

Rock Brand: The Political and Cultural Economy of Live Rock  
Performance

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
BY

Kristine Weglarz

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Adviser: Mark Pedelty

November 2011

© Kristine Weglarz 2011.

## **Acknowledgments**

Special thanks goes out to my committee members (Gil Rodman, Mary Vavrus, Ron Greene, and my adviser Mark Pedelty), my friends in Toronto, the LSU Mafia, Yonge St. Tattoos, my friends in academia far and wide, and last but not least, my family. Trust me, without your help, this dissertation wouldn't have seen the light of day.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my wonderful parents, Donna and Leslie Weglarz.

## Abstract

This dissertation addresses the political economy of live rock performance and touring, both as they stand currently and their evolution via legislation, deregulation, and corporate conglomeration. Additionally, I examine the intertwined relationship between institutional arrangements and constructions of authenticity within rock culture, resulting in shifts as to how artists and audiences can perform “authenticity.” Live performance is now at the center of value judgments of economic and cultural capital, overtaking the role of recordings. This shift, along with reduced options and limited promotional control over touring, produces consequences for artists, fans, and media scholars. These structural and fiscal changes dramatically alter how rock artists tour, maintain authenticity among fans, and - in the case of protest artists - speak on political issues with conviction, through a new relationship between the live, the political and the authentic, where “economic authenticity” and “keeping it real” fiscally is both more important for genre standards and more difficult for artists to achieve.

## Table of Contents

<b>List of Figures</b>	vii
<b>1. Introduction</b>	1
Thesis: Liveness, Capital and Authenticity	2
Defining Liveness and Authenticity	5
Peer-to-Peer File Sharing as Instigator	7
Money for... Something?	13
Why Live Performance?	16
Overview: Chapters	17
<b>2. Literature Review</b>	24
Political Economy of Media	24
“Political” Popular Music	38
How can popular music engage with the political?	38
Why Rock?	45
Cultural Studies, Rock, and “Authenticity”	47
Protest Artists and Pearl Jam	56
Methodology	62
<b>3. Case Study of Ticketmaster and the Industry of Live Performance</b>	70
Pearl Jam vs. Ticketmaster: The Anti-Trust Complaint	73
Ticketmaster, Circa 2011	81
What Can We Do?	84
Conclusion	94
<b>4. “Let the Song Protest”: Pearl Jam’s Political Turn</b>	95

<u>Background</u>	96
<u>Lyrics: What to do with them?</u>	98
<u>The Third Way: Pearl Jam Endorses Ralph Nader</u>	100
<u>“He's not a leader, he's a Texas leaguer”: The “Bushleaguer”</u>	
<u>Controversy</u>	106
<u>Vote For Change</u>	116
<u>Conclusion</u>	124
<b><u>5. Economic Authenticity and Liveness</u></b>	127
<u>Crisis/Responses</u>	128
<u>Anatomy of Mediated Authenticity</u>	132
<u>The Impossibility of Grunge Authenticity</u>	133
<u>The Paradox of Constructing Live Authenticity through Recordings</u>	138
<u>Pearl Jam, VH1 Storytellers, and MTV Unplugged: Constructing</u>	
<u>Authenticity</u>	140
<u>An Unhappy Marriage: Pearl Jam and MTV/VH1</u>	141
<u>Encoding Decoding Videos (or the Absence Thereof)</u>	143
<u>Conclusion</u>	147
<b><u>6. Conclusion</u></b>	149
<u>Chapter Review and Summary</u>	152
<u>Chapter two</u>	152
<u>Chapter three</u>	153
<u>Chapter four</u>	155
<u>Chapter five</u>	156

Social Relevance: What's Left? What's Next? Directions for Future

<u>Research</u>	<u>156</u>
<u>Signs of Hope</u>	<u>160</u>
<b><u>7. Works Cited</u></b>	<b><u>167</u></b>
<u>Bibliography</u>	<u>168</u>
<u>Discography</u>	<u>179</u>
<u>Videography</u>	<u>179</u>



**List of Figures**

<b>Figure 1: Anatomy of a Concert Deal</b>	<b>80</b>
--	-----------

---

## Introduction

I fully realize by playing those venues we are getting into bed with all these guys. I've learned to choose my fights and at this point in time it would be logistically too difficult to attempt to circumvent the venues / promoter / ticketing infrastructure already in place for this type of tour. For those of you about to snipe "it's your fault for playing there, etc..." - I know it is. (Reznor, 2009)

In 2008, Ticketmaster told many fans who wanted to see Bruce Springsteen perform on his most recent tour that the show had sold out. They then directed the fans to another site that did have tickets available, albeit at a steeper price. The catch? Ticketmaster also owned the other website, Ticketsnow.com. How could Ticketmaster suggest that the show sold out, and yet its subsidiary had tickets available for a steeper price? Bruce Springsteen, when briefed about the situation, publicly chastised Ticketmaster with bad business practices and already steep ticket prices due to their service charges (Knapton, 2009).

History repeats itself and this should sound familiar. Pearl Jam battled Ticketmaster just over a decade before Springsteen suggested that he might pursue legal action against the ticket distributor, while RIAA continues to target alleged distributors of illegal music via peer-to-peer networks. My dissertation examines the band as a case study to illuminate the political economy of live music performance as it stands today and has evolved to the present through

legislation, deregulation, and conglomeration. I also examine the intertwined relationship between these institutional arrangements and constructions of authenticity within rock culture.

Although a limited body of research exists on the political economy of music, a considerable amount of research flourishes on authenticity and popular music, there have been few, if any attempts to combine both a political economy and cultural studies approach to rock culture. My dissertation attempts to fill this research gap, while also illustrating productive, tangible, and often necessary uses for the combination of both political economy and cultural studies approaches and methods. The need to fill this research gap rests on my assertion that live performance, rather than albums, finds itself at the center of the economic debates, exchanges, and concerns within the music industry itself. In short, while concert tours served to promote album sales, the instability of album sales and their continued unreliability as a source of income for both artists and record companies reversed this focus, such that the albums serve as a promotional tool for the more lucrative tours. This is a recent and dramatic shift, and as such has not received much scholarly attention as of yet. I intend to insert myself in this larger discussion through my examination of the political economy of live music performance.

### **Thesis: Liveness, Capital, and Authenticity**

This dissertation focuses on the topic of live music performance, the political economy of this facet of the larger media industry landscape, and the

impact and consequences of increased conglomeration/concentration/ownership on rock artists. Specific consequences, dealing with perceptions of authenticity, result from this changing structural and cultural landscape. In particular, authenticity, which serves as the *de facto* currency of success between artists and fans, rests on particular notions of both cultural and economic conditions. It is measured by fans of artists, and judgments that determine who is in and who is out are made by fans, journalists and other musicians. I have deliberately focused my study on rock, rather than other music genres such as country or hip-hop, and such my study is bound by genre-specific constructions and is also time-sensitive. I elaborate on both of these statements later and the necessity of drawing boundaries around this study.

My thesis has several main and sub-points. First, live music performance is the economic and cultural focus of popular music. While it once served primarily as a promotional tool for other ends (*Money for Nothing*) like the album/recording, now it is the revenue generator and the site at which value in terms of authenticity is constructed and bestowed. Further, live music has suffered increasingly under the effects of vertical and horizontal integration illustrated by the merger of Ticketmaster and Live Nation. The number of alternative options for touring/promotion narrowed drastically since Ticketmaster's acquisition of Ticketron in 1994-1995, the dates of the Pearl Jam anti-trust complaint, leading to the Live Nation-Ticketmaster merger. During the same period of major mergers (early 1990s), authenticity was seen to be at a

crisis point and the bar for authenticity set very high for artists (we can attribute some of grunge's cultural currency to this need to fill the "authenticity void").

There are consequences for artists, fans and media scholars with this change in authenticity and fewer and fewer options for touring and control. What is at stake here is the financial/economic authenticity as well as sonic authenticity. Sound (voice and instrumentation, etc) as well as distribution deals, ticket prices, sponsorship, etc, are part of two kinds of constructed authenticity. As a result, these structural and fiscal changes have dramatic impacts for how rock artists tour, maintain authenticity amongst fans and in the case of protest artists, construct and parade the necessary ethos to speak on political issues with conviction.

Tying these concepts together is the idea of *mediation*, and this dissertation looks at the ways and means by which relationships between audiences, musicians and ticket distributors are mediated. I use this term in two distinct ways. First, the more literal understanding of mediation, in that ticket distributors provide the means by which artists get tickets into the hands of audiences, or mediation as the negotiation of distribution. Second, I look at mediation in a less literal sense, in that authenticity is also a means by which audiences and artist interact and conduct transactions, albeit of cultural capital rather than economic capital.

How do protest artists avoid problematic sponsorship and promotional arrangements with a limited environment of touring choices or monopoly over the means of touring? There seems to be a certain level of futility in hearing

Rage against the Machine at the Coors Arena, or Pearl Jam calling for social and political change while surrounded by billboards for large corporations whose interests contradict theirs. Can audiences ignore the contradiction? Does this make protest music in large arenas a contradiction in terms?

I attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What is the nature of the political economic landscape of the live music industry?
2. What is the relationship between economic and cultural factors in live music performance?
3. How does the political economy of the commercial environment of live touring affect the ability for protest artists to continue their work and in what significant ways is their work stunted or enhanced?
4. What does it mean to "sell-out" in both economic and cultural terms?
5. How would we characterize the relationship of Pearl Jam to authenticity and its status as a protest band/artist? Is this a workable relationship or does this remain a tenuous balance?

### **Defining Liveness and Authenticity**

Authenticity as it applies to popular music and in this instance, rock, generally refers to the *perception* of an artist, a performance or a recording as somehow genuine. I highlight that *perception* is the important point to consider

with regard to authenticity as theorized by most scholars of rock music/culture.

This is not to suggest that audiences, performers and anyone making what amounts to a value judgment on what is authentic or inauthentic can be correct or incorrect in their verdict, but instead to illustrate that authenticity in rock does not amount to something essential found in the performers or the recording.

Authenticity is a construct, but the fact that it is a construct does not dismiss the important role it plays for fans and artists, and often serves as the means by which we distinguish pop and rock from one another. Both pop and rock recordings generally use the same instrumentation and in many cases, the same melodic structure, so the anatomical elements of the music do not serve to make this distinction. Authenticity, however, steps in, largely via fans and critics as a means to distinguish these two genres from one another. Rock audiences read “pop” as the inauthentic, while rock is seen as the authentic. This distinction becomes increasingly blurry in recent years, as I will expand upon later.

This argument regarding authenticity and its relationship to technology remains powerful, insofar as rock fans/critics see an inverse relationship between increased use of technology and perceived levels of authenticity. This has not gone unnoticed by rock artists themselves, as overtly illustrated by Queen's pronouncement on their albums that synthesizers were not used in the composition and/or recording of their albums (though ironically they would incorporate them later in their career). Yet another example of the ideological power of authenticity as it relates to rock and technology is the mythology

surrounding Bob Dylan's switch to electric rather than acoustic guitar for his performances, and the backlash by fans attributed to his newfound appreciation of electric guitar. This too is questionable, as reports from the festival where this took place suggest that the booing of Dylan had to do with his set list and the conditions of the concert itself, rather than the use of an electric guitar.

According to both of these myths, fans and critics equate the use of technology beyond the culture of the genre at the time as inauthentic: a crutch to supplement for a lack of virtuosity or talent. It also illustrates the fact that authenticity is a construct and largely genre-specific, such that what is deemed authentic in one genre of music may be inauthentic in another, or perhaps irrelevant to the issue of authenticity altogether.

A second term requiring elaboration is the concept of the rock formation. The term, coined by Lawrence Grossberg (1992), roughly equates to the culture that surrounds and includes rock music. While rock music itself remains an important component of this larger whole, the rock formation includes all those factors that constrain and influence, push and mold rock music in different ways, while the rock music produces also serves to change the territory of the elements of rock culture outside of the music itself. This includes the myths, mythology, genre expectations/limitations, and producers/consumers of the music in various capacities: fan, musician, critic, and to some degree the record label and their management. These factors pushing against one another and opening up new avenues for the rock formation to take shape illustrate the cultural interplay between rock music and related cultural phenomena, and



further serve to demonstrate that while rock does not have an essence, even those performers audiences deem most authentic, the articulation of particular people, forces, events, myths and so on give rock the appearance of having an essential quality. By de-naturalizing the rock formation, Grossberg demonstrates that not only has it changed but can and will continue to do so as cultural shifts push and pull the rock formation in different directions and manifest itself in different but malleable sites of construction.

### **Peer-to-Peer Filesharing as Instigator**

Given that authenticity is a construct and the rock formation is malleable and changing, the relationship between the rock formation and authenticity can and will change. Though not limited to these, digital technologies create different ways in which authenticity can or cannot be articulated to rock culture/the rock formation. First, the increased use of peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing networks have contributed to a polarizing effect on the relationship or articulation between authenticity and the rock formation, through changes in how we understand the economic aspect of rock culture/rock formation. The rise of digital technologies/services and their increased availability to a broader spectrum of users have created profound changes in how rock culture, or theorizing and shape of the rock formation understand and perform authenticity. In particular, I will focus specifically on peer-to-peer file sharing and its implications for the rock formation and authenticity, and suggest a number of ways in which scholars can and should change how they study rock music in

response to these shifts. Peer-to-peer file sharing has changed the cultural formation around rock and authenticity because of the economic discourse, rather than the tangible economic consequences of unauthorized file sharing. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will assume that most peer-to-peer file sharing, under current law, is technically illegal. This does not assume that the laws are correct, nor does it suggest that legal peer-to-peer file sharing of rock music takes place (though it is not the bulk of the traffic).

The case against Napster in 2000 serves as a useful cue to symptoms of the changing relationship between money and authenticity. In a very narrow definition of the copyright laws at the time, what was going on through Napster was essentially piracy, and software and individuals making available for free what you would likely have to pay for before gaining access to the software yourself and the hard drives of other users. It was on these grounds that record labels and individual artists, including several rock artists such as Metallica, took legal action to recoup losses attributed to file sharing and eliminate the software that made it possible.

What I am not trying to argue from this point onwards is that peer-to-peer file sharing is “killing the record industry” or some variation of that slogan. While record sales declined from previous years, there is no consensus as to the role of peer-to-peer file sharing in this decline. In fact, many scholars looking at peer-to-peer music propose a number of alternative explanations. Some suggest that CD sales were inflated in the years immediately prior to common use of peer-to-peer technology as consumers were buying CDs to replace

cassette tapes of recordings they already owned, essentially paying for the same product twice but with the advantage of an improved medium for longevity and sound quality. The drop in CD sales could then merely be, according to this theory, a correction to levels before the move to CDs from cassette tapes *en masse*. Others have suggested that there is no relationship whatsoever between CD sales, consumer tastes and peer-to-peer file sharing, as their relatively quantitative study demonstrated that the most traded files and albums were the biggest selling albums on the Billboard charts. This is a more problematic line of argument, but this highlights a valid point. Additionally, others have argued that peer-to-peer file sharing has actually stimulated album sales through a kind of viral marketing and increased exposure to new artists, songs, and albums. This argument is difficult to reconcile with the statistics showing that the most-traded songs were also the biggest hits in CD and single sales, but the argument continues to have its adherents.

What is more important, and crucial to the issue of authenticity, is the *discourse* around economic matters that has created profound implications for rock artists and the rock formation in general in tandem with the rise of Napster/peer-to-peer file sharing. In particular, how listeners and other musicians view their relationship between economic capital and rock musicians within the rock formation. As I have stated earlier, what constitutes the rock formation is fluid and elements that define it at one moment may be irrelevant at another. The relationship between wealth and authenticity within rock waxed and waned throughout the last several decades, often in response to

technological “threats” to the profitability of record sales. As manufacturers made blank cassettes and tape recorders available to the mass market, predictions of the death of the record industry and other apocalyptic scenarios flourished, though never came to fruition. The same is true of the move to CD technology and CD copiers, yet again seen as a sign that the days of people paying for music were ending, and yet this technological intrusion into the rock formation did not bring down the industry of record sales.

In both instances, critics charged that rock artists (and in truth, any musicians) who protested the making available of these technologies to be more devoted to the pursuit of cash than their devotion to their craft of music making. The same can be said of the Napster case and the moral panic surrounding peer-to-peer file sharing. It was the degree to which musicians publicly took stances voluntarily or through public pressure on the issue, with some falling on either side of the pro-Napster and anti-Napster camp, and the pervasiveness of newer and more evasive technologies in peer-to-peer file sharing that produced an exaggerated consideration of the relationship between rock culture and revenue.

In very simplistic terms, bands who were on the pro-Napster side, such as the Offspring, who went so far as to offer low-cost Napster shirts through their official website, were judged as being more dedicated to the craft of music making. On the anti-Napster side, bands such as Metallica were labeled as greedy, blinded to “music for music's sake,” and more interested in padding their retirement funds than working on innovative music. What peer-to-peer file

sharing does create is an exaggeration of tensions already problematic within the rock formation through its distribution via online networks. The internet, while heralded as the great equalizer by many, has the capacity to amplify existing differences in power and wealth and has accomplished this in the past as evidenced by the massive commercialization and concentration of the means of access to the network, through sometimes a single ISP in a city. Bands that were successful before the internet already have the cultural capital to draw in viewers to official websites in addition to the promotional apparatus standing behind them. This is not to suggest that those with fewer avenues of power are always left with limited power, but that the separation between the powerful and the less powerful, in terms of economic and social capital, grows wider through online and digital media in many cases. Once again, the rock formation equated greed with inauthenticity after the post-Kurt Cobain decline of charges of “selling out.”

At the same time, the discourse surrounding peer-to-peer file sharing and musicians taking sides on the issues often obfuscated very tangible structural issues surrounding how artists earn revenue as rock musicians. While efforts by the Media Education Foundation and individual musicians such as Courtney Love (Love, 2000) have attempted to educate the public on how the music industry functions. In particular, they highlight how little money musicians earn from that \$23.99 CD you just purchased, with most of it going to the labels, the recording studios, the CD production companies and a host of other parties, challenging the prevailing belief remains that artists who sell many records

make a lot of money.

Instead of Metallica arguing that yes, they had made considerable revenue in the past through a number of successful albums and that this is not the case for the vast majority of musicians, they instead framed their argument around issues of legality and ownership. We lost an opportunity to provide a listening public with a broader critique of the rock music industry and how it makes or squanders profit. As I have suggested earlier, the Napster case was a *symptom* of a problem that had been brewing in rock culture for some time. Even if Metallica did make this point when arguing against Napster, the shift in favor of a renewed claim to a romantic ideal of authenticity had already taken place its most-exaggerated form: the starving artist as ultimate rock authenticity.

### **Money for... Something?**

With the ubiquity of peer-to-peer file sharing, the public backlash against RIAA targeting individual file sharers, and the increasing ease of both access and the size of the catalog of rock recordings available online, the actual perceived economic value of recorded music has been reduced to almost nothing. Recognizing this, Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails decided to proceed along this line of reasoning and forgo the potential profits by the sale of their albums in stores or through means such as iTunes (Sandoval, 2007). In this “If you can't beat 'em, join 'em” line of reasoning, the discourse and ideology surrounding the rock formation could follow suit, particularly on the part of fans. This creates a problem for artists who are unable to follow the model of

Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails due to their record contracts, their small fan base, or a number of other barriers to this mode of record distribution. Nevertheless, the continued drop in revenues from CD sales (of which artists were only getting a small cut anyway) continues to eat away at the profits they might make, some of which may be to pay off debts incurred during the production of music videos or the mastering and packaging of the CD, rather than providing artists with the big houses and cars often attributed to blockbuster success. To avoid this financial pitfall, rock artists can and do seek out other means for generating revenue. The most common way to generate revenue outside of CD sales is through touring, including the merchandise available at these tours. Other rock artists have turned to commercial sponsorship using their songs and images to sell products other than the actual CD itself. While not a rock artist by most definitions, Moby infamously licensed every track off his *Play* album to commercial bodies, with the same song often used in different commercials for different products (Smith, 2002). Though Moby is not a rock artist, his hyper-commercialism garnered some criticism from what I will colloquially call the “Neil Young School of Economics,”<sup>1</sup> with corporate sponsorship representing the antithesis of musical integrity/ethics. While the direct economic impact of peer-to-peer file sharing seems unclear, the *perceived* economic impact, and the discourse around the issue often places rock artists potentially in a double bind where many metaphorical roads lead to the charge of “selling out.” On one hand, rock artists can offer

---

1 See Neil Young's recording “This Note's for You” (1988) off the album of the same title.

recordings for free while raising ticket prices, sell overpriced merchandise and drive up demand for their tours and potentially face the wrath of consumers unhappy with the increasing prices and charges of inauthenticity embodied as perceived greed. On the other hand, they can attempt to keep ticket prices reasonable and attempt to derive more of their income through record sales and the promotion of hard copy or digital versions of their recordings while fighting the spread of unauthorized peer-to-peer sharing of their music, and again face charges of selling out.

My underlying argument is that political economy needs to incorporate and theorize cultural studies notions of authenticity when considering music. Overall, the topic of live musical performance needs more research utilizing political economic approaches, and my larger research project will address this need. This premise rests on several important changes in the music industry. I believe record companies have lost, for the most part, the battle with illegal peer-to-peer file sharing. While RIAA will continue to go after some individuals involved in illegal file sharing, we are not seeing the sort of public battles between popular musicians and file sharing applications. Instead, some artists have accepted the premise that their fans can and will access their music for free. Rather than distribute their music through traditional channels such as retail stores or newer technologies such as iTunes, both of which require the consumer to pay for the product, they are distributing the music themselves for free online.



## Why Live Performance?

Given this, how can and should we as scholars rework how we approach the study of rock culture? This specific case study of peer-to-peer file sharing illustrates the need for a better working relationship between political economy scholars of rock music and cultural studies scholars of rock music, or at the very least, a critical consideration and inclusion of Cultural studies concepts into a largely political economy-centric analysis within a single scholar's research. While we are fundamentally dealing with *discourse* and how it shapes the rock formation, we are specifically dealing with discourse surrounding issues of capital and economy. Given the cantankerous relationship between political economy and cultural studies, this may be an impressive challenge for scholars on both sides of the epistemic field but research such as this offers opportunities crossover research without considerable conflict. Secondly, as artists attempt to avoid going the corporate sponsorship route and earn their income through profitable tours because of peer-to-peer file sharing discourse, scholars need to focus their attention on the issue of live performance as the meeting point for cultural and economic exchange. Philip Auslander's work, *Liveness (1999)*, provides an excellent example of the beginnings of work on live performance that should emerge from this cultural and economic shift from the recording to the live, though there are few other works that deal with rock culture, live performance, and authenticity at such length. The flipside of this is that the era of deconstructing the music video either through institutional analysis or cultural studies is just about over. Music video has long been one of

several foci in rock scholarship and while fans and journalists alike chastised MTV and VH1 for years for their lack of music videos on what was supposed to be music television, the end of MTV's *Total Request Live* should indicate to scholars that their research would be better done elsewhere. Live performance, rather than music videos, should take a much more central role in critical analyses of rock culture.

### **Overview: Chapters**

In chapter two, I outline the methodology and theory I plan to use for this project. Using political economy, I examine patterns of ownership, chains of value, policy analysis, and employ ideological analysis to look at the industry of ticketing and touring in live rock culture. This leads to a detailed analysis of the recent Live Nation-Ticketmaster merger and the legal precedents that have been set in place to permit this sort of large conglomeration to exist legally. These methods rest upon established theories of the political economy of media, of which I hope the results of my research confirm and expand upon as it relates to popular music.

In addition to methods from political economy, I utilize theory and methods from cultural studies to round out what may appear to be an overly economic analysis of what is essentially a cultural product. While brief and contested, cultural studies is an approach with four main characteristics. As stated by Gil Rodman,

Cultural studies is many different things to different people... a

partial list of those constitutive features of cultural studies [includes]: its radical contextualism, its explicitly political nature, its commitment to theory, and its self-reflexivity. (1996, p. 19).

To this end, I draw on theories of resistance, the mapping of power and anti-essentialist theoretical standpoints to understand and elaborate on the concept of authenticity and how it relates to the economic conditions of live music performance. As with political economy, I hope to illustrate the usefulness of theories from cultural studies in examining live music performance productively and expand upon a body of literature that appears substantial compared to the relative dearth of work on political economy and popular music (specifically concerning live performance).

This dissertation aims to contribute to an overall dearth of literature on the contemporary role of music in protest. Protest music has not received the sort of critical academic attention in recent years that it did during the 1960s and 1970s. I believe that while the work on protest music from this earlier period is essential to any examination of popular music in the present, there are too many structural and ideological changes to both the music industry and the nation to say that the conversation, as it stands, is sufficient for the purposes of theorization.

Examples of these changes include the increased consolidation of music labels. Excluding independent labels that generally must rely on major labels for distribution, the number of major labels has dropped considerably. Further, the

increased consolidation of ownership for venues in which musicians can play/perform since the 1960s remains a concern. Both of these changes place restrictions on artists because of a decrease in the number of available choices. Related to this is the near monopoly of Clear Channel, who has publicly advocated a pro-Bush, right-of-center political agenda at odds with many of the causes protest musicians criticize. If they are proverbially the “only game in town” and willing to extend their ideological position to choices regarding the playing of musicians on the radio or their ability to play in certain live music venues, where does that leave the protest artist?

Another possible point of departure is the change in the nature of populism as practiced in American politics. What was once used by both the Left and the Right, and especially by protest folk musicians, has come to be used almost exclusively by the Right under the Bush Administration. As such, populist tropes used by left-of-center may not have the same resonance with sympathetic ears as they may have had previously.

Even more infrequent is a critical and theoretically-oriented attempt to place Pearl Jam within this larger context of protest music. Ian Peddie's edited collection *The Resisting Muse* (2006) contains an important, but relatively brief reference to the band's political endeavors. The bulk of commentary on Pearl Jam and protest music occurred in the popular press, with *Rolling Stone* setting the standard. With the status of journal publication timelines, sufficient time may not have passed for articles dealing with the band's protests to make it to publication. I am doubtful this explains the entire dearth. There may be a

problem with matching such studies with appropriate journals. For example, neither the journal *Popular Music and Society*, nor various political science journals nor those publications put out by communication studies associations such as the National Communication Association address Pearl Jam's protest efforts and instead the subject falls between the scope of the journals listed above.

Further, popular music studies have faced a number of theoretical upheavals regarding the appropriateness of examining lyrics as a primary text. I will discuss this further in my methodology section but will suggest here that there remains considerable disagreement amongst popular music scholars over whether studies that use lyrics as a primary text should be encouraged through publication. This barrier may prevent many studies, including ones dealing with Pearl Jam, from getting to the publication stage.

Lastly, the field of popular music studies, as with many projects dealing with popular culture, suffers from a common view in the academy that popular culture is not particularly worthy of study. The boundaries may be more fluid when dealing with musicians with very lengthy and public careers, such as U2, Bob Dylan and the Beatles, but overall popular music scholars may find considerable barriers to publication in academic journals outside of those specifically dedicated to popular music.

