UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Rock Bands/Rock Brands:

Mediation and Musical Performance in Post-liberalization Bangalore

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requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Ethnomusicology

by

Chloe Louise Coventry

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This dissertation, based on twelve months of ethnographic research in Bangalore, India, examines the city's six decades-old rock music culture, a rapidly professionalizing musical genre that has been largely overlooked in studies of Indian popular music. Though historically an English-language genre, contemporary Indian rock is performed in myriad regional languages and comprises heavy metal, indie, folk rock, cover songs and a variety of other styles. Observing its predication on the historical and contemporary circulation of transnational popular music media, this research posits Indian rock in Bangalore as significantly shaped by mediation and coextensive commodification: in addition to its grounded performances rock music plays out in a materially configuring and symbolically significant intertextual field composed of mediated sounds, images and discourses found in advertisements, television, print and film. Through historical, textual

and ethnographic analysis I explore how these mediations are implicated in the changing symbolic meanings of rock music practices in India, and comprise a modality through which rock music subjects make sense of their own musical projects and their positionality as post-liberalization citizens.

Rock music performance in the context of Bangalore's post-liberalization economic and social reconfigurations is a strategic and reflexive practice in which, through creative forms of musical and lyrical expression, musicians negotiate differential forms of tradition, modernity, locality and globalized positionality via a transnational popular repertoire; rock also, however, functions as a vehicle for the reproduction and re-inscription of socio-economic hierarchies taking new shape in the globalized economy and consumer culture of urban India. Thus a study of Indian rock music culture is instrumental in understanding the emergence of new forms of social identity and new or newly contested forms of globalized nationalism in Bangalore's public culture. Indicative of these concerns about national identity are questions about cultural "authenticity" and musical "originality" that sound out repeatedly throughout the scene. From the many instances of musicians, producers, and local and international media functionaries demanding a "more Indian" or an "original" sound emerge insights into deeper anxieties about the transformations wrought by cultural globalization and the role of music in mediating such social and cultural changes.

The dissertation of Chloe Louise Coventry is approved.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Bangalore's rock music culture

This dissertation is about rock music in Bangalore,[1] India, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. A niche music in the broader spectrum of Indian popular musical practices, rock and roll[2] - in various stylistic guises - has nonetheless been performed in Bangalore and throughout parts of urban India for the last six decades. Since the beginnings of economic liberalization in the early 1990s a rock music culture[3] has expanded and transformed for a variety of reasons that this dissertation will explore, with more participants, professional opportunities for those participants, and a consequent increase in the economic viability and social visibility of the genre as a whole. Notwithstanding these recent trends, rock music has had an uneven history in India, with periodic declines and resurgences a regular feature of its existence. From the 1960s when the genre primarily comprised English-language cover bands to its early twenty-first century incarnation in which myriad bands play progressive and classic rock, metal, fusion, indie, and blues in a variety of languages, rock music in India has held a peculiar,

[1] In 2007 the Anglicized name "Bangalore" was replaced as the city's official name by the Kannada "Bengaluru." Throughout this dissertation, however, I have used the city's old name in deference to my interlocutors' usage and because the city is still known around the world by its old moniker. The politics around this name change are complex and will be further addressed in chapter three.

[2] Sociologist Motti Regev, in his study of rock music's global dispersion, offers a useful description of those characteristics that comprise rock as opposed to other popular genres. He describes its predominant elements as "a set of constantly changing practices and stylistic imperatives for making music whose main signifiers are electric and electronic sound textures, amplification, untrained and spontaneous forms of vocal delivery, frontal presence of rhythm instruments, studio craftsmanship, and an eclectic logic that encourages the application of all of these to any musical style and whose major signifiers are extreme pleasure or fun and rage and anxiety (all as opposed to pleasant affirmation) - plus an emphasis on musicians as auteurs, and not just performers" (Regev 1997:126).

[3] This ethnography observes and describes the manifest rock music "culture" as multifaceted and multiply constituted with sounded, performative, visual, discursive, mediated, representational and economic dynamics that intersect and interact in a variety of complex ways.

precarious position in relation to the country's other musical genres. It is fundamentally and audibly indebted to a mediated transnational popular music repertoire, looking outwards to international styles and audiences while simultaneously striving to be "original" and to attain some relevance for the local audiences who might enable it to survive in the film music-dominated Indian popular music market.

In spite of its limited economic ambit relative to film song, rock music's sounds and images play a specialized role in Bangalore's public culture (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995). During my twelve months of fieldwork in Bangalore in 2007, 2009 and 2010, the sounds of the international popular music all-time top-forty (Michael Jackson, ABBA, Led Zeppelin among the other usual suspects) filled the malls, fancy hotels, boutiques and European-style coffee shops within which some of Bangalore's citizens were partaking of the stuff and symbols of the "good life." Against this backdrop, local amateur rock bands played in the many lounges and bars (for which Bangalore has long been christened India's "pub city") to audiences of college students, young professionals, and nostalgic middle aged people—the last group eager to recount stories about listening to "English music" in the days before it was as easy to do as streaming an mp3. Along with these sounds and performances, rock music imagery was apparent on signs, in advertisements, and on clothing throughout the city's upper middle-class neighborhoods, where it had a specialized visual and symbolic presence in Bangalore's burgeoning theater of consumption (Firat and Dholakia 1998); meanwhile multinational companies such as Levis, Wrangler, Nokia, Pepsi, Seagrams, and Coca Cola sponsored rock shows and festivals in marketing campaigns designed for the young middle-class consumer.

Rock plays out on the ground in a network of urban Indian performance locales and circulates in national and transnational media but this ethnography is centered in Bangalore, situating the city's rock music culture in relation to its economy, urban geography, historical memory, and differential social and economic milieux. While I will undertake an in-depth discussion of Bangalore as the research locale in chapter three, it is important to note at the outset that many of the lauded narratives and images of the city (its economic strength, its industrial and information technology sectors and middle class consumer culture) mask social divisions along the fault-lines of money, religion, language and nativity. These divisions are fomented by the city's post-liberalization socio-economic trajectory, and result in social conflicts[4] or discrepancies in citizens' ability to partake in the economic benefits of liberalization – wherein skills such as speaking English or having access to a computer or to a particular type of schooling can mean the difference between staying in poverty or the possibility of upward class mobility. Bangalore's social divisions and class and caste hierarchies have been recalibrated in the last three decades according to the city's emergent economic identity as a global city,[5] and, as this dissertation explores, it is in this shifting context that rock music performance symbolizes the "western" or "foreign" as well as the locally cosmopolitan: simultaneously controversial to some and aspirational to others.

[4] For example, speakers of the local Kannada language maintain their claims on nativity in the face of the historical and contemporary influx of workers who speak and conduct business in Tamil or English rather than Kannada, and the shifting linguistic identity of the city has provoked many *Kannadiga* (Kannada speakers) to assert these claims in various forms of civil unrest or public discourse; for example in the newspaper and cassette tape accounts and discussions around the kidnapping of the Kannada film star Rajkumar by the Tamil *dacoit* or bandit, Veerappan (Niranjana 2000).

[5] Saskia Sassen first identified Tokyo, London and New York as global cities: nodes at which flows of transnational media and capital coalesce (Sassen 1991); in 2008 the Journal Foreign Policy, in consultation with Sassen and the Chicago Council for Foreign Affairs constructed the "Global Cities Index," (Kearny 2008) a list on which Bangalore ranked 58th.

Performance, mediation and commodification: conceptualizing the research

This research is framed as an engagement with the performed, mediated and commodified dynamics of rock in Bangalore, an approach that foregrounds the fundamental role of transnational media in the emergence of this genre and the consumer culture formations in which its sounds and images play out. A musical culture kindled by the historical circulation of globalized popular music media, Bangalore's rock music performances in 2010 were not only visibly branded and sponsored by national and multinational corporations but, as this work will demonstrate, were playing out in a symbolically significant and materially configuring intertextual field composed of mediated sounds, images and discourses found in television, print, film and advertisements. These mediations should be taken seriously as implicated in the changing symbolic meanings of rock music practices in India, and more generally as comprising a modality through which rock music subjects make sense of their own musical projects and their positionality as post-liberalization citizens. This is an approach that recognizes rock music as a form of public culture wherein "the consumers of mass-mediated cultural forms are agents and actors" (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995:3).

Proceeding from the assertion that in Indian public culture media and consumption are mutually implicated this research suggests that rock music's "commodification" can thus be conceptualized as more than its objects or the generalized commercialization of the genre. Throughout this dissertation I will show how rock's commodification comprises an interpenetration of rock music practices with the development and entrenchment of a neoliberal[6] form of globalized consumer culture

[6] Foucault describes neoliberalism as a force that works to "extend the rationality of the market, the schemes of analysis it proposes, and the decision making criteria it suggests to areas that are not

taking place in the city of Bangalore. This commodification is materially demonstrated in part by the prolific and historical branding and sponsorship of rock music shows in the country[7] and is realized in the processes that posit rock musicians as the exceptional subjects of Bangalore's hierarchical, globally-oriented consumer economy via advertising and media texts.

Rock music in this context is understood as "cultural product and social process" (Ginsburg 1991:93): a musical form that is both a means for participants' reflexive self-expression and also a dynamic in the emergence of new forms of social identity in the increasingly globalized public culture of the city of Bangalore. As a practice historically associated with English-educated upper class young people, rock music in Bangalore in the early 21st century is in the process of expanding its cultural reach through the propagation of its sounds and images in the media. Thus this work suggests that rock music be viewed as contributing to the construction and normalization of globalized middle class and gendered youth culture formations that extend beyond their original class associations. Much like speaking English, going to a prestigious engineering or science college or wearing Levis, rock music is a practice that symbolizes both a classed positionality and a desirable (though often ambivalent) cosmopolitan cultural orientation in a city whose knowledge industry is structured around participation in the global economy.

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exclusively or primarily economic." (Foucault 2008:79)

[7] Branding and sponsorship is not limited to rock music performance in India; performances in many genres including Hindustani and Karnatak music utilize sponsorship and those performers forge alliances with different brands. Rock music sponsorship differs from these other traditions in that whereas Indian classical, folk and popular music have defined socio-cultural and historical roles and institutional support, rock music's primary source of financial support has from the outset been branding and sponsorship. An overly facile, though not wholly unfounded comparison is to say that as the princely patrons of the 17th century were to *Hindustani* musicians, Levis and Nokia are to the rock musicians of the 21st century.

Rock music practices, emplacing subjects in a globally inflected local culture, also allows for those subjects to utilize the form creatively to express their positionality, and it is from this vantage point that its sounds should be interpreted. For while much of the English-language rock music being produced in India sounds very similar to music being produced in the west, this work rejects out of hand a simplistic designation of "westernization" or "cultural homogenization." Through creative forms of musical and lyrical expression rock musicians negotiate differential forms of tradition, modernity, locality and positionality via the strategic utilization of sounds, discourses and ideologies of a transnational popular repertoire. Nevertheless, rock music, traditionally the province of English-educated "elites" in the country, also functions as a vehicle for the reproduction and re-inscription of socio-economic hierarchies taking new shape in the globalized economy and consumer culture of urban India. Undergirding this research, then, is the recognition that Indian rock music might best be understood as one of the "sounds of capitalism" (Taylor 2012), and that in order to do justice to its complex meanings it must be interpreted as both a means for the articulation of localized postcolonial modernity and as reflective of the intensification of globalization's outcomes in India's post-liberalization urban public culture; a musical culture partially shaped, as this dissertation demonstrates, by the neoliberal logics of consumer capitalism.

In order to assess the ramifications of these issues, this dissertation describes and explores the conjunctures and disjunctures between three arenas: firstly, the practices of musical performance, self-representation and subjectivity; secondly, the representations of rock music and musicians found in national and transnational media texts; and thirdly, the projects of a globalized consumer culture in which the media and advertising

industries work to valorize particular types of consumer-subjects (Mankekar 1999, 2004; Leichty 2002; Saldhana 2002; Asthana 2003; Juluri 2003; Lukose 2005). Rock music's sounds play out in these intersecting practices and representations, allowing for articulations and negotiations of participants' subjectivity and futurity in relation to the changing contexts of Bangalore's public culture. What emerges are new or newly contested forms of globalized nationalism – manifest in questions about cultural "authenticity" and "originality" in the rock music culture. The disjunctures in the flows that characterize globalization are writ large in the representational politics at work in Indian rock, and its sounds are increasingly subject to critique both from inside and outside the country. These critiques very often involve discussions about how Indian rock sounds or if it should sound differently in order to sell or "make it," with various Indian rock styles subject to different demands according to their genre. The primary concern voiced by musicians, writers and industry functionaries is if the music sounds "Indian" or not and demands for "originality," "authenticity," or something "new," or "interesting," are often but stand-ins for the question of why Indian rock music does not "sound more Indian."

This question, seemingly innocuous and yet deeply complex, provides a compelling point of entry into a study of the rock music culture of Bangalore, and into the considerable anxieties both from within and from outside the country about its postcolonial identity as an Indian cultural form. Engaging with subjects' sounds, lyrics, and grassroots music business strategies I assess how these musical practices invoke larger issues: firstly, as reflective of the larger processes of "social reproduction and social transformation" (Mahon 2000) at work in post-liberalization Indian public culture;

secondly, providing insight into the cultural politics at work in transnational field of cultural production in which rock music plays out (Bourdieu 1993); and finally explicating what Tejaswini Niranjana has called the "subtle changes occurring in the composition of the 'Indian' in transnational spaces" (Niranjana 2006:6). Indian rock music, as this work will argue, deserves critical interpretation as an increasingly meaningful social practice in public culture: inflected by consumerist logics, demarcated as the province of middle class, urban, consumer-citizens, enabling new articulations of "postcolonial globality" (Cheah and Robbins 1998), and indicative of the anxieties of modernization in the urban Indian context.

Theorizing Indian rock

Liberalization and mass media in Indian public culture

In the 1980s Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's post-Emergency governmental reforms paved the way for India's gradual shift towards free-market capitalism. Among these early reforms were increased investment in the science and industry sectors as well as a strengthening of political relations with the United States, both changes that would lead eventually to India's developments in business processing (outsourcing) and telecommunications (Wolpert 2004). Building on these adaptations, in the 1990s the government of Narasimha Rao put forth a series of liberalization policies meant to bolster foreign investment, augment India's production through increased industrialization, and strengthen its position in the global economy. The broad strokes of economic liberalization entailed, among other methods, reducing tariffs and duties on imported goods, privatizing previously state-run industries, and in various ways transforming the banking and investment sectors (Mankekar 1999; Wolpert 2004; Lukose 2005; Singh

2005). Some results of these liberalization policies have been the accelerated growth of the economy;[8] the influx of foreign companies, goods and media; a proliferation of transnational mass media and intensification of consumer culture in quotidian urban middle class life; and the transposition of neoliberal modes of governance into a variety of Indian contexts (Oza 2006; Rajagopal 2009).

Materially speaking, one outcome of liberalization that was to have a profound effect on rock music culture in the country was the end of the government monopoly on media, and specifically on television. In the 1990s a multitude of international shows and brands were introduced into Indian homes via satellite television, engendering broad shifts in the emergent consumer culture. As Vamsee Juluri writes, in 1990 a typical family might have watched one channel for a couple of hours every day, but a decade later "37 million households [watched] dozens of cable and satellite television channels voraciously" (Juluri 2005:1). Scholars have written extensively about the results of these types of changes, particularly about the ways in which mass media has engendered re-conceptualizations of gender and class identity in the public sphere as well as directed discourses about the Indian nation (Mankekar 1999, 2006; Fazal 2009; Gokulsing and Dissanayake 2009). David Page and William Crawley suggest that satellite television in India has enabled a "new cultural market, which transcends national boundaries and has acquired geopolitical significance for this reason" (Page and Crawley 2001:25) – and in which, despite linguistic divisions, networks are able to target broad demographically defined audiences, effectively creating an cultural-ideological field that overlays pre-

[8] For example, while India's GDP growth rate held steady at around three percent in the decades prior to the 1980s, in the last decade it has reached as high as nine percent (Kotwal, Ramaswami, and Wadwha 2010). As Wolpert succinctly describes the period, "[I]n less than five years India's economy grew as much as it had in the previous forty." (Wolpert 2004:464)

existing national or regional boundaries. Furthermore, as Purnima Mankekar points out, transnational networks of media do not simply enable new types of distribution and reception but they also contribute to the creation of new kinds of cultural production and new or reconfigured responses to that cultural production (Mankekar 1999).

