

Entering a Musical Haze: How Music Festivals
Have Created Their Own Culture

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My Entrance to the “Coachella Haze”

I was ten when my parents took me to my first concert. It was one of the best moments in my life, seeing a band that I loved so much right in front of me. I was in awe watching my favorite boy band. The concert was for Nsync, and even at such a young age, I knew that concerts were going to be something I enjoyed forever. From then on I had to see and experience more. Growing up in Southern California made it easy because I was lucky enough to have the one of the largest music festivals right in my backyard.

I was 18 when I attended my first Coachella Fest, and from then on I was hooked. I had friends that had gone a few times before me, and after hearing about their experiences and how the weekend played out for them, I became so pumped up for this three day event. The first thing my friends and I did, even before we looked at the lineup, was purchase new clothes to wear. I remember being so excited about planning my outfit for each day. My friends and I made shopping trips to Urban Outfitters and Free People so that we could look the part and be seen as “trendy” or “hipster.” I finally got a chance to feel like I could wear whatever I wanted and express myself through my clothes. Dressing up was exhilarating for me because I knew that Coachella is a place where I would feel most comfortable and confident. I watched my friends in the past years wear things that I had never seen them wear before and really push the limits of their style. I was very ready to be able to do this for myself.

After the outfits were planned and my flower headband fit perfectly around my head, the next step was looking up every band, listening to their top songs, and memorizing every lyric. I made sure that I strategically planned which bands I was going to see so that I did not miss anyone. My friends and I had everything set out for our 3-

day festival and we could not wait till the days to drown ourselves in dancing. Not only did I plan my schedule ahead, but I also looked up almost every band that was playing that year. I had extremely high expectations for Coachella but I had no idea how high it would have exceeded them until I entered the polo fields.

The morning of the festival came and we basically sprinted to the polo fields. We immediately went to the outdoor theatre stage where our first pick of the day was playing. I remember sitting on the grass listening to the band, She and Him, looking around at all the friends I was with and thinking that I never wanted to leave this place. After a long day of listening to music and eating spicy pie and watermelon, we headed over to the Sahara tent, where all the EDM artists performed. I had never experienced something quite like this before and I was mesmerized. Everyone danced like crazy and did not care what anyone else thought about how they looked while dancing, or how ridiculously sweaty they were (as well as the others around them). I felt like I belonged and that this was truly the happiest place on Earth because I could literally be anyone I wanted to be and feel any way I wanted to without being judged. I felt accepted.

As the night progressed, we headed to the outdoor theater where I got to see one of my longtime favorite bands, Vampire Weekend. This performance definitely cemented my love for music festivals. I had been looking forward to seeing this band the most. It was all my friends and I had talked about for most of the day. In my mind, all the bands that I had seen earlier were just openers for Vampire Weekend.

It was just starting to get dark when my friend and I got separated from the group. We headed to the Outdoor Theatre right next to the Coachella Stage. Our other friends texted us and gave us so much grief that we did not stay with them at the Coachella main

Stage, but we didn't care. We had been waiting for this moment for too long to miss it. We made our way through the sea of people to get as close as possible. I felt a mixture of anxiousness, adrenalin and excitement. Once we found a spot to call our own, lights flashed, a purple chandelier appeared and the song "Kape Cod Kwassa Kwassa" started playing. We sang along to every word and my friend and I felt such a strong connection to each other, as well as the band and everyone around us. We were singing, dancing, meeting new people, and having the time of our lives. The best part of it all was getting the chance to go up on someone's shoulders and be above the whole crowd. My friend and I were sailing above the crowd on the shoulders of these two guys we had just met. It was the first time I had been on someone's shoulders during a concert before, and it was an amazing experience. Above the crowd, I felt like I was looking Vampire Weekend right in the eyes. I had such a strong connection to the music. It became an emotional and spiritual experience. Holding hands with my friends, being above the crowd, listening to my favorite bands, and on top of it all, being in my hometown where I grew up—it was a memory we still talk about to this day.

Entering what I like to call a "Coachella haze" changed my life. I could not get enough of it and I wanted the weekend to last forever. Watching people be whoever they wanted to be, seeing the bands I had researched and listened to for years live right before my eyes was an amazing experience. I realized in that moment that Coachella was truly my perfect place of being. After that experience, I discovered that music festivals were my utopia.

As the years went on, I could not get enough of the festival experience. I attended different raves, Lollapalooza, Vans Warped Tour and many others to recreate my

wonderful Coachella experiences. Something that I learned as the years went on was that there is a huge sense of community, liveliness, performance, and even religious or ritualistic aspects to music festivals. They each have their own “culture” and their own set of rules that are new and different from the outside world.

My experiences in music and music festivals have lead me to this philosophy: Music festivals (whether they are a punk rock show or a rave) all share the same aspects and features of the audience members engaging in the act of performance, “liveness,” and, lastly, music festivals have ritualistic features that create community. All of these have been experiences throughout each music festival I have attended. Hopefully, through my research and my case studies, others will share in the idea of what I believe is to be true within the culture of music festivals.

Intro to How Culture and Music Festivals Relate

Culture and its Importance on Music and Life

Culture is a very complicated concept, derived from a very simple idea. Your culture is what you are, who you are, how you are, and how you came to be. Culture can be on a small scale, like the culture of your home life, or on a much larger scale, like the culture of the Catholicism. In the book *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*, Judith Martin and Thomas Nakayama discuss the idea of intercultural communication. The authors ask the question “why do we study intercultural communication?” My answer, as well as theirs, is that by studying intercultural communication, not only do we learn about others and how they communicate, but we also learn about ourselves and why we

individually communicate in certain ways. Communication varies with different cultures.

The way someone communicates can range from the way they were raised and who they were raised by to things like religion, family background and comfort in situations.

Language is also a huge part of culture and has major impact on your relationships with others. When I say language I don't just mean what language to they speak, I mean how they use the language that they speak. For example, someone who grew up on the East Coast will have a different language then someone who grew up in Southern California.

Since language is a part of culture and culture is what a music festival embodies, people will tend to unconsciously create their own language. Music also becomes the language for the festival attendees. In the article "Negotiation Globalization Through Hybridization: Hip Hop, Language Use And The Creation Of Cross-Over Culture In Nigerian Popular Music", Wale Adedeji makes a statement about language and it is a large part of communication is music.

"Language is an important means of communication and where popular music is involved the language of delivery is a coded embodiment of the speaker's culture. It is also a common saying that 'music is a universal language' meaning music should be enjoyed and felt the same way anywhere irrespective of the language of delivery and location" (np).