With the third chapter, I outline and analyze the political economy of the industry of live performance, focusing specifically on rock artists and those performing in large arenas. In this chapter, I present a narrative as it appears

from a political economy standpoint, while using the period between 1994 and 2004 as the start to the critical narrative. While I will inevitably touch upon events both before and after this period during the mid-nineties, this non-linear approach emphasizes the importance of this period to live music performance, in ways I will argue throughout the chapter. I emphasize that it is the perceptions amongst fans/peer-to-peer file sharers that contribute most to the carryover effects in the industry of touring, rather than the tangible, measurable economic effects. I present an analysis on the changing value of recorded music, in relation to touring and other forms of dissemination and the implications of fans perceiving the value of music to have dropped as file sharing increased in popularity and it became easier to pay little or nothing for recordings.

Chapter four illustrates the importance of live performance to Pearl Jam as they established themselves as a political rock band. While elements of the explicitly political are found on the recorded albums, it is through the medium of live performance that audiences can directly engage the band in questions of the political. It is also in the live arena that fans and audiences ascribe meaningfulness to the actions of a political rock band, and hold them accountable for these political views, in ways not realized through recorded albums alone. I detail the efforts of Pearl Jam to use the live arena as a political platform, the backlash against this movement, and underscore why live performance itself remains a politically “hot” issue for the band, in the aftermath of their unsuccessful Ticketmaster complaint.

Chapter five starts in/around 1994 using authenticity in rock as the main lens of analysis. I review and include critical changes both in what constitutes rock authenticity during this time as well as the means by which artists can find themselves deemed authentic by fans and/or rock journalism. I parse out the semiotic distinctions that make up the phrase “sell-out,” touching on musical, melodic characteristics as well as perceived financial alliances and decisions to illustrate the continued importance of not selling out, or in other words, remaining “authentic” to rock artists. Live performance, rather than recordings increasingly becomes the battleground for the “authentic” vs. the “sold-out.” I detail the specific battle of authenticity faced by Pearl Jam, using the bands history as a case study. The band serves as a useful case study due in large part to their reliance on touring as one of few options for self-promotion, and their conscious decision to limit self-promotion to touring and albums for several years. Further, an entire economy, both gift and value-driven, emerged amongst fans of the band for their live shows. To “be” a Pearl Jam fan is not to buy their albums per se, but to see them live, even if they make it increasingly difficult (and did make it difficult) to access tickets. I have also chosen the band for personal reasons, as I have spent a great deal of resources over the years consuming the band in various ways, including travel to many live shows. As a member of their fan club for over a decade, I also have access to materials more casual fans may not possess. While I begin with their career around 1994-1995, I illustrate the conditions present before and during the bands initial years as setting a precedent for what could be called the post-Milli Vanilli authenticity

crisis. Further, I illustrate how for Pearl Jam, it remains not enough to “sound” authentic, but actions and decisions outside of the actual sound of the music that count towards how we and audiences perceive their relative level of authenticity. To this end, I outline structural/economic forces contributing to Pearl Jam's need to remain perceptively authentic, the specific challenges they have faced as while working in a cultural studies understanding of the workings of authenticity into this structuralist framework. My hope, as with my larger methodological premise, is to illustrate both the need and possibility to incorporate economic and cultural factors when considering live music performance.

I conclude with overview of my results and conclusions and suggest a number of avenues for a) future research, b) how this research adds to the existing literature, and c) actions musicians can take if they find themselves frustrated with the current touring/promotional corporate landscape. In particular, I examine the possibility of a renewed anti-trust complaint against Live Nation/Ticketmaster given their recent merger.



## Literature Review

While popular music has not received the same amount of scholarly attention as television or film in communication studies, several scholars have focused their research on rock, folk, hip hop, and other musical forms with wide currency. In particular, I present a broad overview of literature on popular music concerning political economy, “political” rock music, cultural studies, and protest artists to frame my larger argument in terms of gap-filling while continuing the theoretical work already undertaken by the scholars below.

### **Political Economy of Media**

The vast majority of the work on popular music, as it relates to communication studies, falls within either the cultural studies or media effects approaches. For example, scholars such as Larry Grossberg have looked at how authenticity works within rock music, and the work of R. Serge Desinoff examined how audiences interpret and understand political protest songs. Political economy approaches to popular music, particularly live performance, are much less prevalent.

One of my arguments is that the topic of live musical performance needs more research utilizing political economy approaches and theories, and my larger research project will address this need. My argument rests on several important changes in the music industry. I believe record companies have lost the battle with peer-to-peer file sharing. While RIAA will continue to go after

some individuals involved in illegal file sharing, we are not seeing the sort of public battles between popular musicians and file sharing applications. Instead, some artists have accepted the premise that their fans can and will access their music for free. Rather than distribute their music through traditional channels such as retail stores or newer technologies such as iTunes, both of which require the consumer to pay for the product, they are distributing the music themselves for free online. Nine Inch Nails released their last album online and attached no price tag to the download. Radiohead took a slightly different approach with their last album, giving consumers the option of choosing individually how much they wanted to pay to download the album. Paying nothing for the album was an option.

Given this shift, I argue that artists are instead generating revenue from live concerts, because their albums are no longer profitable. This shifts the relationship between albums and concerts, such that in many ways the album is now a promotional tool for the live show, rather than the reverse. Given this shift within popular music, I believe a political economy approach to understanding this shift towards live performance is necessary. This literature review attempts to synthesize some of the existing work on political economy to provide a framework for understanding the political economy of live music performance.

As a step to understanding the importance of employing a political economy framework to understanding live musical performance, I will define the

terms predominantly used in political economy studies and apply them to live musical performance. To this end, Marx's *Capital, Volume 1* (2003/1867) serves as a useful starting point for outlining the terms, processes and relationships at the heart of the economic side of live musical performance. Marx outlines the relationship between capital and the social body, developing the following concepts in the process: commodity, abstract labor, commodity fetishism, and several definitions of value.

Marx defines the commodity as something different from an object, in that commodities are those things that are for sale on the market. He states that the commodity is “an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort of another. The nature of such wants, whether for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference” (p. 43). It is the accumulation of commodities in immense proportions is how capitalist society defines wealth (Ibid.).

Commodities are further understood by the value, and the nature of the value they may or may not possess. Value, for Marx, represents labor time invested and embodied by workers. He then divides value into use and exchange value, with the latter corresponding to the ability for a commodity to fulfill human wants/needs, while the latter represents a ratio of one commodity to other commodities on the market. Marx differentiates these two for important reasons. First, he states, “a thing can be a use-value, without having value” if it fulfills human needs/wants without the thing requiring the investment of labor (p.

48). Things can then acquire use-value through labor but not in and of themselves become commodities because they are used by the individual who has directly invested labor within that thing, but does not put the thing out on the market (Ibid.). Again, it is the market that makes a thing become a commodity. When the market enters the picture, we are able to speak of exchange value of commodities. Marx uses the example of yards of linen and coats, and hypothesizes a relationship between the two commodities that explains exchange value. In his example, in the market at a particular moment, twenty yards of linen has the exchange value of one coat (p. 55). Both of these are commodities, the linen and the coat, with labor invested in the creation of both, and yet a relationship between the two has been established through market exchange. Abstract labor represents work invested under average conditions. With relation to commodities, social labor results from society labor only through the process of abstract labor within the creation of commodities (again, things to sell on the market).

Lastly, the concept of commodity fetishism proves relevant to the study of live music performance. For Marx, commodity fetishism is the process by which commodities receive value without the input of social labor. He states,

In that world, the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. (p. 77).

Within capitalism, producers encounter other producers until they exchange commodities, the specifics of labor imbued physically in each commodity:

Value, therefore, does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is a value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic. Later, we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social productions. (p. 79)

Using the example of silver and gold, Marx illustrates how we give value to these commodities, independent of the social labor imbued in them by workers. Instead, they were seen as natural objects, when used as money, with magical or mysterious properties independent of labor (p. 86). This process of rendering labor hidden, while playing up the natural and mystical properties of a commodity, is how the fetishization of objects occurs under capitalism.

All of these terms, concepts, and relationships described in *Capital* appear to refer to physical, tangible “widgets.” How then, can we look at the relationship between labor and capital when looking at live musical performance? When dealing with music itself, the “widget” in question could refer to recordings available for purchase, and political economy approaches to the recording industry exist (see Burkart and McCourt, 2006). Further, who are the laborers? The musicians? Audiences? The advertising and promotional apparatus in place to make these live shows happen? Alternatively, are the

musicians, audiences and so forth themselves commodities?

The distinction here is that I analyze live performance itself, and perhaps its relationship to recordings, but the emphasis is on live performance itself as a commodity. To move from understanding live performances as commodities, the work of Dan Schiller in his book *How to Think About Information* (2007) and Vincent Mosco's *The Political Economy of Communication* (1996) prove relevant.

Schiller's (2007) work outlines the transformation of the economy from one that deals with tangible objects to that of information itself, where information has economic implications, use value, and particularly exchange value. As Schiller illustrates, information was often seen as a means to an end, and that end was the sale of products/services. In fact, economists often saw the industry of information as a "surplus eater," in that the bourgeoisie had to invest some of their potential profits in the industry, laborers, and so forth involved in promoting and advertising their products (p. 9). Over time, however, information itself became a commodity. No longer did this industry of advertising and promotion serve to decrease profits; instead, they added value to the products/services promoted (p. 11). The market now features industries exclusively devoted to advertising, promotion, and so forth, and the former eaters of surplus value are now members of a market of information itself as a commodity (p. 16). Schiller goes so far as to suggest that the economy itself should be referred to as information based, through the term information

capitalism (p. 25). In fact, the U.S. has made clear, through policy, that information and communication are commodities, with increasing value, in direct contrast with the policies of countries associated with the Non-Aligned Movement (p. 39).

Of particular importance to this larger project is Schiller's chapter on the culture industry. He describes the state of art and culture in the present as saturated within a climate of "ceaseless flows of cultural commodities" (p. 101). He outlines three factors that have helped to promote this climate, two of which are particularly relevant to this project: convergence and conglomeration. Convergence refers to the development of media whose substance can and does contain multiple kinds of information or cultural products, whereas previously different media were required for each (p. 102-103). Conglomeration refers to the increasing amount of media-related mergers taking place, for Schiller, at an accelerating rate. He attributes this to the erosion of the "mass market," and that in order to reach audiences and receive revenue from advertising, media corporations must acquire more of the total market, through mergers and the like (p. 112-113). The massive Time-Warner corporation is an example of this kind of conglomeration. The result is that fewer owners own more of the proverbial slice of the audience pie. What is important here is that when convergence and conglomeration combine, fewer media outlets own the means of distribution and the relative audience share for a variety of cultural products, so that any single corporation may own stake in television, radio,

newspapers/magazines, and recording companies.

While Schiller's work provides an excellent outline of the commodification of information itself, Mosco (1996) provides insight into the process of commodification within communication itself, including ideological changes in perceiving what, in fact, can be commodified within communication. His work, as well as Schiller, builds upon Marx's concept of the commodity and its specific importance to late capitalism. Importantly, Mosco distinguishes commodification from commercialization. Commercialization, for Mosco, is by its nature more specialized, narrow and refers to "the creation of a relationship between an audience and an advertiser" (p. 144). Mosco also emphasizes the research on the commodification of content, audiences themselves, and labor within communication and media relationships and industries (p.145). He criticizes existing research for its focus on the "product" or "content" of media industries (p. 146-147). It is not that the existing research is wrong, but the overwhelming focus on content/products downplays the possibility for considering audiences and labor as themselves commodities transformed within capitalism. Mosco finds Dallas Smythe's theories on the labor of audiences to be important entry points for a more useful working definition of commodification. He states that,

Capital... must actively construct audiences as it constructs labor, but even at it does so, both audiences and labor construct themselves by deciding, within a social field whose terms of engagement are primarily set by capital, how to activate their



audience and labor power. (p. 149)

The question for Mosco is not whether audiences engage in something akin to labor, but that it is labor itself, and proceeding from this standpoint remains an important consideration to media studies scholars (p. 150).

Secondly, Mosco emphasizes the role of spatialization in political economy approaches to communication, which he defines by quoting Henri Lefebvre as the process, within social life, of eliminating the restrictions imposed by time and space (p. 173). Returning to Schiller's outline of conglomeration and convergence, spatialization appears to be the result of these related processes working together. For example, when a media corporation acquires other media firms (conglomeration) and acquires the means to distribute and manage media content across a number of platforms, we have an example where spatialization may be in play. Mosco uses the terms vertical and horizontal integration to refer loosely to Schiller's comparable terms of conglomeration and convergence. Media corporations aiming at vertical and horizontal integration, thus aiming at spatialization, are working towards what Mosco refers to as synergy (p. 192), appropriately so because the resulting output is more than just the sum of its institutional components.

Mosco expands his analysis through an examination of the role of the state in spatialization, recognizing that policy creation and reform are essential elements to consider in political economy. The state serves to put policy into

action and modify it as necessary, albeit not without the input of lobby groups that serve to promote the interests of big business and input, although to a lesser degree, from citizens themselves through their governmental representatives. Mosco recognizes the role of the state in responding to structural changes in the media environment, but also reminds us that the state can and does serve the active, rather than reactive role in determining media policy (p. 200). Through an examination of existing political economy literature dealing with the state, Mosco suggests that the prevailing view has been that the state implements regulation(s) to deal with market pressures, in this case, media markets (p. 201). He goes further to suggest that while existing discussions of regulation argue primarily on the issue of whether more or less of it is necessary, this is missing part of the point and does not account for the *social totality* political economy scholars should aspire to include in their analyses (ibid.).

Robert McChesney picks up on the policy/regulation theme in his collection *The Political Economy of Media* (2008). While McChesney's focus has long been on the political economy of journalism, he devotes several chapters to broader media-related issues, with strong implications for understanding the fiscal aspect of live musical performance, evaluating its current status more than in the other works discussed herein, and how media can be made more democratic, both for audiences and particularly musical performers. McChesney looks at the implications for media policy given

contemporary interpretations of the First Amendment. In particular, he argues that absolutist interpretations of the First Amendment, such that corporations are also covered by this free speech measure, are problematic and in fact, anti-democratic. Focusing on the efforts of the ACLU, McChesney argues that their broad advocacy of First Amendment rights, premised on the idea that it leads to a marketplace of ideas, does not advance participatory democracy (p. 251). Their logic is flawed because of two problematic premises: first, that government is what threatens democracy in the most severe way, and second, that markets are neutral and unbiased. (p. 252). What troubles McChesney is that the commercialization of the First Amendment has already taken place, and that groups such as the ACLU continue to support this interpretation. Given the factors of conglomeration, convergence, horizontal and vertical integration previously outlined, the world of commercial media is tightly concentrated and largely inaccessible to the larger public.

McChesney also tackles the problems of hyper-commercialism pertaining to media commodities, particularly the overwhelming increase in product placement (p. 267). He directly refers to the impact on music, presenting an agreement between Pepsi and Sony Music for the purposes of cross-promotion (p. 273).

Rather than focusing on hypercommercialization of the media, Dallas Smythe instead focuses on what mass media produce. In Dallas Smythe's work *Dependency Road* (1981), Smythe poses the question: What is the primary

product of the mass media? In posing this question, Smythe is problematizing the natural response that mass media produce entertainment, programming, ideas, or a host of other answers that continue to point back at the media industries themselves, rather than the consumers of mass media. Smythe suggests that existing work by Marxist mass media scholars answers his question incorrectly by positing “influence” as the main product of mass media (p. 25). While Smythe is not suggesting that mass media do not produce products meeting the aforementioned description, he does indicate that these answers to his question are concerned with purposes or effects (p. 23). Further, these answers are subjective and abstract, and given Smythe’s larger critique of the lack of a material basis in existing research in communication, he wants to posit a tangible and materialist answer. Audience power, rather than influence, ideas, programming or entertainment, is the primary product of mass media. At first glance, audience power seems no more materialist or tangible than the other products he critiqued, but what makes audience power tangible is its role as a commodity under capitalism, though the work done by this commodity is on the part of audience members themselves, not by mass media industries. Further, the work that audiences do as part of being components of the audience commodity does not, on the surface, closely parallel other work/wage relationships under capitalism, precisely because audiences are not paid in a monetary sense for the fruits of their labor by media industries. Smythe debunks this line of reasoning in acknowledging the difficulty in conceiving audiences consuming mass media as a form of work. As Smythe

states:

...Work may be defined as whatever one does for which one receives pay (wages, salaries, etc.). (Let us defer for the moment the fact that audience members do not get paid for the use of their audience power.) As such it has come to be regarded generally as something which you would prefer not to do, something unpleasant, alienating and frustrating. It also is thought of as something linked with a job, a factory, an office, or a store. It was not always this way. At its base, work is doing something creative, something distinctively human – for the capacity to work is one of the things which distinguishes human beings from other animals.

(p. 26)

With this acknowledgment, Smythe suggests that in consuming mass media, audiences are engaged in a form of wage labor that can be a source of pleasure and desire and take place in the seemingly separate sphere of the home. The nature of the labor of audiences relies in their consumption of messages of advertising and the subsequent purchasing of those services/goods promoted during the commercial components of mass media programming. The payment for this labor, for audiences, is not in the form of a wage but rather through the pleasures of consuming what Smythe calls “the free lunch” which is NOT a substitute for a wage (as audiences are not individually paid for their status as workers). The free lunch metaphor refers to those elements of mass media programming that depend less on advertising,

whether it be educational or news programs (p. 38).

Several serious concerns follow from this worker/employer relationship. The first is that what we conceive of as leisure time, or that time spent outside of a formal and traditional wage/work relationship in the form of employment, is truly not leisure time at all. In consuming mass media products during out time away from the office or the factory, we continue to engage in a form of work, and it is not leisure after all. Further, while the wage/work relationship in traditional employment tracks is often exploitative of workers, they do receive some sort of compensation for their labor. This is not the case with the purchasing of audience power. Audiences receive the free lunch, a concept which Smythe himself recognizes to be a highly propagandistic exchange medium (p. 39) but in turn, the free lunch itself functions as yet another piece of raw material from which audiences can continue to produce the highly-desired audience power mass media desire. Lastly, this relationship highlights the centrality of media institutions to facilitate the relationship between advertisers and audiences. We as consumers pay media institutions for access to the free lunch and advertisers, in turn, pay media institutions for their access to us as members of the audience commodity (Meehan, 2000, p. 77).

I have attempted to provide a framework for understanding the political economy of live musical performance. My focus narrows further when considering the existing literature of political pop music.

## **“Political” Popular Music**

While it remains an under-researched facet of popular music, the interaction between popular music and politics remains a compelling object of critical inquiry, particularly with recent examples of overtly political musicians and their use of touring to promote a particular political party, ideology, or candidate. In approaching this object of study, researchers should address two questions. The first: how can/do political musicians use their music to achieve political ends? This question considers both past musical forays into politics as well as the ways in which audiences can use popular music for their own political ends. Secondly, while several genres of music have been employed for political means in the history of popular music, what is it about rock and roll that distinguishes rock musicians' efforts to effect political change from that of folk or hip hop artists? The following literature review identifies several key works on popular music and politics and how they address these two questions.

### **How can popular music engage with the political?**

Ray Pratt (1990) outlines two potential ways in which music and politics interact with political behavior. The first is purposive, the explicit attempts to effect political change through the behavior of a group/individual to change the ideas/actions of others and effective, the process of influence that may be intentional or unintentional. What this distinction takes up is both sides of the process of encoding/decoding, which recognizes both the intents of artists, if

known, and the ways in which audience can take up the music produced and use it for political ends. In particular, Pratt's distinction illustrates that music can be produced without political intentions and yet be taken up as such by audiences, or vice versa, that explicitly political texts can exist without audiences or artists creating political change.

Pratt also takes up the theories of Stuart Hall in applying the model of encoding/decoding to popular music. Encoding/decoding suggests three ways in which producers and audiences work with texts, in this case, popular music and make it meaningful, which directly carries over into the political uses of popular music. Popular music can serve to reinforce the status quo in its conservative/hegemonic use. In this formulation, producers of music have encoded the music with particular ideological cues, and audiences reading it within the hegemonic context decode the message in precisely the ways in which it was originally encoded, with all of the ideological baggage originally included.

The result is that this reading can socialize audiences into the acceptance of what currently exists, potentially through the lyrical content of musical releases and lastly, this may occur through description of the modes of production/consumption, and it is the latter that Pratt explicitly ties to the popularity of large music festivals over the last few decades (p. 10). In fact, Pratt goes to far as to suggest that the sheer size of these concerts negates the individual encoding of potentially resistant/counter-hegemonic ideological values by the musicians from being recognized as such by audiences (p. 11).



This observation combined with the general theory of hegemonic readings of popular texts privileges the industrial process of encoding over the individualized encoding that takes place when artists produce music.

Negotiated readings of popular music suggest that audiences accept, in part, the ideological content of any particular piece of music/performance, but make it personal and work for them through the inclusion of their own experiences. As Pratt quotes, “this negotiated version of the dominant ideology is shown through with contradictions... it operates with exceptions to the rule. It accords the privileged position to the dominant definitions of events while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to 'local conditions'” (Hall, 1998, p. 137, qtd. in Pratt, 1990, p. 11).

Pratt ties negotiated readings to the safety valve theory of culture, in which popular culture serves as an outlet for frustrations with the dominant order of things. Audiences can air and put aside their grievances with the existing order of things through popular music, though in the end, there are no widespread changes that take place as essentially the frustration that may motivate those changes is let off in manageable and small amounts rather than several large and organized movements (p. 12). So, for example, popular music may allow both artists and audiences a means to register their economic concerns and their frustrations with issues of employment, but the act of airing these grievances in the realm of popular music is a means to “get by” and make the best of a bad situation, with minimal to no structural changes taking place at the socio-political levels necessary.

Lastly, when audiences take up music it can serve a counter-hegemonic or resistant function. Pratt refers to this function as emancipatory, in that audiences can use popular music to free themselves from the existing social and political order or to suggest that a different social/political system is possible outside of what we currently find. One of the ways in which music can add to the emancipation of audiences is through the work of affect, in which

Through...emotional changes, music promotes establishment of sustaining relations of community and subculture that are fundamental to creation of an alternative public realm, a kind of cultural free space made of materials taken from the thousands of composers and musicians who contribute the essential elements of what is propagated by the culture industries. (p. 14)

This process of emancipatory readings by audiences rests, as Pratt illustrates, on an understanding that the current system of social/political relations is problematic, a view that may not be shared some or all of the audience/listening public.

Pratt also takes up R. Desinoff's (1983) list of functions of popular music, but also states that music cannot make political movements in itself or serve to change political consciousness in and of itself. Instead, popular music serves five political functions. First, popular music can persuade individuals to make themselves aware of and/or get involved in political causes. Second, popular music can create groups/communities through increased solidarity/morale or through the act of separating supporters of political causes from the rest of the

population. Third, music can work on the value systems of individuals to change them in favor of particular political causes or against them. Fourth, music can personalize the effects of social concerns through the translation of the social into the emotional or demonstrating how solutions at the individual level can create change. Lastly, music can reinforce all of the above and press for continued action when the goals of a movement do not play out the way group members had hoped (Pratt, 1990, p. 200).

In a similar vein, Mark Mattern (1998) locates the function of popular music in creating and reinforcing community through the highlighting of commonalities or the underlining of differences to mark those who are in versus those that are outside of a given group. From this community-based position, Mattern outlines three forms of political action that can spring from popular music and the creation of community. First, confrontational, the act of resistance or opposition of one community against another, and Mattern places “protest music” under this heading. Second, the deliberative function of popular music and community, in which questions of self-identity are raised and temporarily resolved. Mattern sees the deliberative function as a first step towards political action, to create a relatively stable base from which a community can make demands upon another community or the larger public. Third, popular music and community can have a pragmatic function, in which a community uses music to “promote awareness of shared interests and to organize collaborative efforts to address them” (p. 30). Mattern uses the example of celebrity endorsement of socio-political causes, such as the work

done by Bono and Sting, to promote awareness and change amongst audiences.

The problem remains that Mattern's work concentrates on the community-building function of popular music, while implicitly stating that it is from this community that political groups united and motivated by popular music can take action. He does not look at concrete examples of how communities have solidified and formalized their relationships and acted as political bodies after music has led to the creation of these proto-communities.

Reebee Garofalo fills in some of the gaps created by Mattern's community-focused approach. Reebee Garofalo (1992) offers a unique look at the functions of mass-mediated popular music and its potential function in terms of its role in mass movements. Garofalo brackets music and culture under the same heading and suggests that music as culture has replaced the charge of mass movements to effect political change. This is to say that rather than mass movements supplementing their aims with the addition of popular music/musicians, the absence of large-scale movements has allowed music itself to serve the function that mass movements initially did. Its primary function, in displacing mass movements, is to serve the role of gathering large numbers of individuals together to create a captive audience potentially receptive to the political suggestions of musicians. With specific reference to the political effects possible through the music mega-event, Garofalo outlines several potentialities: First, fundraising, and Garofalo quotes Will Straw in suggesting that this may be the most important, and most overlooked function of musicians in creating

political change—gathering the necessary economic capital to do just that.

Second, music mega-events can function to raise consciousness of issues and concerns. Music is unique as a cultural form to achieve this end because of, as Garofalo states, its “versatility, responsiveness, and impact” (p. 29). Third, the usefulness of celebrity endorsement, and in this case, celebrity musicians, to underscore the potential for both fundraising and the generation of a public consciousness about the issues contested. Lastly, music mega-events can function as agitators/mobilizers, which is the direct mobilization of bodies, either intentionally or unintentionally into working for causes endorsed by the musicians, in the form of volunteers, lobbyists, or organizers.

Ian Peddie's edited collection, *The Resisting Muse* (2006), takes a much more skeptical, or caution position on music and its potential political effects. Through a broad selection of essays in the volume, the work first questions the idea that protest music can and does have discernable political effects. Further, the volume comments on the idea that there is a plethora of protest songs available to the listening public and pieces out the elements by which we as audiences may or may not decide on what constitutes a protest song. The articulation of music to activism is presented as an appropriate fit because, as the contributors suggest, music is cyclical in nature. This articulation, however, does not suggest that its outcomes are necessarily political or furthermore, successful. Peddie's collection of essays also includes a section on music and place, reaffirming the recurring narrative about music's function to create, reaffirm, and reassess community membership, and from that community-

based political action can take place.

### **Why Rock?**

Questions of genre factor into the existing work on political popular music, and in particular, rock's relationship to political action. Neal Ullestad (1992) suggests that rock has a particular ability to link audiences to social and political concerns, despite distractions, because of the conditions of its production. Ullestad states that rock's emergence and creation during the 50s in the context of racial segregation and an authoritarian political climate (p. 38). Further, rock's articulation to young baby boomers then, and now youth in a broader sense, serves to fuel its subversive potential. What Ullestad does not want to suggest, however, is that a clean separation of rock, pop and other genres rests on its political potential. Instead, he points out that pop is always political in terms of its production, reception and reproduction and the conditions underlining these three stages but in line with the existing work by Larry Grossberg on rock and politics, Ullestad suggests that rock's political potential rests on and is bounded by specific "affective alliances." These alliances are what create the conditions for rebellion under conditions of rock's cooptation, or alternatively, limit the possible means for rebellion under these same conditions.

Deena Weinstein (2006) makes a similar argument regarding rock's protest potential and the conditions of its production. Specifically, rock's historical development alongside protests reinforced the power of this

articulation to enact political change in the present. What Weinstein underscores with this comment, however is that despite this articulation, this does not in any sense guarantee successful political movements tied to rock, and notes the skepticism of the left in the 60s, who saw “rock as antithetical to motivating political engagement” (p. 5). Second, Weinstein notes the structural and demographic conditions of rock's production in the 60s, with an emergence of new musicians ignored by the existing music industry, and without industrial supervision subverted and recreated the rules of this new genre. Those in the industry that did invest in the new rock musicians in the 60s granted artists a degree of freedom artistically they otherwise would not have and as such, the potential for protest songs reaching the listening public was higher than had they been supervised by the larger and more well-established components of the music industry.