The proliferation of transnational mass media that accompanied liberalization has affected the development of Indian rock music culture in both the material and the ideological realms. In the nineteen-nineties it became possible for Indians to gain greater access to a transnational field of popular music that had been less readily available when tariffs and import restrictions limited the records, cassettes and CDs that could come into the country. Beyond these material changes, however, and more significantly, the fact that the liberalization of the media was concurrent with the gradual entrenchment of free market capitalism meant that the transnational popular culture elements circulating in the emergent Indian public culture were linked symbolically to the valorized growth of the economy. Media like MTV and other transnational cultural forms, though directed towards relatively small audiences, signified India's participation in the global cultural economy and became part (though often in controversial ways) of the triumphalist narratives of economic globalization.[9]

These dynamics far exceed the limited idea of cultural "grey out" or homogenization, embodying instead what Appadurai has called "the infinitely varied mutual contest of sameness and difference" (Appadurai 1996:43) that characterizes

[9] These media and the advertisements that accompanied the introduction of MNCs did not always enter Indian public culture in as smooth or easy a fashion as corporate interests might have hoped. A significant development, and one that will be discussed throughout this dissertation, was the indigenization of foreign media that occurred in India in various ways and with various problems and issues for marketers and advertisers (Mazzarella 2001).

contemporary cultural globalization. In this assessment the relationship of transnational flows to local cultural formations is not one of westernization shaping or transforming traditional culture, but is better understood as a process in which local and transnational culture mutually define and inflect each other (Gupta and Ferguson 2004; Mankekar 2004), with outcomes reflective of that process. Transnational mass media reconfigures perceptions of the differential fields of the local, the national and the transnational that constitute the spatiality of public culture, with ramifications for subject's understandings of their own positionality within the processes of cultural globalization.

Consumption and subjectivity in South Asia

Mass media is one constituent in the circuitry of cultural globalization in which the predominant modality is consumption. Daniel Miller succinctly describes consumption as "social processes based around the possession and use of commodities," (Miller 1995:144) and it is a primary modality of modern capitalist society (see Weber 1978; Bourdieu 1984; Friedman 1990; Douglas and Isherwood 1996; Baudrillard 2001; among many others). It is difficult to overstate the present importance given to consumption in theorizations of transnationalism and globalization. John and Jean Comaroff assert that consumption is presently the preeminent force shaping the global ecumene and suggest that it has eclipsed production as the most salient indicator in assessing the wealth of nations (Comaroff & Comaroff 2000). As Leslie Sklair observes, the inculcation of beliefs about the value of consumption as a key to the "good life" is the "prime culture-ideology task of global capitalism" (Sklair 2001:11). Consumption practices serve, among other effects, to produce capital, and in order to do so must operate as part of a broader ideological system that fosters the desire to consume. Against

this broader backdrop of consumption's geopolitical significance, then, theorists assess the ways in which consumption may engender patterns of social behavior or types of class stratification and assess how advertisements speak to ideas about gender or nationalism. In South Asia the ways in which consumption inflects class identity has been the subject of close scrutiny (Leichty 2002, 2003), and scholars have extensively analyzed the relationship between consumption, mass media, class, gender and nationalism (Dickey 1995; Mankekar 1999; Juluri 2003).

Appadurai, for whom consumption is a central fact and principal expression of Indian modernity writes that "there is growing evidence that the consumption of the mass media throughout the world often provokes resistance, irony, selectivity, and in general, *agency*" (1996:7 italics in original). Appadurai and Breckenridge have written about the consumption of mass media texts enabling alternative readings that may give rise to subversive political possibilities (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995), a stance on mass media reception that has a counterpart in youth culture theories in which taste in goods and fashion may be viewed as aspects of participating in a subculture or as more general social identity-shaping projects (Thornton 1995; Bucholtz 2002; Lukose 2009). While the consumer of mass media may have been almost wholly redeemed as an agentive subject in social theory, however, the notion of "consumer agency" – utilized most often as a buzz phrase for advertisers and marketers – is more problematic. Appadurai, indeed, also writes that

> [T]he consumer has been transformed, through commodity flows (and the mediascapes, especially of advertising, that accompany them), into a sign, both in Baudrillard's sense of a simulacrum which only asymptotically approaches the form of a real social agent; and in the sense of a mask for the real seat of agency, which is not the consumer but the producer and the many forces that constitute production. (Appadurai 1996:42)

The tension here is between, one the one hand, the corporate forces of production in which ideologies of consumption are developed via advertisements and mass media; and on the other, the "real social agent," that for Appadurai is not equal to the "consumer." Sherry Ortner, pointing out critical theory that is concerned with agency or power often overlooks questions of subjectivity (Ortner 2005), suggests that "the idea of agency itself presupposes a complex subjectivity behind it," (2005:45) and that contemporary cultural formations might well be read in terms of the types of subjectivities they "tend to produce" (2005:46). Following in this vein William Mazzarella, assessing the "fertile" capitalist ground construed by economic liberalization in India posits a social ontology of global consumerism (Mazzarella 2005) that addresses the types of subjectivities that are produced, enabled, or excluded by the ideologies of consumer culture. Rock music's emergent urban middle class youth culture is a social formation that is mediated by the increased, intensifying, and changing role of media and consumption in India (Leichty 2002; Juluri 2003). The classed youth culture that coalesces in rock music's spaces, and the production, within those spaces, of rock's sounds and meanings must be read against the larger theoretical backdrop presented here.

Metaphors of musical globalization

One of the hallmarks of the globalized musical world is the dislocation of sounds from their "original" sources and their circulation around the globe through various uneven channels and networks, and scholars have long questioned the ramifications of globalization—manifesting in the increased volume and velocity of animated dynamics of capital, trade, people, and media—on musical cultures (Erlmann 1993; Slobin 1993; Taylor 1997, 2007; Bohlman 2002; Feld 1988, 1996, 2000; Born and Hesmondhalgh

2000; Frith 2000; Stokes 2004; Turino 2000; Malm 2001; Krims 2007; Guilbaut 2007 among many others). The ways in which these processes represent either intensifications of, or ruptures from, previous modes of musical circulation and practice has been a topic of debate in ethnomusicology for the last three decades, and the response of ethnomusicologists to questions about globalization have been, as Steve Feld puts it "equally celebratory and contentious" (Feld 2000:146). Possible stances on the topic are strikingly disparate: on the one hand the result of musical globalization is demonstrably a proliferation of syncretisms, an unruly hodgepodge of sounds overlapping in public and private spaces and traveling via social, national and transnational media. On the other hand one might decry the grim prospect of a world filled with local manifestations of multinational brands and their commensurate spaces—a world of audibly interchangeable locales where identical, mass-produced music pipes through the multinational chain franchise. Rock music in India is perforce engaged with debates about the effects of globalization processes in relation to musical culture: the phenomena of metal or classic rock cover bands in Bangalore demands an interpretative position that takes into account the transnational dimensions of this popular music genre as complexly constitutive of its "local" meanings.

Appadurai's concept of "scapes"[10] presents a productive model for addressing the framework in which this cultural form and its media travel through the circuitry of globalization. By positing the five scapes as disjunct, and deeply perspectival (Appadurai

[10] Appadurai's influential theory addresses the messy and overlapping arenas in which globalization processes are manifest. Appadurai distinguish these, five in all, as: 1) technoscapes, or the global configurations of technology; 2) ethnoscapes, meaning people and groups who move across national boundaries 3) finanscapes, or the movement of capital and investments; 4) mediascapes, meaning images produced by media; and finally 5) ideoscapes, comprising ideologies such as human rights and democracy. (Appadurai 1996)

1996) Appadurai's metaphor serves to highlight the disorganized, uneven relationship between the dimensions of global flow and the unpredictable nature of their outcomes. Anna Tsing, similarly, questions the ways in which the globalization's metaphors of flow and circulation present a picture of unfettered movement that is easily co-opted by overly celebratory narratives of the interconnectedness of globalization: "*circulation* calls forth images of the healthy flow of blood in the body and the stimulating, evenhanded exchange of the marketplace" (Tsing 2005:4). She offers instead the idea of "zones of cultural friction," arising from encounters and interactions "where words mean something different across a divide even as people agree to speak" (Tsing 2005:xi). Mazzarella presents a related idea when he suggests that:

> ethnography of the cultural politics of globalization might usefully set its sights on those nodes of mediation where value is often produced and contested, more or less self-consciously, in the name of culture." (Mazzarella 2004:345)

Rock music in Bangalore is a particularly fruitful example of a "node of mediation," or a "zone of friction" in which the meaning of rock music as an Indian cultural performance is contested and problematized. When a producer from MTV India, for example, states that in his "making the band" TV show he wants to find a rock band who express a truly "Indian" perspective in their music, rather than a band who "imitates" the west (Darshan 2010) it becomes clear that the flows of culture and media through which rock music travels are subject to a multitude of competing claims and currents that direct the ways in which rock music's meanings are then received and interpreted. Rock's sounds and meanings are, *pace* Anthony Giddens, dis-embedded and re-contextualized in India, with a variety of outcomes that this dissertation explores (Giddens 1990).

The ethnomusicology of Indian popular music

Rock music's social meanings in Indian public culture are framed by the historical dynamics of economic liberalization, global capitalist expansion and explicated by critical theories of mass media and consumption, but this research is also informed by themes in the ethnomusicology of South Asia, by paradigms from popular music studies, and by the theories that have emerged over the last three decades in the study of music and globalization. Existing ethnomusicological literature on the popular music cultures of India is somewhat limited in comparison to the centuries-old tradition of both indigenous and foreign scholarship on Indian classical and folk music. The scope of existing scholarship on Indian popular music cultures reflects the fact that in the Indian context a reference to popular music is almost always a reference to the film music industry.

Scholarship on Indian film music has looked at the conventions and development of the genre over the last eighty years (Arnold 1988; Booth 2000); the role of film song as an integral aspect of a film's affective or pleasurable power (Vasudevan 2000; Morcom 2007); the ways that film song uses particular musical conventions to express sentiment (Morcom 2007; Sarrazin 2008); and the role of technological advancement in fostering different types of musical output (Manuel 1993). Film and rock music, both popular music cultures that have drawn from a well of global musical influences and western popular forms nonetheless differ considerably in terms of aesthetics, audiences, production, and distribution; despite these differences, however, rock and film musical practices often overlap. Rock musicians, particularly those for whom music is a profession, sometimes find work in the film industry even while the general stance by many rock fans and participants tends to be to define their own musical practices in

opposition to film music, decrying the latter as overly commercialized. Chapter five will address some of these issues, particularly film's representation of rock and the role of rock musicians in contributing to new trends in the film music genre.

A very limited amount of research has been done on Indian rock or non-film popular music thus far. Peter Kvetko's 2005 dissertation, *Indipop: Producing Global Sounds and Local Meanings in Bombay* describes the influential role of musicians in the Indipop genre (described as playing "rock and pop") as music industry insiders and cultural mediators (Kvetko 2005). Kvetko describes the introduction and history of rock music in Mumbai and India generally and in doing so presents an invaluable introduction to an under-researched genre. Other recent work on transnational popular music in the region includes articles on Nepali pop (Greene and Henderson 2000; Greene 2001); Arun Saldhana's article on western music fans in Bangalore (Saldhana 2002); Diraj Murthy's investigation of right-wing Hindutva nationalism and the Delhi-based electronica band Midival Punditz (Murthy 2010); and one article on "Vedic" or Hindu-themed heavy metal and nationalism (Dairianathan 2007) in Southeast Asia. These writers engage with the nuances of localization processes and observe how transnational musical genres may be indigenized in a variety of ways.

Some work has been done in ethnomusicology on the proliferation of rock, rap and western pop music scenes around the world, with scholars investigating how rock music functions in support of nationalism or protests political oppression (Diehl 2002; Baulch 2003; Huang 2003; Nooshin 2005); serves to articulate or enable types of class mobility or social differentiation (Greene 2000; Leichty 2002; Baulch 2003); and works to express aspects of political, social or gendered identity (Kahn-Harris 2000; Deihl 2002; Baulch

2003; Solomon 2005). What much of this research has in common is, firstly, a focus on youth as the producers and consumers of western popular music forms; and secondly focus on the myriad ways that the producers and consumers of global rock forms produce music that is locally cosmopolitan within transnational or translocal[11] networks. What this dissertation has to offer the ongoing emerging scholarly discussion about global rock music scenes is an emphasis on the ways in which late capitalism, represented by transnational media, sponsorship, advertising and consumer formations, has in part enabled the conditions for the emergence of rock music in India. With rock (particularly heavy metal), rap and other western popular music forms increasingly to be found as live performance tradtions around the world, this research suggests that a focus on the imbrication of transnational popular music and consumer culture formations is a particularly fertile arena of study.

Indian rock as a translocal scene

Studies of popular music youth cultures theorize "scenes," "musical communities" and "subcultures" (Hebdidge 1979; Cohen 1991; Straw 1991; Negus 1996; Bennett 2000), descriptors that address a variety of types of musical and social participation. The musical practices of youth cultures in the west have often been posited as resistant to commercialization; for example with punk, defined as a subculture that takes an oppositional stance against the culture at large (Hebdidge 1979), or with dance music that creates an alternative social space to a gendered or mainstream musical culture (Thornton

[11] Tim Oakes and Louisa Schein define the translocal thusly: "Translocality draws attention to multiplying forms of mobility without losing sight of the importance of localities in peoples' lives (Oakes and Schein 2006:1), distinguishing it from transnationalism, which they assert is focused more on dynamics like large-scale economic flows. Addressing musical practice, Peterson and Bennett have used the designation "translocal" to address the networks of geographically disparate music scenes that in which participants form affiliations through genre or style (Peterson and Bennett 2004).

1996, 2006). Indian rock (including its more aesthetically insular subgenres like black metal) is arguably neither anti-social nor necessarily anti-mainstream, rendering "subculture" a less-than-useful descriptor for the genre. Rather, in everyday conversation participants refer to Indian rock as a "scene" with participants often defining rock music against the film music industry,[12] a classed-based as well as aesthetic distinction wherein participation in rock music signifies a taste-based positionality against the populist pleasures of film music.

The scene as theorized by Peterson and Bennett has dimensions that encompass the local, translocal and the virtual, (Peterson and Bennett 2004), reflecting the spatiality of Indian rock in the first decade of the 21st century. Defining the scene in part as a cosmopolitanized community of musical practices Straw addresses the ways in which scene members are attentive to and influenced by how other musical practices exist in relation to their own (Straw 1997); and as Kahn-Harris writes, the concept of scene is a context for musical practice that does not assume the coherence of its membership (Kahn-Harris 1997). Thus the scene might be defined as a musical culture in which a variety of musical practices coexist, with social alliances formed through participation across a range of genres, spaces, or practices. To describe Indian rock as a "scene" (the term is also used by participants) is in this case quite appropriate, as while it functions largely outside of the dominant film music industry, this does not imply its musical homogeneity but instead speaks to the alliances formed by its members – both locally and

[12] This opposition is often rhetorical or aesthetic and not shared throughout the scene. Some rock musicians, particularly those making it their profession, look for work in the film industry. Parikrama, a bluesy-rock band, the hard rock band Pentagram, and folk rock band Raghu Dixit are three groups whose members have been involved in film music.

with musicians in other parts of the world – in the face of a disinterested popular music industry.