Adedeji makes a great point in saying that music is involved with language and its delivery and that fact that it is looked at as a code for the person's culture. Music can serve many communicative functions including it being looked at as a code and cracking the code serves a pathway into a person's culture. Music festivals are a place for people of all kinds to come together. The previous quote (at least what I personally get from

that) is truly correct in saying that all people, regardless of anything else, should enjoy music.

A music festival is, in a way, its own unique cultural space. It is a unique melting pot of cultures that becomes its own culture. In the book *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*, Martian and Nakayama discuss the notion of cultural space. Cultural space can be hard to define in just one simple sentence because it can be defined as different things. It can mean a physical space you are in, like your home or apartment as well as a non-physical space like a social media website. Cultural space is a mix of different social groups, demographics, religions, and cultural backgrounds that create a new cultural space. The demographic of a festival is a mixture of all different kinds of people with different backgrounds and/or cultures. Therefore, music festivals have demographics because it has many different people from all over the place with different cultures coming together in this space and making a new culture. When you understand the environment of a music festival, you come to learn the routines and rituals that make a music festival unique and individualized. Although there is great diversity within different music festivals, they all share the central idea of community and have certain social standards that are common among them.

Music festivals even have aspects of globalization. Adedjii quotes a line from Mafleet Kiely's article "Globalization and the Third World," saying that "globalization, in its simplest meaning, refers to a world in which societies, cultures, politics and economies have in some sense come together" (Kiely). I think that music festivals have most, if not all, of these aspects. People of all different cultures, politics and economies come together for three days as well as a festival having its own economy, culture and

politics. When you mix people together with different culture and background, you will get people with all different tastes and outlooks on music. Each person has their own favorite style of music as well as style of how they like to enjoy their festival experience.

A music genre is more than just a type of sound or style you are “into.” It has deep meaningful aspects, strong followings, passion, and even religious qualities. Music is sometimes thought of as being not just music but also a “way of life.” This cliché is not only true, but should be embraced and thoroughly accepted. Music festivals are a great example of how music can become a “way of life” throughout history. Music festivals are jam packed with all types of people, personalities and ways of life.

Typically, music festivals are specific to a genre but some, like Coachella, can have a mix of different types of music throughout. For example, Vans Warped Tour and Electric Daisy Carnival (EDC) like to stick to certain themes/genres of music. Vans Warped Tour tends to stick to mainstream pop-punk and will vary into the more hard core and “screamo” music. EDC has DJ’s and sticks to Electric Dance Music (EDM). This creates an experience where the person attending gets completely surrounded by the true culture of these genres. Coachella tends to go all over the map, mixing EDM, pop, rap, rock, and indie all into one festival. Joining all of these styles together creates a unique and special experience for the festivalgoer. It does this because it is creating a dynamic festival. It is creating something that you can only experience at this particular event, whatever music festival that may be. By having all these different styles of music in one festival, it gives the attendee the full experience as well as the choice to view whatever style of music they want.

Music and Emotions

Music is unique in every way, from the creative process of writing a song, to the feeling people get when they listen to a song. The way in which one song differs from the other with its complex chord progressions to the technology that can recreate sounds are just a few examples of that. This is something that has been around since the beginning of time and not only has been a part of every human's life but has enhanced people's lives in many ways. So why does music have such a strong effect on people? The answer, as I see it, is this: Music is equal to happiness. Music has such a strong effect on one's emotions that listening to one song can change your whole mood and/or way. There is a large psychological aspect behind music and how it affects people's emotions.

This is why music festivals are as large as they are. You are surrounded by friends, family, and strangers that all share the same love for music as you do, or maybe the same desire for new music and experience that you do. Community and people coming together create a connection, and connections between people make people happy. Festivals have a large capability to do that due to the fact that they are centered in music. In the article, "Music Listening in Families and Peer Groups: Benefits for Young People's Social Cohesion and Emotional Well-Being Across Four Cultures," Diana Boer describes this perfectly by stating;

"Listening to music with family and friends is associated with positive emotions. In line with a vast amount of research on the emotional effects of music-listening... our findings suggest that music listening as a social activity relates to more positive emotions being experienced in everyday life. Hence

musical rituals contribute to positive emotional well-being or vice versa:

individuals who are more positive in their emotional well-being tend to engage in more music listening with their peers and family members” (np).

This statement fully embodies why music is equal to happiness and why music festivals are such a large part of that. If you are listening to music with your friends and family, people that you love and enjoy being around; it is not surprising that a positive emotion will occur. Music festivals are a social activity and according to this quite listening to music as a social activity will make you happy. I, as well as the people I conducted case studies with, believe music is such an important part of life and can have such a positive effect on people.

In the article "Emotions In Music Culture: The Circulation Of Love", the author Ann Werner discusses what the relationship between music and emotion can be.

“Emotions may be purposely invoked or expressed, come as a surprise, be good, bad or painful. Nevertheless, all listeners will at times experience emotions when listening to music. Music also portrays emotion: in lyrics, sounds and performance, and while the variation of emotions in music is immense, ‘love’ is the emotion that dominates mainstream popular musical lyrics” (np).

Music festivals combine the two things people should have in their life to increase happiness: music and people. Communicating with people about a band you love creates such a strong connection between you, that person, and the artist on the stage. Music has a strong positive effect on emotions, especially when people you like surround you.

In the next section I am going to discuss music festival History. The reason I am going to do this is because music festivals are not a recent discovery. As our world,

society and culture develop, music develops. As music develops, music festivals develop and become more dynamic. Although music festivals have recently grown a large amount, they are not a new event. Music festivals have been around since the 50's and it is interesting and useful to see where we were with the development in music festivals to where we are today.

A Brief History of Music Festivals

When I think about the music festivals today, I cannot help but look at them as “The New Woodstock or “The New Monterey Pop” which, in actual fact, they have become. They share the same qualities that the festivals in the 60's and 70's had, and, it can be argued, have expanded to become much bigger and have more variety. In the book *Join Together: Forty Years of the Rock Music Festival*, Marley Brant expresses his thoughts on music festivals in the 60s that are in line with what I believe to be true about them today. He says, “I remember the impact that ‘Monterey Pop’ and ‘Woodstock’ had on my generation. It was amazing to see us that such gatherings would reflect our society, our politics, and our hopes for the future. And the music that we were exposed to because of the success of those festivals was pure magic” (xi). This shows the impact that music festivals had on our culture before they became what they are today. Music festivals have been a part of culture since before this generation. Brant continues by describing Monterey Pop and what it meant for the fans that were going to be attending: “Monterey Pop would not be focused on the (that) aspect of the music industry—at least not during the days it would actually be happening. Instead it would be a fellowship of people coming together purely for the music in the spirit of love and peace” (6). Music festivals

today have only become more and more popular with music lovers and with musicians. They have expanded from what Woodstock and Monterey Pop were while still having the same “magical” effect on people.

