with a variety of experiences and sometimes competing, sometimes cooperative, motivations, whether it is to build a career, promote a city or business, have fun, or forge a community identity.

Third: Festivalization is a process of using these temporary, reproducible, and malleable social occasions, which can be understood according to three distinctive patterns, and their relative costs and benefits depend upon the management and use of economic, spatial, social + cultural, and symbolic resources.

Fourth: Festivalization is also an emerging urban cultural policy wherein groups attempt to develop, use, and exploit these resources to a variety of ends.

The next steps look at these three cases, the relationships behind them, and the lived experiences around them to see how different arrangements create different outcomes. Chapter 2 highlights how the partially isolated Newport Folk Festival looked to a nearby, relatively inexpensive, and loosely affiliated network of musicians at a point when it was having

a simultaneous economic and identity crisis. Chapter 3 traces the success of a music trade organization in its use of a downtown core of institutions and images to label Nashville as “Music City, USA,” while fans eagerly enjoy a branded landscape of scripted interactions and activities. Chapter 4 shows how the confetti-like organization of the hybrid music conference/music festival of South by Southwest, with its wide array of official and unofficial events that create many indistinct roles for participants, collectively ensures the commercialization of festival spaces as much as the city’s weird subcultural status.

## 2

### Music in Ruins

#### The Newport Folk Festival

*We have searched the world over to find you  
And now that we have found you, you have changed  
We are still the same crew of berserkers  
That you knew, but maybe just a little more strange*

—“MABEL GREY,” BROWN BIRD

#### Like a Graceland Adrift

The approach to the 2007 festival is arduous but beautiful—it runs south through the center of the town and then east along the water’s edge to Fort Adams State Park, a walled enclosure sitting on a narrow peninsula jutting into the harbor opposite the town. The bumper-to-bumper summertime traffic, exacerbated by the sudden increase of festivalgoers, braids slowly through a row of rather large homes with four-car garages, a series of brick walls and gatehouses, until it eventually ends at the park. This year’s sponsor, Dunkin’ Donuts, has designated the various parking areas with the name of their different beverages; I pull into the Coolatta lot, where a shuttle bus picks me up to cover the last stretch to the fort itself. People talk excitedly about the lineup. Exiting