Indian rock music might be understood, then, as a translocal scene, connected through various media networks to rock scenes in other parts of the world, and fundamentally shaped by its historically transnational legacy and contemporary globalized spatiality. The genre reflects this legacy in its sounds but also in its retention of some of the non-sounded elements of rock music: hints of a "counter-cultural" mythology, particular sartorial signifiers, performance styles and performative gestures, as well as in scene members' distinctions between rock's "authenticity" as an expressive genre in contradistinction to pop – what has been termed an "ideology" of rock. Simon Frith first theorized the rock ideology, describing the genre as "mass produced music that carries a critique of its own means of production" (Frith 1981:11); and more succinctly observing that: "the contrast between music-as-expression and music-as commodity defines twentieth-century pop experience (Frith 2006:231). Frith makes critical interventions into the false binary of commercialization versus creativity that animates the rock ideology but an unproblematized distinction between "authentic" creative expression and commercialization encapsulates the idea of what constitutes "real" rock music for many Indian participants (despite the exceptional role of sponsorship in the scene), who cast their preferences as against film music's "fake" or "overproduced" sounds. Along with these musical distinctions, the rock ideology as "commercial versus authentic" conjures a host of other associated tropes including, significantly, the free-spirited or rebel performer, forging his own way through sheer force and talent. This figure, who emerges obliquely in advertisements and media and in the scene's discourses,

also fits hand in glove with the claims to individuality and personal expression that are the hallmarks of modern subjectivity.

Research methods: observant participation, virtual ethnography, and a word on the position of the researcher

In order to address the performed, mediated and commodified aspects of this musical culture my ethnographic research has followed their intertwined and interdependent modalities using a combination of interviews and participation, musical and historical analysis, online ethnography, and critical readings of texts and visual media. The critical ethnographic methods from which this research draws examine how media is integrated into "communities that are parts of nations and states," as well as "transnational circuits produced in the worlds of late capitalism and postcolonial cultural politics" (Ginsberg, Abu-Lughod and Larkin 2002:23). In addition to the mass media forms (print, television and film) that will be addressed in chapter five, social media networks and the advent of digital music have considerably expanded and diversified the reach of rock music in India, enabling better exposure, resultant larger audiences and increased revenue for rock competitions and shows. Social and other online media work to forge translocal networks while they also produce a variety of discourses in which participants define and debate the meanings of Indian rock, and participation in an online forum like Facebook is an expected part of participating in the rock music culture.

While virtual fieldwork is no substitute for on the ground fieldwork, the Internet is nevertheless an ideal mode for an examination of discursive formations of musical meaning, for analysis of the fluid (or sometimes awkward) dialogic exchanges that participants partake in, and thus observance of the communicative practices that surround

the emergence and development of a scene. Theorists have suggested viewing the Internet not as a 'thing' but as a "means" (Miller and Slater 2000), leading to the recognition that through different uses of the Internet arise new sorts of communities and communicative interchanges that are in themselves cultural products and practices (Wilson and Peterson 2002). Ethnomusicologists in particular work from this paradigm, utilizing critical methods, conducting interviews, joining discussion groups and chat rooms to research online communities (Lysloff and Gay 2003; Wong 2003).

Despite my use of some internet ethnography and much time spent watching MTV, reading magazines and seeing films, the great majority of this research was done with musicians: at rehearsals and at bars or other venues for performances or on road trips and tours. As the months unfolded during my time in Bangalore, I often found that my most fruitful ethnographic encounters grew from a kind of sympathetic and taste-based commonality between the musicians I met and myself. That is to say, despite our cultural differences, I was as familiar as they were with many of the genres of music we were discussing, and so our conversations often had the feeling of being conducted on a kind of common ground in which our histories with this popular music were intelligible to the other, even if our exact tastes did not match. This element of commonality considerably lessened the burden of conducting research in a culture different from my own, a process that seems intrinsically to present the researcher with an immense number of difficulties, not least of which is the ever-present feeling that one is somehow missing something – that the relative unfamiliarity of the research area or culture means that the depth of understanding is never quite as layered or pervasive as it might otherwise be in one's "own" culture.

What is meant to stand in for this is, of course, a kind of scholarly authority, or what scholar Tejaswini Niranjana, discussing her ethnographic work in Trinidad, describes as the "ethnographic authority" assumed by the anthropologist (Niranjana 2006). Niranjana writes about the problematic nature of this assumption of ethnographic authority, based as it often is on an institutionalized power asymmetry that, in her opinion, cannot simply be overcome by the reflexive turn. Thus she describes a dual problem of discarding a position of ethnographic authority while also being unable to claim "cultural authority," and being left with the difficulty of finding a position from which to write. I quote her passage in full:

> How do I conceptualize my relationship to a place that has become an intimate part of my subjective past while remaining, at the same time, outside any assertion of my cultural authority? Where Trinidad is concerned, the nature of my research there as well as the rejection of a particular subject position—that of an anthropologist—does not allow me the privilege of deploying an "ethnographic authority"…in writing about Trinidad, I often find myself caught between the disavowal of ethnographic authority and the impossibility of claiming cultural authority" (Niranjana 2006:7).

Niranjana, an Indian woman studying members of the Indian diaspora in Trinidad describes her project as in part an attempt to address the ambiguity of her position through her ethnographic encounters. Certainly the "reflexive turn" in anthropology and ethnography has been well documented (Clifford 1983, 1986; Feld 1994; Marcus 1998; Barz and Cooley 2008). Maureen Mahon describes its outcomes for scholars and ethnographers as, in part:

> increased self-consciousness about the limitations and possibilities of conventional modes of ethnographic research, theory, and representation, as well as the efforts to innovate in the discipline (Mahon 2000:483).

The sense of trying to find a place from which to speak which always also takes heed of the already constituted aspects of one's positionality and institutional privilege is one

which I struggled with during my research, with no conclusive answers and yet many pragmatic maneuvers. Throughout this dissertation I am reflexive about certain moments in which my positionality shaped the direction of the research: in chapter six I write about coming into conflict with some of my interlocutors over their usage of a homophobic epithet, a conflict that directed my research into certain areas that then became a subject of my writing.

My focus on rock music meant that I was dealing almost entirely with an English-speaking group of people – several of whom described English as being the language they "think in." Though I did translate some Hindi while watching MTV (much of which is in "Hinglish") I imagined that the fact that my interlocutors and I were able to communicate in a shared language enabled me to be sensitive to and faithful in reproducing their interviews and narratives. However, using English almost exclusively during my research and focusing on a musical culture in which English was the lingua franca was by no means a solely positive or value-free orientation. English is spoken across South India, but its speakers are disproportionately from particular social classes with access to specific levels and type of education and therefore my language limitations directed the parameters of my research in a fundamental way. Braj Kachru writes about the spread and usage of English-language usage in India that "the alchemy of English…does not only provide social status, it also gives access to attitudinally and materially desirable domains of power and knowledge" (Kachru 1990:13-14).

The "alchemy of English" is demonstrated in the massive proliferation of small English schools and classes that have sprung up throughout both rural and urban India, with signs plastering Bangalore's public spaces: undoubtedly to speak fluent English

gives people access to the "domains of knowledge and power" – and of course employment – of which Kachru writes. With these limitations in mind, I was still confident in my project's scope and particularly in its location, Bangalore, where there is relatively little rock music being produced in the Kannada, Tamil or Hindi languages (with some exceptions described in chapters six and seven). Interesting and nuanced work could and doubtless should be undertaken on some of the rock music cultures in India in which indigenous languages are used, such as the Bangla-language rock scene in Kolkata, but those are for obvious reasons beyond the scope of this dissertation. My own language limitations notwithstanding, making sense of complexity of language politics in Bangalore is a vital aspect of understanding the role of "English music" in the region and it is an issue that will be explored in some depth in the second and third chapters of this dissertation.

Outline of the dissertation

The following six chapters of the dissertation bring historical, ethnographic and theoretical analysis to bear on the questions raised in this introduction. Chapter two addresses the historical trajectory of the rock music culture in India, constructing a lineage of "western" musical forms in the country. I draw from the body of scholarship on western musical forms in Mumbai, Lucknow, Goa, and other areas of the country whose colonial heritage gave rise to social and musical histories that contributed to fostering specific types of English-language music. Drawing from the limited amount of prior research on India's early rock music scene, from archived newspaper reports, magazines and from oral histories, I describe and identify some elements of the nineteen-

sixties and nineteen-seventies musical culture that continue to be influential today, including the playing of cover songs and the role of corporate sponsored competitions in providing bands with a platform and in consolidating rock music sounds from around the country into a coherent scene.

Chapter three examines some of the contexts for Bangalore's emergence as a center for Indian rock music culture, focusing on the city's recent history and economic development. I describe and examine how the city's urban geography—its historical and contemporary social and economic characteristics and politics—have contributed to or constrained its rock music culture, and how Bangalore's rock music scene plays out within, reflects and also in some ways mediates the city's political, generational, and especially economic and class-based divisions.

Drawing from chapter three's description of Bangalore's economy and public culture, in chapter four I analyze the role of advertising and branding in shaping conditions for the production and the reception of Bangalore's rock music culture. Drawing from Baudrillard's discussion of the sign-value of commodities (Baudrillard 2001), I treat advertisements as texts that may be read for their representational semiotics as well as for the conditions of their possibility and I look at the ways in which branding is a material source of economic support for rock concerts and performers. I draw from interviews with musicians and marketers to gain an understanding of how corporate sponsors have enabled the rock scene's continued viability, and interpret the motivations for and responses to these types of partnerships. Through case studies, interviews and musical analysis I try to identify the ways in which these mediations are integral to rock

music's development, scope and ambit as a cultural form while they also often constrain or inflect the styles and performance possibilities for rock music.

Chapter five of the dissertation critically analyzes the discursive and media fields within which some of the meanings of rock music are produced, negotiated and received, charting some of the processes of adaptation and change within the media of print, television and film. I draw extensively from the independently owned Indian rock magazine Rock Street Journal, reading deeply into the editor's comments from the 1990s and observing the reader's issues and concerns – elements that critically shaped the early-liberalization era rock music culture in the country. Turning to television, I describe and analyze the early days of MTV in India, assessing the channel's infamous and ignominious retreat from the Indian market in 1994 and their return in 1996 with a more localized identity. I then critically analyze the latest incarnation of rock on MTV India, the rock music-reality television program *Kurkure Desi Beats Rock On*, and I assess how producers and musicians negotiate sounding appropriately "Indian" through linguistic, stylistic and musical choices. Chapter four also examines the circulation of the rock star figure in recent Hindi films, making a close analysis of the interpellation of the ideal rock music figure in the film *Rock On!!*, and tracing out the ideas about rock music and rock music subjects that circulate in this and other recent Hindi films.

Chapters six and seven of the dissertation focus on musical production: the sounds, performances, and industries of cover bands, fusion bands, metal and indie bands in Bangalore. Throughout these two chapters I explore the concept of "originality" and the "Indian" rock sound — perhaps one of the most anxiously negotiated musical concepts in the community. In chapter six, I look at cover bands and so-called "fusion" or

folk-rock bands, two genres that differ considerably and which are viewed as respectively outmoded (cover bands) and representative of the future of Indian rock (fusion bands). I explore the ways in which a band "sounding Indian" enables it to be positioned in a particular way in the transnational music industry. These genre struggles, in which the project of defining a sound and defining a musical identity are collapsed into the project of defining a market sector, encapsulates many of the problems and issues that this dissertation is concerned with.

Chapter seven looks at metal bands and "independent" music in Bangalore, exploring some of the ways in which participation in those genres mediates aspects of identity, class, and social mobility in this community. I describe the heavy metal scene in Bangalore and observe how a translocal network of heavy metal enables some Indian metal bands to get fans and shows around the world even though they may not be on a major label. I then turn to the "independent" genre, in which bands play a variety of styles, including the self-described "post-world" band Lounge Piranha, who reject corporate sponsorship at shows and I examine how an independent music industry, enabled by the internet, has begun to grow in India.

CHAPTER TWO

TRACING THE LINEAGE OF "WESTERN" MUSIC IN URBAN INDIA

The performance of English-language rock music in India commenced in the early 1960s, closely following the genre's explosion in popularity in the west. A modest musical culture in its early days, centered in Bombay and Calcutta[13] and to a lesser extent New Delhi, Bangalore, Madras, Pune, and Assam, "beat music" as it was then called nevertheless found enthusiastic audiences in upper class students and young people eager to experience this new popular music form. Histories of the rock genre and its role in processes of cultural globalization often pay scant attention its early transnational travels, giving the superficial impression that the form's contemporary global dispersion is concurrent with the late twentieth century's digital technologies and the emergence of global media conglomerates. Indeed, upon first glance the rock culture in India seems to be almost predicated upon its relationship to transnational flows of media and capital, and the upsurge in the visibility and audibility of rock music in urban India in the last decade is undoubtedly due in large part to the shifts in media circulation and consumption that have taken place since the 1990s.

There is, however, a deeper history of western music[14] in India, played for centuries in the country due to the cross-cultural exchanges that are the legacy of trade,

[13] When describing a period before a city's name was changed I use its old name (Calcutta was changed back to Kolkata in 2001; Bombay to Mumbai in 1995). When referring to a period post name-change I use the city's new name.

[14] Throughout this chapter I use the term "western music" – although in most cases it is incomplete and obfuscatory – to refer to a variety of musical forms that originate historically with Europeans or non-native American people.

Christianity, colonialism, tourism and media: from the guitar music brought by early missionaries, to the waltzes and social dance music of the Raj, to the jazz bands, film musicians and popular performers of the mid-twentieth century. While not a direct genealogy by any means (and indeed the links between hymn singing in seventeenth-century Kerala and Beatles cover bands in nineteen-sixties Bombay are somewhat tenuous at best) this music history is also a social history that presents a context for the rock music culture that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century. The many elements of this multifaceted social history include a heritage of guitar performance in the country; churches that trained students in western musical notation and hymn singing; the performance of western popular music in urban Anglo-Indian[15] culture; American jazz performers playing in the hotels of metropolitan India; and the long and variegated history of Indian film music.

These various elements are threads which, when woven together, reveal rock music to be not an accidental interloper, imported wholesale from MTV, but a performance practice with musicological antecedents and social roots further back in history. Putting Indian rock music in its historical context enables a better understanding of its ambiguous, often discordant role in the larger Indian musical culture – why on the one hand it is often cast as a damaging cultural trend that harkens back to a colonial heritage or forward to a objectionable "overly westernized" future; while on the other hand it functions as a symbol of a desirable or at least acceptable cosmopolitanism, a modern birthright to young people compatible with new articulations of globally-

[15] "Anglo-Indian" in common usage describes either people of British descent living in India or people of mixed Indian and British heritage (Wright and Wright 1971), this chapter is concerned with both groups. A diminishing population in the early twenty-first century (Williams 2001) Anglo Indians were nonetheless a recognizable social group in mid-century Bangalore (Doctor 2008) and their leisure practices played a part in fostering rock music culture in the city.

inflected nationalism. More generally, this chapter addresses the history and social context of western music in India, drawing from relevant writings about Lucknow, Mumbai and other cities when appropriate, making use of secondary sources in ethnomusicology and cultural history while also drawing from primary sources including interviews with elder musicians and journalists, and the narrative histories recounted in topical chat-rooms of the Internet.