Music festivals have been around since before the 60’s and 70’s. As our generation, population, technology and musical abilities grow, the music festivals around the world grow. Brant discussed the Newport Jazz Festival and how it was one of the festivals in the 50’s and 60’s that attempted to push the boundaries of music and music festivals. He starts by saying that “the idea of a music festival wasn’t anything new...the 3 day Newport Jazz Festival had been popular since it first debuted in 1954” (3). This shows that music festivals are not a new concept for this new generation. Not only did the music festivals in previous decades show us the evolution of the music, but they also taught the people that put on these music festivals to create a safe and fan-friendly environment.

When you think about where music festivals started and where they have ended up today, you can observe the fact that these changes are not taking away from the core value of a music festival, which is creating this community of people experiencing a musical and spiritual adventure. In the book *Coachella*, Greg Robinson describes this perfectly by discussing how in 1999 Woodstock did not have a successful year. They had overpriced food and water, and did not have well-maintained security, which led to people causing riots and fires (9). He commented on the fact that the people of Coachella did not want to make the same mistakes as Woodstock. Robinson stated that the promoters of Coachella wanted this festival to be “...the festival that people would want to return to each year. And on October 9-10, 1999, a mere three months after the

Woodstock '99 fiasco, the Coachella Festival was launched" (9). As we now know, they were right, and Coachella still lives on to be extremely successful in Southern California. This shows that the growth of music festivals helps us learn how to make better and more successful festivals for the future music lovers of the world.

Brant continues by discussing how and why the Newport Folk festival was so important for music festival history. He discusses how one of the artists that was a part of that was Bob Dylan, a very influential musician. Brant states;

“The 1965 Newport folk festival included a controversial performance by Bob Dylan when he attempted to merge folk with blues and rock n roll as he performed his first live electric set. This act introduced rock music to the festival crowd and it was only a matter of time before a festival devoted to the new music, a new way of thinking was set into motion” (3).

Music festivals are only becoming more and more popular with all different types of music, musical artists, and the fans. The music we have now is not so much different then the music we had then in the sense that the message is still the same. The music and the music festivals are supposed to represent the mix of cultures and people. “...the music of the late 60's was the perfect vehicle for expressing the transformation of Americas youth” (3). The music festivals we have now also serve as an expression. They symbolize the transformation on music festivals and the growing population of music festivals among America's, and even other countries, youth. The music festivals of the 60's and 70's are the vehicles, which would make it possible for us to host the music festivals we have today. They are the inspiration for us to keep growing as a music festival culture and to keep building on this unique community.

Festival Method

The method I am going to use to further develop my thesis is going to be a mixture of an “untraditional” literature review and a case study. As you have read, I gave an introduction into the aspects of music and culture and how they relate to one another, followed by an insight into music and emotion and a brief history of music festivals. Next, I am going to give insight into my thesis by going into: The Parts that make up a Festival Dynamic. In this section I will have 3 sub sections: Performance, “liveness” and Ritual and Community. I picked these 3 aspects because I believe that all music festivals have these characteristics within them. I plan to lay out what other scholars and authors have to say about these features and describe why they are significant and how they give culture to music festivals.

The next part of my project will then be the case study section where I discuss my one-on-one interviews with festival attendees. The people I interviewed attend music festivals frequently, and are very aware and involved with the cultures within. They all have a very wide range of what type of music they listen to and what type of festivals they attend. They have vastly different experiences and different opinions about what music means to them. I hope that this will give a better understanding of how each music festival shares the same qualities of performance, “liveness”, ritual and community. I aim to give a qualitative analysis of what current festival attendees experience and feel when at a music festival and intend to get a better understanding of why and how these festivals share the same characteristics. I already know how I feel about the experiences I have had but I want to get a better understanding of the other people in my generation and permit their opinions to be heard and understood.

I believe that the research I engage in and the opinions and experiences I get from music festival attendees will give a better perception of music festivals today and how they have aspects of cultural values. I have determined that there is something intriguing and important in looking at this topic, and that it deserves our attention and research in Communication Studies and even beyond. My main goal is to show how special and exceptional a music festival experience is. I want to show people through my research and case studies that music festivals are so much more than the music; that it is a combination of the people and the music coming together to create an unparalleled experience that can vary from person to person.

The Parts that make up a Festival Dynamic

Performance

Before we discuss the audience as a performer, let me give an introduction to what performance really is. In the book *Theories of Performance*, in Chapter 5, titled “Performance Culture,” Bell discusses the idea that performance is culture and/or that it is equal to culture. You cannot have a culture without it being performed over and over again in small individual levels and massive levels as well (Blau). Throughout her book, Bell focuses on theories of performance and tries to make “claims about what performance is and what performance does” (2). Bell defines theory in an interesting way saying that theory is the normal Albert Einstein type of mathematical “stuff” we think of when we hear the term “theory,” but it is also something much more “imaginative” and “creative” than that. Bell says, “Theory is often an invitation to

imagine, to explore, and to create new knowledge's and practices" (2). Like I stated before, this invites you to look at theory in a more creative sense and lets you apply theory to the aspects of performance.

Bell looks at performance as a key term. When she says "key term" she means that it is "contested, slippery and unstable" and says that "performance theory attempts to make clear what, how and why performance is both a 'key term' and a 'key' to understanding the intricate ways we participate in social and political life and create its many expressive forms" (15). This, I believe, is right in line with many aspects of music festival culture. If we look at music festival culture in particular and specific ways, then we can see how performance is key to help us understand the ways we engage in a social aspect within music festivals. This gives insight to how there are different social norms that are performed within their respective genres or types of music festivals.

The one that comes immediately to mind is the exchanging of kandi bracelets at raves. Exchanging bracelets is a process: First you meet someone, and then you discuss the bracelets. Then, once you have met someone, you will decide if you want to exchange bracelets. Now it gets to the fun part: spelling PLUR. You make a peace sign with your fingers touching the other person's fingers, while saying "Peace", then make a half heart with your hands while they do the same connecting the heart while saying "Love", then lastly you hold hands and say "Unity" then one of you takes your bracelet over your hand and gives it to the other person and this is supposed to symbolize "Respect." The performance of exchanging bracelets is a social act that we should learn and understand if we are attending these types of festivals. Learning this "act" teaches us

our script and our stage when we perform the exchange, as well as gives us a better understanding of the culture.