Mark Mattern (1998) suggests that the political and social power of rock music comes from the ability of audiences to weave music into their daily lives. Using the example of rock in the 1960s, Mattern suggests that the easy articulation between rock and politics stems from the fit it provides between moments of everyday life. Rock then seems less like a world audiences enter when they play recordings or attend live shows, but a constant element of everyday life.

Ray Pratt (1990) locates some of rock's potential for subversion and rebellion in the relationship between sexuality and rock's history. This tension serves as the catalyst for political action employed by rock musicians and/or

rock fans. Additionally, Pratt makes the argument that it is the discourses around authenticity and rock, in particular, which serve as a source of energy for rock musicians making political inroads. While Pratt is careful to problematize “authenticity” in rock, as well as other genres whose nature rests on discussions of authenticity, it is the articulation of authenticity and rock music that itself provides, in the eyes of musicians and fans, the means for rock to serve political ends. Using the example of Bruce Springsteen, Pratt demonstrates that the “promise and power” of rock rests on its roots in the 1960s and the successful articulation of it to an authentic truth (p. 201). Whether or not this authenticity is possible or even probable is not the issue with Pratt's statement, but it is the belief and discourse around authenticity that lends support to rock's political potential. This is particularly the case when considering the question of rock and post-modernism, in that if post-modernism critiques the idea of an objective truth and therefore, an authentic point of origin. The search for potentially objective truths continues onward, making the claims of rock and its articulation to authenticity subject to skepticism but not wholeheartedly dismissed because, in Pratt's words, it is the promise of this authentic spirit that keeps audiences and musicians searching for the political power embedded in rock music.

### **Cultural Studies, Rock, and “Authenticity”**

It is perhaps appropriate to start any discussion of authenticity with both Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin. In Benjamin's “The Work of Art in the



Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1968), authenticity is dealt with primarily in aesthetic terms. For Benjamin, art has what he describes as an essence, something “transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced” (p. 223). Martin Jay (2006) points out that this term is itself misleading, in that while Benjamin is not an essentialist, he described art as obtaining a property or characteristic that functioned much like essence would, though it is not ahistorical (p. 19-20). With the ability to mass-produce art, this essential quality disappeared and acquired a political function through this substitution for the ritualistic, community-building base it had once. Authenticity as a concept for evaluating art is itself the result of mass production, creating a particular dialectical tension between authentic and inauthentic that did not make sense before this historical shift. While audiences could question whether a piece of art was in fact the true product of a particular artist and not a forgery, mass production both problematized and added to this authenticity dilemma. Inauthentic mass produced art does not require an “original” point of departure from which audiences make these value judgments.

Also wrestling with the implications of authenticity and mass culture, Adorno (1974), like Benjamin, identifies our understanding of authenticity as related to historical materialism. For him, authenticity served as apt filler for the void created by the collapse of the Enlightenment project’s notions of ethics and religion. The subject is instead the effect of “imitation, play, wanting to be different.” (p. 153). It is this concept of imitation as a primary impulse that

underscores Benjamin's diagnosis of authenticity's crisis from its "origins."

Adorno here identifies the tension between enlightenment and myth, as represented by the sovereign subject and the individual as the product of both ideology and historical materialism. It is the fetishism of authenticity and the authentic that depends on and reinforces the presumed right of "those who were here first," an explicit reference to land and property rights of ownership (p. 153-154).

Moving from mass culture to the narrower field of popular music, Allan Moore (2002) identifies three tropes correlated with believable constructions of authenticity in rock music: first, that artists speak the truth of their own situation; second, that they speak the truth of the situation of an absent second persona (a subject or audience not actively present/participating in the exchange between artists/audiences); and third, that they speak the truth of their own culture. The particular balance of these three tropes depends largely on context, though for Moore, musicians who are able to perform all three will be perceived, by their respective audiences as more authentic. Where authentication takes place, for Moore, is not in the music itself but through a process of uptake and circulation, in that present or absent audience members ascribe authenticity onto performances that in many ways depends upon on who they are as social/cultural/economic subjects. For Moore, who we are depends greatly on whether we choose to mediate our interactions through technological means.

Moore highlights a tension at the heart of many discussions of

authenticity and music video: technology as artifice. The first of Moore's three-part typology dealing with first-person constructions of authenticity brings this tension to light. Perceptions of authenticity that are based on a first-person construction of authenticity take account of perceived distances between the origin of the music and the physical performance of it, with decreasing distance between origin and the physical indicating stronger constructions of authenticity. The question Moore poses through this first trope deals with the "measuring" of believable authenticity through performers' attempts to convince an audience that their performance is "one of integrity, that it represents an attempt to communicate in an unmediated form with an audience" (p. 214).

Moore's second trope deals with the relationship between the music and an absent audience, suggesting that this form of authenticity is successful when artists are able to create a link between their music/performance and perceived points of origin, thus establishing a link between the artist and the larger musical tradition, naturalizing both their sound and performance. Music video poses challenge to this form of authenticity in that it allows for yet another, visual level of referencing back to occur, whether it be to other artists' videos or to their recordings, while also challenging the creators of music videos to attempt successful constructions of authenticity through a medium that itself represents a disjuncture between modernism and post-modernism.

Moore's third identified form of authenticity deals with the immediate and present audience. Citing Lawrence Grossberg, Moore suggests that this perception of authenticity is particularly important and distinctive to rock

authenticity, because it is not defined by either artistic integrity or links to the past, both of which became problematic negotiations of authenticity in the post-WW2 world and the resulting critique of progress and modernism. In the context of social and political structures that minimized difference, this basis for authenticity depended and still depends on the listening audiences' ability to find themselves as part of a community, or "place of belonging," that required neither substantial financial investment nor investment in hegemonic groups. From this point, Moore suggests that this listener-dependent authenticity relates to appropriateness, rather than integrity or lineage, further underscoring the rejection of linear modernist understandings of progress.

Keith Negus (1999) states that the relationship between authenticity and music are both a concept and an intuitive sensing that "connects the fabrications of the industry with the lived realities of fans and artists" (p. 129). At stake here is both 1) the individual perceptions of authenticity in relation to a particular musical artist and their audience and 2) the relationship of musical artists to the financial and corporate concerns that facilitate their mediation and simultaneously impose a new set of demands upon the audience/artist relationship. While the discourse of authenticity must consider the consequences of mass mediation, Negus illustrates that authenticity is itself a mediating form, in that it "mediates social relations that have been 'disembedded' out of their immediate experiential contents of face-to-face interaction by the modern music media" (p. 130).

Roy Shuker (2001) makes a related argument with his discussion of

commerce and authenticity. Perceptions of authenticity in rock have historically been embedded in a dialectical tension with commerce, suggesting that most audiences read commercial success as antithetical to authenticity. This suggests a zero-sum game of authenticity vs. commercial success, and walking the line between the two in the minds of audiences is difficult, if not impossible. This line of reasoning, this poses substantial problems for artists with populist appeal, such as U2, who also became blockbuster commercial successes. Shuker illustrates that this polarization of art and commerce is problematic, for artists have to be concerned with commercial interests and, similarly, even some of the most anti-corporate musical acts have found commercial success (p. 25).

Lawrence Grossberg (1992) identifies one facet of rock's construction of authenticity in excess, which, as he illustrates, refers to the opposition between a particular musical act, song, or performance and its binary other: mere entertainment. The degree to which performers, audiences and the like recognize and accept this polarization largely determines their perceptions of authenticity, in that increasing excess of "mattering" generally suggests higher perceptions of authenticity. What that "mattering" refers to will vary depending on the particular socio-cultural matrix in place at that moment, and what the artist and the audience effectively bring to the table. Grossberg suggests that fun can itself be posited as the binary other of "mere entertainment," something that at base seems counterintuitive, in that "excess links the social position and experience of musicians and fans with rock's ability to redefined the lines of

social identity and difference” (p. 202).

Grossberg goes further in linking authenticity and excess by separating out two dimensions of this relationship: the problem of communication and the problem of community, taking into account both the music and the context/audience. Interestingly, the form of authenticity that relies primarily on aesthetics has morphed, for Grossberg, into parody and irony of the fetishization of authenticity.

The result, authentic inauthenticity, acknowledges that authenticity is one form of style or image among many. With recognition of authenticity as a strictly subjective construction, authentic inauthenticity refuses to privilege itself over other images or styles. The crisis Grossberg identifies with this phenomenon are the consequences when audiences place “excess” at the center of constructions of authenticity. The fan’s affective investment in “excess” ceases to retain any objective validation of one form of excess over another. The result is the creation of what Grossberg understands to be a form of nihilism that threatens the foundation of mattering on which rock authenticity and rock culture rests. As he states, “it is not that nothing matters but that, in the end, it doesn’t really matter what matters” (p. 206). Consequently, the only convincing authenticity still standing is the one in which performers admit to a lack of authenticity, or to “fake it without faking the fact that you are faking it” (Ibid.). U2’s 1993 *ZooTV* tour is one of the more elaborate and deliberate examples of this strategy. For Grossberg, as with other incarnations of rock authenticity, the live performance and sound/the voice in particular are the site from which many

fan/audience considerations of authenticity take place.

Philip Auslander (1999) makes a similar argument concerning the ideological basis of authenticity in rock and roll, but rather than addressing the audience and musicians as the primary participants in generating authenticity, Auslander suggests that elements of the music industry specifically attempt to include cues for authenticity in the acts/musicians they promote and manage (p. 70). In contrast, however, Auslander rejects Grossberg's argument that we should search for indications of authenticity in the sound of music, rather than the visual elements. His critique rests upon his disagreement with Grossberg's separation of sound from the visual because for Auslander, all elements of the musical experience can be constructed and Grossberg's privileging of sound over vision fails to take into account the consistent importance of the visual in attempts to link so-called authentic genres/artists to their historical black roots. For Auslander, the importance placed on the creation of a sonic lineage between contemporary rock artists and Black musicians ignores the important visual cues that audiences read as authentic and the long and continuing importance of the racial dimension of images/the visual in rock history.

Shuker (2001) discusses the live performance as, ideologically speaking, the site at which the highest perceptions of authenticity for a performer can and do take place. For Shuker, rock audiences have historically recognized a hierarchy of performance, with proximity to the artist given high marks for authenticity, such as the live performance. What Shuker calls pseudo-live performances—performances that take place live but audiences view them

primarily on television or film, (p. 106-107) result in diminished authentic currency.

In this way, the live rock show retains its status as an important site for audiences in search of the authentic, because it offers both the visual and the aural elements up for evaluation. This explains why audiences distinguish between the inauthenticity of the Monkees vs. the authentic elements of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, despite many similarities present in the recorded music, as Shuker illustrates. Live performance serves as the point of original departure as well as the continued site from which artists can constitute authenticity, because the history of live performance serves as an important cue for rock audiences of authentic musicians. Further, both Grossberg and Auslander agree that live performance, in its status as the point of departure, serves as a means to turn back and authenticate other elements of the musical act, such as their recordings and as a result, the musical act as a whole within a particular definition of authentic rock music.

Auslander is quick to clarify, however, that live performance does not give Benjamin's aura, the awe or reverence consumers attribute to perceptively unique works of art, back to the recording and live performance, nor does the recording receive aura status though the process of identifying the authentic/inauthentic. Instead, Auslander states, "the aura must be located between the recording and the live performance," rather than one or the other.

The work of Auslander, Shuker, and Grossberg on authenticity sheds light on how audiences bestow authenticity onto particular artists, in the context



of an increasingly narrow range of options for controlling all the facets of live performance. How do the economic factors and beliefs reflect upon how audiences accept or dismiss particular artists as authentic or inauthentic?

### **Protest Artists and Pearl Jam**

For the purposes of this literature review, I read Pearl Jam against prominent historical examples of protest music, and the protest music of the 1960s, particularly the folk revival, provides an appropriate point of comparison. Jerome Rodnitzky (1999) argues through example/case studies that the protest music of the 1960s, particularly that coming from folk singers, serves as a meaningful way to understand the 1960s in America. What seems clear from the article is that while there was much to protest against during this decade, the key word is *response* rather than using music to create change. These artists served to document social change, rather than serve as a catalyst for those changes. The events happen, and *then* musicians respond in kind through music. While this initially makes sense if protest music is the subject of attention, and they are essentially protesting against a set of perceived injustices or events, etc., it does not imply or suggest that musicians actively involved in socio-political concerns can or do act to speak out and demand change from the status-quo, in the absence of triggering events. In fact, Rodnitzky paraphrases Pete Seeger, who stated that his music could swing the outcome of presidential elections, and yet knowing this, Seeger used restraint and deliberately did not put it towards this end (p. 107).

Robert Rosenstone's (1969) affirms the link between protest and popular music through his assertion that protest music serves two functions: 1) To codify and define the standards of particular youth subcultures (and *youth* is the key word here) and 2) Put youth in contact with critiques of American life heard primarily by the academic and intellectual community at the time, serving a gap-bridging function (p. 131). Rosenstone suggests that protest music primarily took three approaches to politicians, suggesting they are corrupt, that they change their minds too frequently, and, most common, they should largely be ignored (p. 135). Further, Rosenstone illustrates an important trait in anti-war protest music of the decade in that much of it described the impact of war on the individual, rather than seeing it in terms of systemic effects or problems that could affect the larger whole (p.135). This individualizing of the consequences of war may work well for listeners to understand why they should be concerned with the injustices of events at the time, but does not provide the foundation for collective political action as a consequence of protest music.

Noticing the individualizing aspect Rosenstone noted, James Dunlap (2006) re-examines Bob Dylan's relationship to protest music and makes a case for setting him apart from many of his folk contemporaries in terms of both lyrical orientation and involvement in protest. Dunlap argued that folk music focused on reaffirming collective beliefs of a younger audience. This is in sharp contrast with the individualizing function Rosenstone attributes to protest music of the 1960s. For Dunlap, Dylan himself is the primary vehicle of this move towards individual experience. Using R. Serge Desinoff's models of magnetic

and rhetorical protest music, Dunlap highlights the contrast between Dylan's calls for introspection on issues of social injustice with the civil disobedience called for by many of his contemporaries, often criticizing what audiences may view as his political allies (pp. 559-560).

The publication date of Desinoff and Peterson's edited collection, *The Sounds of Social Change: Studies in Popular Culture* (1972) prevents it from directly addressing protest music under the Bush administration, its contents serve as a fruitful starting point for weighing in on the status of protest in popular music with equally political musical predecessors. Desinoff's chapter on the evolution of the protest song details the historical role of the protest song before the rise of "popular music" while tying this history into the mass-marketed form. Desinoff reiterates his position that a working definition of protest songs are those songs that fall into one of two broad categories determined by intended function: magnetic and rhetorical (pp. 16-18). Desinoff attempts here to reconcile the folk music-protest articulation with the reality that, at the time of writing, folk had given way to rock as the music of mass marketing and that this shift of genre has implications for how we might continue to define protest songs.

In terms of literature addressing *recent* protest music, Ian Peddie's work (2006) represents the most recent and concise effort to date to address the dimensions of the music of politics. Serving as a useful thematic bridge between the work on folk protest music and examples from the last decade, Peddie's work demonstrates how the political implications of any artifact of

popular music rely on audiences, rather than solely performers, in that “the forms and aims of social protest music are contingent upon the audience's ability to invest the music with the 'appropriate' political meaning” (Peddie, 2006, back cover). Deena Weinstein's (2006) essay on the contemporary protest song argues that the prevailing mythology surrounding protest songs suggests that they are frequent within rock music, particularly during the lead up to the 2004 presidential election. The reality is, however, that there is a dearth of rock protest songs and yet the myth prevails because of the history of rock and protest music, particularly the articulation of the two during the 1960s. Weinstein goes further to provide reasons for the relative lack of protest songs. First, that they are not heard on mainstream rock radio; second, protest songs as understood by the musicians are not read as such by audiences for reasons of misunderstanding or misreading of lyrics or other textual elements; lastly, that we may discount certain songs as protest-oriented because of their lack of effectiveness (pp. 8-14).

Continuing this theme is Jerry Rodnitzky's (2006) chapter on 1960s folk music and its role in protest. Of particular note is his point that what we define as the popular music protest song has changed radically, from a very broad definition of the protest song to a narrower contemporary understanding that discounts the personal-is-political approach used by protest songs/singers of the 1960s (p. 28) or a generalized feeling of discontent with politics or the establishment (p. 19). Rodnitzky also suggests, as Pete Seeger did, that protest songs and their relative ubiquity or dearth are *cyclical* in terms of their

appearance, and we may be entering a new cycle in which they are increasingly present and popular (pp. 28-29).

Liesbet van Zoonen (2005) takes a broader approach than the other works discussed herein to situate music as one of several popular culture forms interacting with politics. In an interesting rhetorical move, van Zoonen's arguments proceed from her assertion that the convergence of politics and popular culture is in fact a positive articulation, in stark contrast, she notes, with many of the works preceding hers. For van Zoonen, this meeting of the political and the popular has value because it helps to negate the hierarchy in which citizens and politics place these realms, bringing politics down to the level of the people (p. 4). Furthermore, it brings the needs, values, and desires of the people to the level of politics, which in turn keeps politics more relevant to everyone in terms of timeliness and issues of importance (Ibid.).

Earlier I discussed the important distinction between the politics of music and the music of politics, with the former addressing issues of power that enable of constrain the act of producing and distributing music and the latter, which deals with the act of using music for political purposes. John Street (1986) appears initially to address the politics of music but instead serves as a unique work that problematizes the stark separation between political music and music politics. Street's work outlines the constraints placed upon artists by both fans and genre considerations when attempting acts of protest. Pop musicians (and Street is careful to note that "pop" is a complicated genre to define) are neither expected nor encouraged to make political statements via

their status as musicians, whereas rock and folk musicians are supposedly more able to explore this end (p. 5). Rather than framing this in terms of increased options, Street suggests that rock and folk musicians have to prove that they warrant the money they have earned and taking up political issues is one way to win this approval (Ibid). It suggests that with increased wealth, the impetus to legitimize it increases, such that the most popular rock and folk musicians must do more than their less lucrative peers to gain that approval. In a subsequent chapter titled "Party Down," Street suggests that the record industry, not the performers/musicians, started the process of pairing musicians with political parties/candidates (p. 49). The consequences of this fact are yet another point not fully fleshed out in other works. Street argues that through this act, both politics and music are "reduced to their lowest common denominator" (p. 50), and returns to this issue of profits and politics throughout the rest of the book. In a later chapter, Street argues that the relative success of any one articulation of popular music and politics rests squarely on "the political context, the nature of the cause, the form and traditions of the music, and the way the sounds are interpreted" (p. 88). This suggests that repeating the success of one particular music/politics articulation may be tricky to duplicate through simple repetition, for even if context, cause and genre remain similar, the last condition dealing with audiences may turn a tested success into a failure. Further, form or genre concerns for political rock musicians rests squarely on the degree to which audiences perceive them as authentic. Rock musicians unequivocally require viewers/listeners to designate their image as authentic to have any

possible success in achieving political ends (p. 86). Since authenticity is a construct that depends on genre, established rock musicians may see the definition of authenticity change during the length of their careers.

In attempting to combine the better parts of each of these approaches, which some scholars have positions as near opposites to one another, my goal is to provide a rounder analysis of the structures, policies, values and meanings surrounding rock protest music and its relationship, if any, to authenticity. Given that cultural studies has already devoted serious scholarly attention to live performance and rock culture, my aim is to dovetail this existing work with both the long-term and recent structural changes in the live performance culture industry around rock. Authenticity seems to already “matter” in cultural studies of rock, and structural and policy changes in ownership have pushed the economic locus of rock culture to live performance, away from the recording. We can place live performance economically, structurally and culturally in meaningful, tangible ways at the center of both methodological approaches to rock music to examine both the opportunities and challenges these changing conditions create for those artists who decide to take their politics, and their music, on to the arena floor.

## **Methodology**

The research for my dissertation focuses on rock music and live performance and the implications of cultural, economic, and structural changes/shifts affecting artists who combine politics with rock music. Given this

subject matter, I utilize both political economy and cultural studies as grounded approaches for my research into this field. As “an approach that embraces the concepts of social class, the value and division of labor, and moral sentiments” (Bilton, 1996, p. 666), political economy is the study of the production and consumption of goods and services and their circulation. In this specific instance, I am looking at the media industries surrounding the popular music industry, with a specific focus on those that relate to live performance of rock, both implicitly and explicitly. To this end, I approach the study of live performance of rock music using institutional analysis.

This leads several of my research questions, the answers to which political economy and institutional analysis provide the most appropriate means to answer: what are the consequences of increased media concentration in the sub-industry of live performance? Why should (or shouldn't) citizens, consumers and rock musicians care about the increased concentration of ownership in the live performance industry? If the problem with media concentration is that it creates the foundation for a less politically-informed and engaged public, how does live performance factor into this problem? Does an increase in competition in the distribution of ticket sales bear a relationship to a more political engaged citizenry? These are some of the issues raised about news by the work of Robert McChesney, Ben Bagdikian and to a lesser degree, Vincent Mosco, though there are few, if any references to music by these theorists. The two most established political economy texts on popular music (as they are limited in number) are Attali's *Noise* (1985), Burkart, and McCourt's



*Digital Music Wars* (2006), both of which have heavily influenced and narrowed my research questions and methodological approach.

Additionally, the fact that I have primarily utilized a political economy methodology in my research on rock music in a general sense has helped to define the specific element of rock music for my larger project, that of live performance. The overwhelming majority of recent political economy scholarship on popular music focuses on the production and circulation of music within the context of peer-to-peer file sharing, such as the use of Napster, Bit Torrent and other similar programs, and their effect and relationship to the tradition outlets for music distribution such as record stores selling CDs. Burkhart and McCourt (2006) discuss this at length in their aforementioned book. While considerable room still exists for continued political economy research into peer-to-peer sharing of MP3s, the recent choices made by several prominent rock artists to bypass the CD distribution system entirely complicate the subject area further. On a side note, what I am not suggesting is the tired argument that the sharing of MP3s is the cause of decreased CD sales, though the decrease in CD sales across the number of musical genres is an important factor into the move towards economic potential through live performance. The relationship of this action to live performance is that the economic locus of activity for rock musicians and other peripheral elements of the music industry shifts from the sale of CDs to the potential revenue generated from live shows. If surplus value cannot be extracted from the sale of CDs (and frankly, the individual artists extracted little surplus value to begin with the sale of their

CDs), elements of the music industry can and will find new ways to make up for the losses.

My theory is that live performance remains that vestige of potential surplus value. Hence, the existing political economy research on popular music and its focus on peer-to-peer file sharing, combined with recent shifts by artists and the Ticketmaster-Live Nation merger point towards live performance as a field for future research. My method for adding my own contribution to the theorization of live performance through political economy requires a more robust examination of the history of anti-trust law, the existing legal precedents in place regarding live performance or that may have a bearing on live performance and, if it happens, an examination of any upcoming challenges the Live Nation-Ticketmaster corporation faces from the recent mergers. This topic is dynamic, timely and requires attention, and a critical analysis of the topic through political economy's institutional analysis provides one of the stronger methodological entry points for further knowledge production.

In addition to conducting a critical analysis through the lens of political economy, I provide a number of prescriptive or pragmatic means by which musicians, consumers, citizens and those unhappy with the current structure of the live performance industries. The legal precedent that led to the dismissal of Pearl Jam's case, when combined with recent horizontal and vertical integration within the live performance industry, may now serve as the crucial wedge that artists could use to launch a new anti-trust complaint.

As previously mentioned, there are a limited number of political economy

researchers looking at popular music, with fewer still that focus specifically on rock. As such, my method remains closest to the work of Robert McChesney and Ben Bagdikian, who not only provide us as researchers with an excellent history of patterns of media ownership, but perform a critical analysis of the problems these ownership patterns create for facilitating democratic action. Further, they both push further than mere analyses alone and through their research find meaningful ways to provide citizens and organizations with options to promote change if they are unhappy with the current distribution of media ownership. The case I make in my research, working along the theoretical lines of both McChesney and Bagdikian, is that increased media concentration and ownership in the live musical performance industry poses a challenge to democracy and civic engagement, and if so, how does this barrier operate? Eileen Meehan's work on television (2005), outside of just broadcast news, provides one such avenue to justify my hypothesis.

Secondly, I incorporate cultural studies into my larger methodological approach to live performance. In contrast to political economy, which focuses on the circulation and production of goods and services, cultural studies (very loosely defined) focuses on the circulation and production of meaning(s), and for my project, those meanings that surround the live performance of rock music (Grossberg, 1997, p. 182-183). This methodology (though cultural studies scholars will object to me labeling it a methodology at all), allows me as researcher to investigate how artists and audiences participate in the mythology of live musical performance. One of the advantages this methodology allows

that political economy does not fully address is the role of audiences, though this is not to suggest that audiences are not a consideration in political economy studies of rock music. Instead, this methodology allows for a consideration of what *meanings* audiences attribute to live rock performance, how they judge it and by what criteria, all of which are in flux and negotiated.

It is within cultural studies that one finds the majority of research concerning rock music, and several, albeit limited examples of research attending to live rock performance. At the heart of much of the work on rock music that pertains to my project is the discourse surrounding authenticity and its role in constituting what Larry Grossberg has referred to as the rock formation, or the culture of rock. Authenticity, within cultural studies, has nothing to do with any essentialized features of the music itself but rests on value judgments made by fans and critics, framed by considerations of musical genre, that determine what is and what is not meaningful for them. Within rock culture, authenticity has long been the means by which critics and audiences find themselves able to label groups as rock, as opposed to pop, which has been cast as inauthentic. The relationship between this and live performance, the object of my research, is a crucial one. Live performance by musicians has often been the means by which audiences make judgments about artists' relative authenticity, based on their ability (or lack thereof) to "cut it" live. For Larry Grossberg, (1992) live performance constitutes a field in which the problems of post-modern nihilism can be replaced with something meaningful and in which we can and should *affectively* invest ourselves, though this is

largely through what he calls authentic inauthenticity and its various subcategories. For Philip Auslander (1999), live performance serves as the means to authenticate the music video, which in turn can serve to authenticate rock musicians.

My use of cultural studies to research live performance serves to answer the second and related set of my research questions, those surrounding authenticity and protest music within rock. How do value judgments within rock about authenticity impede, complicate, or assist rock artists who choose to combine their music with political protest? Why do some artists face a backlash when they combine music and politics while others do not and does this issue shape constructions of authenticity, or do relative perceptions of artists' authenticity shape the ways in which their political messages are received and in turn, interpreted? These issues and my research questions rest on the cultural studies theory of articulation (Grossberg, 1997, p. 182-183), in which things/ideas appear to be naturally linked but are not, instead, they merely fit together better than other combinations due to ideological and structural constraints, such that they appear to be linked naturally. Articulation aims to de-naturalize those couplings and uncover why and under what conditions or what prerequisites particular articulations come to be naturalized, while acknowledging that these concepts/objects may be articulated differently and to different objects/concepts given changing ideological and structural shifts. Larry Grossberg (1992) argues that the link between traditional definitions of authenticity and rock music/rock culture is less meaningful now than it once

was, suggesting a de-coupling or de-articulation of these concepts, due in part to neoliberalism, the aging of the Baby Boomer rock generation and post-modernity. It is, as I have previously stated, authentic inauthenticity that has largely taken the place of authenticity. Philip Auslander (1992) makes a similar but less hard-edged argument on the current articulation between rock culture and authenticity as it pertains to live performance, adopting Grossberg's concept of authentic inauthenticity but emphasizing the visual as well as the aural elements found in live performance.