Variable historiographies: issues in the construction of a historical narrative of rock music in India

As Indian rock is a comparatively new musical genre, and one that has as yet not been the focus of much academic study, its critical history is yet to be fully constructed. The study of this genre departs in many ways from the traditional scope of Indian musicology; nevertheless, aspects of its development might be productively read with reference to a broader Indian popular and even classical music historiography. Although this dissertation obviously does not fall within the purview of Indian classical music scholarship, some broad themes in that body of research dovetail with this study, including the relationship of musical performance to projects of nation-making or regional and linguistic diversification or unification; the construction and maintenance of gender roles through musical performance; and the changing roles of patronage, media, and notation in relation to performance (Bakhle 2005; Weidman 2006). Although Indian classical music has a different social purview than rock, the general question of how the processes of standardization of musical performance work to produce "appropriate" audiences is one that carries over from classical to rock music; in addition, the role of women in India's rock music culture can be partially understood with reference to some

of women's roles in the performance of light classical and film music in the last century (Manuel 1990; Morcom 2007); and finally theorizations of how music may help to articulate nationalism (particularly in relation to what constitutes "Indian" or "foreign" music, a topic that has been the focus of much Indo-musicology of the last decades – see Bakhle 2005; Weidman 2006; Kippen 2006) can provide insight into western music practices in the Indian twentieth century.

Excavating the history of rock music in India also means engaging with journalistic accounts as in many cases journalism is the only source material that exists besides personal accounts. In the last decade participants in the rock scene have begun to consolidate a historical narrative about rock in the country via newspaper and magazine stories and the Internet. Musicians from around the country contribute their reminiscences to message boards and blogs, creating a trove of historical material for an otherwise under-documented genre. Music journalists in the country, drawing from these resources and doing their own research into the scene, have begun to tell the story of the history of Indian rock (Mehar 2006; Richard 2009) and more than one journalist has begun work on longer historical accounts. One of the effects of this increase in volume of popular historical narratives is the consecration of particular types of stories about and interpretations of the phenomenon of rock music in the country: concurrent with the effort towards coalescing a historical narrative there is the emergence of a particular shape and discursive slant to that narrative. Apparent in many of these anecdotal or journalistic histories are some of the rock culture's mythologies as a rebellious youth movement, as well as a retrospectively valorizing gaze (given the changes in India's economy and culture since the 1990s) in which participants in rock music are portrayed

as vanguards of the new Indian "globalized" culture. In other words, engaging with these accounts requires a kind of critical historiography that takes into account the positionality of rock's subjects throughout its history and the effects of a transnational ideoscape (Appadurai 1996) within which, even in its early days, rock's meanings circulated.

Hymns, waltzes, jazz, *film*i and rock: tracing a socio-musical lineage

Drawing together the existing literature on western musical forms in India is a useful exercise that reveals several historical themes framing the performance of western music in the country, including the place of Christian missionaries in introducing western musical notation and instrumentations (Kvetko 2005; Booth 2006; Coelho 2005); the role of the British Raj in fostering pre-rock and roll western popular music forms in India (Shope 2004, 2007, 2008); the important position of the guitar in Indian musical performance (Clayton 2001); as well as the influence of early film music industries in indigenizing and naturalizing "foreign" and western popular music sounds (Arnold 1991; Manuel 1993; Booth 2005; Morcom 2005). Pulling these themes together clarifies the historical context for western popular music in early twentieth century India and brings into focus the context in which rock music's sounds and meanings were comprehensible and attractive to a certain strata of urban youth in the nineteen-sixties.

This account of rock's musical pre-history India addresses the conditions of its emergence and in the process attempts to problematize the persistent idea (coming from musicians as well as journalists and audiences) that Indian rock music is somehow still striving to express its cultural roots, that it is "not Indian" or that its very existence demonstrates a troubling tendency to "imitation" and derivation rather than "original"

musical creation. This historical background explicitly embeds rock music performance in India to a longer history of musicianship and performance in western musical genres even as it observes the ways in which the rock music culture of the 1960s broke from those musical traditions as a performance practice form as well as in its modes of fandom, production and dissemination.

In India western music has a history dating back at least to the fifteenth century, when Portuguese Catholic missionaries brought sung vespers, *cantigas*[16] and motets and a variety of instruments with them to Goa along with church teachings (Coelho 2005). In addition to the western notation and polyphony used in the church Portuguese traders brought secular instruments, and by the middle of the seventeenth century lutes were being played in Goa for pleasure even as the church frowned on their use in services (Coelho 2005). Peter Kvetko writes about the Portuguese influence that

> [w]herever the Portuguese went in India, they built churches and schools, both of which taught western music as a basic element of cultural indoctrination. It should not go unnoticed, then, that education in western music has been institutionalized in this part of India for nearly 500 years. (Kvetko 2005:50).

The "cultural indoctrination" that Kvetko describes as one of the purposes of western church music pedagogy was not, however, a unidirectional dynamic; as Victor Anand Coelho writes, in Goan church services, in the Jesuit fashion, European instruments were played together with local instruments in processions and celebrations (Coelho 1999; 2005). Even as part of the aggressive missionary project of Portuguese Catholicism,[17] musical performance displayed the syncretic dimensions that would define forms of

[16] Medieval monophonic songs with lyrics that praise the Virgin Mary

[17] Frykenberg, in his comprehensive work *Christianity in India* (Frykenberg 2008) observes that the Portuguese presence in India brought "an especially militant form of Christianity" (127) enabled by the Church of Rome's granting of the *Padroado Real*, an edict giving Portuguese maritime explorers "exclusive authority to fill clerical positions within…overseas domains" – effectively linking the expansion of Catholicism with the project of economic empire.

Indian popular music centuries later. Since Janet Abu-Lughod's germinal work on the early world-system (Abu-Lughod 1989), theorizations of globalization and studies of musical globalization have paid heed to the early history of global expansion. The early syncretic musical genres Coelho writes about demonstrate that a historical account of music's global travels must take into account the fact that its early phases were enabled by trade routes that even predated the fifteenth century.[18]

The guitar, an instrument that has been played in India since the Portuguese *vihuela de mano*[19] arrived there the early days of trade exploration, while not traditionally part of a liturgical instrumental grouping, was nevertheless integrated into Goan Portuguese worship practices in the seventeenth century, particularly in the feast days that were celebrated with dancing, dramatic presentations, and a variety of musical performances (Coelho 2005). In Southern India, then, the church as well as the secular Portuguese culture that came along with the colonizing mission helped to naturalize methods of musical pedagogy, notation and instrumentation, and musicians from Christian communities, especially those in Goa, have had a specialized role in the performance of western musical forms through the colonial encounter and into the present century.

It is clear that Christianity and the institutionalization of Christian education played a role in indigenizing western musical notation and hymn singing even as the history of guitar music in India has multiple roots – not restricted to its place in Christian communities in India. Gaurav Vaz, a Mangalorean Catholic guitarist living in Bangalore,

[18] Trade routes existed between India and the Roman empire as early as the *pax romana*, for example, as archeological findings in South India have demonstrated (Warmington 1928)

[19] A plucked chordophone originating in fifteenth-century Spain, forerunner to the Baroque and modern guitars.

stated to me that his interest and early exposure to western musical forms came as a result of the use of the guitar in his Church's musical repertoire and the fact that there he sang "Western style songs" (Vaz 2009). Another interlocutor, Bryan Richard – a journalist, aficionado of rock music, and bible college graduate – made similar allusions in our conversations, when he described his "background" as being in "western types of music" (Richard 2009).

Martin Clayton's research on the history of the guitar in India observes that a high number of guitarists there "were born in India as Christians" (Clayton 2009:68) He, like Kvetko, observes the influential role of Goan Catholic musicians in the performance of western musical genres but also finds that guitarists throughout the country today come from a variety of backgrounds and social classes. While the guitar is no longer played mainly by Goans or Christians, however, its historical connection with those communities is still taken for granted: for instance, a recent popular Hindi film about a rock band, *Rock On!!* features a "naturally gifted" guitarist, Joe Mascarenas, characterized as a Catholic from the "fishing village" of Bandra.[20]

Clayton refers to the guitar's "paradoxical location" in India (Clayton 2009:65), observing that Indian guitarists often consider the west as the original home of the guitar. Given its long history in the country and its central role in the popular music of the west, the ways in which the guitar symbolizes either something local or something "foreign" in Indian musical practices is complicated and continues to be subject to debate. Indian classical music has indigenized foreign instruments throughout its history, as demonstrated by the central role of the violin in the South Indian classical Karnatak

[20] An upscale neighborhood in Northern Mumbai.

tradition beginning in the eighteenth century (Weidman 2006), and as Gregory Booth has written, indigenization is apparent in the wedding brass bands that are a syncretic musical legacy of the colonial military bands of the Raj (Booth 2006).

From the entry of the British East India Company into India in the seventeenth century to the final days of the Raj in 1947 colonialism and its social, political and cultural entailments induced seismic shifts in the social organization of musical performance in India, as scholars have written about extensively (Neuman 1990; Bakhle 2005; Kippen 2006; Weidman 2006). The diverse effects of colonial rule in fostering specific western musical forms in Bangalore is a topic that will be addressed in greater depth later in the following chapter; but as the work of Kvetko, Shope and Booth suggest, there is a demonstrable genealogy from the culture of the brass band performance in India to Indian wedding bands[21] to the swing bands that entertained the Anglo-Indian communities in the metropoles of the British Raj; to the jazz bands of Bombay in the early twentieth century. Naresh Fernandes' book *Taj Mahal Foxtrot: The Story of Bombay's Jazz Age* explicitly traces a history of social dance bands in 1920s and 30s Bombay to a period of prolific jazz performance in the city in the 1940s and 50s (Fernandes 2012). Bradley Shope's historical research also has shown that in 1930s Lucknow:

> [A]n increasing number of …dance halls, auditoriums and cafes were being built to cater to a growing number of British and Americans in India, satisfying their nostalgia for the live performance of the foxtrot, the tango, the waltz, the rumba, big-band music, and Dixieland (Shope 2004:167).

[21] Booth writes that in their first appearance brass bands "were evidence of the subcontinent's engagement with the global and with colonialism…however, bands have become a locally constructed variant on a global theme" (Booth 2009: 81).

In his fascinating history of the culture of ballroom dancing in this period, Shope notes that social music and dancing became a way that Anglo-Indians and Goan Portuguese "assert[ed] their identities" as distinct from the Hindu mainstream via their appreciation for sounds that "extended beyond India's geographical boundaries" (Shope 2004:167). Ballroom dancing culture in Lucknow and other Indian cities was also enabled in part by a system of convent schools that considered social dancing an appropriate form of interaction for well-raised British and Anglo-Indian children.[22] The orchestras for these social dances were often composed of musicians from the Goan and Anglo-Indian communities who would later play important roles in the film industry as musicians, arrangers, and directors for film orchestration and as jazz and cabaret musicians in the early twentieth century (Kvetko 2005; Shope 2007; Clayton 2009; Fernandes 2012).

By the 1940s cities like Bombay and Calcutta were home to a small but thriving café culture where new forms of popular music were overtaking the fox trots and waltzes of earlier years (Shope 2007). Cities like Madras, Calcutta, Shillong, Bombay, Lucknow and Bangalore, some of which were "hotbeds of western music performance" (Clayton 2009:163) were also the former military bases, capitals or summer retreats of the British Raj. The performance spaces in those cities (including hotels and cafes) and the legacy of musical training and instrumentation were instrumental in fostering the conditions for the emergence of western popular music's live performance, and in this era several cities welcomed touring bands of African-American musicians who performed regularly in

[22] Shope also writes about dancing and music schools run by Goans and Anglo Indians – a phenomenon that foreshadowed the emergence of rock music schools in urban India (like Bangalore's Nathaniel School of Music) in the last decade.

India (Booth 2006; Shope 2008, Fernandes 2012).[23] While jazz was popular with a wide audience of urban cosmopolitan subjects, Shope suggests that Goan and Christian participation in the professional playing and performance of jazz might be linked to its ability to transcend "the conservatism of the British colonial aesthetic" (Shope 2008:272) and to produce and circulate of a kind of significatory "muscular modernity" – a modernity removed from the from the colonial legacy by virtue of its association with African Americans:

> African American jazz musicians, especially, generated an appeal that rested somewhere between the primitive and the progressive...Yet jazz was also considered a civilised commodity; its spread carried with it previous elitist conceptions of music, albeit altered by new celebrations of modernity, and flavoured with exoticism (Shope 2008:272).

In Shope's assessment, Goan and Anglo Indian musicians' performance of a specifically African-American form of popular music enabled them to access a "different" west than the one associated with the British imperialist legacy, one synonymous with the promises, freedoms and in a sense the technological developments of modernity:

> Jazz music served as an effective means for these two ethnicised communities [Goans and Anglo-Indians]…to empower themselves by commodifying the value placed on its emancipatory potential as a tool of modernity (Shope 2007:100).

Shope's interpretation of jazz's reception in the country notwithstanding, there was another facet to the story of touring jazz musicians in India. Naresh Fernandes recounts how many of the American jazz band performances of the 1940s and 1950s (made up of some of the great African-American players of the time) were part of a State Department initiative mounted to combat what was seen as the Indian government's communist sympathies. In 1951 a chapter of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (an

[23] Significant performers in this category include Teddy Weatherford, stride and jazz pianist from Virginia, Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, and Dave Brubeck, among others (Shope 2008, Fernandes 2012)

organization made up of writers, philosophers and artists founded in Berlin) met in Bombay. Instrumental in supporting the jazz tours of this era, among other endeavors, what the Bombay CCF (as it was called) did not know at the time was that the original Berlin chapter of CCF was in fact conceived of and funded by the CIA. As Fernandes writes, the CCF was involved in export of jazz as a kind of cultural "Americanization" meant to sway the populations of supposedly communist-sympathetic countries:

> It would later come to light that some of the State Department's jazz tours were also organized with the help of the CIA. In this climate of skullduggery, it wasn't surprising that the American "foreign hand" was accused of pulling a great many strings in India (Fernandes 2012:146)

Fernandes observes that jazz was used as a weapon in the State Department's arsenal during the Cold War: he quotes John Wiggin, public affairs officer of the United States Information Service, telling Dave Brubeck that jazz was thought to reach out "on a personal level," and was a "great tool in helping save the country [India] from the Reds" (Fernandes 2012:165).

Whatever the underlying geopolitical motivations at work in the circulation of American jazz music in India in the first part of the century, the resultant Indian jazz music culture is claimed with pride and is considered to have contributed extensively to the sounds of film music in the country. Indian jazz musicians, positioned on the forefront of a popular music genre that was "attainably modern," were sought after as performers as well as music supervisors and composers for the film industry. Booth writes about the crossover between jazz and film music in the nineteen forties, describing how, for example, the band leader Antonio Vaz (aka Chic Chocolate) collaborated with film music director C. Ramachandra: Ramachandra would go to clubs where Vaz's band was playing to search out musicians for that evening's recordings. Booth observes that

these crossovers between film and jazz music appear to have been "a crucial factor in the introduction of dance band instruments and styles into Bollywood's music culture" (Booth 2006:90).

The eclectic arena of influences that Indian film music draws from is well documented (Arnold 1991; Manuel 1990; Kvetko 2005; Morcom 2007; Sarrazin 2008), and the early days of music production and film music composition is the focus of work by ethnomusicologists and historians who identify, as Peter Manuel does, the occurrence of a variety of "western" musical elements in film song of the 1940s and on. Manuel, in a brief overview of the genre, suggests that the use of western chords, instrumentation and form in film music – film music's oft noted syncretism – serves the purpose of mediating elements of tradition with mandates of modernity in the popular culture sphere: "The impression of novelty is essential to the urban Indian who no longer fully identifies with traditional India," whereas "the use of traditional elements, whether tasteful or not, satisfies a sense of cultural nationalism and lends familiarity to new songs." (Manuel 1990:13).

Subsequent scholars of Indian film music have tended to view eclecticism in the form differently than as a "traditional" versus "novelty" binary. Shope makes the persuasive claim that the hybrid or syncretic aspects of 1940s film music should be understood partially as the result of the domestic production and performance of western popular music like that being played by jazz musicians of the nineteen-thirties in India:

> I conclude by suggesting that some of the *filmi* 'hybrid music'…was influenced by domestic popular music practices established in the 1930s in which African Americans were a pioneering force. (Shope 2007:98)

Thus a subtle perceptual shift might be in order, one that recognizes how the lengthy history of domestic performance of western popular music forms has played a constitutive role in the production of Indian film song's syncretic sounds, problematizing the de-historicizing moves necessary to cast film music as a hybridized form in which Indian folk and classical forms are overlaid with exotic foreign sounds.