In the book *Cultural Misunderstandings*, Raymonde Carroll discusses cultural analysis. Carroll's book is comparing and discussing French culture to American culture and showing the reader that you have to learn to become less ethnocentric and more open minded. Even though the exchanging of the kandi bracelets isn't a "normal" every day act, in a rave setting it is very normal and widely appreciated. The concept of "normal" is learned. Something that may seem normal to you can seem weird to someone else. The process of learning that exchanging bracelets at a rave may seem weird at first, but the more you understand the culture, the less you will feel that way. You first have to learn about it and then it will seem normal (3).

Bell also tries to define the term "performance." Performance is a hard concept to define with just one sentence because it is extremely complex and has many different components that make it what it is. Bell attempts to define it by looking at it in three ways. Bell first says, "Performance is both a produce and a process" (16). She says that performance goes through a process, which she calls "emergence." This means that performance emerges from repeating "a set of activities or specific behaviors" (16). Bell says that it is a process because it produces something for someone or something. It is an "accomplishment, an event" (16). Performance has purpose and meaning behind it. It is supposed to communicate something to your audience. In the book *Performance Studies: The Interpretation of Aesthetic Texts*, Pelias and Shaffer state, "Performance is a communicative process. All performers are transactional communication events between speakers and listeners" (15). To understand how this is a communicative process you

have to look at the speaker as the performer and the listener as the audience. The performer communicates to the audience by doing their “act,” and the audience accepts that act by giving some kind of recognition. There are cases where there is no recognition at all; there is just acceptance. There are also cases where you can have both the recognition as well as the acceptance. For example, at a music festival, there is the typical situation in which the musical artist is the performer and the people in attendance in the crowd are the audience. If you flip that around and say that the audience is performing for the musical artist, you will recognize that the audience screaming for the artist and singing along to the song is the “act” and the artist smiling and playing his best songs/beats is the recognition and acceptance.

Next, Bell says, “Performance is productive and purposeful.” Performance always has a purpose. It is not something for nothing. It aims to produce something for its audience, on the individual level, and even for the community. “Performance causes, creates, and produces both itself and things outside of itself. This productivity is utilized to do a number of functions, uses, or intentions.” (16). Performance is thoroughly utilized in music festivals by the performer and the audience. The audience and the performer depend on each other. The way each of them performs for one another has a purpose. For example the purpose of the performer can be to provide entertainment, while the purpose of the audience is to provide energy and participation for the concert.

Pelias and Shaffer expand on the idea of performance and communication by stating that all communication includes the aspect of performance. Performance can be understood as playing different roles in different settings (5). This fully encompasses the idea that one person can play the role of the hipster at Coachella, a raver at EDC and a

punk kid at Vans Warped Tour. For example, the way you act in a classroom setting is going to be different from the way you act at home. When in a classroom, your role is the student and the professor is the teacher. That is why the teacher stands at the front of the room while you sit in the seats in front of him. There are certain sets of unofficial “rules” to follow while you are playing the role of the student. When you come home from school your role/performance changes. Say you live with other people, you then take on the role of a roommate or a friend. The way you act and or/perform towards your roommates will be wildly different from the way you act in the classroom. This example can directly apply to the culture and the act of performance at music festivals. You can truly take on many different roles in the different settings, depending on who you want to be while you are there. Music festivals give you an opportunity to open your mind and accept something new. For example, if you went to Vans Warped Tour, you have this unique opportunity to fully take on the persona of a “punk rock” kid. This performance act helps you learn about your self as well as learn about the others at this festival. This performance act helps you learn about yourself because you are watching yourself go through the selection process of what “role” you would like to play, if any. This teaches you about other because you are observing all the different types of people there acting as these “roles.” It shows you what cultures and music personas are at each festival.

In the book *Beyond Culture*, Edward Hall says that culture “is not innate but it is learned” (5). You have to engage in the act of performing as a “character” while at the music festivals to learn their culture and continue to build on a more open mind. I think this is important to music festivals and maintaining the culture within them because we all have different roles in life. Music festivals allow us to shed and try on new identities,

which can create a feeling of freedom, relief or escape—every music festival has this established culture of “freedom.”

Pelias and Shaffer say that because communication is performance, it is done “on various private and public stages” (5). Within that concept, how good your performance is can help you succeed in different situations. They state that a person will act and speak differently for different situations or “stages.” If you are very good at playing a role in a specific circumstance, you will be more likely to succeed. I agree with this idea and believe that if you come to EDC in full effect as a raver, and take on the persona as well as the costume, you will have a much better time than the person who does not try to embrace this. Performance, then, can “demonstrate the social and cultural power of artistic performance,” and that “performance skills may determine individual worth” (10). This is why engaging in performance as an audience member will make you feel more accepted. Although this is not true for all cases at a music festival, “a community may welcome or reject people as a result of their performance behavior” (10). I think that by embracing an experience, it can help you have a positive attitude while learning and understanding where this state of euphoria comes from for active EDC and rave goers. Many festival attendees embrace this concept of what I like to call a “free spirit.” When at a music festival, you step into an alternate reality, where societal norms don’t exist. The concept of being a “free spirit” can mean that you are free to do and feel whatever you want in this safe space that is the music festival.

When you are at a music festival you have this unique opportunity to take on a “persona.” At Coachella Festival you can fully dress up and perform the act of a “hipster” or a “boho goddess” or really anything you want. You can wear the attire you

think someone who would attend wears, and go over the top to really embody what you want, as well as embrace what it is to be a Coachella/Festival attendee. This can apply to other festivals as well. For example, at Vans Warped Tour if you want to take on the persona of a “punk” or a “hard core kid,” you have the opportunity to do so. At EDC, you have the same opportunity to take on a persona of a “raver” and you are encouraged to take on the identity. The reason why the performance of what you wear (aka your costume) is important is because the outfits that a typical/stereotypical “raver” would wear would not necessarily be accepted/appropriate to wear in a non-rave setting.

Performance, we see, serves a purpose. Therefore, this makes festivals and the cultures within them exciting because you get to break the rules and take on roles that you would not in a “normal” setting. It is not something that is for nothing. There are motives and genuine acts behind and throughout performance. There is reason why people feel the need to act a certain way. This is dependent on culture. Performance, then, also serves a cultural purpose. Without performance, we do not have structured rules, and we would not know how to act within our society and culture. We perform every day of our lives, whether that be at a music festival or in a classroom.

“Liveness”

What categorizes something as “live”? Does this mean that the artists are literally recreating their music without any help from anything besides their instruments and their vocal abilities? Or does it simply mean that they are performing in front of a live audience? Does it matter if they are using musical instruments? Or is a turntable accepted as a musical instrument?