There are a number of problems with both of these works when utilizing the theories they espouse. Grossberg's analysis is problematic particularly because he discounts the visual elements of live performance in making value judgments about which artists are authentic or inauthentic. The visual remains a crucial consideration for my own research when examining the implications for protest music, given that actions of protest by artists may render them authentic or inauthentic yet remain explicitly political and uniquely visual in nature. Grossberg's dismissal of the visual is a critique Auslander makes in his own work. Philip Auslander, on the other hand, places a great deal of emphasis on the music video as the role of authenticity mediator between the band, the record, and the live performance. While his emphasis may hold up to criticism given an examination of other genres, arguably the role of music video in rock is not what it once was with the current state of both MTV and VH1 and their move away from music video.

## **A Case Study of Ticketmaster and the Industry of Live Musical Performance**

In 1996, I managed to get tickets through Ticketmaster to see my first Pearl Jam show in Toronto. Sure, the seats were not great, but I was not complaining, particularly since my ticket only cost \$25, plus a \$2.50 service charge, and all the seats in the arena cost the same. Not bad, I thought, particularly in light of what I had read about the band's struggles with Ticketmaster in the recent past. Somehow, Ticketmaster Canada had managed to agree to what Ticketmaster in the U.S. would not. Clearly, it was possible for the ticketing giant to keep their service charges at 10% of the face value price for tickets, despite Ticketmaster's arguments to the contrary.

In light of the contradictions between Ticketmaster's actions and statements, this chapter outlines the antitrust complaint launched by Pearl Jam in 1994 to illuminate the laws and loopholes present in antitrust law and the Ticketmaster. These legal grey areas may serve as inroads to subverting the increasing concentration of ownership in the market of live music performance. I also demonstrate the limits of utilizing political economy and cultural studies approach to solving the issue of increasingly limited options for concertgoers to purchase tickets. A joint methodological approach is necessary in this case. I also analyze and propose a set of solutions to the monopolization of the ticket distribution industry for a number of agents, including fans and the musicians involved in the business of touring.

While cultural studies scholars and those working within the paradigm of

political economy have traded theoretical barbs in academic journals for some time, the March 1995 colloquy series in the journal *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* brought much of this conflict to the forefront of the field of communication in spiteful and unproductive ways. In reviewing this debate, I use the arguments of all scholars involved and place them in relationship to the study of live musical performance. In doing so, I illustrate the limits of each approach for opening up avenues for audiences and artists to productively work around the existing corporate and legal apparatus for the purposes of resistance, subversion and ideally, meaningful change.

Nicholas Garnham (1995) forcefully argues that the practice of cultural studies lacks an adequate analysis of class and power. He posits the question of whether cultural studies simultaneously chastises political economy approaches to communication for being too economicist or variants of economic determinism, yet lists a few examples from prominent cultural studies scholars' work, including John Fiske and Larry Grossberg, that has a prominent air of economism therein (p. 64). He suggests that cultural studies refuses to "think through the implications of its own claim that the forms of subordination and their attendant cultural practices...are grounded within a capitalist mode of production (Ibid.). The problem then is that the focus is on cultural consumption rather than cultural production within capitalism, exaggerating, according to Garnham, the ability for individuals and groups to resist prevailing ideological modes and find meaningful ways to carve out spaces for their existence and survival (p. 65). He finds a dearth of research that examines cultural producers



and the exercise of power by these agents (Ibid.). In defense of political economy, Garnham argues that human actions do coordinate with the prevailing ideological mode because it is in their general interest (p. 66).

This is a different argument than that made against political economy by some cultural studies scholars, in that the cultural studies camp promotes the idea that predetermined courses of action or predetermined courses of actions are circumscribed on human agents by the mode of production (Ibid.). Further, Garnham laments that political economy antagonists chastise the approach for its lack of reliance on a functionalist perspective (Ibid.). Lastly, Garnham makes an important distinction he sees lacking in cultural studies between cultural practices that are largely irrelevant to the mode of production, those more appropriately deemed coping mechanisms and on the other end of the spectrum, those cultural practices that actively resist capitalism (p. 66, 69).

How can we account for Garnham's criticisms and insights in studying responses to capitalism and the media monopoly's structuring of live musical performance? The distinction between resistance and coping mechanisms serves as useful point of departure. With live musical performance, the unit of analysis for finding and interpreting cultural practices contrary to the prevailing mode of production primarily remain the performer and the audience. While the numerical balance between these groups is weighted towards higher numbers of audience members, numbers alone obviously do not necessarily translate into potential results once cultural and economic power become important considerations. Economically and culturally, performers have the potential for

considerably more cultural and economic power at their disposal to challenge ideological modes they find abhorrent or problematic, and yet, simultaneously, they are perhaps even more contained in a structural sense by the media monopoly itself, wedged between audiences on one hand and increasingly conglomerated music labels. These dual considerations for performers extend beyond the physical recording process itself, hence why I have chosen to examine the field of live performance. The ever-narrowing network of music labels, combined with synergistic control and ownership over the means of ticket distribution, limits points of access to venues and promotion agencies.

### **Pearl Jam vs. Ticketmaster: The Antitrust Complaint**

The most prominent example of artists challenging the way in which tickets for shows are distributed is arguably the anti-trust complaint brought by Pearl Jam, claiming that Ticketmaster's dominance of the ticket distribution system in the early 1990s was a monopoly. Through an examination of the actual hearing on the issue, I hope to illuminate the issues Pearl Jam felt were problematic and the rebuttal Ticketmaster provided, along with highlighting some of the problems with the hearing itself and the unexpected problems with the touring business that came to light in the process.

In the summer of 1994, the Information, Justice, Transportation, and Agriculture Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations convened to discuss an anti-trust complaint brought against Ticketmaster by Pearl Jam (*Pearl Jam's Anti Trust Complaint: Questions about Concert, Sports,*

*and Theater Ticket Handling Charges and Other Practices*, 1994, p. 1). The opening statement by Chairman Gary Condit illustrates some of the back-story leading to Pearl Jam's complaint. In 1991, the Antitrust Division of the Justice Department let Ticketmaster purchase its leading competition at the time, Ticketron, and ruled that the purchase did not violate antitrust legislation in place (*Ibid.*). Interestingly, the merger took place a few years before Pearl Jam's formal complaint, but the band would illustrate in their statement and testimony that their problems with the newly enlarged Ticketmaster began soon after their acquisition of Ticketron.

In the statement prepared by Pearl Jam, the band details several examples of their battles with Ticketmaster during their attempts to tour after the huge success of their first album, *Ten*. The first incident was in 1992, when Pearl Jam scheduled a free show in Seattle paid in full by the band. For security reasons, the promoters limited attendance and tickets distributed through an agent such as Ticketmaster, who refused to distribute the free tickets without demanding a \$1.50 service charge, resulting in the band contracting instead with the city of Seattle as an alternative (p. 15-16). Another show in Seattle, with some of the proceeds going to charity, was affected by Ticketmaster, in that Ticketmaster reneged on an agreement with Pearl Jam to donate \$1 of the agreed-upon service fee of \$3.25, plus an additional charity contribution by Ticketmaster such that the total donation would reach \$20,000, an amount the band would match (*Ibid.*). After this show, the band's statement indicates that they noticed an increasingly hostile and aggressive approach by

Ticketmaster when attempting to work with them. Additional arrangements for lower service fees were met with resistance, and Pearl Jam decided to try to distribute tickets without using Ticketmaster. An effort to use the Pearl Jam fan club as a means of ticket distribution for a show in Detroit and the Paramount Box office in New York failed when Ticketmaster served both venues with threats of legal action for potentially violating their exclusive ticketing arrangements with both of these venues (p. 17-18). Perhaps the most troubling allegation by Pearl Jam against Ticketmaster was that Pearl Jam's agent in charge of managing concert/tour arrangements received a message from Ticketmaster that "he'd had better watch himself and that if [Pearl Jam] didn't back off he would be run out of the business" (p. 18). They sum up their complaint with Ticketmaster as a difference of business philosophy, and suggest that if they cannot work with Ticketmaster, they should be able to work with someone else. They claimed, however, to be unable to pursue an alternative ticket distribution company given the market dominance of Ticketmaster (p. 20-21).

The situations that led to Pearl Jam's antitrust complaint were the problems and eventual cancellation of their 1994 tour. During testimony by both Jeff Ament and Stone Gossard of Pearl Jam, the band members revealed that their desire was to be able to offer tickets that cost the consumer no more than \$20, total, including any service fees, as they had, according to Ament, actually lost money touring over the last several years (p. 28). A base price of \$18 dollars, according to the band members, represented the minimum base

price they could charge in order to break even or make a limited amount of money per show. In order to keep the total price of the tickets under \$20, Ticketmaster would have to honor their request for a service charge of no more than 10% of the base price. Ticketmaster was unwilling to agree to this request, and Pearl Jam argued that because of their market dominance, they were unable to successfully find an alternative ticket distributor or another means to sell tickets to potential concert goers that would grant their wishes to both break even/make a small profit touring and keep the ticket prices at no more than \$20. The bulk of their complaint is that few alternatives, if any, exist because of exclusive ticket distribution deals Ticketmaster secured with many potential venues. The issue is less about whether or not Ticketmaster has an obligation to honor all requests from bands regarding their service fees, but rather that if bands do not like what Ticketmaster has to offer, there should be a number of other competitors to which the bands can turn for more competitive touring and ticket distribution arrangements.

When dealing with Ticketmaster, Schiller's (2008) points prove insightful. First, that the industries of promotion and advertising upcoming musical performances have changed to include fewer promoters/players in the game, and have diversified their ability and strategies to attract larger audiences through a multi-method approach to promotion: the web, television ads, radio ads, and the classic poster ad promoting an upcoming show. Further, the decreasing number of outlets for self-promotion and the full apparatus of touring suffer from increased conglomeration.

Another concern, which almost goes unnoticed during the entire hearing, is the point raised by Stone Gossard on the concerns the band has with booking shows at venues without exclusive ticketing arrangements with Ticketmaster: the challenge of security. He explains this as one of the reasons for their canceling of their summer tour:

We didn't feel like we could coordinate—because of our dispute with Ticketmaster and feeling really the only way we could tour was to sort of go outside and try to do it on our own, given the amount of time we had and our feelings about security and whether we could actually put on a safe show consistently in these sort of—we would be in outdoor venues probably in fields and stuff, we just felt that it wasn't appropriate and we should deal with this issue first and focus on recording music. (p. 28)

This concern with the link between security, open fields as concert venues, and their appropriateness as alternatives to Ticketmaster-only venues would tragically bear itself out in 2000, when nine fans died at an open field festival during Pearl Jam's set. Since then, Pearl Jam have rarely performed at open-field venues, and have taken to placing seats in the general admission areas near the stage that would normally be left unseated and potentially dangerous.

During the hearing, the Department of Justice allowed Ticketmaster and its representatives the chance to respond to the allegations that they constituted a monopoly of the ticket distribution system and had exclusive contracts with the majority of venues in major cities. Fred Rosen, CEO of Ticketmaster at the time

of the hearings, spoke on behalf of the ticket distributor to suggest that not only were they one of several competitors in the ticket distribution industry, they had been turned down by venues to serve as the means of ticket distribution, presumably because alternative distributors were more competitive or offered something Ticketmaster was unable to provide (p. 121). Further, Rosen later furnished a report on the fifty largest cities and potential markets in the U.S. and whether or not Ticketmaster had an exclusive distribution arrangement with these venues (p. 128-134). The information contained in the list does demonstrate, at least on paper, that at the time of this hearing, there were several major arenas in the largest fifty markets that had no exclusive arrangement for ticket distribution. As such, while Ticketmaster may constitute a large portion of the market, there were venues without these exclusive arrangements with Ticketmaster for ticket distribution.

Secondly, Rosen argued that Ticketmaster would lose money if they had agreed to Pearl Jam's requests for a 10% service charge on an \$18 ticket price and as such declined to agree to distribute tickets for the band's proposed tour. Rosen also suggested that Pearl Jam could meet their goal of a \$20 limit for ticket prices desired by Pearl Jam by dropping the base ticket price to \$17.50 or \$17.75, with service charges in the range of \$2.25-\$2.50 per ticket. Given that Pearl Jam argued that \$18 was the minimum base price they could set to break even or not lose money as they had on previous tours, this was a clear impasse for both Ticketmaster and Pearl Jam in terms of a working relationship. Lastly, Rosen provides a list of a number of companies considered Ticketmaster

competition, including ProTix, The Home Shopping Network, Art Soft, Laser Gate Prologue Select, SofTix and Sun Micro Systems amongst others (p. 120).

After several months of testimony on both sides, the Department of Justice decided to drop the investigation/complaint against Ticketmaster and issued the following statement:

It is the Plaintiffs['] own allegations in the Complaint which show that they are not best suited to bring this claim against Ticketmaster. If a violation has occurred, the appropriate party is a venue or class of venues and promoters who are the ones who "consume" Ticketmaster's product; they are the ones who would suffer any direct loss if there is uncompetitive pricing in the fee contracts due to Ticketmaster's alleged monopoly power. (*Brief for the United States and the Federal Trade Commission as Amici Curiae: Alex Campos, et al. v. Ticketmaster Corporation, 1998*)

In essence, the law considers venues and promoters to be Ticketmaster's consumers, rather than the audiences. I have included a diagram of the actors and relationships involved in realizing a concert at a particular venue, included as part of the official statement by Bertis Downs, the attorney for R.E.M., in support of Pearl Jam's action against Ticketmaster:



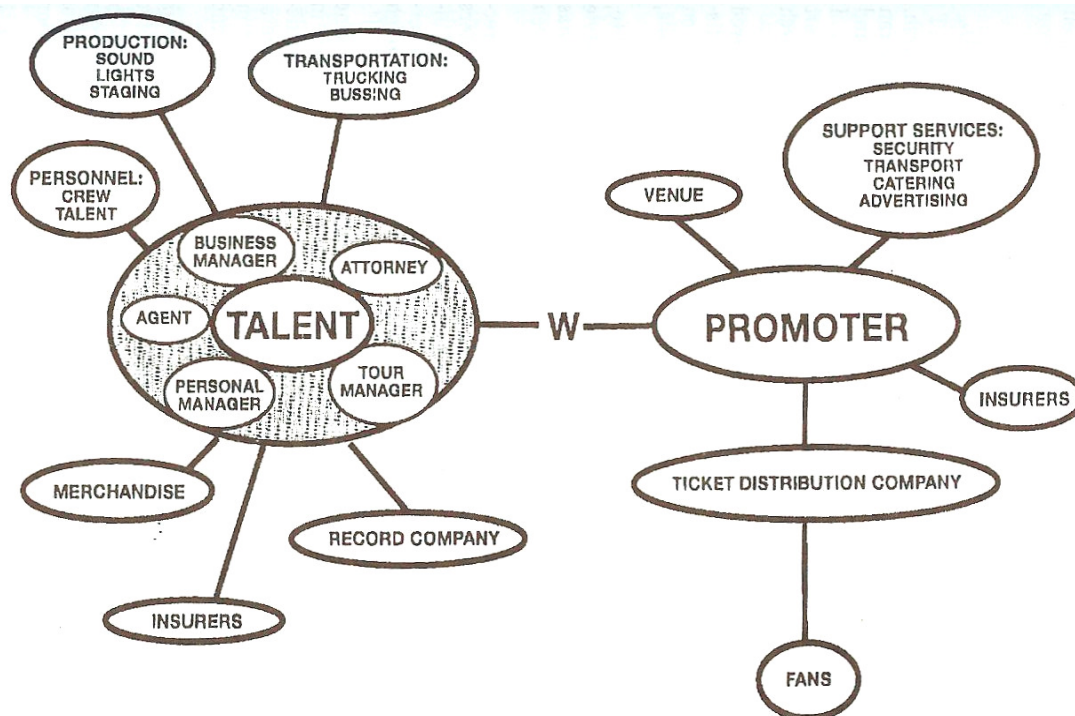


Figure 1: *Anatomy of a Concert Deal*

Note: (1994) *Pearl Jam's Antitrust Complaint: Questions about Concert, Sports, and Theater Ticket Handling Charges and Other Practices: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Information, Justice, Transportation, and Agriculture of the House Committee on Government Operations, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., p. 65.*

This diagram illustrates the problematic but legally legitimate argument resulting in the dismissal of Pearl Jam's anti-trust complaint against Ticketmaster because they were not the appropriate plaintiff to bring up the issue. If promoters and venues are the ones who should be challenging Ticketmaster, this ruling may be a factor in what might be the next Ticketmaster anti-trust complaint currently in the works, albeit in its infancy.

Pearl Jam did not tour that summer and Pearl Jam continued to try to explore other means for ticket distribution, with limited success and an increasing amount of fan resentment for planned and canceled tours-- the

difficulty and confusion in obtaining tickets through the Pearl Jam fan club and other unconventional means proved frustrating for both fans and the band.

### **Ticketmaster, Circa 2011**

Fast forward more than a decade later: Ticketmaster, still the largest ticket distributor, and Live Nation, a spinoff of Clear Channel and the largest concert promoter, merged in 2010, fostering rumors of yet another antitrust complaint (Duke, 2009). As Matt Rosoff illustrates,

Why is this important? Because the combined companies are, in my opinion, dangerously close to building a *vertical monopoly*. The new company, Live Nation Entertainment, will *own concert venues, the ticketing system for those venues, and exclusive rights to certain major acts that play those venues*. In other words, if you thought concert prices were high now, just wait a couple years.

Some background, if you haven't been following along: Live Nation was spun off from radio-advertising giant Clear Channel back in 2005. Its main business at that time was concert *promotion and ownership of concert venues--particularly large amphitheaters*. (2009, emphasis is my own)

What remains particularly troublesome about this merger, beyond the charges that this new company constitutes a monopoly is that Ticketmaster had already entered into the secondary-sales market—in effect, the legal scalping of

tickets for prices often astronomically inflated compared to the original printed price, through Ticketsnow.com, owned by Ticketmaster. Greg Kot discusses the details of the Ticketsnow.com/Ticketmaster relationship and the complaints by musicians about the ethics and legality of such an arrangement:

News of the merger has already set off alarm bells in some prominent corners. Connecticut Atty. Gen. Richard Blumenthal and U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.) are among officials calling for investigations and hearings into the merger. Pascrell denounced Ticketmaster for funneling fans seeking to buy Bruce Springsteen concert tickets to Ticketsnow.com, a company owned by Ticketmaster that sells concert tickets significantly above face value. Springsteen himself called the Ticketmaster redirection of his tickets “a pure conflict of interest.” (2009)

The situation with Bruce Springsteen ticket sales is alarming, to put it mildly. In essence, fans eager to buy tickets to Springsteen shows found that many of the shows sold out quickly, according to the Ticketmaster website. These fans were then given the option of purchasing tickets through Ticketsnow.com for prices well above what they would have paid through the main Ticketmaster website. Ticketmaster claimed tickets were unavailable or sold out, and then redirected fans to a site also owned by Ticketmaster that mysteriously had tickets available, but for inflated prices (Satariano & Bensinger, 2009). Were these shows actually sold out or were these fans being tricked into paying more for seats that were not actually sold out?

Mosco's (1996) concept of spatialization proves useful in this analysis. Echoing Schiller's concepts of conglomeration and convergence, Mosco's work on spatialization accurately describes both Ticketmaster during the anti-trust hearing years but especially that corporate body that would result from the Live Nation merger, illustrating examples of Mosco's understanding of synergy (p. 192), as well as his theorization of vertical and horizontal integration within media conglomerates. The effects of this merger are apparent even at the local level. Using the Chicago market as a case study, the merger of Ticketmaster and Live Nation directly threatens local promoters, effectively edging out even more competition:

[Live Nation boss Michael] Rapino also argued that competition is alive and well. He cited the example of Chicago, claiming that Live Nation only promotes 16 percent of the concerts here versus 29 percent promoted by Jam. Nationally, he said, Live Nation only controls 38 percent of the concert business.

[Jerry Mickelson of Chicago-based Jam Productions] fired back with numbers of his own, noting that in 2001, Live Nation controlled 161 of the top 200 concert tours. Jam may promote more club and theater shows, Mickelson granted, but Live Nation dominates the larger and much more lucrative arena and amphitheater concerts.

"U2 doesn't call us. Shakira doesn't call us. Coldplay doesn't call

us," Mickelson said, adding that the situation will only get worse if the merger is approved. He called it "vertical integration on steroids" and called the giant corporation "the poster child for why the country has and needs antitrust laws." (DeRogatis, 2009)

As it stands, Ticketmaster has stated that it will stop redirecting potential ticket buyers to the Ticketsnow.com website (Satariano & Bensinger, 2009). Nevertheless, Ticketmaster, as it currently stands, owns not only the largest ticket distribution system, but also the largest promoter of shows and many concert venues as well. This is a marked change from the already problematic arrangement Pearl Jam challenged in 1994. This time, however, the precedent set by the grounds for the previous dismissal of the antitrust complaint may actually work to the advantage of those who might challenge the newly merged Ticketmaster/Live Nation behemoth. This dynamic is further complicated by Dallas Smythe's (1981) theories of the audience as commodity, in that this merger further facilitates the ability for media institutions to link advertisers and audiences, allowing the unpaid economic and cultural labor of audiences to continue in the context of this highly corporatized and exploitative environment.

### **What Can We Do?**

*Money for Nothing* (2001), a documentary produced by the Media Education Foundation, outlined several potential solutions to the larger problems within the music industry. The documentary outlines the structural

constraints faced by musicians who succeed in garnering record contracts. In sum, the documentary illustrates how musicians take home such a small percentage of the gross profits their music generates and focuses on the problematic relationship between musicians and record labels. Not only are there fewer and fewer major record labels who have the resources to offer contracts to artists, but these record labels obviously do not operate for the purpose of dispensing music that is representative of the public and in the public interest. Robert McChesney, in the aforementioned documentary, comments on music's important role in social movements and as one of several voices of "the people." Yet, there is little that is democratic in the operation of the music industry. The result is that what reaches the larger public is not mirroring the public's musical choices, but major labels themselves shape and limit tastes. Some artists receive extensive promotion and accrue substantial financial success and status, whereas other artists face battles to create the music they want to create in fear that record labels will hesitate or refuse to release or promote such recordings adequately. In essence, the record labels serve as a filtering device that both demands at least a few mega-stars and serves as the means to generate this level of stardom.

What solutions to this problem does *Money for Nothing* provide for artists and fans? Several key points emerge though the documentary provides a limited number of viable solutions for the monopoly of ticket sales outside of policy changes and legal challenges. Through an examination of these suggestions, I hope to add on to the existing, workable solutions, and illuminate

the challenges other proposed solutions offer for artists and consumers. Additionally, I illustrate the problem that exists when we ask fans to make economically moral decisions on supporting certain musicians over others when personal preferences remain a central driving motive. First, *Money for Nothing* serves to de-naturalize the structure that has led to the limited number of record labels, the relationship between artists and these labels. There is nothing essential in music itself, or even consumer culture, that has created this particular arrangement; hence, it can and presumably should change. They suggest that consumers can have a role in making changes by increasing their knowledge of how the system works and the ways in which they consume the products of musicians, including live performances, the producers of the documentary believe that the system will change in response to consumer changes.

While I agree that increasing public knowledge of the music industry's policies and the undemocratic way in which they operate is necessary, I fail to see how consumers can find ways to resist the current arrangement of the music industry when it comes specifically to live performance. Granted, the use of peer-to-peer file sharing has elicited a huge reaction from the record labels (albeit delayed and perhaps inappropriate/unsuitable) but when we turn to live musical performance, how can consumers access these performances without actually going through the existing and limited channels to purchase tickets? If consumers have a problem with the monopoly system of ticket distribution, one obvious but ineffective solution appears for them to refuse to attend concerts

where they are required to purchase tickets through Ticketmaster. Who really suffers directly because of this course of action? Further, how realistic is this choice? Even small venues often deal with Ticketmaster for the sale of their tickets (though this is not always the case).

This relates directly to another solution proposed in the documentary: consumers choose to support artists and labels who operate with a different mentality towards live performance and attempt to find the means to work around the restrictions in place. While I support the promotion of local artists who are able to perform in venues outside of the grasp of Ticketmaster, and encourage consumers to seek out local and independent artists whose politics towards the music industry and the ticketing/touring industry challenge prevailing structural norms, it remains the case that many musicians that consumers want to see live can and do perform in large venues that have exclusive arrangements with Ticketmaster for selling seats.

The implicit argument made by the Media Education Foundation is that while consumers should “vote with their dollars” and support local acts playing at non-Ticketmaster venues, they should avoid paying for shows and artists choosing to use Ticketmaster to promote and distribute their tours/tickets. This is a problematic line of reasoning for the documentary to suggest implicitly. For starters, live performance remains one of the few reliable sources of revenue for artists given the popularity of peer-to-peer file sharing. Musicians, already earning limited revenue from the sales of CDs and authorized digital distribution of their work, face the fact that the peer-to-peer file sharing system has the



potential to cut dramatically into their incomes. What I am not suggesting here is the tired argument that file sharing is killing the music industry, but I do argue that it is changing it in uneven inconsistent ways, with some artists benefiting from the increased exposure file sharing creates and others losing a once-steady source of the majority of their music-related income. Live performance and ticket sales, including all the associated industries such as merchandising, remain a more reliable and peer-to-peer-shielded means to generate income.

Additionally, this implicit argument for a boycott of artists and concerts accessible only through Ticketmaster not only penalizes artists whose sources of revenue through music sales are drying up, but wrongly places some of the blame on the artists themselves for working with Ticketmaster. It ignores the fact that some artists must tour extensively and in large venues as part of their contract obligations, and in many cases to make up for the initial debt some artists take on when signing onto a record label. There are, of course, cases in which it is safe to say that the prices for tickets are outrageous in spite of the fact that they are being distributed by Ticketmaster and that there are artists who set the base price of their tickets astronomically high. The recent success of the Police reunion tour is an example of this. Knowing the consumer demand for decades for a Police reunion, tickets were incredibly expensive, even for bad seats. Put simply, some artists want to make a lot of money.

This is not the case for all artists, however, and suggesting a boycott of artists who use the Ticketmaster system paints all artists with this same brush—as greedy individuals/groups who know that people will pay whatever it takes to

see these artists live. When it comes to commercially successful acts, one option would be for them to downsize the venues in which they choose to perform, aiming for those venues that do not have exclusive ticket distribution deals with Ticketmaster. This may result in a number of problems, such as fan resentment for not being able to see the band with fewer seats available per show. Further, the scalping of tickets may receive a boost and given the limited availability and increased demand for tickets, fans may resort to purchasing scalped tickets at prices that would make even Ticketmaster blush.

This is also an example of the sort of overestimation that cultural studies applies to audiences in terms of their ability to resist and/or cope with the existing mode of production. By suggesting that individual consumers can demand, through educated choices, what system of ticket distribution is acceptable and fair, this suggestion assumes that these choices are enough to overcome the barriers put in place by synergistic business models, cross-promotional operations and exclusive access arrangements is overly optimistic.