By the 1950s, then, a variety of popular musical forms were being played in the country by different communities and generations of musicians: in film, where the sounds of foreign music, including Latin styles, jazz, tango, and later rock and disco were eclectic signs of the film music genre's ability to assimilate a variety of musical styles; and in the newly emerging rock bands influenced by the mediated sounds of the rock and roll explosion happening in the west. This turn of events meant that there could be found two different streams of rock-style music occurring simultaneously in mid-century Indian popular musical culture: the stylized images and sounds of "rock music" in film as it was meant to portray a western, foreign, or youthful element; and the local rock bands that were beginning to play cover songs of English language hits in the cafes and hotels of the metropoles for crowds of their peers. Both made claims to a cosmopolitan orientation through the portrayal and performance of a similar musical form but in terms of production, dissemination, and social purview represented divergent streams from a similar musical lineage. This divergence was to continue for the next few decades, albeit with film and rock music often intertwining in a variety of interesting and problematic ways.

In the early 1960s the Goan musicians who had been instrumental in the performance and propagation of western popular music forms in the early parts of the

century were no longer at the forefront this musical trend. As Kvetko writes, in the 1960s rock, or "beat" music as it was called, was an avocational, rather than a professional pursuit that would have been in line with musical practices of the Goan musician community, and his research suggests that while some younger Goan musicians were involved in making rock music, for the most part many of the professional musicians from this community found rock music "incompatible" with their background as trained musicians (Kvetko 2005). Notwithstanding the regional origins of rock music's new devotees, the main barriers to playing rock music were and have continued to be the expense of buying instruments and records; whether or not one speaks English, the lingua franca of the genre; and whether or not one has the leisure time to devote to playing in a band. Thus, into the latter half of the century rock music was no longer an ethnically-oriented musical practice – it was instead becoming a youth culture practice oriented to particular socio-economic populations with particular types of education who might have had the means or mobility to participate in it: namely, a English school-educated group of young upper-middle class men.

Beat music: modernity, media, and musical practice in the 1960s

The emergence of Beat music in India came during an era of economic austerity, amidst the social and political upheaval following independence, partition, and the 1965 war with Pakistan. With Nehru's five-year plans ushering in an era of social and educational reform, India was pushing towards self-directed modernization. As Dipesh Chakrabarty notes, exactly what constitutes "South Asian modernity" is a question that remains at the center of scholarly debates (Chakrabarty 2002), and his critique suggests

generally that modernity, far from being a descriptive term, must remain subject to investigation and open to multiple descriptions and orientations. As complex as manifestations of "the modern" were in the 1960s across Indian society, an ideological valorization of self-reliant Indian modernization in the national context shaped the urban milieu in which an emergent rock music culture played out. An examination of rock music in the era following independence provides insight into how youth participants may have articulated an engagement with the "modern" via musical practice. This is not to imply that rock, a western popular music form, was *ipso facto* considered to be modern; to equate rock music with modernity is a proposition that easily falls prey to an improperly teleological, west-oriented version of how "the modern" was emergent in Indian culture. Rock music's mode of transmission – through technology and material culture rather than pedagogic legacy as well as its connection with an international youth culture movement gave it desirable, arguably "modern" contours, but it was through their own engagement with rock music that youth participants began carving out their own forms of modern subjectivity: culturally cosmopolitan and nascently transnational.

As Fernandes describes, beat music began to hit its stride in 1965 in Bombay when English-college students, leaving school without permission, would crowd the Venice club at the Astoria hotel to listen to live musicians and to socialize, men and women together, the 11am performance time allowing both for the blackouts imposed by the war and social convention that meant that many girls might not be allowed out un-chaperoned at night (Fernandes 2012). These Venice performances, which grew in popularity until the schools began sending angry letters home, were a welcome respite from wartime austerity measures and ushered in an era of beat music performance that

would soon be a source of both consternation and celebration in print media, as well as a serious endeavor and practice for many young musicians. The accounts cited here describe beat music practices of the time, including learning to play through listening to records and radio; playing homemade instruments or using jerry-rigged equipment; and fashioning a youth style that borrowed liberally from the most popular bands of the time, notably the Beatles. What these practices indicate and what the following section will demonstrate, then, is an early conjuncture of this transnational musical youth culture with a specialized set of consumer practices centered around the accumulation of media and instruments and the development of specific styles of dress and appearance.

In recent years more scholarship has been devoted to exploring the history of India's consumer culture, work that considerably enriches an understanding of Indian consumption patterns in the twenty-first century. As Douglas E. Haynes describes, between 1910 and 1940 cities of the subcontinent saw the development of "new forms of advanced capitalism, focused on the aggressive marketing of consumer goods to South Asians" via print advertisement (Haynes 2010:185) that was "implicated in wider signification systems involving families, communities and the nation" (Haynes 2010: 4). In its early days beat music not only consisted in sound and musical practice, but ushered in a host of specialized media and goods in a society where the consumption of luxury or western goods was neither easily attainable nor desirable as part of post-Independence nationalist economic directives. Studies of early twentieth century Indian consumption patterns such as those by Kidambi (2010), Bhaumik (2010), and McGowan (2010) suggest that consumption practices worked to define an early twentieth-century Indian middle class through figuring proper gender norms or social positions, or by appealing to

tropes and markers such as nationalism, tradition or modernity. Studies such as the ones mentioned above share a concern for how "anxieties about and enthusiasm for consumption became emblematic of class identity" (Haynes 2010:4), and Bhaumik in particular observes how young members of the middle and working classes, through consumption, entertainment and leisure practices designated a realm of "freedom" for themselves, somewhat distinct from the social norms of older generations (Bhaumik 2010).

Following from these studies, the history presented here suggests that beat music be viewed as a performance and leisure practice inflected by the beginnings of a youth-oriented consumer culture centered around musical goods and media. The argument here is that only does contemporary Indian rock have musical antecedents in earlier eras, but its connections to the development and entrenchment of consumer culture also has roots in an earlier phase of Indian history. Rock media hinted at a zeitgeist as much as a musical experience: a complex of music, images, social mores and, in some cases, luxury goods. In narratives and anecdotes from the nineteen-fifties and sixties the consumer culture-rock culture confluence materializes partially through allusion and image: anecdotes about fashion and hairstyles, versions of the "American dream" as expressed in blue jeans and hamburgers, or images of teenage boys in Beatles suits with luxury imported instruments and records. In his 2010 autobiography Biddu, lead singer of one of the first rock bands in India, the Trojans, alludes obliquely (perhaps unintentionally) to the material aspects of rock music fandom:

> America had everything a young lad longed for: the glamour of film stars, rock and roll heroes, hamburgers, and blue jeans. We never had anything foreign in our shops. In fact we hardly had shops in Bangalore…Whatever we saw occasionally in magazines was a distant dream, which could only come true in another

> incarnation or via a job – such as a pilot's or flight purser's – that would take us abroad briefly (Biddu 2010:4).

While style and having the right instruments and look were integral to a band's presentation, musical media was fundamental to the scene's development. In the 1950s and 1960s the sounds of new rock music came to Indian in part via a half-hour Radio Ceylon program on Sunday nights (Biddu 2010), or from records brought back from the U.S. or UK or in some cases purchased as domestic releases. Ashsish Kothare, a guitarist and pub owner in Bangalore, was a young teenager in the 1960s playing in a band called Fandango Rock. Kothare, who was educated in one of Bangalore's English schools was by his own account highly influenced by images of Woodstock and the musicians coming out of the counter-culture in the U.S. and UK. In an interview he described how he and his band mates learned to play the western hits that were their primary repertoire:

> So what we did was we heard it on the radio…there were no cassette recorders…we had to make do with Voice of America and BBC top twenty on Radio 2. The lyrics—we were always cheating on the lyrics because we could never hear the lyrics on the radio (personal interview with Ashish Kothare).

Radio shows like Voice of America were a primary source of western rock music for young fans, made more accessible by virtue of the cheap transistor radios that had come onto the market in that era (Rathinam 2005). Particularly influential in this regard was Radio Ceylon, which started broadcasting from Sri Lanka in 1923 and in the 1960s. Their Hindi service was extremely popular, particularly the program *Binaca Geetmala*, a weekly countdown show of Hindi film songs that filled a void left when the national All-India Radio banned Hindi film songs from their station briefly in the 1950s in an effort to create radio programming that was consistent with post-independence nationalist



Figure 2.1 The Mustangs playing in Bombay, 1963. Photo courtesy of Joseph C. Peirera.



Figure 2.2 The Hectics in 1959. A beat band formed at the St. Peter's Boys School, Panchgani, India. In the center is Farokh Bulsara, aka Freddie Mercury. Photo courtesy of Joseph C. Pereira.

values.[24] Concurrently (if with a smaller audience) the popular announcer Greg "Happy-Go-Lucky" Roskowski was broadcasting a count-down of hit songs from the west on the show "Binaca Hit Parade,"[25] which featured artists like Elvis Presley, The Everly Brothers, Frank Sinatra, and later the Beatles and Rolling Stones, among the other popular artists of the time (Rathinam 2005). Binaca Hit Parade was instrumental in fomenting the beginnings of rock music fandom in India, even while, as journalist Bryan Richard notes about the radio shows of the sixties and seventies, it served to deliver "only the hits," a scenario that that shaped the sound and influences of Indian rock until the advent of the Internet decades later (Richard 2009).

Radio shows and domestic and imported records exposed young people to the rock and roll coming from the west and contributed to building a base of fans in the country, but playing rock and roll and the mechanics of forming a band often presented some difficulties. Ardeshir Damania, now a professor at the University of Davis, has written for the rock website Garage Hangover (Damania 2011) about his experiences as part of the beat music movement in Bombay in a band called The Gnats. Damania writes of his early fandom of the rock genre that although the Parlophone record label in India released a 45 of the Beatles "Love Me Do" in late 1962, it was often extremely difficult to get records or instruments given India's strict no-import policy (Damania 2011). The lack of amplifiers and electric instruments was also an impediment that many young

[24] Lelyveld writes that in the nineteen-fifties All-India Radio had a broadcasting directive from the government: "as a central government monopoly, it would play a leading role in integrating Indian culture and raising "standards." With regard to music, the major concern was to replace the system of princely patronage, now clearly dead, and to counterbalance the sources of commercial music, in particular in films" (Lelyveld 1994:119).

[25] Binaca Hit Parade and *Binaca Geetmala* have featured prominently in studies of musical mass media in India but few of these accounts have engaged critically with the fact that the shows were sponsored and branded by a multinational corporation.

musicians had to overcome to realize their rock and roll ambitions – musicians often had to either fashion their own equipment or hire others to make them. Examples of industrious inventiveness abound: the Devil Beats, a Beatles cover band, used a parent's radio for an amplifier, while Kothare describes how he at one point tried to build his own electric guitar from raw materials. One of Damania's anecdotes about his experiences evokes some of the spirit of the times:

> I ordered an electric guitar to be handmade by a shop at Gol Mandir Dhobi Talao. The Catholic guitar-maker and violin repairer was always boozed up and took weeks and weeks to make the guitar. Finally, one day when it was ready to be picked up my friend and I picked it up on his father's BSA motorcycle. All the way from Dhobi Talao to Dadar-Matunga where we stayed people were pointing at us since we had the guitar in hand and looked like the Beatles. The scene in Bombay was ready to explode (Damania 2011).

Material culture in the form of equipment and instruments were a vital aspect of the scene's appeal , as Damania describes, and it was not only the music but the material culture – instruments, amplifiers that inspired excitement in rock music audiences:

> In 1966 at yet another beat concert at the Shanmukhnanda Hall a new group The Reaction (who had been formed abroad comprising of kids of some Indian professionals and diplomats posted in Europe) arrived on the scene. I was there. A couple of local groups opened the concert. And then The Reaction came on. They had set up their instruments behind the curtains and when the curtains finally opened the audience, yours truly included, let out a gasp! They played a cover of the 1965 Fortunes' hit "You've Got Your Troubles" and Rolling Stones' "The Last Time". The Reaction had arrived from Germany with the latest guitars by Vox and Fender and had all the lovely and much craved for professional equipment, especially the Vox amplifiers and speakers with reverb, echo and all the special effects which the local groups, including ours The Gnats, did not possess. The effect was nothing short of stunning. With the striking of the first chord the crowd went in to raptures as The Reaction brought the house down! (Damania 2011)



Figure 2.3 The Devil Beats playing at the BUS Club in Bangalore 1964. Guitarist to far right is playing a homemade acoustic guitar with a pickup. Photo courtesy of Joseph C. Pereira.

As cosmopolitan Bombay was swept up in Beatlemania, Bangalore too experienced an upsurge in rock music with numerous bands including the Spartans, the Hydrocarbons, Wild Cherries, Atomic Forest (in the late sixties), and The Variations playing around town (Richard 2009). Rock and roll, however, was looked on askance by the culture at large: as Damania describes it, "Beatlemania was considered "foreign" affliction of an imperialistic power that should be shunned." Nevertheless, Bangalore's Catholic Club and Bowring Institute hosted talent competitions for young musicians awarding cash prizes and sometimes even liquor to the winning bands (Biddu 2010) and bands competed for the few gigs at clubs like the Three Aces on the Mahatma Gandhi Road and others around the city. Robert Xavier, a musician and guitar teacher in Bangalore who grew up during this period, describes how clubs like the Three Aces were often

inaccessible for young people due to their high cost of entry and so instead "we would sit along the boulevard across the road and catch the music" (Richard 2009:22). Musicians also played in any of the open-air areas of the city that would allow the bands to set up. Peter Isaac, lead singer of a 1960s Bangalore band called the Chronic Blues Band describes the scene's public spaces and their importance for this generation of students and musicians:

> Movies and music were the only source of public entertainment available. What that meant essentially was that if you organized a gig, you were almost guaranteed a packed house… There were a good deal of open air shows, but the main places we used to play were at the movie theaters…They'd just book the halls and there'd be a gig" (Richard 2010).