There is a difference within the aspect of “liveness” and that is deep knowledge versus deep experience. This relates to music festivals so appropriately because this is something an attendee can experience while they are there. There is a large back and forth between the deep experience and deep knowledge that one can have or feel when attending these festivals. Deep knowledge means that you have a vast knowledge of the band. For example: you know all their songs by heart and you are in love with the band and came to the show just to see them. On the other hand, having a deep experience is to attend because you know you will have a good experience and not focusing so much on what musical artists will be performing. Maybe you aren’t as knowledgeable of the band’s playing, but know they put on a great show and are interested in simply experiencing the show, dancing around and having a good time. This does not mean you have to be one or the other. You can have deep experience and deep knowledge. It all depends on the individual. “The way people perform their own [f]andom affects the culture and experience of the show” (Blau). You could have a deep knowledge on one artist where they really want to focus on the music and really take in the performance in a knowledgeable and educational way. On the other hand, you could see a band that you’ve never heard of and just decide you want to enjoy the show and enjoy the spiritual experience, trying to just be within your own mind.

When it comes to “liveness” in electronic music, the “DJs” and/or artists can face negative feedback due to the fact that they aren’t what some people would categorize as “real” musicians and that they lack “real” talent. Even though some people believe that, EDM artists and the people who are fans of them have created a life, a genre, and festivals to honor/symbolize/create/celebrate the DJ’s and/or artists that play there. EDM

artists have had the opportunity to create a safe space for people who enjoy the music/culture to thrive in. Something I have noticed being an active festivalgoer of all different types of music genres is that the definition of “liveness” really depends on the person. In my experience, when talking with/getting to know people who do not attend raves, they tend to believe that EDM isn’t live music. Some of the respondents in my case studies definitely seem to agree with this. I’m not trying to stereotype, by any means; this is just what I have discovered in my life thus far. In the article "Patterns Of Listening through Social Media: Online Fan Engagement With The Live Music Experience,” Lucy Bennett quotes a line from Phillip Auslander’s book, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, stating, “As Aulander acknowledges ‘the idea of liveness is a moving target, a historically contingent concept whose meaning changes over time and is keyed to technological development’ ” (547). This shows that “liveness” is something that will always be changing, and due to the fact that “liveness” depends on the person this chance can happen on the individual level and the public scale. “Liveness” is a personal experience and it depends on the situation that a specific person is in to determine whether or not they believe it is live.

In his book, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Phillip Auslander states that he “... quickly became impatien(t) with what (he) consider(s) to be traditional, unreflective assumptions that fail to get much further in their attempts to explicate the value of “liveness” that invoking clichés and mystifications like ‘the magic of live theatre,’ the ‘energy’ that supposedly exists between performers and the spectators in a live event and the ‘community’ that live performers is often said to create among performers and spectators” (2). This then allows us to see that relationship between

community and “liveness” has on the attendees and, “that live performance itself somehow generates what ever sense of community one may experience” (64). This live community that is created with the performers and the spectators and/or audience is what creates the culture of “liveness.” The “liveness” creating this community is key for a music festival because this is what causes people to feel like that are in a safe space. By creating a community you are more aware of the cultures of others and feel more inclined to open up your mind and enjoy what you are at this music festival for: experiencing your own version of “liveness.”

In the article “Structure in the Dimension Of Liveness and Meditation,” Jeffrey Morris says a quote that I believe sum up the answers to the question “Why live? And what is live?” His answer is “Because some things are meaningful only when experienced live...” (59). When the audience feels a connection to the artist they feel a sense of being and a sense of deep purpose for being there. This is what I believe is so special about culture within music festivals: no matter what festival it is, and no matter what type of music is playing, we can all relate to that fact that you feel a huge sense of community when your artist/DJ/musician is playing onstage. This feeling creates the true, genuine “liveness” that all festivals share in some sense.

Ritual and Community

I believe music festivals are a ritualistic community. They engage in activity that is special and unique to that select festival. Music festivals tend to have sets of unofficial and unwritten rules that attendees choose to follow and partake in. These festivals have what I believe to be special rituals and religious aspects. These aspects are

part of what creates the “ecstasy” of a music festival. When friends of mine come home from a music festival and I ask them how it was, I get this answer almost every time: “It was amazing. I can’t even explain it.” I believe the “not being able to explain it” part is a clear sign of the religious experience music festivals can offer. It comes largely from the ritualistic atmosphere within the “spiritual” community they are a part of when seeing an artist perform.

I like to think of Church as a metaphor for a concert. The musical artist is the preacher, his music is the preaching, and the fans are the believers. Music and ritual share a strong connection that can be seen in religious settings. In the book *Exploring Music as Worship and Theology: Research in Liturgical Practice*, Mary McGann attempts to study “music within a community’s worship performances...” (10). She then continues to do so by stating, “music is a constitutive part of a community’s liturgical prayer. Its purpose is to enable an exploration of music as worship and theology through the focused study of music and ritual performances of particular communities” (11). Music is a huge part of creating ritual within all types of communities. The concept of music as worship is directly in line with what people go through when attending a concert. People truly worship the artist and worship the songs they connect with.

In the book *Traces Of The Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music*, Robert Walser writes a statement that I believe is extremely true and apparent in music festivals. He says “Fans often use religious language to account for the intensity and profundity of their experiences at concerts: ‘I felt the presence of the Creator,’ ‘It turned me back on to life,’ ‘I experienced things from a higher plane of existence,’ ‘It was like a whole new world,’ ‘It’s like being with God” (170). Religious language is very present

in festival culture. It is part of the community. People feel a connection to the music and, through that, feel a connection to each other. For example, in the Christian religion two people can share the feeling of the Holy Spirit within them. This connection can lead them to become a part of the Christian community.

Auslander states, “that live performance itself somehow generates whatever sense of community one may experience” (64). The artist performing onstage, and the audience member feeling the deep and meaningful spiritual aspects with others, creates the community of which they are a part. In the article “Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory,” authors David McMillan and David Chavis define community as the following: “Sense of community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (9). Music festivals seem to have all these qualities, and the people who attend do indeed share a sort of faith. This faith that they share, and their belongingness to the festivals, are what makes these a strong and a binding festival culture.

Case Studies: What Festival Attendees in my Generation Experience Today

In my attempt to understand how festivalgoer’s feel about festivals today, I conducted one-on-one interviews with people that have attended many, and different types of, festivals. These are friends of mine who are highly involved with the festival scene, and are people that tirelessly continue to go to shows all over the country. My intention was to get a full picture of what experiences festival attendees have, as well as to find common relations among them. What I found was that even if concertgoers are

only interested in specific genres or music cultures, they all can find shared experiences or commonalities among them.