Further, there is, within this line of argument, a problematic implication of the idea of false consciousness. False consciousness in and of itself is a problematic term for both political economy scholars and cultural studies scholars. In simple terms, Garnham (1995) argues that recognizing the existence of false consciousness is essential to productive work in cultural studies, particularly its educational role (p. 68), while Larry Grossberg (1995) argues,

Cultural studies refuses to assume that people are cultural dupes,

that they are entirely and passively manipulated, either by the media or by capitalism. But it does not deny that they are sometimes duped, that they are sometimes lied to (and believe the lies, sometimes knowing that they are lies). (p. 76)

The argument here is that in illuminating the undemocratic means by which popular music is produced and performed, that consumers will make politically informed choices about the music they enjoy and financially support. While a successful and widespread project to promote this particular form of media literacy may ripple over into shifting musical tastes amongst consumers, particularly through the exposure to artists not currently receiving massive promotion for tours, the issue obscures the matter of individual musical preference. I recognize and acknowledge the ability for big media to shape tastes in popular music, rather than reflect existing musical tastes, but asking consumers to reject artists they enjoy on the basis that they work with Ticketmaster (often something the artists themselves dislike) and change their tastes to reflect artists who work outside the Ticketmaster monopoly is ludicrous. As Wilfred Dolfsma (2004) points out,

What people value or prefer is not something they decide on in a vacuum. People are shaped and molded by their environment. On the other hand, the social environment does not strictly determine people's behavior either. They can decide which group(s) of people they want to belong to, and can to some extent change the actions of these group(s)... Institutions express socio-cultural

values. These values can, however, be expressed in different ways, and often institutions change without the socio-cultural values changing in concord. At some point, however, tensions are likely to arise, inducing institutional change. (p. 135)

Dolfsma advocates a dialectical approach to culture and cultural institutions and consumers in this work. Returning to the issue of musical preferences or tastes, his position suggests a fair degree of free will, albeit constrained by the ideological and economic environment in which we find ourselves. What remains important and relevant in his argument to take away is the need for an increased number of options in all avenues such that what we understand as the territory of free will also opens up in tandem. His sociological approach to values and preferences within the music industry carves out the notion of a spectrum of behaviors ranging from free will to institutionally determined choices and preferences, eliminating the problematic binary these concepts invoke.

Given this predicament, what can be done to assist in promoting a fair system of ticket distribution? *Money for Nothing* highlights the role independent labels have in both promoting music that may otherwise be deemed non-commercially viable and suggest that they use a different economic operating model. While I am skeptical of the latter, independent labels do have the ability to take a stance against monopolies such as Ticketmaster. I propose that more well-developed/well-established artists create their own record labels. The cultural capital these already well-known acts, combined with the formality of an

independent label, may allow for more bargaining power with agents such as Ticketmaster. Further, the owners of these labels can take it upon themselves to educate new talent in the business of the dominant music industry and the pitfalls it can create for artists when it comes to both recording and touring.

Second, fans and rock journalists may need to reject the idea of mega-stardom when it comes to musicians as the benchmark of success. The major labels depend on blockbuster sales by a few artists to stay in the black with artists who are signed to the same label but less profitable. Mega-stardom, while also the product of the audience, is shaped by the major labels to allow them to continue to operate. These mega-stars, such as Madonna, U2, Britney Spears, and others, are unable to perform in small venues that may operate outside of the grasp of Ticketmaster. Not only is the problem one of fan resentment and ticket scalping, as I have previously mentioned, but security and safety may also become factors if such large artists attempt to perform in smaller venues. One approach for stars who would normally perform in large arenas would be to set up several back to back dates at smaller, independent venues in the same city to approximate the number of fans able to see the band if they were instead performing at a five or ten thousand seat arena. This is something that needs to be sufficiently tested to see if it is possible for the larger artists as if they are in fact able to perform without incident at smaller venues; their cultural capital as mega-stars may be enough to persuade Ticketmaster to cooperate with them in the future by lowering the processing fees tacked on to the base ticket price. The model of moderate success needs

to be the standard for independent labels from this point onwards to find the cracks in Ticketmaster's overwhelming control of ticket distribution. There is a larger issue within this argument, something that Ray Pratt (1990) notes, in that larger and larger audiences lose their potential for counter-hegemonic resistance due to their sheer size. While Pratt focuses on large music festivals, I argue the same applies to large touring acts. It becomes increasingly difficult, according to Pratt, for larger and larger audiences to read and act on the messages and goals of artists working to change the dynamic of touring (p.11). Moreover, this becomes a central concern when those touring musicians are explicitly political in addition to providing for large and lucrative touring opportunities.

Perhaps the most useful solution, as I alluded to above, lies in using the precedents set by the Pearl Jam antitrust complaint. In essence, the dismissal of the complaint lied in the fact that Pearl Jam were deemed to not be the appropriate plaintiffs in an antitrust complaint, and instead any antitrust action should be launched by the venues and promoters themselves against Ticketmaster. I refer back to Figure 1, which illustrates the relationship between all the parties necessary to secure a concert contract. With Ticketmaster now owning the largest promoter and as a result, many of the venues acquired by Live Nation, the vertical integration may in fact provide the legal advantage for a successful antitrust complaint by fans or artists. The parties once considered the only legitimate plaintiffs to challenge Ticketmaster are now *part of* Ticketmaster/Live Nation, collapsing the number of agents and parties into one

large entity. A successful challenge will have to demonstrate how the new system renders fans and artists the actual consumers of tickets, and hence the legitimate parties to pursue an antitrust complaint.

## **Conclusion**

I have illustrated, through the case study of Ticketmaster, the legal challenges regarding its potential status as a monopoly, and an examination of the ways in which musicians and audiences can challenge Ticketmaster/Live Nation with the means available. Additionally, I have outlined the limits of both political economy and cultural studies approaches to the issue when used alone, while demonstrating how consumers and musicians may be able to use strategies from both methodologies to challenge the prominence of Ticketmaster and its increasingly prominent face in live music performance. With the locus of financial activity moving from the sales of music to live performance, the importance of this issue continues to increase and both artists and fans must remain vigilant in monitoring and finding ways to keep ticket prices at levels that make them accessible to more than just the wealthy. To return to McChesney's point in *Money for Nothing*, popular music should continue to represent one of several voices for the public, and to remain accessible in the live arena for the public to consume.

### **“Let the Song Protest:” Pearl Jam's Political Turn**

Maintaining a commercially successful band for almost two decades is no small feat, given shifting audience tastes and genre preferences on radio and television. This challenge becomes even more difficult when you face criticism for speaking out against a controversial president and controversial war. This is the reality faced by Pearl Jam, the Seattle band composed of Eddie Vedder, Stone Gossard, Mike McCready, Jeff Ament, Boom Gaspar, and a rotating series of drummers. After releasing their first album in 1991, Pearl Jam was one of a small but prominent group of musicians to speak out actively against the Bush administration and the Iraq War during a time when doing so could and did lead to charges of being unpatriotic, hypocritical, and even treason. As such, the band serves as a useful case study into contemporary American protest music. Additionally, the longevity of their career allows for a careful examination of how their protest efforts have changed (or alternatively, have not changed) in relation to various political and social triggering issues and events.

This chapter will attempt to answer the following questions: What historical tropes or recurring themes of protest music do Pearl Jam draw upon when engaging in their own protest actions? How has the nature of Pearl Jam's protest efforts changed over the last eight years of their musical career? What is the relationship between Pearl Jam and live shows when performing as political rock artists?



I aim to expand upon the existing, but limited academic literature on contemporary protest music. At the heart of these questions is a concern with the “music of politics,” which is relatively under-theorized and does not receive the same sort of academic attention as the “politics of music.” The former, which I attempt to address with this project, represents musicians engaging directly, through song or activities, political causes, parties, candidates and/or concerns. The latter generally looks at the political decisions behind the business of music, including considerations of genre and economics, and how communities use music to reinforce and redefine themselves. I do not wish to draw a clear line between the two, as from this brief description alone it seems clear that they are related and one may feed into consequences for the other. The importance of this project rests upon establishing the role of protest music in fostering deliberative democracy. Amy Gutmann (2004) provides the purpose of deliberative democracy, and this project will demonstrate Pearl Jam's commitment to the concept of deliberative democracy with music as a conduit to achieve this end. Gutmann suggests that the purpose of deliberative democracy is to promote the “most justifiable conception for dealing with moral disagreement in politics” (p. 10). This is especially important given the relative power difference between performers and their audiences. I will add that for Pearl Jam, the act of protest is a good in itself, and while the ends matter, the process is what remains crucially important and central for protest artists.

## **Background**

I have limited the scope of this project to the four years between 2000 and 2004 in Pearl Jam's career, not because their commitment to socio-political causes and events commenced in 2000, but because there was a palpable shift in the kinds of socio-political causes they endorsed.

Prior to 2000, Pearl Jam was very active in a number of causes (and continue to endorse them). Rock for Choice, an organization committed to securing the right to abortion and the means to achieve it got a very high profile endorsement from Eddie Vedder during Pearl Jam's earlier years. Rock the Vote, a group committed to increasing young voter turnout (but was not associated with any particular candidate or party) also received considerable attention due to Pearl Jam's involvement with the cause. Pearl Jam's legal challenge against Ticketmaster represents the most prominent and public of their socio-political causes. Pearl Jam accused Ticketmaster of having a monopoly over the means of distributing concert tickets; further, its monopoly over ticket sales translated into a monopoly over concert venues as well (see McChesney, 2008). In the midst of their battle with Ticketmaster and for sometime afterward as well, Pearl Jam attempted to provide fans with a way to buy tickets to see them live without going through Ticketmaster—selling them directly through the fan club. This process, while full of good intentions for fans to keep ticket prices low, resulted in incredible difficulties in actually receiving tickets, finding venues that would cooperate with this ticketing arrangement and frequent concert cancellations.

I include these pre-2000 endorsements as a backdrop to the rest of my

project because, in some cases, their involvement in political protest seems to follow directly from their previous activities. Pearl Jam continued to commit to increasing voter turnout through a number of organizations, including Rock the Vote, and during elections years they have had facilities available at the actual concert venue for potential voters to register. Initially their case against Ticketmaster may seem like an anomaly, particularly since they have resigned to dealing with the concert promoter for shows over the last decade, but I argue that it represents a crucial middle step that feeds directly into their first round of protest/endorsement with the Ralph Nader campaign of 2000. Nader's commitment to corporate responsibility, government oversight of big business and his long career of consumer advocacy dovetail well with the ethical issues at place in Pearl Jam's Ticketmaster battle. As a fan, I found it unsurprising that Pearl Jam would choose to get involved in the 2000 presidential campaign as they did, because of their record of accomplishment. This decision would set the tone for future tours and indicated the band's decision to use their music for explicitly political ends.

### **Lyrics: What to do with them?**

My primary method of research is textual criticism. My hope is that through this method I will be able to create a historical account of Pearl Jam's political protest since 2000 that takes into account social and cultural factors, but from the perspective of the band. To this end, I plan to use official concert

footage, interviews with the band, and their records released during this period as primary texts. While the bulk of these types of sources seem relatively uncontroversial, for scholars of popular music, the use of lyrics from recordings as a “text” to be read is not universally accepted as an appropriate primary or even secondary source.

Historically, scholars have used lyrics as a source when dealing with popular music texts in their analyses, but a growing backlash against this proved compelling in the mid-80s with a number of journal articles cautioning against the use of lyrics in this way. A particularly compelling argument against lyrical interpretation as a mode of analysis comes from Simon Frith (1987), who, amongst other music scholars (Desinoff and Levine, 1971; Rein, 1986), fervently argued that the analyses of lyrics coming out during the 1980s assumed several problematic ideas. First, that the techniques of literary interpretation can be applied to lyrics with relative success, effectively making musical lyrics no different from poetry. Second, in analyzing lyrics in this manner, the popular music scholar ends up missing half of the actual text, such as the melodic, extra-lyrical components of music. Third, engaging in textual analysis of lyrics on paper is rarely the way audiences encounter lyrics, as such, if scholars want to look at anything remotely resembling “effects,” this approach does not adequately consider the impact of the audience. Lastly, textual analysis of lyrics assumes that audiences prioritize the lyrics over the beat or general sound when there is the chance that audiences are not paying attention to lyrics at all, or are, in Stuart Hall's language, decoding them in ways

in which the research may not. Dai Griffiths' chapter (2003) takes up these concerns and suggests that popular music scholars:

Stop thinking that the words in pop songs are poetry, in some ways, and that by extension if they are not like poetry then they tend towards being like prose... I think we can then begin to think systematically about how the words work, and historically about how their position in the pop song has developed, what might be called word-consciousness. (pp. 42-43).

To avoid the pitfalls highlighted by Frith and others that come along with using lyrics as a primary text, I have several solutions. First, lyrics are one of several primary texts used in this analysis. This helps to provide some context to make their use more valuable and legitimate. Second, my project will involve a process of triangulation to look at the social and cultural context, the extra-musical activities of Pearl Jam, as well as their musical releases to provide a comprehensive picture. Lastly, I have attempted to incorporate the band's own interpretations of key songs as they discuss them in interviews, as my focus for this paper is less about audiences than how Pearl Jam themselves understand their role and strategy as a political band.

### **The Third Way: Pearl Jam endorses Ralph Nader**

Pearl Jam commenced their scheduled North American tour in the summer of 2000, supporting the spring release of their album *Binaural*. The

album is very much a product of its time, reflected as such by recurring themes throughout the lyrics. "Rival" addresses the Columbine shootings (Manning, 2000). "Insignificance" "explores the conflict between their generation's opposing instincts of protest and passivity...as falling bombs bring death to a small American town, the doomed gather in a bar, dancing while a protest song plays harmlessly on the jukebox" and "Grievance" makes reference to the World Trade Organization riots in Seattle of 1999 (Tannenbaum, 2000), the band's current residence and suggests we "let the song protest." At the time, it may have come across as a throwaway lyric, but if you will pardon the pun, "Insignificance" became incredibly significant, and prophetic, as the tour continued. "Grievance" reflects a generalized disdain with the direction in which the country was headed, with the chorus shouting "Pledge my grievance to the flag/because you don't give blood then take it back again/oh we're all deserving more," another song which would become eerily relevant in the context of an upcoming and important presidential election. Lastly, "Soon Forget" picks up on folk protest tropes and the singer-songwriter model, featuring only Eddie Vedder's vocals while he plays the ukelele, standing as a polemic against materialism (Gallagher, 2000). The short ballad is definitely not of the anthem-rock variety, but as with "Grievance" and "Insignificance" served as several vehicles of both protest and presidential endorsement during this tour.

With an important election fast approaching, the band's continued commitment to voter registration remained, but slowly, a clear preference for a presidential candidate emerged. During a concert in Saratoga Springs, NY, fans

got a clearer idea of who that candidate was. I attended this concert, and before the show began, the large screens broadcast the music video for “Testify,” by Rage Against the Machine (they, however, were not part of the show). The video juxtaposes still images, audio and video clips to draw compelling comparisons between Al Gore and George W. Bush, presidential candidates for the two major parties during that election cycle. The music video concluded with a clip of Ralph Nader, who emphatically states, “if you're not turned on to politics, politics will turn on you”. This video would set the tone for the rest of the tour, and Pearl Jam as endorsers of voter registration, a third party candidate and in particular, Ralph Nader and the Green Party.

The decision, however, to endorse a candidate was neither swift nor immediate. Although the individual members of Pearl Jam may have made up their own minds on who they would be voting for (and perhaps not the same candidate!), the band initially decided to promote voter *registration* and directing potential voters to resources so as to become aware of the positions of candidates on a variety of issues, rather than publicly endorse a presidential candidate as a band. *Salon.com* detailed the band's initial statements about participating in endorsing a candidate:

Vedder's decision to support Nader's campaign comes as a surprise to many of Pearl Jam's fans. In a July interview in *George*, Vedder and his band mates said that lending political sponsorship to a candidate was an inappropriate activity for a rock band. Vedder, in particular, worried that endorsing one candidate

might alienate fans. (Talvi, 2000)

Perhaps, within this statement, there lies an implicit reference to Neil Young, an artist long admired and covered live by Pearl Jam. In "This Note's For You," Young states amongst a litany of criticisms of corporately-sponsored music and musicians, "I won't sing for politicians/ain't singing for spuds" ("This Note's For You," 1988). Given this context, however, Pearl Jam's eventual endorsement of Ralph Nader seems to be the best possible compromise for a set of artists committed to corporate responsibility and who snub their noses at the idea of their music being used for commercial ends. Whereas Young compares politicians to commercial products, Nader's status as a third party candidate in favor of corporate responsibility, the end of corporate welfare and the triumph of the rights of the consumer-citizen, he appears anathema to a consumer product.

As the 2000 tour progressed, Pearl Jam's rejection of both major parties became more overt onstage. It was clear, however, that the fight for Nader was Vedder's idea and that the rest of the band agreed to support his decision. As Vedder states in an interview with *Rolling Stone* in 2003:

It started as my thing, and they supported me. They figured I was doing my homework. It was interesting -- one by one, they came around. But the first thing Ralph said was, "We are looking for money because we're not taking any soft money. We're not taking money from corporations. If there's something you can contribute, that would be great." I said, "Not only will I do it, I'll get everybody



in the band to do it." Then I wrote a check, even before I made the phone calls. So I started getting calls: "I heard about this thing, I want to talk to you about it." (Fricke, 2003)

Additionally, fans were willing to show their dislike of both presidential candidates at shows. In the *Touring Band 2000* DVD, which compiled video footage several songs from various shows during the 2000 tour, Eddie Vedder invited two fans on stage who had dressed as George W. Bush and Al Gore. The Al Gore costume featured a suit with money glued all over it, while the George W. Bush costume consisted of a grim reaper costume, complete with the sickle, and a Bush mask. The three danced on stage during an extended solo by Mike McCready then Vedder takes the sickle from the Bush character and pretends to hack them both to death (*Touring Band 2000*, 2000). At a show I attended in Montreal in September 2000, Vedder stated that if Bush became the president, the band were all going to apply for Canadian citizenship. The real focus on promoting Nader as the better option required a more concentrated approach, and Vedder volunteered to perform at several Nader rallies around the country. Notably, it was Vedder alone, without the rest of the band that played at these rallies. Vedder explained this decision, and notably invoked the efficacy of the singer-songwriter folk-protest trope:

Those [Nader] rallies aren't set up for that. It's better just to show up with a guitar and harmonica. They [the band] thought I should carry the weight, which was fine. This was the campfire of truth -- this is where I saw the real stuff coming out. It was so head-and-

shoulders above the other rhetoric -- it was easy to believe that you were absolutely doing the right thing. I still feel that way.

People would say to me, "You know, Nader's not going to win."

Hey, I grew up in Chicago -- I'm a Cubs fan. I'm used to this.

(Fricke, 2003)

While Vedder performed a number of Pearl Jam songs at these rallies, the covers performed remain the most poignant in this context. "I am a Patriot," written by E-Street Band member Steven Van Zandt, is perhaps most representative of Vedder's involvement with the rallies. There is a phrase in the lyrics that reads:

And I ain't no communist

And I ain't no socialist

And I ain't no capitalist

And I ain't no imperialist

And I ain't no democrat

Sure ain't no republican either

I only know one party

And that is freedom. ("I am a Patriot," 1983)

Given Ralph Nader's status as an alternative to the two-party system, Vedder's performance of the song resonated with the theme of the Nader rallies. When applied to Nader himself, "I am a Patriot" clarifies that while Nader may be very left-of-center, his policies do not completely threaten capitalism

and that a third party in the U.S. is both necessary and possible, as is the case in other democratic nations.

To no one's surprise, Nader did not win the presidency. In fact, many Democrats blamed the Nader campaign for Al Gore's loss, suggesting that votes that would have gone to Gore effectively went in to the garbage can as votes for Nader. Pearl Jam and Vedder in particular, received criticism from Democrats and fans, blaming them in part for the Bush win. The band may have implicitly acknowledged this possibility, in that they too would have preferred a Gore victory to a Bush victory, with Vedder wearing a "No Bush 2000" shirt in one of the *Touring Band 2000* DVD clips. 2000 closed as a tough year for the band, which faced a Republican president-elect, the fan backlash for their endorsement of Nader, and the continued hangover of the fan deaths at the Roskilde festival. The years between this tour and the next did not prove to be more positive, for the band or the American public at large.

### **"He's not a leader, he's a Texas leaguer": The "Bushleaguer" Controversy**

In November 2002, Pearl Jam released *Riot Act* after a two-year break between albums. Composed in the aftermath of the presidential election won by George W. Bush, the events of 9/11, the deaths of nine concertgoers during Pearl Jam's set at the Roskilde festival and the war in Afghanistan, the album drew upon these events for lyrical content. "Love Boat Captain" directly references the deaths during the Roskilde show with the phrase "Lost nine

friends we'll never know/two years ago today." "Green Disease" continues Eddie Vedder's fight against corporate greed, reminiscent of the theme of Binaural's track "Soon Forget." Most prominently, the album featured the song "Bushleaguer," a blunt and highly critical evaluation of George W. Bush, juxtaposing the last name of the president with the colloquial term for those playing in minor league baseball. This comparison, suggesting the inadequacy and ineptitude of the president, stands out as the most overt form of lyrical protest released by the band. A selection of the lyrics read as follows (I have omitted the refrain):

How does he do it? How do they do it? Uncanny and immutable.

This is such a happening tailpipe of a party.

Like sugar, the guests are so refined.

A confidence man, but why so beleaguered?

He's not a leader; he's a Texas leaguer

Swinging for the fence, got lucky with a strike

Drilling for fear, makes the job simple

Born on third, thinks he got a triple.

A think tank of aloof multiplication,

A nicotine wish and a Columbus decanter.

With retrenchment and hoggishness

The aristocrat choir sings

"What's the ruckus?"

The haves have not a clue.

The immenseness of suffering  
And the odd negotiation, a rarity.  
With onionskin plausibility of life,  
And a keyboard reaffirmation. ("Bushleaguer," 2002)

The song, as released on the album, clearly raised eyebrows, no doubt, because Pearl Jam released the album during the build-up to the Iraq War, assumed to become a reality in only a matter of time and welcomed by a large number of Americans. Given this and the continued effects of 9/11 on the American public, criticism of the president was not warmly accepted. It was not the fact that this song was featured on Riot Act that caused the most controversy. Instead, it took Pearl Jam's live performance of this song, taken to levels of *spectacle*, which initiated a fierce counter-protest by some fans and the media.

As is generally the case with musical acts, tours support the release of albums. Pearl Jam toured in support of Riot Act in the spring and summer of 2003. By this time, the war in Iraq had just begun, and public opinion of the war revealed a divided nation in terms of support for the war effort. The outrage against Pearl Jam's performance of "Bushleaguer" required only its debut at the first show of their tour in Denver.

To understand why the live performance of "Bushleaguer" created such uproar, we need to look at how Pearl Jam performed it live. While I will attempt the most accurate and colorful description of the performance, no account will

substitute for actually witnessing it. The song commences, and before Vedder begins to speak/sing the words, he emerges from backstage complete with an ill-fitting blazer, a bottle of wine, and a kitschy rubber mask of George W. Bush. While in costume, Vedder alternates between invoking both Michael Jackson and Madonna's signature dances, the Moonwalk and Vogue respectively, and then Vedder starts into the lyrics. When the mask comes off Vedder places it on the microphone stand, the real show on stage begins. Vedder uses the mask to various ends throughout the tour when "Bushleaguer" is played, alternating between using the mask as a make-shift cigarette holder to forcing the mask to drink Vedder's wine and occasionally simulating foreplay with the mask and stand combination. In general, the performance ends with the mask, in one way or another, ending up on the stage floor.

Pearl Jam performed "Bushleaguer" in Denver, and the reaction was swift and highly critical. Media outlets reported that fans walked out during or immediately after this performance, presumably in protest (Brown, 2003). The *Denver Rocky Mountain News* covered the incident the following day,

One [fan], Kim Mueller, told Denver's Rocky Mountain News: "I wasn't sure if it was really happening. We looked at each other and realized he really did have George Bush's head on a stick and was waving it in the air, then slammed it to the ground and stepped on it." Fan Keith Zimmerman added: "It was like he decapitated someone in a primal ritual and stuck their head on a stick." (Ibid.)

*Associated Press* also reported on the show stating,

Dozens of fans walked out of a Pearl Jam concert after lead singer Eddie Vedder took a mask of President Bush and impaled it on a microphone stand. Several concertgoers booed and shouted Tuesday night for Vedder to shut up as he told the crowd he was against the war and Bush. He impaled the mask during the encore of the band's opening show of a U.S. tour... During the show, Vedder said, "Just to clarify... we support the troops. We're just confused on how wanting to bring them back safely all of a sudden becomes non-support," he said. "We love them. They're not the ones who make the foreign policy ... Let's hope for the best and speak our opinions." ("Dozens walk out of Pearl Jam concert after anti-Bush song, remarks", 2003)

It should be noted that only weeks before the condemnation of "Bushleaguer," the Dixie Chicks faced a brutal public reaction for their similar criticisms of George W. Bush at a concert in London. Despite the immediate backlash, Pearl Jam continued to play "Bushleaguer" live at selected shows with all of the theatrics that commanded such negative attention. The back and forth between fans, the media and the band reached a fever pitch at a show in Uniondale, NY. "Bushleaguer" received a particularly scornful response live at the show. *The New York Times* reported,

When the second encore came around, Mr. Vedder emerged

cradling a mask of President Bush, and sang "Bushleaguer," a strong statement of protest: "Drilling for fear keeps the job simple/Born on third, thinks he got a triple." A number of formerly enthusiastic fans responded by making long, low noises that sounded a lot like "boo," and they weren't placated by the remarks that followed. "I don't understand," Mr. Vedder said. "Maybe you like him 'cause he's going to give you a tax cut." A number of people then chanted: "U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" Mr. Vedder tried a different approach. "I'm with you: U.S.A.," he said. "I just think that all of us in this room should have a voice in how the U.S.A. is represented." A few people threw things, and the band played two more songs, ending with a cover of Neil Young's "Rockin' in the Free World." As the song faded out, Mr. Vedder reprised the crowd's chant -- "U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" -- sounding more defiant than conciliatory. Then he threw down the microphone and walked off. (Sanneh, 2003)

The band discussed this reaction on a Buffalo, NY radio station. Mike McCready, lead guitarist for Pearl Jam, said that due to this negative response, the band would not play "Bushleaguer" live again. In their defense, McCready said that he hoped fans would not "misunderstand the meaning behind the song" (Pearl Jam, 2003). The band resumed playing "Bushleaguer" only a month or so after McCready issued the statement. In another interview with the Nashville City Paper, McCready said he'd rather leave politics out of the



performances and concentrate on playing well (Jordan, 2003). Clearly, there was tension in the band over what to do with “Bushleaguer” at future shows. I was able to see Pearl Jam perform “Bushleaguer” twice after McCready's statement that “Bushleaguer” had been retired, in both Detroit and Toronto. Interestingly, the Detroit show did not include any of the theatrics but the Toronto show featured all of the more controversial elements of the performance. Presumably, Canada seemed a safer place to criticize a U.S. president than Detroit, and the performance in Toronto was overwhelming greeted with palpable, vigorous support and applause. Pearl Jam guitarist Stone Gossard commented on the change of heart when interviewed by Steve Morse from the *Boston Globe*,

We still pull the song out at some of our shows... We don't like to restrict ourselves about what we can and cannot play. Ed hasn't been doing it with the animation of the Bush mask and the theatrics that were associated with it before. Now he allows people to focus more on the song and less on the controversy surrounding it. That's been the right choice at this time for us. Even in terms of the controversy, though, we wanted people to understand that we weren't very excited about the way that George Bush was running the country. That's pretty much something we all believe... If you believe in something and stand by your words, then ultimately you're going to be fine... In general, people need to be a little bit more [confident] about what they're

willing to do and what they're willing to sacrifice to speak their minds. (Morse, 2003)

In lieu of playing “Bushleaguer” even without the theatrics, Pearl Jam opted to play covers of songs by other bands that to present a similar sentiment towards Bush. Creedence Clearwater Revival's “Fortunate Son,” decrying the ability for some to avoid the draft because of money, status and family ties, became a frequent stand-in (“Set Lists and Appearances of 2003-2,” “Set Lists and Appearances of 2003-3”). Pearl Jam also performed “Know Your Rights” by The Clash, with its criticism of the perceived right to free speech, “as long as you're not dumb enough to actually try it,” re-articulated to become a stinging rebuke of the response by some fans and the media to Vedder's comments during the tour (Ibid.). Further, Pearl Jam performed “Soon Forget” frequently, with its critique of corporate welfare, corruption, and greed, perceivably directed at the Bush Administration and its ties to the Enron and Halliburton controversies (Ibid.). “Bushleaguer” may have outlived its usefulness, however, as Pearl Jam have not performed the track since 2007, and its last performance was in Europe (“Set Lists and Appearances of 2007”) where anti-Bush sentiments were/are unquestionably more pronounced.