These accounts evidence a youthful exuberance that translates, these decades later, into a kind of glowing nostalgia. While for this small group of elite students rock music seems to indeed have been a kind of transformative experience of leisure and camaraderie, the space that rock took up in the public culture of Bangalore or Bombay of the nineteen-sixties and seventies was exceedingly limited. When Damania writes that "rock groups were in demand all over Bombay" (Damania 2010), he is referring to the heightened demand within colleges in Bombay for bands playing at annual festivals, and not a wave of rock music culture overtaking the city proper:

> The colleges in Bombay had their annual day around February or March just before the end of the scholastic year and rock groups were invited to play for a few hundred rupees or only conveyance, or not even that sometimes. The Gnats played the Annual Day of the Khalsa College at Matunga in 1965 and in 1966 at the Annual Day of the Nair Dental College at Bombay Central. (Damania 2010)

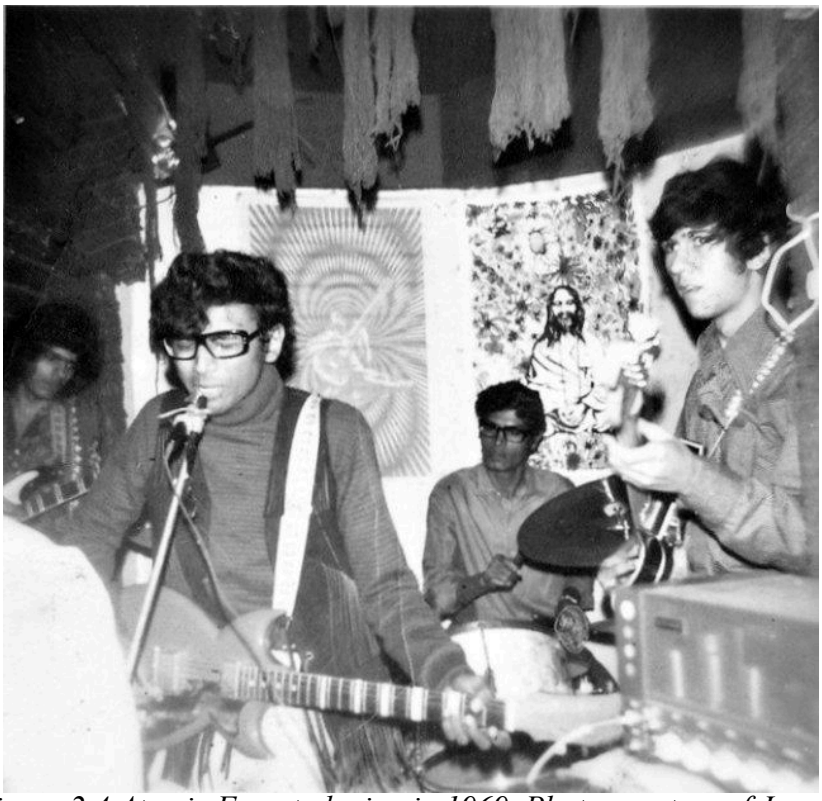


Figure 2.4 Atomic Forest playing in 1969. Photo courtesy of Joseph C. Pereira

While most bands played at this amateur level for a couple of years and then disbanded and went on to their "real" lives, in these early days there were musicians who attempted to make a living from playing rock music. Ken Gnanakan describes playing with The Trojans in a hotel in Calcutta and being paid just enough for lodging and food for the four band members but no more; when the Trojans disbanded he found success in another field (Richard 2009). Without an extensive network of fans or paying gig opportunities the beat bands and cover bands of the nineteen-sixties tended to play the rounds of college festivals, some hotels, and maybe a club here and there – there were simply not enough gigs to make a living, and no substantial industry in place that wanted to take the financial risk of recording and releasing Indian rock albums. Nevertheless, a source of funding for rock music performance and recording was emerging in the late

nineteen-sixties and would continue to support Indian rock for the next decades: corporate sponsorship.

Simla Beat: corporate sponsorship and the emergence of a youth market

The 1960s marked the beginning of a long-running performance format for Indian rock musicians: the sponsored festival or competition. In 1967 the cigarette company Simla Beat introduced the first nationwide rock music competition for beat music, and along with college festivals and hotel and club shows, many of the performances of the period were also sponsored by different companies; for example Bristol Beat (sponsored by cigarette company Bristol) and Fortune Beat Bonanza, sponsored by Estrella batteries. One of the significant outcomes of these sponsorships and competitions were some opportunities for recording that few beat bands were able to access otherwise. In 1967 a band called the Savages won Simla Beat, and attained a recording contract through this method as independent scholar and journalist Rajesh Mehar describes:[26]

> Back in the days, there were earlier variants of the rock competitions that we see today. One of these was the Simla Beat contest, sponsored by Simla cigarettes, an ITC brand. The Savages won the 1967 edition of the Simla Beat contest. Another prestigious Bombay festival was the Sound Trophy. The Savages won the Sound Trophy for Best Composition and Best Band in 1968, and in the process snagged a recording deal with Polydor India Ltd (Mehar 2006)

Polydor, originally the export division of Deutsche Grammophon, released at least one album of Indian beat music from the Savages, and Parlophone (also originally a German

[26] Rajesh Mehar, a musician, radio host, and writer whom I interviewed for this research had also been a Sarai independent fellow writing about the notion of creative ownership in music in India. As part f his research he kept a livejournal weblog, where he recounted much of the early history of rock music in the country that he had gathered from interviews and archival research, an invaluable source and one to which I am indebted (Mehar 2006).



Figure 2.5 Bangalore's Spartans playing a show at the Rex theater on Brigade road, Bangalore 1967. Photo courtesy of Joseph C. Pereira.



Figure 2.6 The Pilgrims, winners of the Fortune Beat Bonanza performing in 1971. Photo courtesy of Joseph C. Pereira.

company and The Beatles' original label) also eventually released some Indian rock in the form of the Simla Beat albums. Parlophone was absorbed into EMI in 1965 and the Simla Beat 1970 compilation album was released on the Gramaphone/EMI label with a combination of cover songs and original rock tracks – a collection highly prized among garage rock aficionados in the West today.

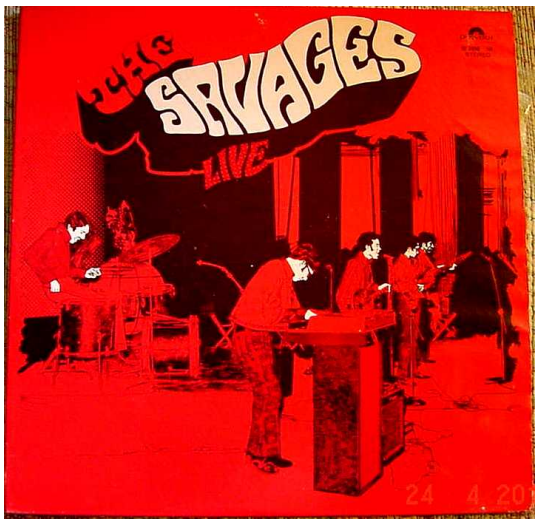


Figure 2.7 The Savages Live album, 1967 on Polydor Records (pictures used with the permission of Ardeshir Damania)



Figure 2.8 Back cover of Simla Beat 1970

Rock music was a youth culture at a time when the teenager as a social or marketing demographic group had not yet emerged fully in India, and it was arguably in and through media and advertisements like Simla Beat that the foundations of a mediated, "teenage" demographic began to coalesce. In 1967 *The Statesman* newspaper[27] began publishing a youth-centric magazine supplement called *The Junior Statesman* aimed towards a group of urban, upper class young people who were interested in and oriented towards youth culture in other parts of the world. *The Junior Statesman* published articles

[27] An English-language daily newspaper based in Bengal, founded in 1875.

on a variety of topics including western and Indian rock bands, film stars and film music, and political and cultural topics of interest to this relatively elite population.

In a thought piece about the magazine written for Himal Magazine in 1999 (twenty years after the magazine's demise) journalist Dubby Bhagat describes how the British editor of *The Statesman*, Evan Charleton, envisioned publishing a magazine geared towards youth that would "catch the readers early by inculcating brand loyalty towards The Statesman at a young age" (Bhagat 1999:10). In Bhagat's assessment *The Junior Statesman* played a crucial role in discerning and defining the demographic of the Indian teenager, a social grouping that was not yet considered a separate demographic by marketing standards:

> The late 60s urban Indian society was made up of children and adults. There was nothing in between. We, at JS, invented the Indian teenager, and it's an invention that has lasted all these years. This is the 'khadi curtain' age we're talking about, a time when India was completely insulated from the outside world. We were the first vehicle to go global and were constantly accused of being pro-Western or bringing in 'disgusting' Western influences (Bhagat 1999:12).

Describing *The Junior Statesman's* cosmopolitan, pop culture orientation as embryonically "global" claims for the publication a prescience that it may or may not have had—and certainly Bhagat's insider status means his account must be taken with a grain of salt. Such a claim does, however, raise an interesting question about the ways in which participation in rock music and its attendant media may have contributed to the beginnings of youth culture as a recognizable social group in India, particularly given the ways that the category was being constructed in the west: as a mixture of media representation, marketing demographic, and popular culture fandom. The post-war consumer culture in the U.S. was, as scholars have shown, an integral factor of the

construction of the social category of the teenager, and indeed, even in Bhagat's article about *The Junior Statesman* we see the aspiration towards fashion and generational individuation emerge as an aspect the definition of teenager:

> Partition was still a fresh memory. We'd just got rid of the British and here was a Britisher who was leading a magazine that was immensely popular and immensely outspoken. A magazine that said that jeans were all right, that the teenager had a place in society outside the family; a magazine that preached fun and preached identity…(Bhagat 1999:12)



Figures 2.8 Junior Statesman,"The Magazine That Thinks Young." November 1972



Figure 2.9 Junior Statesman October 1974

While education, language, and economic position tended to form the differential boundaries for rock musicians and fans, those aspects alone did not define the rock music fan at the time. As Bhagat writes, the admixture of "fun", "identity" and "blue jeans" preached by the Junior Statesman signified persuasive aspirations for the cosmopolitan youth who, while Nehru's five-year plans fostered a culture of socialist austerity, took part in a the "decadent" western leisure practice of playing rock music. Nevertheless the

"rebellion" often ascribed to rock music fans in the west (particularly in the nineteen-sixties) was not, on the whole, a major aspect of rock's cultural history in India: excessive use of drugs, sexual experimentation, alternative religions and lifestyles or even political agitation were not foundational aspects of the beat music scene in India. Notwithstanding the personal or political feelings of individual rock musicians or bands, often the print media and thus the larger culture ascribed to beat music and the rock musicians an anti-social outlook, more sensationalistic than realistic, as seen on the June 16th, 1974 cover of *The Illustrated Weekly of India*. The cover, featuring Bangalore band Atomic Forest, read "Down with God, Country, Parents, Everything," a statement that incensed the band's members who demanded (and got) an apology from the magazine.

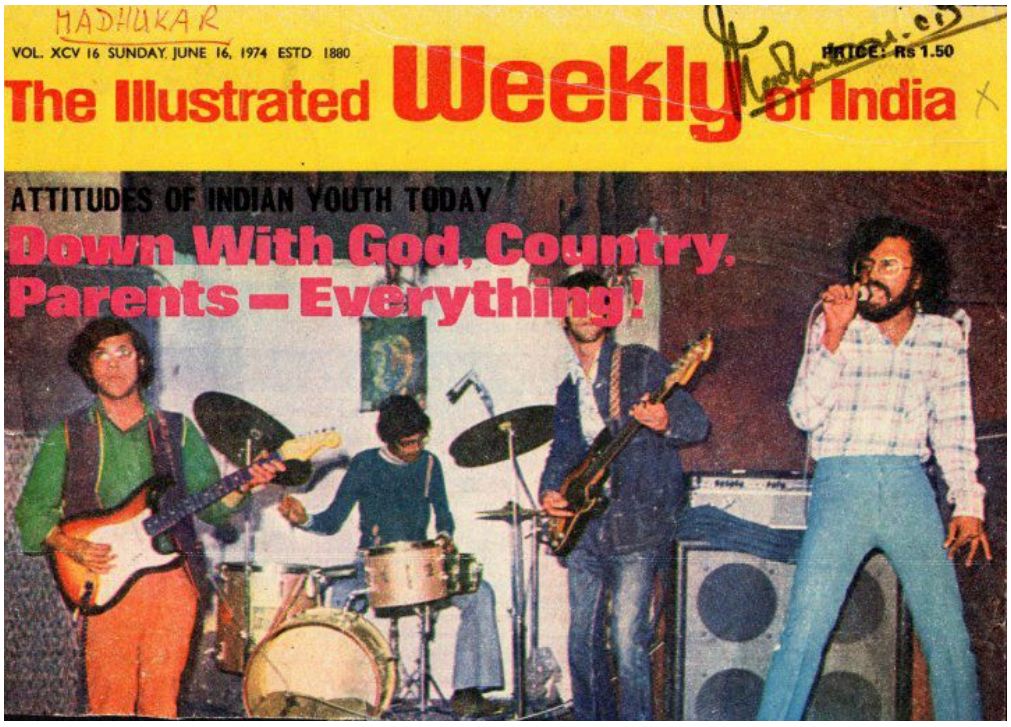


Figure 2.10 Atomic Beats, 1974. Cover of the Illustrated Weekly of India. Photo courtesy of Joseph C. Pereira

The "freedoms" associated with rock music and the west seemed, if the anecdotes recounted here have any credence, to be about a youth culture that was breaking away

from the austerity and social restrictions of the larger culture or at least from social expectations imposed by prior generations, rather than one that was rebellious or mounting a political critique.

Conclusions

That the cover and beat bands of the nineteen-sixties were so directly influenced by the sounds coming from the west meant that this genre was always subject to questions about its validity as a form of Indian musical culture. In the most negative valuations beat bands were accused of representing a "colonial hangover," and to have no place in the cultural landscape of independent India. Very little attention was paid contemporaneously or after the fact to the role of this niche music in demarcating an urban, cosmopolitan youth culture that in turn would become a valorized demographic in Indian media and by extension in middle class consumer culture. The connections between rock music, media, and corporate sponsorship, while perhaps not as concretized in this period as they became after liberalization, were certainly apparent in the nineteen-sixties, as evidenced superficially by the existence of Simla Beat, Bonanza Beat or Binaca Hit Parade; however, the significance of this sponsorship extended beyond its financial support for a nascent musical culture. Beat music attained corporate sponsorship because those sponsors wanted to reach a particular group of young cosmopolitan people; even as it was directed towards this demographic, however, the group was in the process of coalescing as a social formation. The affective coalition between print media, consumer goods, advertisements and rock music is one that would remain intact – and it supported as well as constrained the development of the rock scene over the next decades.

By the nineteen-eighties many of the rock musicians from the sixties and seventies had given up their rock and roll dreams, transitioning into responsible adult careers or parlaying their musical talents into jobs in the bourgeoning film industry, including in a non-film popular genre called Indipop.[28] Biddu, weaned on Elvis and the Beatles, forged a music career in the UK, first in disco with his hit "Kung Fu Fighting," and then in the nineteen eighties producing Indipop hits for artists like Nazia Hassan, Zohaib, and later Alisha Chennai, for whom the Biddu-penned song "Made in India" would be a gigantic hit (Biddu 2010). Indipop, with its rootedness in western pop production, Hindi film song style, and its cosmopolitan orientation at a time when "cosmopolitan" was beginning to represent desirable socio-economic opportunity is today functionally part of the film song industry, with many Indipop musicians finding success as playback singers or music producers and their musical styles influencing and shaping the sound of film music. Beat musicians of the sixties and seventies were lost to history, their most lasting contribution, perhaps, the musical tastes they passed on to their progeny, who would be raised listening to the records and popular music that for their parents were forbidden fruit.

In the postcolonial nationalist landscape, an orientation towards Britain as the epicenter of a bourgeoning youth culture was an ambivalent posture. Throughout its early history in the country rock music would operate in a tenuous cultural space, at once a sign of desirable modern popular culture for its participants, but eschewed by a society that on the whole supported austerity and self-reliance. While the youths of the 1960s and 70s might have aspired to cosmopolitanism, in the eighties and nineties what would emerge was an articulated need and desire for a rootedness to that cosmopolitanism; an

[28] For more on Indipop and its makers see Kvetko 2009.

"Indian-ness" to mark rock music as more than just a western "imitation." Particularly in Bangalore, where globalization fomented considerable economic and social changes in the late 20th century rock music has been and continues to exist (as the following chapters will show) as an uneasily globalized cultural expression within the context of valorized economic globalization.