I hope these one on one interviews will smooth the way for a better understanding of music festival culture as a whole, and demonstrate that music festivals all share the same sense of community, even when they are surrounding entirely different music genres. Something to point out is that my interest was in getting answers from people with different interests in the music festival scene and that were either only into one kind of music festival or all kinds of festivals. I cannot give a complete overview of people at every type of music festival because there are so many out there, but I hope these initial case studies shed some insight on how my generation feels about the festivals they attend.

For the purposes of relating to this essay, I am going to zero in on the participants' answers to these specific questions:

1. Tell me about one of your most favorite music festival experiences.
2. How do you prepare for a music festival?
3. Do you believe there is an act of performance as an audience member at music festivals?
4. Many people involved with music festival have different definitions of the term "live." What do you believe "live" means?
5. Do you believe that music festivals have a certain set of "unspoken" rules and rituals?

Each person I interviewed had different, yet similar experiences. They all agreed that they felt part of something really special and had a connection with the music, as well as feeling a huge sense of community. However, each person's favorite experience

was different. For example, one interviewee described her first experience at Vans Warped Tour as “being about the bands and not about the environment or even the experience. I was there to see my favorite bands and that was my only purpose” (Scheer). Another person I interviewed described her first rave, which was put on by Insomniac events, the same production company that puts on EDC, as an experience she would never forget and that “it was literally like a whole new world” (Morrison). This difference showed me there is a very wide scope for how people experience festivals, and what makes them special to them.

Out of all of the interviews, one person shared with me an experience that really touched me. She discussed her first time at Coachella, her favorite moment. Her story went as follows:

I was pretty young when I went to my first Coachella fest, but even at a young age I felt like I was totally ready for it. When I walked into the gates, I was amazed. I had never seen anything like this before and this was literally the festival experience that got me into music and that almost changed my life. So this leads into my most favorite time at Coachella, because my first time really cemented my love for Coachella and music. So it was in 2013 and life was really rough around that time. The band I most wanted to see was The Postal Service. And they were my favorite band when I was 14. I was with all my friends, hundreds of people and a random guy just put me on his shoulders. I’m looking up at this iconic band and I’m separate from everyone, yet I’m with everyone. I’m experiencing this band in such a real way and it is ecstasy, it’s real yet it

doesn't feel real. When you are above the rest of the crowd it makes it more personal.

It's all of your senses coming into play at once to make a strong emotional experience. (Williams).

Another person stated, "Being at Coachella in the rave tent was almost like a religious experience, with the DJ at the front and all of us in front of him. I almost feel like I'm at church and that it's almost dogmatic with the DJ telling you all to get low to the ground and us jumping up. We're all doing exactly what the DJ says" (Sahlstrom). This quote relates strongly to my idea that church is a metaphor for a concert. Sahlstrom's quote has shown that he is one of the attendees that engaged in the ritual process when he attended Coachella.

Another one of my interviewees shared in the idea that music festivals have ritual, and shared in the fact that she too feels like she has had feelings of a religious experience. She shared with me that she feels as though "Everything about music festivals is ritualistic" (Lorenz). She used her favorite genre of music, Electronic Dance Music, as her example and stated:

"I think they (EDM) have a lot of cultural value embedded within them.

The set-up of a rave has certain ritualistic qualities. For example, the DJ is set up in front of a large crowd, as if they were something to be worshiped—and in many ways the crowd does 'worship' the DJ. They do whatever he/she says and are under the power or spell of his/her music. Some of the set designs I have seen have parallels to ritual or spiritual references as well—for example, symbols like arches or projected words symbolizing peace, unity, harmony, etc. The most I

have found relations between EDM festivals and rituals is in the music itself” (Lorenz).

She uses the same metaphors I use when discussing Church, but elaborates on that by saying the music is the ritual. She continued to elaborate on this idea when she told me about a song she loves titled “Save My Night” by Armin Van Buuren. She said “The song talks about the music saving one’s soul, the beat saving your life, and the DJ saving the night. I think this speaks to the power and ritualistic aspect of the crowd and the DJ’s relationship” (Lorenz). The bond that can be created between the DJ and the audience can be a strong one. They play off one another and feed off one another.

Toward the end of our interview she shared a story that I felt was right in line with the ritualistic concepts I have described. She shared with me that when she attended Q-dance this year, (a very popular hardstyle rave in Los Angeles) in which her boyfriend in the middle of one of the DJ’s set looked at her and said “Hardstyle is my church.” She continues with this and says “They know that they are going to escape to a different reality, and they keep going back to find that same state of mind again. Raving is in many ways a spiritual ritual of escaping one’s problems and finding a sense of belonging with others who are performing the same ritual they are” (Lorenz). This really speaks to the power that festivals have on the fans and people that attend them. This interviewee had a very strong sense of where this feeling came from, and was one of the people I spoke to that was very passionate and had been a part of these experiences many times. She fully embodied someone who feels this sense of having a religious experience when attending festivals.

One of my interviewees stated that their experience was one that could be enjoyed by anyone watching their favorite band. It is an experience and anyone is open to enjoy it. The story they shared with us is a true description of what music festivals are. They are live, they are a community, and they are truly one of a kind in that moment. One person that shared a similar experience said that their participation was unique, yet almost in a “sharable way,” because others can easily have the same experience or even join in with theirs (Anonymous). This means that all experiences at these festivals can be acquired by anyone. Anyone in attendance has the opportunity to have as many experiences as they want to and can share experiences with others.

They all agreed that music festivals have the components of performing as audience members, and that there is a preparation process. The only difference is that the people that attend Vans Warped Tour have different ways they prepare for the concerts when compared to people who will attend EDC or Coachella. People who go to Coachella are going to prepare differently than the people who attend EDC. This preparation process also depends on the person and what type of experience they want to have. They all described that there is a performance element and that they engage in a preparation process, but some had a very different definition of what these two concepts mean.

When discussing the act of performing audience member at a music festival, one of my respondents gave a rather interesting, maybe verging on stereotypical, observation. He or she stated, “The people that go to Warped Tour are totally different than the people at Coachella and EDC” (Anonymous). When I asked to further explain what he/she meant, he/she said he/she felt like the “people who attend Warped Tour look the same

when they walk in as they do when they leave to go home. That the girl with the purple hair did not dye her hair purple for Warped Tour; she just has purple hair and wears that every day. It is not a costume for Warped Tour, it's her costume for everyday life"

(Anonymous).