It is difficult to pinpoint a single reason for the critical response “Bushleaguer” drew from fans and the media. The response from the media may be easier to explain, in part because of an overwhelmingly uncritical early response to the war in Iraq by networks and individual journalists, for which they would later suffer embarrassment. At the time, criticism of the war, particularly

for Fox News, was largely unacceptable by individuals given any sort of pulpit from which to speak and address a captive audience. Lack of support for the war was articulated to a lack of patriotism, or even treachery. Given the pronounced change of attitudes towards the war (and the president, by extension) by most networks, journalists and the general public, “Bushleaguer” might not have drawn the attention it did in 2003 if performed today, and implicitly, this may also explain why Pearl Jam have not performed it for almost a full two years before the Obama administration took office.

Their vindication as citizens and artists was slow but arrived, as increasing numbers of individuals endorsed their position on the war and president. What remains less easy to explain is the response by fans, though presumably some of their reaction may derive from the overwhelmingly positive media coverage of the war, as I have described above. First, there will always exist a contingent of music fans who want to keep music as entertainment, rather than a conduit for politics. Given this and Pearl Jam's commitment to making public their political views in the concert arena, the “Bushleaguer” incident may have served as a breaking point for fans unhappy with the music-politics articulation, but were willing to tolerate it up until that moment. Second, the format of the “Bushleaguer” performance may in and of itself turned fans off. As outlined in detail in the literature review, the articulation of music and politics has a history primarily tied to the singer-songwriter and the folk music genre. Given that Pearl Jam performed “Bushleaguer” as an entire band, and in terms of genre, the song has few, if any ties to folk or populist themes, it breaks from

a well-established form of protest music. This is not to suggest a natural or essential link between folk and protest, but this articulation may remain compelling enough for *these* fans to reject other genres as conduits of protest.

The simple answer to the question: “what happened?” is that supporters of Bush were offended and upon being offended at a show for which they paid handsomely, left in disappointment and protest. No doubt, this answer may be a genuine one for those offended. I propose instead that “Bushleaguer” posed a challenge to Pearl Jam’s democratic approach to meanings, due to its similarities to a music video and the fact that the message behind it, as encoded by Pearl Jam, was not open to this same democratic understanding and negotiation of meaning with “Bushleaguer” as they had been with much of the rest of their catalog. Instead, as the band themselves admit, “Bushleaguer” and its fall out were not the result of a healthy dialogue over meanings but instead the backlash came about through a “misunderstanding,” and hence failure of the transmission model of communication as they had intended for it to function. Ultimately, there is a discord between on one hand, the larger Pearl Jam narrative of the democratic negotiation of meanings and linking this to democratic politics and on the other, the prescriptive, anti-democratic narrative in “Bushleaguer.”

First, there is the issue of *prescription* as it relates to the visual over the aural implications of such theatrics. In rejecting music videos containing narratives and opting to either film videos featuring live performances of the band, such as *Storytellers*, or to not make them at all, Pearl Jam attempted to

both reconstitute their fan base and simultaneously provide one of several means to communicate openness to a dialectical approach to meanings. “Bushleaguer,” seems more at home during U2’s *Zoo TV* tour, and considerable parallels between Vedder’s Bush alter ego and the multiple personas Bono employed to both restructure their media presence and simultaneously parody their status as media(ted) icons (Johnson, 2004). The sheer contrast “Bushleaguer” presents when compared with the rest of the show increases its spectacle and makes it more comparable to a music video than an element of live performance. It is its function as a haphazard stand-in for music videos that gives “Bushleaguer” its anti-democratic and prescriptive status, out of step with collective bargaining that was the norm.

In sum, the problem is not that fans necessarily disagree with Pearl Jam and Vedder’s anti-Bush stance, the issue here is that the theatrical “Bushleaguer” asserts the band’s authority over meanings and interpretations related to the song, particularly its political thrust. This lack of narrative coherence and fidelity to the larger constitutive narrative evolving and involving Pearl Jam fans suggested the last course of action to restore the democratic dialectic of meanings between performers and audience: the eventual rejection of both the prescriptive narrative and “Bushleaguer,” the means to this end.

### **Vote for Change**

One year after the “Bushleaguer” controversy and with another important

presidential election fast approaching, Pearl Jam decided yet again to tour in response. This time Nader would not be the beneficiary of their endorsement, formally or informally. Instead, in the fall of 2004, Pearl Jam and several other musical acts, including Bruce Springsteen, Steve Earle, and R.E.M. came together as voices of protest from the Left, touring to eliminate the possibility of a second term for Bush. Eddie Vedder explained the decision to not support Nader during this election in a statement to *Rolling Stone*:

I supported Ralph Nader in 2000, but it's a time of crisis. We have to get a new administration in. All of us who supported Ralph last time should get down on our knees and say, "Can you bow out on October 3rd? We'll get back to the ideals you're fighting for on November 3rd." (Voices for Change, 2004)

The tour was NOT, however, an explicit endorsement of John Kerry, though there were palpable nods towards supporting a Kerry presidency. As the title of the tour suggests, change, rather than voting for Kerry, was the explicit goal. Rhetorically, this title provides the artists with a degree of flexibility in terms of interpreting its mission and articulating it to their own performances. Change could, and usually did, represent a new president, but change also applied to the policies of Kerry, in that a Kerry presidency should include massive and sweeping policy changes regarding the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, health care, and the relationship between government and big business. Stone Gossard, guitarist of Pearl Jam, stated that the band as a whole decided very early in 2004 that they would play shows in October to

promote voter registration and sway voters away from voting in a second term for Bush, and band manager Kelly Curtis contacted other managers and artists closer to October to see what, if anything, they were doing for the upcoming election and if they would be interested in joining a larger tour (*Vote For Change? Part 1*, 2008). *Billboard* magazine reported on the formation of the tour as the ambitious work of several prominent music managers:

First tipped by billboard.biz July 23, the tour is promoted by and benefits America Coming Together, an organization dedicated to mobilizing voters to elect progressive candidates. It is being presented in association with liberal political organization MoveOn PAC. The still-evolving lineup also includes John Mellencamp, Babyface, Death Cab for Cutie, Bright Eyes, Ben Harper, Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Browne, James Taylor, Jurassic 5 and John Fogerty. All artists are donating their services, as are many of the behind-the-scenes players. The list of managers behind the project is nearly as impressive as the artists. Among them are Landau, Bertis Downs (R.E.M.), Simon Renshaw (Dixie Chicks), Coran Capshaw (Dave Matthews Band) and Kelly Curtis (Pearl Jam), who [Jon] Landau calls the project's "guiding light." (Waddel, 2004)

As the *Billboard* article underscores, this was not a tour explicitly in support of Kerry, though audiences may have read the tour through this lens. Jon Landau, manager of Bruce Springsteen, explained the decision to not

formally affiliate the tour with Kerry:

"We knew we wanted to stay completely separate from the [Democratic National Committee]," he says. "This is a range of artists with a range of things to say, and we wanted to make sure our platform would remain uncompromised." MoveOn PAC, with 2.5 million members, came on board to both receive and offer visibility. But neither America Coming Together nor MoveOn had anything to do with the creation of the tour, Landau says. (Ibid.)

In some ways, the lack of the tour officially endorsing a candidate may appear as a bit of a cop-out, a way for these artists to avoid yet another round of political backlash. Arguably, however, the fact that the tour was not an official vehicle for the Kerry campaign may have worked to its advantage, at least initially, in those formal voting affiliations among the participating musicians required only a shared belief that a second Bush presidency was not preferable. Jeff Ament stated that premise of the tour was essentially to get Bush out of office (*Vote for Change? Part 1*, 2008). Rolling Stone reported on the range of political opinions found by those touring with Vote for Change:

An informal poll of artists on hand the day before the tour announcement revealed that many were registered to vote as Independents... "I see the divide between Republicans and Democrats as a giant farce," says [Pearl Jam's Stone] Gossard, "because people make liberal and conservative decisions all day



long." Gossard is a perfect example: Although he generally votes Democratic, "I'm probably the most Republican guy in Pearl Jam." (Fricke, 2004)

Structurally, the tour divided the participating artists into six groups touring in key battleground states such as Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan and others, with several shows taking place on the same night in different areas of the country (Ibid.). The result was a musical blitzkrieg of protest during the last weeks of voter registration.

Eddie Vedder acknowledged the potential for a backlash against musicians participating in the Vote for Change tour, with the events of last year's "Bushleaguer" controversy and the boycotting of the Dixie Chicks (also involved in the Vote for Change tour) on his mind. He stated:

I read a piece from a musician I respect, Alice Cooper, who wrote that musicians really need to keep out of political discussions... For one, they're idiots... For another, when he was a kid and his parents started talking politics, he ran to his room and put on the Rolling Stones and turned it up as loud as he could. And I agree with Alice. I don't think any of us want to be doing this. . . . But my problem is that my stereo does not go loud enough to drown out the sound of bombs dropping in the Middle East. (Morse, 2004)

For Pearl Jam, the choice of what to play at these shows was a decision made strategically. These shows were not just Pearl Jam shows during a

regular tour year, there was to be a method behind song selection with specific consideration given to context. Initially, Eddie Vedder pondered whether it would be plausible to have fans vote in their choices for songs through the band's website, to both democratize the process of creating set lists and to remind fans of what they should be doing in November (Ibid.). Vedder mused that "Bushleaguer" remained an obvious choice for the shows, despite the reception it received only a year earlier (Ibid.). Given that the audiences at the Vote for Change shows were united by their distaste for a second Bush term in office, if only in this way, the audience reaction to "Bushleaguer" would be less likely to be as hostile as before. Surprisingly, "Bushleaguer" was not the centerpiece of the Pearl Jam sets during this tour, and in fact, Pearl Jam performed the song once during the tour ("Set Lists and Appearances 2004"). Instead, as was the case with their 2003 tour, cover songs served as a stand-in for the heavy-handed "Bushleaguer." Jeff Ament explained the utility of some cover songs often lies in the ability to make slight alternations to the lyrics to make them more relevant to a specific context (*Vote For Change? Part 1*, 2008). Specifically, Ament said that the band learned how to play a number of punk songs written during the Reagan years, and he states, with slight alterations to the lyrics, one would think they were written about Bush instead of Reagan (Ibid.). Some of the punk songs covered included "The American In Me" by the Avengers, "I Believe in Miracles" by the Ramones, and "Bleed for Me" by the Dead Kennedys all performed with the lyric changes Ament described ("Set Lists and Appearances 2004").

This is an important point to note for the band who had, as previously described, primarily drawn from folk-protest tropes during their own efforts to combine protest and music. To draw from a vastly different genre of music drastically changes the tone, and possibly the shape, of performed protest. Punk has a legacy, much like folk, of articulations to various political movements, but perhaps problematically, many of these articulations are to a generalized distrust of government *a priori* or the abolishment of it entirely. Additionally, punk is less clearly articulated to Left politics than folk music and often finds a comfortable home in both the extreme Left and Right when looking at both the artists' own political opinions and those of their audiences. One need only look at the sub-genre of Oi to see its ties to fascism and Nazism. Even Johnny Ramone of The Ramones, a friend of Eddie Vedder, was a fervent Republican up until his death (Fricke, 2003). Clearly, Pearl Jam intended not to eliminate the concept of government nor alter its structure, but distrusted a particular administration and called for an alternative from the moderate Left. As a result, their covers of punk songs fit within the goals of Vote for Change, but doing so successfully rested on the band making very conscious choices about which songs to cover, and making those small lyrical changes to enable their re-articulation to a different political project.

Pearl Jam did not abandon their comfortable folk-protest approach during the Vote for Change tour. During an appearance on "The Late Show with David Letterman," Pearl Jam kicked off the Vote for Change tour with cover of Bob Dylan's "Masters of War," the song that would define the rest of Pearl

Jam's role in the tour. Pearl Jam would also cover Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower," and did so in a particularly rousing duet with Neil Young during their Toledo, OH show. Young himself covered "All Along the Watchtower" when Dylan was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (*Vote For Change? Part 2*, 2008). Apparently, for both Young and Bruce Springsteen, artists who were by no means apolitical but disavowed themselves from party politics and endorsements, the concerns created by the War in Iraq and the Bush administration were enough to encourage their participation in a tour like Vote for Change. Other folk songs covered included James Taylor's "Millworker" and "Don't Be Shy" by Cat Stevens ("Set Lists and Appearances 2004").

Returning to the issue of cover songs, clearly Pearl Jam and Vedder in particular find them useful as instruments of protest, and have used them to this end during each of these tours. Some of the songs have been included on set lists from every tour, and seem at home in each without too much contradiction with the radically different purpose of each tour. "Fortunate Son," for example, appears just as relevant during the Vote for Change tour as it did during the tour in 2003. An exception to this is Van Zandt's "I Am a Patriot," referenced earlier. At several of the Vote for Choice shows, Vedder would play the Van Zandt song solo. Despite Pearl Jam's willingness to alter the lyrics to make cover songs more appropriate to the goals of Vote for Change, this was not the case with "I Am a Patriot." Despite the fact that the Vote for Change tour was overtly designed to eliminate a second Bush term in office, Vedder and Pearl Jam retained the line "and I ain't no Democrat/sure ain't no Republican either." While

it is unclear how audiences reacted to this strange contradiction, the fact that the line remained may reflect an underlying unhappiness with Kerry as the Democratic nominee. As was the case with Al Gore, many Democrats found their respective candidates difficult to swallow and hard to truly support as a good alternative, rather than “the lesser of two evils.” Given that the tour was not a Kerry rally, this sort of thing could pass as appropriate without much question.

In total, Pearl Jam played eight shows in thirteen days as part of the Vote for Change tour. Despite all of their efforts, and a tour that grossed in the range of fifteen million dollars in *pro bono* revenue (Waddel, 2004), a wartime president was not unseated by the voting public and Pearl Jam faced four more years of president they couldn't stand.

## **Conclusion**

Pearl Jam's tours, when seen in light of the outcomes, may beg the question: “Why bother?” For despite Pearl Jam's efforts, Nader did not capture the 5% of the popular vote he was aiming for, much less the presidency, and blamed for a Bush win. Many Pearl Jam fans were alienated, rather than welcomed, by the “Bushleaguer” performance and fired back at the band for this artistic and political choice. Lastly, Vote for Change was unable to secure a Kerry win, and roughly half of young registered voters did not bother to vote (*Vote for Change? Part 4*, 2008). All of this reinforces a model of pop politics

that 1) bands build cultural capital and 2) bands try to spend it politically. I would also suggest that cultural and political capital could become mutually reinforcing, even for “apolitical” audiences.

This is not exactly a glowing track record of success. For any of these tours, it is also difficult to measure “causal effects.” There is possible exception: States featuring Vote for Change shows, the youth vote was 12% higher than in previous years (Ibid.). Whether this was due to demographics or the Vote for Change tour is unclear. We should consider Pratt (1991) and his statement of the “law of diminishing returns” with larger audiences when attempting to use shows for political ends. These larger shows, according to Pratt's theory, may have shot themselves in the foot due largely in part to their size.

I have, through interviews and other sources, attempted to present the band's perspective on their protest/endorsement actions for the years of 2000-2004, to argue that their efforts are in fact a good in and of themselves, regardless of which candidate they endorsed or protested. Further, I emphasize the importance of *live* rather than *studio* performance to Pearl Jam's aspirations to remain a politically-engaged cultural performer, both in terms of actions and motives. Pearl Jam felt that the live arena was the primary means to act as political agents and their actions, however successful or not, reflect their intention to make this focus on the live a political matter, and it is this fact that remains central to why the changing landscape of touring and live performance, with increased concentration/monopoly, matters to both Pearl Jam and their audiences. For Pearl Jam, the live show is the political theater, and as a result,

remains an important political battleground for the band in terms of both economic and cultural capital.

## Economic Authenticity and Liveness<sup>2</sup>

Ask two fans what “real” rock and roll is and you'll have an argument; ask three and you'll have a fight. Ask two critics what “authentic” popular music is and you'll have a contradiction; ask three and you'll have a mess... We need a mirror to show the cockatrice its own face and, in so, doing, perhaps disempower it. (Willhardt, 2006)

Economic authenticity, or the ability to avoid literally “selling out,” came into focus during the early 1990s, when deleterious aspects of the industry became transparent to artists and fans alike. It started to matter that one could not just “sound” authentic, but increasingly, proving one's “chops” in rock authenticity meant putting forth evidence to suggest that music, rather than money, were of central concern to artists. Previously, to sell out could mean both changing the nature of one's musical product to conceivably have broader mass appeal (adding “pop” elements) or to actually sell out financially by charging excessive amounts for tickets, signing with a larger record label for a more lucrative return on record sales and certain acts of complicity with the larger promotional machine driving both touring and album sales. With album sales decentered from the financial locus of rock and touring/live performance taking its place, to sell out financially had/has more to do with decisions on the cost and availability of tickets, the venues chosen for performing and so on.

---

<sup>2</sup> Selections of this chapter were previously published as Kristine Weglarz. 2011. Lifting the Curse: Pearl Jam's 'Alive' and 'Bushleaguer' and the Marketplace of Meanings. *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 7. doi:10.3983/twc.2011.0254.



With this shift, cultural authenticity too has moved to depend on live performance for its cultivation, coinciding with the rise of an “indie” or do-it-yourself work ethic.

Here, I explore the necessity of cultural and economic authenticity to Pearl Jam's career, and the debates and challenges faced by the band as they struggle with issues related to touring and live performance. Further, I illustrate the importance of live performance, and specifically the construction of economically authentic live performance, for the purposes of a band committed to bringing issues of social and political activism/justice to the forefront.

### **Crisis/Response**

The authenticity crisis, as Auslander (1999) identified, crystallized in stripping Milli Vanilli of their Grammy. The pop group's fall from grace in 1990 seemed to indicate that a line had been drawn between live performances before and after this period (p. 86). The construction of a moral panic around music and authenticity with Milli Vanilli as the scapegoats did not reflect a true scandal, as Auslander puts it, but instead a scandal effect “used by agencies of power and capital to ‘regenerate a reality principle in distress’” (p. 96). This manufactured crisis had an important consequence for rock musicians operating in its wake: First, the renewed emphasis on the acoustic as the rebuttal to the intrusions of simulation (Ibid.). Second, one of the consequences for rock music was the renewed articulation of the local to the authentic, as was

best exemplified by the explosion of bands proclaiming their residential ties to Seattle (Olson, 1998, p. 283). As Olson states, “place-based scenes produce places where one can presumably live an ‘authentic’ relation to rock in one’s daily life” (Ibid).

Several prominent strategies emerged to respond to this crisis by musicians who were clearly concerned with the demands that a new regime of authenticity placed upon them as artists. Granted, not all artists at the time made perceptions of authenticity a primary concern, though the concern with authenticity was most pronounced in the rock genre. Pearl Jam took the extreme decision to attempt to reduce their exposure via most mass media outside of radio. Unable to rely fully on a clear articulation between themselves and their local “scene” in Seattle, which was wounded by the presence of members from the perceptively “inauthentic” South California music scene (Eddie Vedder lived for a time in San Diego) the band attempted to wrestle with the authenticity crisis in other ways. The band stopped making promotional videos, rarely gave interviews, and very infrequently consented to press photos for various rock magazines. In essence, they attempted to limit the mediation of their image as a band to sound itself, as was the case with their continued presence on radio, or the live arena, which became one of very few avenues to view the band. Eddie Vedder often went out in public wearing a mask, to avoid photos of himself emerging in the popular press.

In contrast, Nirvana had the advantage of a strong articulation to a place-

based scene, both in terms of the lives of the individual members as well as their musical links to other important and seminal Seattle-based bands. Though they found themselves highly mediated through both MTV and music magazines, they used such venues for powerful critiques of corporate involvement in the music industry. Kurt Cobain wore a shirt proclaiming “corporate rock still sucks” for a cover shot of *Rolling Stone* magazine, amongst other examples. Therefore, while they reluctantly accepted mediation, they used such channels for critique and commentary, and to poke fun at their own status as rock stars.

This continued thread of the relevance of economic authenticity rings clear in a *Rolling Stone* article profiling singer Eddie Vedder in 1996. As stated in the article,

Vedder claimed that his goal was to be a different kind of rock star... resist[ing] the temptations of power, wealth and ego. The emphasis... must be on the music – a sentiment entirely in keeping with Seattle's punk-inspired, anti-commercial ethos, rejecting the careerism and grasping ambition of the pandering 1980s hair-metal bands. (Colapinto, 1996, p. 52)

Arguably, the ethos here is not Seattle's alone, but the general vibe of rock culture as Philip Auslander (1999) as it emerged from the Milli Vanilli lip-syncing scandal. Seattle may have espoused many of these anti-commercial values, but the relative importance placed on such values, rather than the

values themselves, is what made Seattle the perceived oven of D.I.Y authenticity. In as much as artists from the area espoused this same ethos, the articulation of anti-commercialism to Seattle simultaneous constrained the personae of these artists. This constraint came in the form of inclusion into rock canon, a process through which artists were either deemed authentic (rock) and inauthentic (pop) as both Grossberg (1992) and Auslander illustrate.

What remains distinct during this period of the early-to-mid nineties was how “high” the bar was set to determine authenticity, and the precarious and tenuous balance artists faced to remain perceptively authentic. This Rolling Stone article clearly illustrates the importance of economic authenticity during this period of popular rock culture, and the efforts to maintain a “pure” element of rock by “outing” those perceived to be constructing an image of themselves and their music that betrays reality. Of course, authenticity itself is a construct, and as such, remains a fluid and changing label whose characteristics can and will change with the variations of rock culture, but because we as rock fans react to authenticity as something natural and tangible, articles such as the previously referenced *Rolling Stone* piece by Colapinto resonate with fans and readers for their ability to highlight supposed frauds and the process of image construction, the creation of simulacral versions of artists once mediated, itself comes under fire. The artists, rather than the mechanics and structure of media, are held accountable. It is, however, the anatomy of media, in a Marxist sense, which bears further analysis here.

## **Anatomy of Mediated Authenticity**

Marx wrote "people make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past" ("Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," 1968). While not speaking directly to music producers by any means, Marx's words highlight the tension faced by musicians looking to cut a different path through the music industry already well in place by their formation. Perhaps one of the best points of comparison in this light, and the most relevant to this case study, would be the ethics of Fugazi, to whom Vedder would later credit much of his battles with various corporate entities, including, of course, Ticketmaster. Fugazi, a punk band with relatively broad recognition, seemed to get everything "right" when it came to economic authenticity. I contrast economic authenticity with what Mark Pedelty has deemed "market authenticity," (2011, p. 236) the perception of legitimacy awarded to cultural figures for their financial success(es). They served as what might become an unreachable ideal for anyone but themselves, though not for a lack of trying by Vedder and others. Fugazi, though approached by large record labels have always said no, preferring to keep the vast amount of the mechanics of production and distribution of their music. With a promise to keep ticket prices and album prices low, rejecting the promotional tools of videos and limited interviews, and the honoring of that promise through \$5 albums, Fugazi remains that Platonic ideal for many artists of unadulterated economic authenticity (Neely, 1998, pp. 91-92). Additionally, Fugazi were not just a band

that served to define economic authenticity, but would emerge as a model of a socially-conscious band wearing its politics very visibly on its sleeve, which, within punk circles, would help to define them as culturally authentic in terms of the fluid but selective criteria of punk authenticity. Vedder wouldn't get to see Fugazi until after the release of *Ten* (Ibid.) and Pearl Jam's signing to a multi-album record contract with Epic/Sony, crossing out at least one potential means for the band to walk the walk of economic authenticity with the Fugazi ethos.

Granted, this was not for a lack of trying on the part of the band; Pearl Jam had approached Sub Pop Records for a contract, only to have Sub Pop reject them, partially on the grounds of what Sub Pop perceived to be their aural inauthenticity (Pray, 1996). They, according to Sub Pop, were less punk rock and more arena rock and as such were not a good fit for the label (who would later lament that they nearly went into bankruptcy shortly after the explosion of Pearl Jam's album *Ten* and lauded them as the social conscience of arena-rock (Ibid.). Nirvana had, however, signed with Sub Pop Records, setting up a new series of comparisons and one-upmanship between the two Seattle-based bands. For the time being, however, Pearl Jam were locked into an agreement with Epic/Sony, and would have to find other ways to make their own economically authentic history, in Marxist terms, given the historical and structural constraints they faced from then onwards.

### **The Impossibility of Grunge Authenticity**

This was not altogether a success story for Pearl Jam. The criticisms mounted, and increasingly focus on issues of wealth, class and the relationship between those categories/traits and the validity of Vedder's public persona. Nor was the band spared the same criticism. As Colapinto points out, Pearl Jam became an easy target, or perhaps a means to define the authentic and inauthentic in Seattle, facing criticism for "importing" a singer from California to front a band once headed in the direction of glam-rock before the untimely death of their singer, Andrew Wood.

The criticism, in economic terms, is two fold. First, that the importing of a commercially viable singer from outside Seattle was seen as a betrayal of anti-commercialism, while the lack of an "organic" story of growth and creation rendered Pearl Jam vulnerable to accusations that they were in the business of making money first, music second. I reiterate that the validity of these claims is perhaps impossible to determine, but it is the fact that these sorts of questions remain central to the identity of Pearl Jam and other rock artists that I want to underscore. It matters to fans, to musicians, and to music journalists, that the artists they support(ed) can be viewed in a context where their music and not their revenue stream, nor their ability to be placed in a chain of value for the industry, remains at the forefront.