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CHAPTER THREE

PLAYING POLITICS AND CONTESTING CULTURE

IN THE "MULTIPLE CITY"

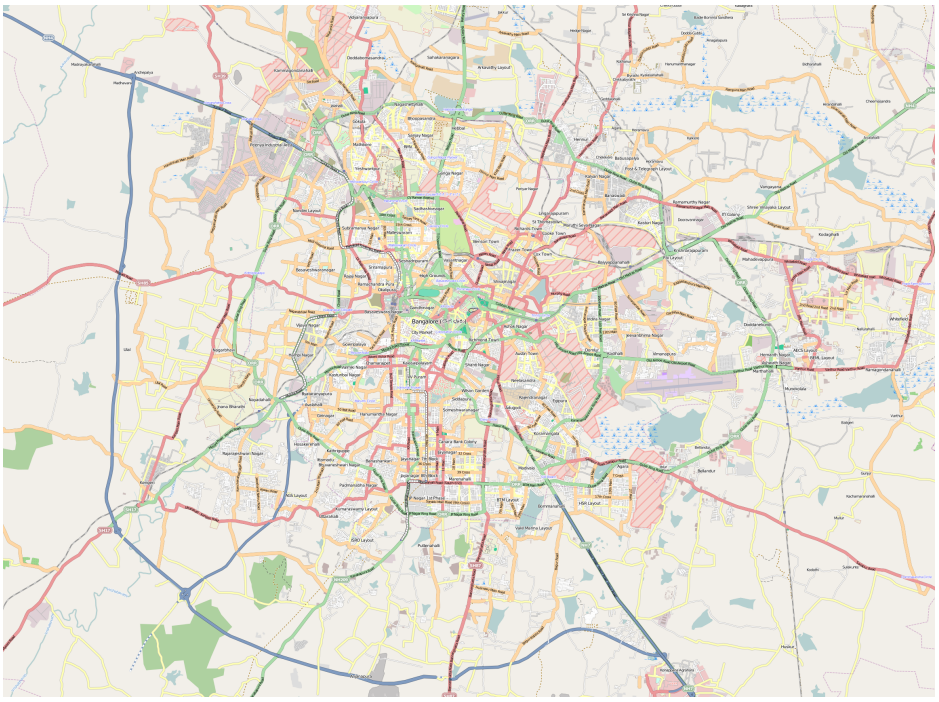


Figure 3.1 Bangalore map (image from Wikimedia Commons)

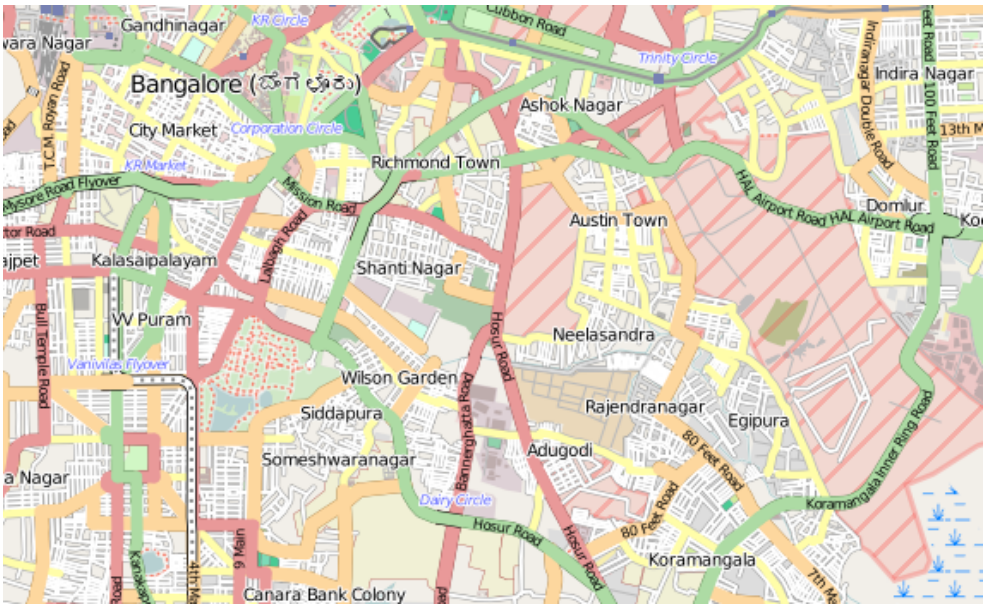


Figure 3.2 Detail of above map showing Bangalore's commercial center



Figure 3.3 Bangalore's Brigade Road

Bangalore, officially called by its Kannadiga name, Bengaluru, is city of 8.5 million people spread out over 300 square miles. With the old cantonment and pete comprising a commercial and historical core around the neighborhoods of City Market, Ashok Nagar and Richmond town, the city has spread from this core to encompass surrounding villages in a surge of urban development over the last 30 years. To the east, the suburbs of Koramangala and Indiranagar have the malls, schools and pricey homes that the city's affluent classes inhabit, and even further east the neighborhood of Whitefield houses the Infosys Corporation along with many other Indian tech companies.

In 2001 the Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF), a government-formed public-private partnership founded by Chief Minister S.M. Krishna and led by then Infosys president Nandan Nilekani, set forth a directive: "Make Bangalore the best city in India by 2004." This emphatic yet nebulous mandate was to be implemented through a variety of public works – including road repair, water and sanitation, school "upliftment" and

"slum development" among others – that would be funded by private corporations including Infosys, The Volvo consortium, property developers Prestige Group and Brigade Group, Coca-Cola, and the biotechnology company Biocon (Pani, Radhakrishna and Bhat 2010:211). As Janaki Nair points out, the Krishna government was in many ways extending a "Mysore state tradition of state aid to industries" (Nair 2005:334); however, the central role of the private sector in driving these policies also represented a qualitative change:

> At no previous stage in the economic history of the city has industry aspired to redefine the image of the city, manage its services and streamline its finances with as much confidence as the captains of the new economy, represented by BATF and its subsidiary Janaagraha [the citizen representative arm of the BATF] (Nair 2005:344).

The BATF's aspirational city was to be increasingly attractive to investment, development, and outsourcing – a "harbinger of a new global labor force that works in cyberspace" (Stremlau 1996:161) – and indeed, it seemed as though there was no reason that the BATF's vision should not come to fruition. Bangalore was investor-friendly and was home to the largest number of engineering colleges of any city in the world, along with the prestigious Indian Institute of Science (Scoones 2007), fostering a knowledge industry that was already becoming world-renowned. As Ritty Lukose writes about the city it has grown to symbolize "the premier embodiment of a newly liberalized Indian economy and globalised Indian culture" (Lukose 2005:921) and in the early twenty-first century, despite a global economic downturn, Bangalore remains an economically successful knowledge industry and biotech boomtown that – despite its infrastructure failings – nurtures a valorized, upwardly mobile Indian middle class.

Despite these triumphal narratives, however, the city's unrestrained growth in the last three decades and the economic and population shifts engendered by its role in India's techno-industrial development have caused civil and municipal debates: over water rights, job availability, and between political, linguistic and ethnic groups. The image of a shining developmental city as conceived by the captains of the new economy elides considerable divisions, problems and tensions in the lived city. Organizations such as the BATF represent a significant shift in the conception and structure of the relationship between polity and citizenry, wherein citizens, represented by organizations such as Janaagraha, are meant to "see themselves as 'stockholders of the city corporation'" (Nair 2005:15). This neoliberal version of civic engagement, however, is exclusive and exclusionary, as Nair describes:

> Such initiatives come at a time when the formal aspects of citizenship are being called into question with increased vigor by certain other categories of urban residents: slum dwellers, unemployed young men, women's groups. For such groups, the struggle over entitlements to space in the city, whether material or symbolic, is a way of defining rights as claims, rather than as possessions held against the world, contrasting with the ownership of rights advocated by Janaagraha. (Nair 2005:15)



Figure 3.4 "IDENTITI you just got to have it" clothing store in Indiranagar, Bangalore (author photo).

This ethnography of rock music, which is focused on relatively privileged subjects and takes place in specialized sites in the city (colleges, hotels, pubs), is shaped and informed by the city's divided and divisive economy and cultural politics – divisions that manifest in the periodic but regularly recurring bans on live music, alcohol consumption, and late-night socializing instituted by the city's local government. Such actions speak to deeper anxieties resonant in Bangalore's body politic. While no decisive periodic break characterizes pre- and post- liberalization rock music practices in Bangalore this chapter and this dissertation generally argue that rock music's social meanings have been constituted in relation to the changing contexts of Bangalore's economy and cultural politics over the past 25 years. Rock's meanings – shaped early on by its role as a kind of signifier of "western" culture – have shifted in concert with Bangalore's transformed economic and political relationship with the west, a relationship whose particulars are manifest in the fields of tourism, industry, immigration, political ideology, and cultural exchange. Partaking in the sounds and practices of rock music culture arguably differentiates participants within the economic and symbolic field of Bangalore's consumer culture—a consumer culture that is in turn viewed a prime indicator of India's economic strength and as a vital aspect of its contemporary national identity. Rock thus takes place in a realm of public culture that is globalized and exclusionary, valorized but viewed with suspicion; thus its practices and performances speak directly to the issues raised above, providing insight into the friction emerging from the rapid changes that have characterized the city in the late 20th and early 21st century.

Urban studies scholars point out that Bangalore's civic tensions, though exacerbated by the city's recent growth, also build on historical divisions in the city that date back to the eighteenth century (Nair 2005; Srinivas 2008; Raghavendra 2009); some of these historical ethnic and linguistic divisions continue to direct the city's laws and development and generally shape its public culture. The description "multiple city" comes from a collection of reminiscences and essays about Bangalore (De 2008) and the moniker is apt: over the years the city has been subject to multiple descriptive appellations that provide insight into its changing industries, urban geography and social stratifications. Bangalore's transformation from 19th century "Garden City" (called so because of its planned greenery, water tanks and bungalows) to "Silicon Valley" in the late twentieth century has been a relatively whirlwind shift of identity that contextualizes the changing role of rock music in the city's public culture.

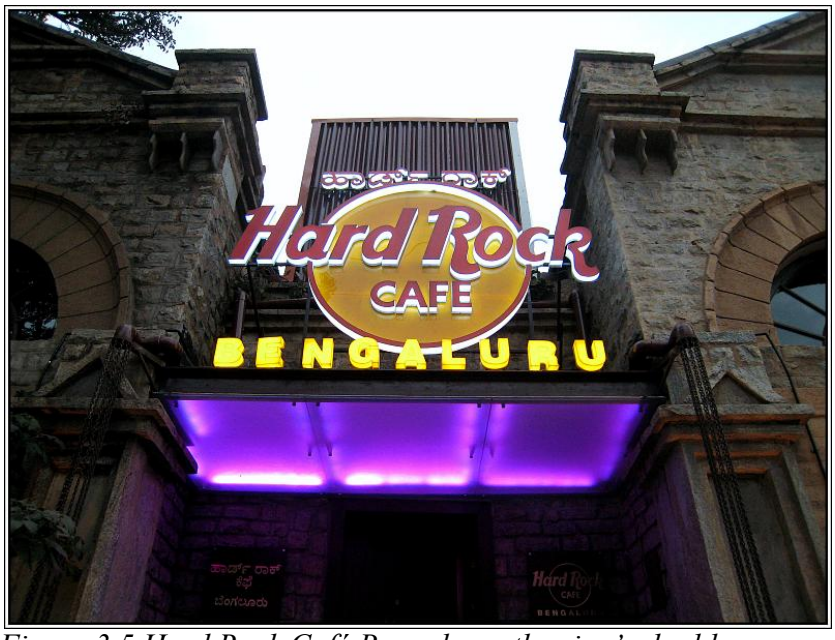


Figure 3.5 Hard Rock Café Bengaluru: the sign's dual language a concession to the city's linguistic politics (author photo).

Smriti Srinivas describes a conceptual model of Bangalore in which this layered historicity is fundamental to its present character: "the garden city, the modern city, the developmental city, the informational city and the Kannada city" are simultaneous and often disjunctive versions of its urban identity (Srinivas 2008:254). Taking into account the constitutive nature of Bangalore's "multiple" identities, then, the following chapter describes several periods of Bangalore's social history in order to contextualize the sites and subjects of its contemporary rock music culture.

Historical Bangalore: The Garden City

Nineteen-fifties Bangalore was by all accounts a somewhat sleepy burg. Located on the Deccan Plateau in the southern part of the country (a geography that gives it its desirably temperate climate) the city was known for its elegant gardens and bungalows if not for its size or importance, even though as the capital of the newly-formed Karnataka state[29] it housed the state's high court, in addition to having a strong industrial base with railways and telegraph lines dating back to before the turn of the century.[30] The city evidences the colonial encounter in the form of its bifurcated layout. Cultural historian Chiranjiv Singh writes about an effective dividing line between the two parts of the city: "the Military Station, which was set up by the British in 1809 (later called the Cantonment), and the native city of the…Wodeyar kings" (Singh 2008:124). Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the "native city" was part of the kingdom of Mysore and was ruled by the Wodeyar kings. By the late eighteenth century the city had been

[29] The States Reorganization Act of 1956 consolidated Kannada-speaking populations from nearby regions into one state: Karnataka (Raghavendra 2009).
[30] Railways and telegraphs were brought to Bangalore around 1898 and in 1906 Bangalore was the first city in India to get electricity (Nair 2005).

wrested from the Wodeyars and was ruled by Tippu Sultan, the "Tiger of Mysore" [31] who himself was defeated by British forces led by Lord Cornwallis in the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War in 1799. The British re-installed Mysore's Wodeyar kings as rulers of Bangalore, and in return were granted permission to build a cantonment adjacent to the old city. As Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha write, the British took over the gardens of the Mysore sultanate in 1800,

> [W]ith the object of extending their working and generative nature. Here they cultivated plants for the English troops and settlers of the camp that would become Bangalore Cantonment in 1807. (Mathur and da Cunha 2008:25)

The British presence was to have long-term effects on Bangalore's infrastructure, economy, and education. The British zeal for "rational" planning was perhaps partially responsible for Bangalore's early industrialization, but built on what Srinivas describes as the "enlightened policies of the Diwans" (minister-administrators under the Mysore kings) that "allowed its technocratic bureaucracy considerable freedom to implement modern, industrial planning models" (Srinivas 2008:133). The early twentieth century, then, found Bangalore on the forefront of industrialization, with tobacco, glass, porcelain, brick and later textile factories — as Srinivas recounts, the motto of the city was "industrialize or perish." The benefits of this industrialization, however, were uneven and differed according to which side of the dividing line one was on: in the old, Kannidga city, or the Cantonment, and the implementation of western systems of education exacerbated these divisions. Christianity had predated the British presence in the city, and by the early 19th century religious schools had already begun to replace the native system of education that was based on the caste system's designation of occupations. After the

[31] Tippu's hatred of the British was legendary. His palace is preserved in Bangalore, where it houses a model of a fascinating organological specimen: a musical automaton that represents a tiger with its jaws around a British soldier; the bellows of the instrument's organ makes a sound like a man groaning in pain.

British arrival English language education in the city began to be institutionalized through a policy of Macaulyis[32] with the first English medium school established in 1847 (Raghavendra 2009). In the early twentieth century Bangalore had the Indian Institute of Science (founded 1909), the University of Mysore (founded 1916) and the Regional Engineering College of Bangalore (founded 1917) (Taeube 2009:224). These colleges institutionalized English language and made the study of English literature an integral part of curricula, moves that were to have long-standing effects on the economy and culture of the city.

As English-language education played an integral role in the project of empire, its role in the post-independence period was culturally ambiguous, even as the ability to speak English undoubtedly conferred some amount of prestige, mobility and even power, as Kachru has observed (Kachru 1990). The dispute about the ramifications of speaking either English or one's regional language or mother tongue has been a central, germinal issue in Indian nationalism and identity since Gandhi and Tagore argued it in the 1920s,[33] and it is an issue which has resonated through subaltern studies and which is part of the complex historiography of colonial and postcolonial India. Whether English is implicated as a tool of hegemony or imperialism, or viewed as an indigenized vernacular language, the debate about English continues apace into the twenty-first century. Although the more intricate nuances of the role of English in late colonial and early

[32] Macaulay's vision of the colonial-ea Indian education system is summed up thusly "We must at present do our best to form a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect" (cite)

[33] In the April 27, 1921 issue of his journal *Young India*, Gandhi published an article titled "Evil Wrought by the English Medium," in which he wrote that "of all the superstitions that affect India, none is so great as that a knowledge of the English language is necessary for imbibing ideas of liberty, and developing accuracy of thought." (Gandhi 1921) This was a criticism of Roy, who Gandhi felt was excessively reliant on English, and Tagore responded in the press defending Roy and his "perfect comprehension" and "full inheritance of the Indian wisdom"(Guha 2008)

nationalist projects of post independence India must be sidestepped here, it seems safe to say that during British rule pre-existing linguistic divisions between native Kannada and Tamil speakers were over-girded by a new hierarchy in which English speakers were afforded enhanced opportunities under the social structures of the British Raj. This state of affairs continues into the present day; flyers for English language-schools proliferate in Bangalore's public spaces, demonstrating, as Vinay Lal and Ashis Nandy have observed, that English is no longer an index of an older, colonial cosmopolitanism; rather: "to a new generation of South Asians the language is now, as the developments of recent years clearly indicate, more a vocational tool than a cultural index." (Lal and Nandy 2007: xiii).