Another respondent had a similar idea, in the sense that he agreed that people who attend Warped Tour are different than the people who attend Coachella and EDC. He said that, "Even the people who attend Coachella are different than the people who attend EDC and raves, but that doesn't mean that the idea of the audience as performers isn't there" (Lederman). I then discussed with him the idea of the girl with purple hair who I had previously discussed with an anonymous interviewee. He said "Well maybe the girl at Coachella with the feathers in her hair always has feathers in her hair. If we are the audience members I can totally see how we are looked at as performers, the part we get to play is being a fan. We have the lines to scream when our favorite song comes up and use our space in the crowd as our stage to dance in. We are performing for the artist just like the artist is performing for us. I mean imagine if the audience just sat there in silence? We would probably get fired for being a 'sucky' performer" (Lederman).

I have to say that I strongly agree with this quote. In this quote Lederman is pointing at concept of the audience as the performer. I believe that the audience as the performer is a very important characteristic to music festivals and really any concert in general. Imagine a concert with a big time musical artist in a huge arena like the Hollywood Bowl. Now imagine that the artist is jamming out with their band, and there is no audience. In this situation the performer does not have a purpose. The audience

performing that acts of attending, dancing, singing, and cheering give the performer a purpose and a reason for their performance.

Previously I discussed how, in *Theories of Performance*, Bell said “Theory is often an invitation to imagine...” Audience members have the ability to imagine and create something new for themselves through their clothes, dancing, and the artists they want to see. Music festivals give the same invitation that Bell believes theory does. I most certainly believe music festivals involve the act of performance. “Not only is the artist performing for the crowd, but the crowd is performing for each other and the festival itself. When I say this, I mean that there are specific ways of being that because you are at a festival you act a certain way. This doesn’t mean that you are pretending to be someone else, but I think you get in touch with a side of yourself that is different or new, and possibly unexpected” (Lorenz). Being able to get in touch with yourself in a “new and possibly unexpected way” is part of the festival process. You learn about yourself, about others, and learn about the festival’s rituals.

When speaking with another longtime festival attendee, I asked him about how he then prepares for his Warped Tour experience. He said for him it is not about planning what to wear but it is about something much deeper than that. He stated;

“I look up every band. And if I like what I hear, I go further than that. I look up the history of the band; I dig deep and find out all I can know about the band. I want to be an expert when I walk into Warped Tour. I want to look like I know all the answers about this band, and actually know all the answers. I want to keep up with all the kids I mosh with. Actually not even keep up. I want to school them” (Weaver).

This preparation process for him was so interesting because it shows that he wanted his performance at these music festivals was to be categorized as “the one that knows all.” He also shared that getting ready for this music festival means he has to wear t-shirts of his favorite band that will be playing. He said that that was his form of a costume. As well as “rocking out to a Vans Warped Tour hat” (Weaver).

When I asked another person how they prepared for Warped Tour, she said that she, like Weaver, looks up which bands are playing that she has never heard of and listens to all their music. She also stated, “taking the time to figure out which bands are playing gives you a better experience while you are there.” When I asked her if she does any preparation in terms of an outfit she said

“Not really, I usually just throw on my favorite band t-shirt because I really don’t care what I look like at Warped Tour...Maybe I’ll throw on my Vans Warped Tour cheetah print hat once in a while. But on the other hand, at Coachella you plan out every single day what you are going to wear from head to toe.” She then stated that at Coachella “you ask yourself ‘is this trendy?’ Then you spend the time to go out and buy a new outfit” (Scheer).

I followed up with asking her about how she felt seeing her favorite artist at Warped Tour. She said;

“I came to Warped Tour to see Paramour and that’s it. It is hard to enjoy Warped Tour unless you absolutely love the band because people are mosh-pitting and pushing you, but when I saw Paramour, I did not care because I was there for that band and nothing could bother me in that moment. When you love

the band, it doesn't seem like anything is happening to you. You are just enjoying the moment with people who love the band as much as you do.”

She also shared the fact that she is not a big fan of rave culture and EDC. I wanted to make note to her that even though she may not enjoy that she can appreciate the fact that the rave culture and the culture at Vans Warped Tour share similar aspects. For example, EDC has a very large sense of community just like the pop-punk culture that is Vans Warped Tour. She agreed with me and said that she never really thought about it that way and now that she realized that she could be more willing to open her musical preference range. This shows that even people who don't necessarily believe in the culture that is EDC and Electronic Dance Music can learn an understanding of why people like it. They can relate and share in the idea of music festivals creating a strong community and the fact that people at raves can also share in the experience of a perfect state of being.

Another respondent I interviewed had a very different way to prepare for music festivals. They said that he or she will “prepare for every aspect” of the music festival, starting with establishing who your going with and then figure out who is playing. They said, “I read all the articles, I sift through the different artists playing.” He or she said they goes over the bands he or she likes and listens to their top songs. Then when the lineup comes out they look to see how they are going to make the best of seeing everyone. They also admitted to me that her or she and certain friends will go over which drugs they will use on certain days of Coachella because some days will have more popular DJ's than others and they want to use their drugs for the best possible music to align with them to create the experience they are searching for. They explain, “Coachella

is all about comfort. You ask yourself questions like: Are you going to be dancing? Are you on someone's shoulders? Are you with people you trust? You have to pick something that works for you and your experience" (Anonymous). When talking with all these people they tend to have this shared experience of wanting to be considered an "expert."

Why it is important to be the expert at a festival? Is it just to be "cool" or is there something else? I believe it is a way to have the full experience. The people I have interviewed are people that have been a part of music festival culture many times and for a long time. I think that this shared experience of really researching and trying to live up to "expert status" is, in a way, just them trying to get everything out of the music festival they possibly can.

In regards to the question about "liveness" and what it means to you, a lot of the respondents had very different answers. One person stated, "if something is live at a concert, it's definitely not a DJ booth. They are just pressing a button, where's the skill in that?" (Scheer). Whereas another person on the opposite end of the spectrum said "If something is live it's as simple as, this is real and actually live, you can't press pause, you can't rewind. It's a moment in time" (Sahlaström). When I discussed this with a different interviewee, they felt in between on how they felt about "liveness." They agreed that if something is live and in the moment it doesn't matter what kind of music or instrument is being used, but on the other hand "we can see what a band is doing, playing an instrument, but I can't really tell what a DJ is doing, but I guess that's because I don't know how a turn table works. Either way if something is live, it's more of a personal experience" (Lederman).