Perhaps the most public, and most repeated criticism of the band, in both economic and cultural terms, came from Kurt Cobain who likened the band to a "corporate, alternative, and cock-rock fusion" (Cobain, 1992, qtd. in Colapinto,

1996, p. 57). Kim Warnick of the Fastbacks (who would later open shows for Pearl Jam during the 1996 tour) offered a similar, though slightly more upbeat description of Pearl Jam's fan base in 1991, pegging them as “the 'bogus' suburban rock kids” (Colapinto, 1996, 57). Again, we see echoed here the link between cultural and economic authenticity, articulated here in terms of commercial appeal and class status, respectively. Kurt Cobain's suicide only added to the pressures to maintain some semblance of authenticity, in that in his own suicide note he referenced the desire, and seeming impossibility, of remaining grunge-authentic:

I haven't felt the excitement of listening to as well as creating music along with reading and writing for too many years now. I feel guilty beyond words about these things... The fact is, I can't fool you, any one of you. It simply isn't fair to you or me. *The worst crime I can think of would be to rip people off by faking it and pretending as if I'm having 100% fun.* Sometimes I feel as if I should have a punch-in time clock before I walk out on stage. I've tried everything within my power to appreciate it (and I do, God, believe me I do, but it's not enough). (Cobain, 1994, emphasis is my own)

Cobain's death and spiral into self-destruction, as he himself pegged, rested partially on his inability to avoid “selling out” (Barker and Taylor, 2007, pp. 24-25).



Grunge had set the bar too high for economic and cultural authenticity, and yet Cobain's suicide would only ratchet up the stakes to even more improbable and impossible levels to maintain and “no post-Nirvana guitar-based band, whether post-grunge, mainstream, or even metal, could ignore the pressure to create autobiographical songs about their misery” (p. 26) or join Cobain (thankfully not) in what he felt was his ultimate act of rejecting the inauthentic, all the while, I will add, eschewing critical elements of the rock promotional machine to maintain economic authenticity with fans, journalists and fellow artists. Pearl Jam, following Cobain's death, became the most commercially successful band in the U.S, with Vedder decrying the inability of rock journalism to find the authentic amongst many frauds, thereby positioning himself and his band as not one of the imitators. Vedder stated, “They [the media] don't know what's real and what isn't. And when someone comes along who's trying to be real, they don't know the fucking' difference” while also suggesting that he did not “feel right being here without [Cobain]” (p. 25).

While Barker and Taylor argue that Cobain's death marked a turning point for conceptions of rock authenticity, I argue instead that marked the end of the inauguration of “realness” in a cultural and economic sense that began with the aforementioned Milli Vanilli scandal and subsequent rise of Seattle as the epicenter of “the real.” His death revealed the limits of maintaining a certain construction of authenticity, and while artists who aspired to the same public performance of authenticity struggled, the subsequent rise of the “inauthentic” pop bands such as the Spice Girls, the Backstreet boys, and a prophetic, if not

ironic album *Pop* by the ringmasters of managed simulacra, U2, in 1996.

Vedder's response to such criticisms further underlines the connection between economic and cultural authenticity in rock.

After significant media access to the band for the release of *Ten* and subsequent singles/videos from that album, Vedder spearheaded the movement to stop producing videos for future albums, limit photo opportunities and deny the vast majority of press interviews with him or the band (he and Pearl Jam have since softened their position on this considerably). Vedder's solution to being branded a willing commodity in rock culture was to severely limit their visual representation to mainstream media outlets such as MTV and rock journalism magazines. To limit the visual, and to some degree the written beyond the music itself, was a tactic of mediapheme management with the deliberate consequence of making their management of authenticity seemingly less challenging.

One of Pearl Jam's arguments for not making videos post-*Ten* (amongst many publicly stated) has been that they tend to over-determine the interpretation of songs by fans. They are not alone in launching this critique; as Will Straw noted, this debate proliferated during the early years of scholarship on music videos, In Stuart Hall's language, the video portion of a music video functions as part of that socio-cultural matrix itself through which a viewer reads and negotiates meanings, rather than being itself a text to be negotiated. The video then over-determines the lyrical elements of a music video in terms of its

ability to be read in a preferred, negotiated, or oppositional way. This position on music videos does not immediately correlate to Hall's encoding/decoding model but one of two resulting theoretical frameworks may. First, the refusal to make videos because they over-determine meanings for an audience may suggest an adherence to the linear transmission model if one assumes that the lyrics to a particular song are self-evident to listeners and that adding a visual element may merely confuse or cloud this inoculation of meaning.

With Pearl Jam, I argue that their approach to videos is not that their lyrics, on the whole, contain some sort of self-evident meaning that may be misinterpreted by their audience but instead that their refusal to release music videos is an endorsement of their desire for fans to generate their own meanings and interpretations behind songs, untainted by the visual element at all. This decision has allowed Pearl Jam to constitute their fan base in a very particular and specific way that shapes the nature of their interaction with the band. In managing the constitution of their audience, Pearl Jam attempted a means of managing their public image, and vice versa, in direct contrast with bands such as U2 who attempted to use the same mass media that created one public image of the band to create another, more manageable one (Johnson, 2004).

### **The Paradox of Constructing Live Authenticity through Recordings**

In recent years, while Pearl Jam has conceded to working through the

Ticketmaster system, the issue of actually seeing the band live has still been unresolved for many potential concertgoers. Pearl Jam have upheld a policy that through membership in their fan club, one was able to get tickets to shows cheaper and that the tickets purchased through the club would correspond with the best and closest seats in the venue. At the Toronto 2003 show, most of the seats in the venue were already spoken for by Ten Club members, who had purchased tickets in advance and filled up the floor, 100, 200 and part of the 300 levels of the Molson Amphitheater, as I learned through my discussions with other Ten Club members upon receiving their ticket assignments, leaving only the most distant seats available for the public sale of tickets: the remaining 300 level seats, the 400 level and lawns.

While live shows were hard to come by, live recordings were not. Up until their summer tour of 2000, live recordings of Pearl Jam's performances were distributed and traded amongst fans in the form of bootlegged cassettes or later on, CDs. This was a practice both tolerated and endorsed by Pearl Jam when many artists were cracking down on unauthorized duplications of their performances/recordings. As long as the bootlegs were being traded in kind and not for cash or sold at a profit, Pearl Jam allowed audience members to record these shows. Small personal recording devices were permitted into shows, and fans were instructed, through Pearl Jam's official website and the Pearl Jam Ten Club newsletter, in what to do and who to talk to if the security at venues did not want to let fans bring in their recording devices.

With the tour of 2000, Pearl Jam decided to sell soundboard recordings of their live shows and have continued to do so ever since. While these recordings are of infinitely better quality than the bootlegs produced through recordings based in the crowd and were available at a very inexpensive and reasonable price, they killed the market for homemade bootlegs (both those that were intended to be used for profit and those used for legitimate trading) without ever changing their long-standing policies on the recording of live shows. Their approach to “live” video recordings, airing on cable television, also served to shape their particular authentic presence.

### **Pearl Jam, VH1 *Storytellers* and MTV *Unplugged*: Constructing Authenticity**

Pearl Jam would choose both *Storytellers* and MTV *Unplugged* as concentrated means to disseminate live visuals of the band outside of their limited release of music videos. *Storytellers* is a running series on the MTV affiliated network, VH1. Bearing some pronounced similarities (and differences) to MTV’s long standing and commercially successful series of *Unplugged* shows, *Storytellers* provides artists with a medium of video performance that goes beyond the standard fare offered by music video rotation on either MTV or VH1 by showing the performers in a live setting, rather than the music video format that often features a particular combination of lip-synched lyrics and dramatics that may or may not include the artist(s) as characters. Interestingly, as both MTV and VH1 have deferred to programming that, on the whole, has

less to do with music videos and even musicians in a broader sense and more to do with both celebrity/celebrities in a larger sense, both series recall a time when both networks were committed to *de jure* and *de facto* music television, at least for the hour or so each *Unplugged* or *Storytellers* show airs.

*Storytellers* functions as a medium for performing artists to discuss the conditions leading to the writing and composing of songs, and often suggesting the meaning of the lyrics for the artist at the time of its composition. This discussion of authenticity is not to suggest that either series actually succeeds at unveiling an authentic performing self of the artists featured, nor to suggest that one actually exists outside of the construction of authenticity made possible through programs such as *Unplugged* and *Storytellers*.

Again, as the name of the program suggests, the artists are not there merely to perform their songs (or, as I mentioned earlier with *Unplugged*, songs authored by others) but they are expected to use this program as a means to give their audience and fans the “real story” behind the creation and recording of particularly poignant and memorable songs. Arguably, Pearl Jam’s longevity as a band frames them comfortably with the artists listed as examples of previous *Storytellers* episodes, but this is a stance that differs greatly from years of actively avoiding appearing on either MTV or VH1.

### **An Unhappy Marriage: Pearl Jam and MTV/VH1**

Pearl Jam's relationship with either network has been at best, ambivalent, and at worst, antagonistic. Pearl Jam did record a session of *Unplugged* in 1992, at the height of their post-*Ten* popularity but since then have largely eschewed both music videos and music award shows. Their 2006 *Storytellers* appearance, in this context, is much more an anomaly than the rule for the band. It reflects both a renewed openness to the networks for the purposes of distributing their material, particularly when seen in light of a renewed effort to return to the music video format after eight years.

One of Pearl Jam's best known songs, "Alive," was featured on an episode of VH1 *Storytellers* as part of Pearl Jam's entry into the continuing series of the show. For a band such as Pearl Jam, this allowed for a particularly telling and introspective look at *Alive* as their initial commercial success and their decision to continue to play the song throughout their touring years. During the broadcast, Eddie Vedder relayed to the audience what I will call the "curse narrative":

The song "Alive," which was on our first record (...) has been transformed through the years and it's not so much how we play it or the arrangement but more, the interpretation. So, the original story being told on the song is that of a young man being made aware of some shocking truths. One was that the guy he believed to be his father, while growing up, was not. And the hard truth number two was that the real father had passed away a few years before.... I mean, the guy was me but I barely knew me then... so

he takes all these news as a curse... the "I'm still alive." So, cut to years later and we're playing to larger and larger audiences and they're responding to this chorus in a way that you never thought... so every night when I look out on this sea of people reacting on their own positive interpretation... it was really incredible. The audience changed the meaning of these words and when they sing "I'm still alive" it's like they're celebrating. And here's the thing, when they changed the meaning of those words, they lifted the curse. (Pearl Jam, "VH1 Storytellers", 2006)

While the song started off as a catharsis, Vedder himself describes how in playing the song, the audiences listening have in fact lifted the curse for Vedder, turning "I'm still alive" from a lament into a celebration of life itself and the ability to survive the traumas that life throws at us. He suggests that it is not the repeated playing of the track itself that has led to this narrative shift, but attributes it entirely to the audience's reaction to Pearl Jam performing the song. It is the very fact that this oppositional or negotiated reading of the song, by the audience, served to change the meaning of the song not just for them but for the original author of the track as well. This process of decoding, and multiple permutations of decoding, provides insight into the relationship between artists, authenticity, and audiences.

### **Encoding/Decoding Videos (Or the Absence Thereof)**

Stuart Hall's (1980) model of encoding/decoding provides insight into the



process by which viewers/fans make meaningful their reception of music videos. In direct contrast to the linear transmission model of communication, encoding/decoding suggests that the decoding of texts (in this case, audio-visual ones) by audience members results in the creation of three forms of readings: dominant, negotiated and oppositional.

Hall suggests that when television broadcasters feel as though audience do not receive the intended message, this constitutes an example of viewers creating a negotiated or even oppositional reading, in lieu of the dominant. The linear transmission model of communication suggests, in contrast, that if one were able to eliminate barriers to the communication process, this message would be received in the way the producers intended and encoded within the broadcast. The distinction here is between a wholesale understanding of negotiated and oppositional readings as misunderstandings, as suggested by the linear transmission model, where as many (but certainly not all) “misunderstood” readings of a particular text by an audience are not the product of a failed linear model of communication and its potential barriers, but the result of the audience themselves decoding the text in ways that differ from the encoded or dominant reading. Hall’s model assumes an audience that is not passive, as suggested by the work of several members of the Frankfurt School but instead posits an audience that is essential in the creation of meaningful discourse through their engagement with texts of various kinds.

The situation becomes a bit more complex when dealing with music videos as an encoded/decoded text. Within any particular music video, there

are at least two texts to be read by an audience, and often three: the visual, the melodic/aural, and the lyrical, if the song features words. Thus, in the process of encoding a music video with a dominant or preferred meaning, producers construct this using several individual texts that work in tandem to reinforce each other. For instance, many music videos feature a narrative that parallels a dominant reading and subsequent acting-out of the lyrics in a song whereas other videos make visual reference to the lyrics of a song in less direct and sustained ways. Other videos may feature a live visual recording of the band performing the song. Some videos combine all of these elements.

Nevertheless, with music videos, in contrast to just the music alone, feature an extra level of text for audiences to decode. Television, for John Fiske (1987), is an open text that allows for negotiated and oppositional readings along with dominant readings that serve the interests of the ruling classes. In this way, music videos can be seen as sites of negotiated meanings whereby an audience draws upon the personal and socio-cultural context in which they are situated to make meaningful a particular music video text.

Music videos, constituting a text composed of other texts, can have multiple domains of meanings, corresponding to the visual, aural, and lyrical elements and a synergy between them. In essence, a viewer can read a music video text according to a preferred meaning that considers all of the textual elements of any particular video (Straw, 1993). Alternatively, they can, for example, negotiate a preferred/dominant reading of the visual elements alone yet simultaneously read the lyrical and melodic components of the video against

the grain, resulting in negotiated or oppositional readings.

The problem with this approach, however, is that part of that socio-cultural matrix that audiences bring to the table when decoding music videos includes a privileging of the visual over the aural (Straw, 1993, p. 3). In the case of music videos, this suggests that viewers will be more likely to take-for-granted the images and narratives visually presented to them than the narratives and meanings that they themselves create through their decoding of the lyrical and melodic elements of the music. Will Straw noticed two trends in early scholarship on music videos, the first of which suggested that music video itself served to reinforce the visual over the aural and the experience of music (1993, p. 3). In the same way that body language serves to contradict or reinforce what we are saying in a communicative moment, the receiver/decoder tends to trust the body language (read: visual) over the aural, particularly when a discrepancy between visual and aural is detected. As I previously outlined, this has lead some acts, including Pearl Jam, to give up making videos permanently or for extended periods.

To remain culturally authentic within rock, or to rebuff challenges to one's authenticity is to deny most means of revenue-generating publicity/promotion and hope that the albums released without benefit of music videos, interviews, photo opportunities and the like, remain successful. This was one prong of a two-pronged approach to re-establishing economic authenticity. The second and related prong was their long and ultimately unsuccessful battle with Ticketmaster, as outlined earlier in this project. While the efforts of the band to

keep the focus on the music and keep things affordable for fans were in good faith, their efforts to reclaim the badge of economic authenticity, and perhaps assert their role as protest artists, backfired in the face of competing tensions and interests.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have attempted to highlight the importance of economic authenticity for Pearl Jam. In providing a working definition of economic authenticity, I argue that Pearl Jam's construction of authenticity, both by themselves and their audiences, rests on their *live performances*, rather than audio studio recordings. This of course, includes live performances with the audio, video or both that are recorded and broadcast; what I underscore here is the centrality of the live show to how Pearl Jam have constructed their role as “authentic” artists and the terms by which audiences agree or disagree with this label. Further, I illustrate how the focus on live performance as the playing field for constructions of authenticity had not always been successful for Pearl Jam, and despite these backfiring cultural moves, the band continues to be understood and interpreted in terms of their live performances when making judgments of value, genre, and legitimacy. Further, these efforts to articulate themselves to an “authentic truth,” can and will make or break their relative success as protest artists (Pratt, 1990). This focus on live performance as the make-or-break mechanism of authenticity becomes increasingly difficult with the economic locus of the rock music industry moving away from studio recordings

to live shows, as this locus becomes increasingly concentrated in terms of management, ownership, and potential avenues for performance. Economic authenticity and cultural authenticity have become increasingly interdependent and increasingly hard to separate from one another as a result.

## Conclusion

This dissertation examined the political economy of live rock performance and touring, both as they stand currently and their evolution via legislation, deregulation, and corporate conglomeration. Additionally, I examined the intertwined relationship between institutional arrangements and constructions of authenticity within rock culture, resulting in shifts as to how artists and audiences can perform “authenticity.” Live performance is now at the center of value judgments of economic and cultural capital, overtaking the role of recordings. This shift, along with reduced options and limited promotional control over touring, produces consequences for artists, fans, and media scholars. These structural and fiscal changes dramatically alter how rock artists tour, maintain authenticity among fans, and - in the case of protest artists - speak on political issues with conviction. Further, these changes *matter* to fans in terms of how they invest both their affective and fiscal resources. As Pratt (1990) suggests, the successful articulation of rock to authenticity is crucial to its political goals (p. 201).

I conclude here with two narratives that should sound familiar: anecdotes of ticket sales and ticket buying that underscore one of my central claims: It matters to fans what ticket prices are, both in terms of their ability and desire to attend shows without spending more than they can realistically afford, but as can be seen in this case, the battle continues over the relationship between ticket prices and perceptions of authenticity.

Eddie Vedder recently announced (April 2011) a solo tour, and the

debate over ticket prices and the politics of touring began, as it has with every Pearl Jam-related tour. Fellow fans lamented the inability to use the band's own system of ticket assignment, which allots seats based on seniority in the Pearl Jam fan club. While this sounds promising as a potential alternative to Ticketmaster/Live Nation, the reality is quite different. The internal ticketing system works with Ticketmaster and has jurisdiction over a small number of seats in any one venue. Further, the website through which Pearl Jam fan club members purchase these tickets has consistently proven to be unable to handle the demand, with server crashes, an overload of web traffic and the inequality of bandwidth availability standing between those few able to purchase tickets this way and those who inevitably have to wait for the general sale through Ticketmaster to buy their tickets.

The reality of Pearl Jam's inability to provide the critical infrastructure for in-house and online ticket sales came to a head in May 2011 with the catastrophic failure of their website and server crash resulting from the large amount of fans attempting to buy tickets for Pearl Jam's two-day Alpine Valley festival and the Canadian tour to follow the festival in September 2011. The Ten Club issued the following apologetic statement:

Since the Alpine on-sale began, we have sold a little over 17,000 tickets (a mix of lawn and reserves for September 3/4) via the Ten Club. More than half of the sales took place today. We have now officially sold out of all of those tickets, travel packages and expo

packages.

We know it was a rough ride for everyone this time around. "Sorry" feels a little light given the amount of time you all spent waiting out *our ticketing system*, but we are. Deeply.

Clearly, *the new system is broken and slow*. However, we need to get through the Canada on-sale tomorrow. Once we get through that, *we will IMMEDIATELY begin building a new, state-of-the-art system* to avoid ever putting you through the pain-in-the-ass-ness of yesterday.

That's our promise to you.

Sincerely, Ten Club. (Ten Club, 2011a, italics are my own)

The Ten Club, Pearl Jam's fan club, eventually resolved the issue by – wait for it – collaborating with Ticketmaster Canada for ticket distribution (Ten Club, 2011b).<sup>3</sup> The comments and criticisms do not, however, end with the mechanics of ticket distribution. Other comments, both in person and in the Pearl Jam blogosphere, chastised the band and Eddie Vedder in particular for the price of the tickets (including service charges, amount to almost \$100 U.S.D). An almost four-fold increase in ticket prices since my first Pearl Jam show in 1996, the ticket prices for Eddie Vedder's solo tour rival those of tickets sold for shows in which the full band participates. Again, it *matters* to fans how they are able to purchase tickets and how much those tickets cost, for reasons

---

<sup>3</sup> For better or for worse, the last-minute Ticketmaster solution yielded positive results: fan club seats and the fastest checkout time for tickets I have experienced thus far. The service charges amounted to approximately 11.5% of the base ticket price.



beyond just the immediate economic impact.

Is this cause for concern amongst those fighting for lower and fairer ticket prices? Perhaps. An argument could be made that these high-ticket prices are the result of a band/artist that has given up on the fight to keep ticket prices low and is cashing in on the reliability of fans to purchase tickets at a premium price. Arguably though, it underscores the argument I have outlined regarding the relevance of ticket prices, touring, and increased concentration to cultural capital and authenticity.

The questions we need to be asking in terms of the larger industry of ticketing address the breakdown of ticket prices, the percentage of revenue that goes into promotion, distribution and eventually, the artist. In addition, we as audiences need to be looking into the relationship of ticket price increases to both album sales, particular venues and do so across a large swath of artists. Concurrently, it bears examination to consider the cultural capital at stake in such tours and the pricing of tickets.

## **Chapter Review and Summary**

### **Chapter two.**

Chapter two focused on historical examination of the political economy as it relates to popular music, cultural studies, authenticity and music, existing work on popular music and protest, and a justification of a combination of political economy and cultural studies methodologies/approaches.

Specifically, this work adds breadth to the limited but relevant work

already in print regarding popular music and the political economy of media. In understanding how ownership, conglomeration and corporatization shape how live rock music is performed, this work illustrates the importance of tracing the full ecology of popular music, beyond just considerations of record label ownership and album/single distribution. As I have argued, live performance is at the center of financial concerns as a relatively stable source of income for promoters, musicians and ticketing companies; the research should continue to reflect this importance and centrality.

Additionally, my combination of research methods illustrates the appropriateness and necessity of introducing cultural studies' theories and analyses of authenticity to political economy-based studies of popular music. It is in combining these two approaches that issues of both cultural and economic capital can be examined in depth and in tandem. I also consider this work an extension of the scholarly work Philip Auslander introduced when looking at the relationship between authenticity and live performance.

### **Chapter three.**

Chapter three outlined the history of Ticketmaster in the 1990s, the Ticketmaster anti-trust case, the stakes for Pearl Jam, the results and justification of its dismissal, and a look at how the anatomy of the Ticketmaster/Live Nation institution has changed since the case was brought before the Justice Department. I used institutional analysis to illustrate the relationships of power and ownership, while also highlighting the necessity of this approach as a complement to cultural studies analyses to understand the

limits of theorizing resistance within cultural studies on its own, underscoring the points made in my literature review/methodology section on doing research using political economy and cultural studies approaches to look at a particular “text.”

I highlighted the fact that the Department of Justice dismissed Pearl Jam's complaint due in no small part to their decision that the promoters working with Ticketmaster, rather than the musicians, were the legitimate plaintiffs to bring about an anti-trust complaint. I then illustrated how the Ticketmaster/Live Nation merger has brought together the largest ticket distributor and promoter, leaving the ruling in a grey area in terms of contemporary relevance. What remains to be seen is who, given this merger, is now the appropriate plaintiff for any future anti-trust complaints, as the question of a separate promoter is now moot. I also provide a number of suggestions that follow from the anti-trust complaint, illustrating a number of means for artists and audiences to wrench back some of that control usurped by the Ticketmaster/Live Nation.

Future challenges, in order to have a modicum of success, will require the plaintiffs to illustrate they are the legitimate party to bring about such a claim. These hypothetical plaintiffs can use the Ticketmaster/Live Nation merger in any future hearings to illustrate their potential legitimacy in bringing up an anti-trust complaint. It remains to be seen, however, whether audiences or touring artists are legally the appropriate plaintiffs when the promoter is removed from the equation. I critiqued some of the existing solutions put forth

by media activists including the Media Education Foundation, starting from their flawed premise that albums, rather than touring, remains the center of the economy of popular music.

I proposed that one point of leverage would be the creation of record labels owned and operated by well-established artists, who, using their considerable cultural and economic capital could bargain with Ticketmaster and their alternatives on behalf of smaller artists. The importance of this issue, as illustrated by McChesney in *Money for Nothing*, remains the fact that live popular music is and should continue to represent a voice for the public at large and as such, keeping these channels affordable for audiences is a matter of both ethical and political importance. Rock artists need to have more options available to them for ticket distribution and promotion, so as to enable those who wish (such as Pearl Jam) to keep ticket prices to a minimum. As protest artists, the ability to reach those audience members with limited economic capital remains a challenge and a necessity for their ability to use the live forum for political ends.

#### **Chapter four.**

Chapter four outlined the relationship between Pearl Jam, liveness and live performance, and their status as a political rock band. Following a review of their tours in support of voter registration, both Ralph Nader and John Kerry's presidential bids, and the backlash over their song "Bushleaguer" performed live, I establish that for Pearl Jam, performing live is itself a political act. Further, songs recorded with an overtly political message take on a different cultural and

economic dimension when debated, performed, and battled over in the live arena.

### **Chapter five.**

Chapter five outlined the relationship between Pearl Jam and economic authenticity, particularly their means of defining themselves as authentic during the grunge years. I argued that with grunge, the bar for authenticity had been set impossibly high and both Nirvana and Pearl Jam had to take steps to construct and highlight their performative authenticity. It bears repeating here that I worked from the premise that authenticity is a construct, and as Grossberg (1992), Auslander (1999) and myself have argued, both “authentic” and “inauthentic” artists, as deemed so by fans, have their authenticity (or lack thereof) constructed in the space between fans, live performances, and the artists themselves.

### **Social Relevance: What's Left? What's Next? Directions for Future Research**

This study has deliberately focuses on Pearl Jam as a case study because of their high-profile and direct participation against Ticketmaster/Live Nation's monopoly. This action, in and of itself, served to set the bar higher for Pearl Jam than other artists as they had, so early in their careers, served as the voice against increasing ticket prices. This in turn would define and haunt their later tours, with fans/audiences always keeping in mind their Ticketmaster battle when evaluating the “legitimacy” of Pearl Jam's current ticket prices. Though

other artists, including R.E.M. and Aerosmith, provided evidence in the Ticketmaster hearing, these artists remained less articulated to the larger Ticketmaster battle after its conclusion than Pearl Jam. As a result, it remains to be seen whether the stakes of live performance and authenticity remain as high for other rock artists as they do for Pearl Jam. Artists not part of the sub-genre of rock known as grunge may find that their audience's perceptions of authenticity depend less on their ability to keep ticket prices low and more about what it means to "sound authentic." As a result, it will be necessary to conduct detailed research into how bands outside of the ones I have cited negotiate economic and cultural authenticity in the live arena.

Additionally, I limited this project to one particular genre of popular music: rock. Genre factors into all discussions of authenticity, though in ways that serve to both define and maintain genre boundaries. With peer-to-peer file sharing and its effect on how musicians and audiences perceive and construct authenticity and the value of recorded music *vis-a-vis* live performance, it becomes necessary to consider the interplay of genre, authenticity and file sharing for genres other than rock. My conclusions are deliberately limited to rock because of the hugely important relationship between standards of authentic and musical genre. What audiences of one genre may write off as inauthentic may be less problematic for audiences of another. Future research can and should focus on how artists from other genres, including hip-hop and pop, negotiate the changed relationship between financial capital, live performance, and cultural authenticity.

Another area requiring further research is the relationship between other promotional tools, such as the licensing of songs for commercials, video games, and television/film, and constructions of authenticity. In particular, the success of both the Guitar Hero, DJ Hero, and Rock Band video games depends on the willingness of artists to license their songs to the game developers. While some artists and record labels argue that they need to increase the use of their songs on these products to make up for losses of recording revenue, these sponsorships and partnerships are economic and cultural authenticity landmines. Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters illustrated this tension when he blasted the creators of the television series *Glee* for their aggressive tactics in recruiting songs to be featured on the show:

It's every band's right, you shouldn't have to do f\*\*\*\*\*g *Glee*...

Dude, maybe not everyone loves *Glee*. Me included. I watched 10 minutes and it wasn't my thing... The guy who created *Glee* is so offended that we're not, like, begging to be on his f\*\*\*\*\* show...