"Liveness," then, can have different definitions. As I have stated before, liveness

is a personal experience. My interviewee Jessica Nazzereno had a humble way of explaining what “liveness” means to her. She said that “liveness” is “to take each day as it comes and appreciate the little moments and much as the big. At every festival I go to, I take a moment to stop dancing, look around, and really take the moment in. The surroundings, the people, the lights, the sounds, how I feel, causes me to appreciate how much time was put into executing this festival. It allows me to be thankful for the opportunity to get to experience moments such as these” (Nazzereno). This was absolutely beautiful to me. She takes the craziness that can come with a live music festival and turns it into something that is aesthetically pleasing.

Another respondent said the same thing during our discussion and said “liveness” is a personal experience. “It is not one-way communication. It is two-way communication. You, as an audience member, are affecting the artist and the artist is affecting you” (Williams). She then said something that really resonated with me as an extremely strong statement: “Music festival culture is human nature.” This reminded me of the quote “reality itself is shaped by culture” (Blau). The way one looks at music festival culture, as well as the way one engages in music festival culture in their own distinct way, creates one’s own reality, and visa versa. Your reality within the festival, whether you are at EDC “raving” to Tiesto or at Vans Warped Tour “moshing” to A Day to Remember, shapes your understanding of the culture at the festival. This shows why and how the culture of a certain music festival can be vastly different than another festival, while still having the same core concepts of “liveness,” ritual, and performance. The different festivals just do them in their own way.

Putting it all together: Music Festival Culture as Human Nature

Throughout this process I have gained a new respect and a new understanding for music festivals. Since I have attended concerts while writing this paper, I look at them in a whole new way. This has given me such deep knowledge that every time I experience a concert I notice things I have never noticed before. This deep knowledge has influenced my deep experiences and has helped me have experiences I have never had before.

Music acting like a second language is something I have now developed. I have learned how to understand the festival dynamic more and communicate with people through music. It has truly opened my mind to the cultures that each music festival has to offer.

“You have to think of it this way: music festival culture is human nature,” as stated by Williams, ties into the idea of music festivals being a part of ritual and/or having its own set of what I like to call “unwritten” rules. One of my respondent’s answers regarding the question about rules and rituals said: “Ritual and human gatherings date back to the beginning of humankind itself. You want to be a part of something. You want to be included and music is a huge part of that, it’s a part of the human existence. Music will evolve as human culture evolves; ritual evolves as music and culture evolve” (Morrison). Ritual will evolve as music and culture evolves because music festivals are continually becoming better and more culturally significant. I believe that new people are discovering the joy of music festivals every year, and because of that we are gaining new people with different cultures. This will have an effect on the rituals because communication and community are a part of ritual.

Communicative acts are what make festivals have the dynamic they have. All of the “acts” that each musician engages in are communicative acts to the audience. They

are communicating messages through the songs that the audience members connect to. When the audience dances with one another, “moshes” in the pit at the front of the stage, sings songs together and trades kandi; these are all acts of communication, even if they are not spoken. These are acts of bonding and coming together as a community.

In the book *Trance Formation: The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of Global Rave Culture*, Robin Sylvan paints a picture of three scenes of a rave. Towards the end of describing the first scene Sylvan states: “As the long hours of the night give away to daybreak, lights begin to illuminate the stained-glass windows and the music is brought to an end with one last uplifting anthem that leaves everyone smiling and happy” (3). This is a part of human nature. Music evoked emotions therefore if you are surrounded by music you love and feel a connection to; you will leave the festival smiling and happy. It is something you cannot help but feel when experiencing such a euphoric state.

My plan in all of this was to show that every music festival shares the aspects of liveness, performance, ritual, and community. Each festival can have different people attending, different genres of music, a different setup, and a difference in performing. Yet they will all share, in one way or another, the same underlying concepts. Each festival just has their own unique way they express themselves through festival culture.

Saying Goodbye to the Musical Haze: Conclusions and Final Remarks

I will never be able to say goodbye to what I like to call the musical haze. We are constantly entering new ones every time we attend a festival. Each time you attend a festival you experience something different than you experienced the year before or at a different music festival. Every time you walk through the gates on a music festival you

enter a new haze. Music festivals create a cultural space. They are communicative in nature. Everything about this cultural space is communication.

The concepts of performance, liveness, ritual and community are key aspects of communication that are involved throughout music festivals. The performance acts each person engages are their own performance, putting on their “costume,” screaming for their favorite bands and, most of all, adding aspects to the artists’ performance that they could not get without an audience. The performance of the audience serves just as much of a purpose as the performer. One is meaningless without the other one. “Liveness” is a concept that varies in terms of people’s personal experiences and backgrounds with music. It is a concept that is versatile because of the fact that it has multiple meanings. Every person’s individual culture determines how he or she view “liveness.” It is the coming together of each individual culture that makes a music festival dynamic. Aspects of ritual and community are strong within music festivals because they create their own “society.” The society within is the melting pot of all people’s cultures coming together to create new and unique rules that the music festival attendees follow. There is a real connection between the people that attend these music festivals and have shared the same emotions and insight.

The euphoric state that is created by each individual is special and exclusive. We can get this from simply dancing to our favorite song and artist. In the article “Timeshards: Repetition, Timbre, and Identity in Dance Music,” Peter Jowers states “Music is used to alter moods, feelings, motivations, desire, comportment, and energy levels. Specific properties of music are ‘plundered’ and used to stimulate the subjective states agents aspire to both individually and socially...Music is used to choreograph an

enormous range of moods” (390). This shows how strong music really is. If music can affect mood and energy levels, it is no wonder the people that attend have such strong feelings of euphoria while they are there. These strong emotions that come out when listening to music in a “live” setting shows the significance and impact it has on the music festival culture. The impact that this has is the fact that people will attend over and over again. In my own experience at music festivals, I feel drawn back to them every year because just thinking about Coachella, Vans and Lollapalooza, make me remember the amazing times I had while attending. The combination of music, friends, family, meeting new people and the social aspect of it all connects you to them and makes you want to become a loyal attendee.

In my process with writing this paper, I felt so honored to hear everyone’s stories, and became so much more appreciative of the music in my life. One of the women I interviewed stated something that will stick with me forever: “Everyone has different backgrounds, experiences, appearances, but the one thing festivals offer is a safe place to be yourself. Music is blind. It doesn't care about your race, age, gender, appearance, sexual orientation, social class, etc. Although everyone is different, everyone's common love for that genre of music brings people together and causes you to realize you aren't so different from one another” (Nazzareno). Festivals are a safe place to be yourself or who ever you want to be. Music festivals are my home. They are my community. They are what inspire me to continue to believe that music is human nature. This metaphor, “Music is human nature,” resonates strongly with me. And I want to keep looking at this as less of a metaphor and more of a law and a way of life.

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