F\*\*\* that guy for thinking anybody and everybody should want to do *Glee*. (Grohl, qtd. in Fernandez, 2011)

Former Guns and Roses' guitarist Slash has equally critical comments about *Glee* and song licensing:

Actually, we got asked about [*Glee*] once already but it got turned down. In the current climate of what's going on in entertainment these days, I try to be more optimistic than negative because it's really easy to get negative about it, but I draw the line at *Glee*.

*Glee* is worse than *Grease* and *Grease* is bad enough... When *Grease* came out I was like, "Oh, c'mon, give me a break."

Actually, I look at *Grease* now and think: Between *High School Musical* and *Glee*, *Grease* was a brilliant work of art. (Slash, qtd. in Snierson, 2011)

While Grohl, Slash and other musicians may take issue with *Glee* for reasons outside of their push to license music, what is clear to the musicians, but less so to those requesting the licensing rights (in this case, the writers of *Glee*) is the fact that there is more at stake with licensing than the demeanor of the musical artists. In paraphrasing the reaction of *Glee*'s creator Ryan Murphy, Grohl debunked his arguments against these artists for declining to be part of *Glee* and his defensive reaction to artists turning down his offer:

"Well, of course he'd say that, he's a washed up ol' rock star, that's what they f---ing do." And then Kings of Leon say, "No, we don't want to be on your show." And then he's like, "Snotty little assholes..." (Grohl, qtd. in Fernandez, 2011)

Saying yes to *Glee*, or a number of other licensing requests, opens up several debates between audiences, fans and artists over the rationale for such a choice and as I have repeatedly reiterated, the politics of "selling out" through song licensing. It should be noted, however, that neither Grohl nor Slash took issue with the licensing of their songs for *Guitar Hero* and/or *Rock Band*. The act of saying yes or no to licensing is more than just musicians being difficult and ego-driven; it is a political act that takes into account cultural and economic



authenticity; recognizing that both forms of authenticity are performative.

In light of this, we need more research on how authenticity promotes certain paths of licensing over others; how Rock Band and Guitar Hero, in the eyes of Grohl, Slash and other artists, pose less of a threat to economic authenticity than their songs featured in *Glee*. This too will largely depend on genre conventions and future research must display sensitivity to these issues. Nevertheless, it remains a growing and relevant area of study to dovetail with the conclusions found herein.

Lastly, there remains the issue of popular musicians whose political leanings represent the other side of the spectrum. Further research will be necessary to determine the implications, restrictions, and performances of authenticity for artists espousing right-of-center political values that are not inherently oppositional to capitalism and consequently the logic of economic authenticity. Ted Nugent is perhaps the most obvious and popular example. This is also the case for artists who keep their personal politics separate from their musical performances.

### **Signs of Hope**

Despite the lack of a renewed anti-trust inquiry of Ticketmaster/Live Nation, there are several small but encouraging signs that artists have identified the market dominance as an issue and responded to the problem. In Minneapolis, several well-known and established music venues have abandoned the Ticketmaster/Live Nation distribution system for smaller

alternatives such as Etix.com and TicketFly (Riemenschneider, 2011). Among these venues include the Cabooze, the Varsity, and two Minneapolis venues known at the national level, the Triple Rock Social Club and First Avenue. In fact, the venues attributed their switch in part to the dissatisfaction with proportionally large service charges levied on tickets by Ticketmaster/Live Nation. The decrease in prices as a result of this switch is dramatic: "It's definitely a win-win," said First Ave general manager Nate Kranz, who estimates fees will be 20 to 40 percent lower for his club's ticket buyers." (Ibid.)

Ironically, in this same article, the author identifies yet another Ticketmaster "alternative" named Ticketweb. The irony is that this ticket seller is owned and operated by Ticketmaster, yet they are able to sell tickets with lower service charges (Ibid.). What distinguishes Ticketweb from Ticketmaster, despite their shared ownership, is, for the founder of Ticketweb, its fluency with social media for promotional purposes:

Dreskin -- also the founder of TicketWeb, which was sold to Ticketmaster in 2000 -- said the big chink in Ticketmaster's armor is technology. Its vast database and promotional capabilities have become less important to concert promoters thanks to Twitter, Facebook, iPhone apps, and other social-media platforms that Ticketfly uses to connect with fans. "We offer a one-stop shop where promoters and club owners can get the word out to all those social-media avenues through us," he said. "The playing field has been leveled." (Ibid.)

While the intricacies of how Ticketmaster is able to operate a three-tiered ticketing system are lengthy and debatable, the fact that this Ticketmaster-owned alternative is able to offer the same tickets for less money renders their argument that conventional service charges are fair and necessary hard to swallow. It may be the case that the continued operation of the traditional Ticketmaster distribution mechanism is what permits the lower service charges offered by the Ticketweb affiliate.

Their reliance on technology as an edge over Ticketmaster is not without challenges. Anecdotaly, blogger makescents81 lamented:

I bought tickets for a show at First Ave last week. Took 3 hours to get my order through. Their website was horrible and I never even saw a confirmation page. It sat at processing.....Then my phone notified me of an email. It was my confirmation email from etix [sic]. Pretty sweet especially considering it still cost \$9 a ticket in fees. I would rather pay \$15 in fees and not have to deal with a dysfunctional system. (makescents81, qtd. in Riemenschneider, 2011)

Ticketmaster is not without similar stories of technology failing or grinding to a halt in the process of buying tickets, but they do have the advantage of a well-established online point-of-purchase system that reduces the severity and frequency of these complaints. For these Twin Cities alternative ticketing companies to mount a serious challenge to the hegemony and monopoly of Ticketmaster, they will have to make substantial investments in their online

infrastructure to handle increasing demand. Otherwise, as makescents81 illustrates, customers may return to Ticketmaster and pay more for security and peace of mind. After all, in many cases, the tickets themselves, without considering the service charges, are a substantial investment and so the added expense to “insure” these tickets through the largest ticketing company might not seem very burdensome.

The use of Ticketweb, Etix.com and Ticketfly by prominent Twin-cities venues reflects a commitment on the part of these venues towards keeping ticket prices low. Venues are not the only participants who have chosen to engage directly with the problem of ticket prices, albeit without a legal challenge to the status of Ticketmaster. Touring artists have found other means to air their grievances at the high cost of tickets when purchased through Ticketmaster, and Pearl Jam has surprisingly not been one of the frontrunners of this campaign. In Toronto, Henry Rollins of Black Flag and Rollins Band offered fans a partial “refund” of \$10 to offset the cost of tickets for his spoken-word tour date (Hughes, 2011). The refund was a response to complaints by fans about the high cost of attendance:

A word to all the swell people in Toronto: I got a lot of letters from you, telling me about the high ticket price. I don't know if you know but I try very hard to keep ticket prices as low as possible. Life is painful enough. So, I got these letters about the price and we did some looking into the situation and found out that the promoter there, who I have been working with for a couple of hundred

years, all on his own, added ten bucks to the ticket price. Isn't he something?! My wonderful and loyal Canadian audience, fear not. I am going to take care of all this in a manner you will find most memorable. Please accept my apologies. (Rollins, 2011)

While there is no way to verify if, in fact, Rollins' promoter added another \$10 to the base price of the tickets, issues of economic and cultural authenticity remain at the heart of this response. Rollins, building a solo career from his punk roots, has some very tenuous lines to walk when balancing the desire to tour with a very real need to avoid audiences and fans labeling him a "sell-out" for high ticket prices. Arguably, this battle between touring and not "selling out" remains at play for many rock artists, including Pearl Jam.

Rollins' solution, to personally hand back ten-dollar-bills to his audience, while novel, cannot serve as a directive to other rock artists. Rollins had the advantage of a small audience in a small venue, and in performing spoken-word works rather than music with an accompanying band, making the financial detour logistically possible. Doing the same with an arena of 20,000-plus fans, during the band's set, will not work. Additionally, the gesture may never satiate the desires of some fans who argue that even with a partial refund, artists such as Rollins charge fans more than the tickets are worth.

Returning to the work of McChesney (2008) on hyper-commercialization, one might find Pepsi advertisements physically present on the stage and surrounding apparatus, in addition to Pepsi holding a monopoly on the kinds of beverages available for purchase at these concerts. For musical artists fighting

this sort of hyper-commercialization, it can become problematic, if not impossible, to present their music at a venue without these sorts of commercial billboards and ambient presence. This may send a contradictory message to audiences, which could be interpreted as the musicians being hypocritical. The reality is that while their songs, statements, interviews, and so forth may express an explicit anti-commercial attitude or political position, their actual performance is physically surrounded by messages that express the opposite. At a Pearl Jam show in Detroit in 2003, the band faced a number of threats to perceptions of their economic and cultural authenticity. First, the best seats at the show were reserved for corporate promotional tickets, given to employees of local Detroit businesses/venue sponsors and their friends and families. This was not in their control and contradicts their fan club ticket policy of offering the best seats in the house to fan club members. In response, Pearl Jam verbally ridiculed those with the best seats at this show and “outed” them for receiving promotional tickets based on their employment.

Second, at this show a number of various ads surrounded the physical stage. Eddie Vedder took time to ridicule and question the presence of these ads, including Miller Lite and the *Detroit Free Press* amongst others. A small step, no doubt, but one means of resisting and identifying their stance on this sort of hyper-commercialism at live musical venues. Ideally, the artists and audiences would be able to experience live musical performance in an environment devoid of this hyper-commercialism, but the particular policies, corporate agreements, and so forth have made this nearly impossible.

I have included these examples to demonstrate the cultural moves made by rock artists and audiences in coming to terms with their position in the institutional chain of value for the rock music industry. While not all the solutions are feasible, these examples illustrate the importance of live shows to fans, venues, and artists alike. This time and energy could have been spent on the continued challenge of peer-to-peer file sharing, but as I have illustrated, live performance and touring, rather than recordings, is now at the center of debates over economic and cultural authenticity and remains the most important musical medium for rock protest artists.

## Works Cited

### Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor. (1974). *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*.

Trans. E.F.N. Jephcott. London: Verso.

Attali, Jacques. (1985). *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis:

University of Minnesota Press.

Auslander, Philip. (1999). *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*.

London and New York: Routledge.

Barker, Hugh and Taylor, Yuval. (2007). *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in*

*Popular Music*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Benjamin, Walter. (1968). The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical

Reproduction. In *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry

Zohn, 217-252. New York: Schocken Books.

Bilton, Tony et al. (1996). *Introductory Sociology*, 3rd edition. London,

Macmillan.

Boehlert, Eric. (1994, April 23). Pearl Jam Tries to Rewrite Rules for Live

Shows. *Billboard* 23, 1-2.

Bourdieu, Pierre. (1993). The Market of Symbolic Goods. *The Field of Cultural*

*Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Ed. Randall Johnson, 112-

141. New York: Columbia UP.

Bourdieu, Pierre. (1993). The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy

of Symbolic Goods. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and*



*Literature*. Ed. Randall Johnson, 112-141. New York: Columbia UP.

*Brief for the United States and the Federal Trade Commission as Amici Curiae:*

*Alex Campos, et al. v. Ticketmaster Corporation*. (1998.). Retrieved May 10, 2009, from <http://www.usdoj.gov/atr/cases/f2100/2157.htm>.

Brown, Mark. (2003, April 3). Concert-goers jam exits after anti-Bush display.

*Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 53A.

Burkart, Patrick. and McCourt, Tom. (2006). *Digital Music Wars: Ownership and Control of the Celestial Jukebox*. New York: Roman & Littlefield.

Cobain, Kurt. (1994). Suicide note.

Colapinto, John. (1996, Nov 28). Who are You? Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder.

*Rolling Stone* 748, 50-60.

Denver Fans Walk Out of Pearl Jam Show. (2003, April 4). *Associated Press*.

DeRogatis, Jim. (2009, February 24). Recapping the Ticketmaster/Live Nation hearing on Capitol Hill. *Chicago Sun-Times*. Retrieved May 10, 2009, from [http://blogs.suntimes.com/derogatis/2009/02/recapping\\_the\\_ticketmaster\\_live.html](http://blogs.suntimes.com/derogatis/2009/02/recapping_the_ticketmaster_live.html).

Desinoff, R. Serge. (1983). *Sing a Song of Social Significance*. Bowling Green, OH: Popular Press.

Desinoff, R. Serge and Levine, Mark H. (1971). The popular protest song: The case of "Eve of Destruction." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 35, 117-122.

Desinoff, R. Serge and Peterson, Richard A. (Eds.). (1972). *The Sounds of*

*Social Change: Studies in Popular Culture*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Dolfsma, Wilfred. (2004). *Institutional Economics and the Formation of Preferences*. Aldershot: Edward Elgar.

Duke, Alan. (2009, February 5). Ticketmaster-Live Nation talks raise concerns. *CNN*. Retrieved May 10, 2009, from <http://www.cnn.com/2009/SHOWBIZ/Music/02/05/ticketmaster.livenation/index.html>.

Dunlap, James. (2006). Through the eyes of Tom Joad: patterns of American idealism, Bob Dylan and the Folk Protest Movement. *Popular Music and Society* 29(3), 549-573.

Fernandez, Jay. (2011). Foo Fighters' Dave Grohl to Ryan Murphy: 'Not Everyone Loves 'Glee.'" *Hollywood Reporter*. Retrieved April 1, 2011 from <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/foo-fighters-dave-grohl-ryan-murphy-glee-168949>.

Fiske, John. (1987). *Television Culture*. London: Methuen.

Fricke, David. (2003). Eddie Unabridged. *Rolling Stone Online*. Retrieved December 8, 2008 from [http://www.rollingstone.com/artists/eddievedder/articles/story/5940075/eddie\\_unabridged](http://www.rollingstone.com/artists/eddievedder/articles/story/5940075/eddie_unabridged)

Fricke, David. (2004 August 11). Taking it to the Streets: Artists unite for Kerry with historic Vote for Change Tour. *Rolling Stone Online*. Retrieved December 8, 2008 from

[http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/6420236/vote\\_for\\_change\\_taking\\_it\\_to\\_the\\_streets](http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/6420236/vote_for_change_taking_it_to_the_streets)

Frith, Simon (1987). Why Do Songs Have Words? In *Lost in Music. Culture, Style and the Musical Event*, ed. A.L. White, 77-106. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Frith, Simon. (1993). Youth/music/television. In *Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader*, ed. Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin, and Lawrence Grossberg, 67-83. New York: Routledge.

Gallagher, Dylan. (2000). Review: Pearl Jam, Binaural. *PopPolitics: Commentary on Popular and Political Cultures*.  
<http://www.poppolitics.com/archives/2000/07/Binaural>

Garnham, Nicholas. (1995). Political Economy and Cultural Studies: Reconciliation or Divorce? *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12(1), 62-71.

Garofalo, Reebee. (1992). Understanding Mega-Events. In *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music & Mass Movements*, ed. Reebee Garofalo, 15-35. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Griffiths, Dai. (2003). From Lyric to Anti-Lyric: Analyzing the Words in Pop Song. In *Analyzing Popular Music*, Ed. Allan F. Moore, 39-59. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP.

Gutmann, Amy. (2004). *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP.

- Grossberg, Lawrence. (1995). Cultural Studies vs. Political Economy: Is Anyone Else Bored With This Debate? *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12(1), 72-81.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. (1992). *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. (1993). The Media Economy of Rock Culture: Cinema, Postmodernity and Authenticity. In *Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader*, ed. Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin, and Lawrence Grossberg, 185-209. New York: Routledge.
- Hall, Stuart. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972-79*. Ed. Stuart Hall et. al., 128-138. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Hughes, Josiah. (2011). Henry Rollins Responds to High Ticket Prices by Handing Out \$10 Bills at Toronto Show. *Exclaim*. Retrieved May 11, 2011 from [http://exclaim.ca/News/henry\\_rollins\\_responds\\_to\\_high\\_ticket\\_prices\\_by\\_handing\\_out\\_10\\_bills\\_at\\_toronto\\_show](http://exclaim.ca/News/henry_rollins_responds_to_high_ticket_prices_by_handing_out_10_bills_at_toronto_show)
- Jay, Martin. (2006). Taking On the Stigma of Inauthenticity: Adorno's Critique of Genuineness. *New German Critique* 97, 15-30.
- Johnson, Fred. (2004). U2, Mythology, and Mass-mediated Survival. *Popular Music and Society*, 27(1), 79-99.
- Jordan, Will. (2003). Pearl Jam still rocking in the free world. *Nashville City*

*Paper.*

Knapton, Sarah. (2009, Feb 5). Bruce Springsteen 'furious' at Ticketmaster. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved May 11, 2010, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/4520960/Bruce-Springsteen-furious-at-Ticketmaster.html>.

Kot, Greg. (2009, February 11). Why a Ticketmaster-Live Nation merger will cost you. *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved May 10, 2009, from <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/2009/feb/11/business/chi-wed-kot-ticketmaster-feb11>.

Kuipers, Giseline. (2005). Television and Taste Hierarchy: The Case of Dutch Television Comedy. *Media, Culture and Society* 28(3), 359-378.

Love, Courtney. (2000). Courtney Love does the math. *Salon.com*. Retrieved April 1, 2011, from <http://www.salon.com/technology/feature/2000/06/14/love/print.html>.

Manning, Kara. (2000). Pearl Jam On Columbine-Inspired New Song. *MTV Online*. [http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1433051/20000419/pearl\\_jam.jhtml](http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1433051/20000419/pearl_jam.jhtml).

Marx, Karl. (2003) [1867]. *Capital, volume 1*. Ed. Frederick Engels, Trans. Samuel Moore & Edward Aveling. New York: International Publishers.

Marx, K. (1968). "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte." In *Selected Works*, 94–179. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Mattern, Mark. (1998). *Acting in Concert: Music, Community, and Political*

*Action*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP.

McChesney, Robert. (2008). *The Political Economy of Media: Enduring Issues, Emerging Dilemmas*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Meehan, Eileen. (2000). Leisure or Labor? Fan Ethnography and Political Economy. In *Consuming Audiences? Production and Reception in Media Research*, eds. I. Hagen & J. Wasko, 71-92. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Meehan, Eileen. (2005). *Why TV Is Not Our Fault: Television Programming, Viewers, and Who's Really in Control*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Moore, Allan. (2002). Authenticity as Authentication. *Popular Music* 2(2), 209-223.

Morse, Steve. (2003). Rock Notes; Pearl Jam Stays True to a Tune. *Boston Globe*, C12.

Morse, Steve. (2004, September 19). Pearl Jam takes action on this fall's "Vote" tour. *Boston Globe Online*. Retrieved December 8, 2008, from [http://www.boston.com/news/globe/living/articles/2004/09/19/pearl\\_jam\\_takes\\_action\\_on\\_this\\_falls\\_vote\\_tour/](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/living/articles/2004/09/19/pearl_jam_takes_action_on_this_falls_vote_tour/)

Mosco, Vincent. (1996). *The Political Economy of Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Neely, Kim. (1998). *Five Against One: The Pearl Jam Story*. New York: Penguin.

Negus, Keith. (1999). *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures*. New York:

Routledge.

Olson, Mark. (1997). "Everybody loves our town": Scenes, Spatiality, Migrancy. In *Mapping the Beat: Popular Music and Contemporary Theory*, ed. Thomas Swiss, Andrew Herman, and John Sloop, 269-289. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Pattie, David. (1999). 4 Real: Authenticity, Performance and Rock Music. *Enculturation* 2(2).

Pearl Jam. (2003, May 2). Radio Interview by *103.3 The Edge*. Buffalo, NY.

Pearl Jam. (1993, Oct). Five Against the World. Interview by Cameron Crowe. *Rolling Stone* 28.

Pearl Jam Ten Club. (1999). *Newsletter* 15. Seattle: Ten Club.

*Pearl Jam's Antitrust Complaint: Questions about Concert, Sports and Theater Ticket Handling Charges and Other Practices: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Information, Justice, Transportation and Agriculture of the House Committee on Government Operations, 103<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess.* (1994).

Peddie, Ian. (Ed.). (2006). *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Pedelty, Mark. (2011). *Rave Paradise or Rock in a Parking Lot? Popular Music and the Environment*. Philadelphia: Temple UP.

Penley, Constance. (1992). Feminism, Psychoanalysis and the Study of Popular Culture. In *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary

Nelson and Paula Treichler, 479-500. New York: Routledge.

Pratt, Ray. (1990). *Rhythm and Resistance: Explorations in the Political Uses of Popular Music*. Praeger: New York.

Puterbaugh, Peter. (1992). U2. *Rolling Stone* 628, 29.

Reznor, Trent. (2009, March 15). TR thoughts on ticket re-sellers / scalping. [web forum comment]. Retrieved March 30, 2011, from <http://forum.nin.com/bb/read.php?59,548515,page=1>.

Rodman, Gil. (1996). *Elvis after Elvis: The Posthumous Career of a Living Legend*. New York: Routledge.

Rollins, Henry. (2011). Dispatches January 2011. *Henryrollins.com*. Retrieved May 11, 2011 from [http://henryrollins.com/dispatch/detail/dispatches\\_january\\_2011/](http://henryrollins.com/dispatch/detail/dispatches_january_2011/)

Riemenschneider, Chris. (2011). Ticketmaster faces the music, especially in Twin Cities. *Star Tribune*. Retrieved May 11, 2011 from <http://www.startribune.com/entertainment/music/119033829.html>.

Rodnitzky, Jerome. (2006). The Decline and Rebirth of Folk-protest Music. In *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*, ed. Ian Peddie, 17-29. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Rodnitzky, Jerome. (1999). The Sixties Between the Microgrooves: Using Folk and Protest Music to Understand American History, 1963-1973. *Popular*



*Music & Society* 23(4), 105-122.

Rosenstone, Robert. (1969). "The times they are a changin'": The Music of Protest. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 382, 131-144.

Rosoff, Matt. (2009, February 10). Ticketmaster, Live Nation to merge. *CNET News*. Retrieved May 10, 2009, from [http://news.cnet.com/8301-13526\\_3-10160553-27.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-13526_3-10160553-27.html).

Sandoval, Greg. (2007, October 9). First Radiohead...now Nine Inch Nails bids adieu to music label. *CNET News*. Retrieved May 10, 2009, from [http://news.cnet.com/8301-10784\\_3-9793541-7.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-10784_3-9793541-7.html).

Sanneh, Kelefa. (2003, May 3). Pop Review; Ruffled Feathers Make a Rough Party. *New York Times B3*, 11.

Satariano, Adam and Bensinger, Greg. (2009, February 4). Springsteen Sides With Fans, Condemns Ticketmaster. *Bloomberg*. Retrieved May 10, 2009, from <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601103&sid=axBM1uUzBOA8&refer=us>.

Schiller, Dan. (2008). *How to Think about Information*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Set Lists and Appearances 2003-2. *Pearl Jam: Synergy*. Retrieved December 8, 2008, from <http://www.sonymusic.com/artists/PearlJam/fanscene/set2003b.html>

Set Lists and Appearances 2003-3. *Pearl Jam: Synergy*. Retrieved December 8, 2008, from

<http://www.sonymusic.com/artists/PearlJam/fanscene/set2003c.html>

Set Lists and Appearances 2004. *Pearl Jam: Synergy*. Retrieved December 8, 2008, from

<http://www.sonymusic.com/artists/PearlJam/fanscene/set2004.html>

Set Lists and Appearances 2007. *Pearl Jam: Synergy*. Retrieved December 8, 2008, from

<http://www.sonymusic.com/artists/PearlJam/fanscene/set2007.html>

Shuker, Roy. (2001). *Understanding Popular Music*. 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge.

Smith, Ethan. (2002, May). Organization Moby. *Wired.com*. Retrieved May 10, 2010 from <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/10.05/moby.html>.

Smythe, Dallas (1981). *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness and Canada*. Ablex: Norwood, N.J.

Snierson, Dan. (2011). Slash talks about his tour with Ozzy, the search for Velvet Revolver's singer, and Axl's latest accolade. *Entertainment Weekly*. Retrieved May 11, 2011 from <http://music-mix.ew.com/2011/01/16/slash-talks-ozzy-velvet-revolver-axl-rose/>.

Storytellers. *VH1*.

[http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/storytellers/series\\_about.jhtml](http://www.vh1.com/shows/dyn/storytellers/series_about.jhtml)

Straw, Will. (1993). Popular Music and Postmodernism in the 1980s. In *Sound*

*and Vision: The Music Video Reader*, eds. Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin and Lawrence Grossberg, 3-24. London: Routledge.

Street, John. (1986). *Rebel Rock: The Politics of Popular Music*. New York: Basil Blackwell.

Talvi, Silja. (2000, September 26). Vedder on Nader: The Better Man.

*Salon.com*. Retrieved from

<http://archive.salon.com/ent/log/2000/09/26/vedder/index.html>

Tannenbaum, Rob. (2000, July). Rebels Without A Pause. *George Magazine*.

Ten Club. (2011a). Alpine Valley Pre-Sale Update. *PearlJam.com*. Retrieved

May 24, 2011, from <http://www.pearljam.com/news/alpine-valley-pre-sale-update-0>.

Ten Club. (2011b). Ten Club Canada Pre-Sale. *Pearljam.com*. Retrieved May

26, 2011, from <http://www.pearljam.com/news/ten-club-canada-pre-sale>.

Ullestad, Neal. (1992). Diverse Rock Rebellions Subvert Mass Media

Hegemony. In *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music & Mass Movements*, ed.

Reebee Garofalo, 37-54. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Unplugged 2.0. *MTV*. <http://www.mtv.com/onair/unplugged/>. n.d. 3 Oct. 2006.

van Zoonen, Liesbet. (2005). *Entertaining the Citizen: When Politics and*

*Popular Culture Converge*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Voices for Change. (2004). *Rollingstone.com*. Retrived Dec 13, 2008, from

[http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/6487639/voices\\_for\\_change](http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/6487639/voices_for_change)

Weinstein, Deena. (2006). Rock Protest Songs: So Many and So Few. In *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*, ed. Ian Peddie, 3-16. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Willhardt, Mark. (2006). Available Rebels and Folk Authenticities: Michelle Shocked and Billy Bragg. In *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*, ed. Ian Peddie, 30-48. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

### **Discography**

Pearl Jam. (2000). *Binaural* [CD]. Seattle: Epic.

Pearl Jam. (2002). *Riot Act* [CD]. Seattle: Epic.

Pearl Jam. (1991). *Ten* [CD]. Seattle: Epic.

Van Zandt, Steven. (1983). *Voice of America* [CD]. New York: Blue Midnight Music.

Young, Neil. (1988). *This Note's For You* [CD]. New York: Reprise Records.

Various Artists. (1996). *Hype! The Motion Picture Soundtrack* [CD]. Seattle: Sub Pop Records.

### **Videography**

Charnoski, Rick and Nichols, Coan (Producers). (2008). *Vote for Change? Parts 1-4* [motion picture]. (Available at <https://www.pearljam.com/activism/vfc.php>).

Jhally, Sut and McLeod, Kembrew (Producers). (2001). *Money for Nothing:*

*Behind the Business of Pop Music* [Motion picture]. Northampton, MA:  
Media Education Foundation.

Pearl Jam. (2006, May 31). *Storytellers* [Television program]. VH1. New York.

Pearl Jam (Producers). (2000). *Touring Band 2000* [DVD].

Pray, Doug. (1996). *Hype! Surviving the Northwest Rock Explosion* [Motion  
picture]. Seattle, WA: Helvey-Pray Productions.