Independence from the British removed the trappings of military control but the social and cultural divides that marked Bangalore remained. As Nair describes, "[I]n 1949, Bangalore City and the Civil and Military Station (earlier the Cantonment) were brought together under a single municipal administration" (Nair 2005:26). This move conjoined the disparate language groups, religions, and economic and political cultures that had existed in the city previously as essentially two municipalities. The effects of this maneuver would continue to shape the problems and concerns of the city into the twenty-first century. From the beginning of the nineteenth century with the building of the cantonment to the mid-twentieth century when Bangalore was "unified," the history of the city is one that is essentially bifurcated, and any study of its culture, musical or otherwise, must take this bifurcation and its ramifications into account.

Anglo Indian culture in the Cantonment

M.K. Raghavendra writes of the 19th century Cantonment that

> An association was made between the Cantonment – with its wide boulevards, its bungalows, and its upper-class lifestyle – and English-medium education because the first English-medium schools were in the Cantonment (Raghavendra 2009:18)

Social historians have written about how this bifurcation functioned in the mid twentieth century when Bangalore's linguistic and religious cultures were also divided by the lines of the "old" and "new" city. As Singh writes:

> The culture of the city [the old fort town] was based on the native traditions; that of the cantonment was colonial and Anglo-Indian. This cultural dividing line has remained to this day" (Singh 2008:49).

Although this perhaps oversimplifies the ways in which Bangalore's citizenry might have been positioned in the cultural and economic fields of the city, in the early 1950s and into the 1960s ethnic or linguistic groups like Anglo Indians did have a distinctive set of social traditions and it was partially due to this heritage that Bangalore would eventually develop its relatively lenient entertainment and leisure culture.

The Anglo Indian community has been the focus of some scholarly work that examines their liminal role in the historical period between colonialism and independence (Younger 1987; Caplan 2001). Even before the British left India many of these mixed-heritage peoples found themselves trapped between one culture and another – shunned by the British Victorians and not wholly integrated into Indian communities. As Lionel Caplan writes, the Anglo-Indian identity "blur[s] the divide between colonizer and colonized, questioning the very efficacy of those labels" (Caplan 2001:6). A marginalized group to some extent, who were subject to racist classifications from both Indian and English communities, but who also in many ways identified with the dominant culture of

the colonizers, Caplan draws from Bhabha to characterize the Anglo Indian experience as one that typifies the ambiguities inherent in colonial encounters (Caplan 2001).

This largely Christian community spoke English as their primary language[34] and had leisure practices that reflected their linguistic and cultural orientation towards Britain. In the nineteen-fifties and sixties, as journalist Geetha Doctor recalls, there were theaters in Bangalore (showing English and Tamil films) that were "unabashedly named after the taste of the empire builders, the Globe, or Empire" (Doctor 2008:107). In the early 1950s British military bands, with "brass shining and the tassels of the bagpiper flying" would play "famous English marches and ballads" at outdoor performances in Mark Cubbon park (named after the first commissioner of Bangalore) (Doctor 2008:108). Western music was integrated into the Anglo Indian community not only through entertainment, but also via pedagogy: western classical music lessons played an important role in the proper education of young British and Anglo Indians. Doctor describes how Catholic musicians from nearby Mangalore and from Goa made their living playing or teaching western musical forms and instruments in Bangalore:

> [T]he Dias Music Saloon…sells the pianos that were once part of every decent parlor and the bane of every child with a musically minded mother. It was opened in 1927 by Jose Marianna Dias who spent his life either in front or behind some musical instrument, playing it as a bandleader at the popular balls at the Bowring Institute or selling it at his shop. (Doctor 2008:105)

The Bangalore of the 1950s and early 60s was described, then, as a "one-horse town" (Biddu 2010) that nevertheless had cultural practices that figured as "elite" within a differential social calculus. The cantonment was a place where one might hear Mozart and Handel played by local convent orchestras, see a Charlie Chaplin film at the Plaza

[34] "Primary language" is the language spoken instead of the "mother tongue," which comes from regional background or ethnic ancestry.

theater, or participate in other cultural practices that foreshadowed the globalized mediascapes that were to characterize Bangalore's public culture a half century later. Anglo Indian social historians claimed these practices with pride, as evidence of Bangalore's cultivated tastes:

> The Christian subculture had given to Bangalore a certain sophistication and a cosmopolitan air...Songs from *No No Nanette*, *Showboat*, *Sound of Music* and a host of other musicals have not been forgotten here. (Doctor 2008:106)

Social dances were popular and were often well lubricated, as Bangalore had a liberal approach to alcohol consumption and by all accounts plenty of wine shops (Deshpande 2008). Doctor recalls that the annual Three Musketeer's ball usually ended with revelers taking a "grand turnout," along South Parade street (now Mahatma Gandhi Road), with "a girl on either arm, a bottle inside the shirt, and one at the lips" (Doctor 2008:107). Even as their numbers and community cohesion declined in the decades after independence, Anglo Indians in Bangalore and elsewhere in the country still valued this cosmopolitan orientation.

Anglo Indian Paddy Savedra, interviewed by journalist Mihir Bose in 1979 claimed that Anglo Indian values were actually, for better or for worse, the values of the future: "More and more people are doing things we do—drinking, dancing, going to clubs. We are absorbing them. They are adopting our lifestyle" (Younger 1987:48). Despite the exaggerated nature of this claim, it raises interesting questions regarding the connection between social mobility and leisure practices in an emergent Indian middle class in the period between 1960 and 2000. As Nair writes, the hotels and clubs of the cantonment "spelt unmatched social freedom," serving "alcohol and meat" and the "excitement of the chance, if sometimes unpleasant, encounter with strange men and

women in these public spaces" (Nair 2005:65). This heritage of leisure spaces and cosmopolitan social practices were to shape the city into the 21st century; indeed, one of Bangalore's many appellations (and entirely apt) is as India's "pub city.

The rise of India's "Silicon Valley"

As a bastion of early industrialization, denoted in 1962 by Nehru as the "city of the future,"[35] Bangalore's fate seemed to be, if not already written, clearly laid out. Nehru's government was undertaking substantial social reforms during the post-independence period, including, in 1955, making discrimination against "untouchables" a crime, and a year later according women the rights of full citizens. Amidst these negotiations around the dimensions and directions of the Indian nation, educational reforms brought a generation of students into newly founded schools, including the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology scattered across the country (Nesbitt 2009). Nehru's valorization of science and technology in the national educational landscape – in the nationalist narrative generally – was institutionalized in his Scientific Policy Resolution of 1958, which stressed need to "bridge the gap" between "advanced and backward countries" via progress in industry, science and technology (Nesbitt 2009:28). As Nicholas Nesbitt writes,

> Nehru instigated an era in which science, technology and planning were seen not only as creators of the modern state, but of the modern nation—of rationally thinking, scientifically trained citizens at the helm of industry, the planners and engineers of a future society. (Nesbitt 2009:28)

[35] "Most of the other cities of India remind one certainly of the present, certainly of the future but essentially of the past. But Bangalore, more than any other great city of India, is a picture of the future." (Nehru cited in Stremlau 1996)

Over the next fifty years Nehru's technocratic imperative would have wide ranging effects not just on India's industry and economy but on educational and employment goals and opportunities, on the shape of Indian modernity generally, and the character of Bangalore's modernity specifically. In 1979 scholars V.L.S. Prakasa Rao and V.S. Tewari conducted a study of Bangalore, inquiring into the city's potential for growth. Concluding their study the authors noted that the city's fate was uncertain:

> Whether it follows the path of the least desired urban monsters or the most desired "garden cities" is a question which should be answered by the citizens and the planners of the city (Rao and Tewari 1979:307)

By 2010 the consensus among many in Bangalore was that the city had become an "urban monster," its historical and geographical charms overshadowed by unrestrained development and dwindling or polluted natural resources. The city's infrastructure, taxed to its limits, was no match for the expectations placed on it as India's "Silicon Valley."

Bangalore's role in the information technology industry, its dominance first in software and then in the business processing outsourcing (BPO) and biotech industries has given it, as noted previously, a privileged role in India's economic landscape, but Bangalore's industrial strength has a historical foundation. As Janaki Nair observes, Bangalore has "passed through at least three stages in its industrial history, including a significant focus on textile production in the beginning of the twentieth century; the interwar years in which Bangalore was the "public sector city par excellence" (Nair 2005); and finally its millennial dominance in software and hardware technologies, commencing with the arrival of Texas Instruments in 1984 (Taeube 2009). As Nisbett writes: "The decade following liberalization witnessed growth in the Indian IT industry on a scale hitherto unknown" (Nisbett 2009:37) and it was Bangalore that benefitted and

also suffered the growing pains ushered in by the IT boom. By 2005 Bangalore's role in the Indian economy was that of knowledge society, characterized by a "recognition of knowledge as the main source of efficiency and competitiveness" and relying on "technological application rather than on physical transformation of material inputs for economic growth" (Majumder 2009:269). Bangalore's relatively recent reinvention as a center for biotechnology business brings together what Scoones describes as "a number of key ingredients that highlight the role of the 'regulatory state'":

> Biotech is driven largely by the private sector, and often through direct or joint-venture arrangements with large, foreign multinational companies. As a knowledge-based industry, requiring a highly skilled workforce, and a reliance on good infrastructural support and the import of key materials, biotechnology requires a different type of backing from the state (Scoones 2007:262).

Bangalore's technological prowess put it on the forefront of India's emergent economic development. During the early years of the tenure of economist Manmohan Singh as finance minister (his first tenure lasted from 1991 to 1996), the Indian economy experienced tremendous growth: as Wolpert writes, "in less than five years India's economy grew as much as it had in the previous forty" (Wolpert 2009:464). As the government of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao aggressively courted foreign investments – ten billion dollars of foreign capital by the mid 1990s (Wolpert 2009) – and introduced neoliberal modes of governance via privatization and reduced tariffs on import goods, the wealthiest one third of the population began to partake in the products of free-market capitalism from companies like Pepsi, Xerox, KFC, McDonalds and IBM, among other idols of the multinational corporate firmament. These Indian consumers "leapfrogged" into a phase of late-industrialization (Wolpert 2009) in which consumption (and for some, conspicuous consumption) meant participation in the modern transnational

capitalist system shared by the world's geopolitical superpowers. Throughout the first decades of post-liberalization multi-national investment, as well as the savings of non-resident Indians or NRIs, infused the new Indian economy (Wolpert 2009); simultaneously transnationalism and globalization became significant and preeminent themes in public culture. As a term used in excess by politicians and pop culture figures alike, globalization's metaphorical power [36] has rendered it a ubiquitous descriptor in both popular and public culture, an emblem of India's success and modernity.[37]

Rock music subjects: education and "flexible citizenship" in middle class youth culture

Although economic liberalization brought about a special valorization of the Indian "middle class," Douglas E. Haynes points out that even in the early nineteenth century in India there were "a number of middling groups" who were beginning to define themselves as middle class, not based on income level but through "a project of self-fashioning confined largely to persons who belonged to the literate professions who saw themselves as pursuing ideals of 'modernity'" (Haynes 2010:10). This distinction between a middle class based solely on income level and an idea of the middle class that subjects themselves have a hand in imagining is one that theorists have wholly embraced. In the mid-1990s, the early phase of liberalization, the middle class was suggested to be a size anywhere from 20 to 58 million households (Rao and Natarajan 1994), a range that

[36] Arvind Rajagopal suggests that "with a word like globalization, what was diffuse and intangible becomes concrete: the name itself carries its connotations, performing what it is meant to presuppose."

[37] A good example of this phenomenon is the 2010 reality TV show, "Shah Rukh Khan: Living With a Superstar" that followed the family and work life of the Hindi film superstar Shah Rukh Khan. In the show, which aired on the Discovery Living and Travel network, the actor describes himself repeatedly as a "global brand," a designation substantiated as he is filmed traveling the diasporic circuit of Bombay, London, San Francisco and Johannesburg to act in and promote films, lend his likeness and support to various products and generally fulfill his role as "global brand ambassador" par excellence.

reflected the difficulties inherent in defining this increasingly important group, soon to be vigorously sought after as consumers. Appadurai and Breckenridge defined a more specialized version of the middle class, one dependent on income as it translated as spending power:

> Even at the most conservative estimates there are at least a million Indians who already have disposable incomes that make them the economic support of new forms of cultural consumption (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995:7)

Appadurai and Breckenridge suggest an Indian middle class "both actual and potential" as the "social basis for new public culture formations" (1995:7) and it is this definition that informs an understanding of rock music subjects as involved and invested in self-definition through participation in a mediated musical culture.

To call rock music subjects "middle class," however, is so vague as to be almost incorrect; I have repeatedly referred to this group as "upper-middle class" but the largely self-selecting group of people involved in making and consuming rock music can also be defined through differential and hierarchical educational, linguistic, generational, cultural and social indices. As Arun Saldhana wrote about western music consumption practices in Bangalore in 2001 and 2002:

> The consumption of Western pop music…accentuates the various kinds of capital rich young people accumulate, and also disconnects them spatially and socially from 'local' India. Local India becomes their constitutive outside. A lower middle-class Bangalorean can no doubt listen to Madonna tapes, wear fake jeans and enjoy Star TV; s/he too can work on a translocal identity. But the rich kids watch Madonna on DVD, wear real Levi's and understand the difficult English words on Star TV. They can afford a party in the Holiday Inn (Saldhana 2002:347).

Listening to Western rock or pop music at house parties allowed young elite subjects to imagine their translocality in relation to desirable Western popular culture images and sounds, excluding the "locally Indian" (consumers of "lesser" brands or knock-offs) in

the process. A decade later, rock music performance and participation has to an extent maintained its exclusive position even as its sounds and images are increasingly normalized by virtue of their proliferation across a variety of media texts such as film, advertising, and television. Throughout my research it became clear that while rock has been associated with relatively wealthy English-speaking elites since the 1960s, in the last decade particularly its purview has expanded to a larger portion of middle class youth; or, rather, the economic growth of the middle class in the last twenty years has brought rock music's sounds, signs and symbols into the purview of a greater number of youth. No longer simply "elite," rock music culture and its attendant leisure practices are also aspirational, the practice of a youth culture that has become increasingly inflected by the materials and texts of globalized culture. Lukose notes that:

> The idea of 'fun,' marking experiences of pleasure, desire, and leisure…becomes one lens through which to understand the differential relationship that young women and men have to new, globally inflected consumer spaces. (Lukose 2005:931)

The sense of looking beyond one's geographic boundaries is one that informs the lives of rock music participants in Bangalore, and not just through musical practice: transnationalism is a spatial descriptor for the lifestyles of many urban educated upper middle-class youth. Travel and emigration have increasingly been a part of the valorized narrative of the new India, personified in the figure of the NRI, described by Toor as "urban in location, self-consciously cosmopolitan in orientation," (Toor 2000:4) outmigrants who in many cases return to live in India and who make up a influential segment of the Indian middle class as arbiters of taste. Toor argues that as "taste-makers," NRIs engender a new hegemonic cultural order in middle class India, one that explicitly emphasizes sophisticated consumerism as a desirable mode of citizenship; similarly

Lukose suggests that the NRI figures, through strategic images of agency and desire, as the ideal globalized upper class consumer (Lukose 2005).

In the last decade the NRI has become are only one type in a larger and growing category of Indians with educational, familial, or work ties to Australia, Europe and the U.S. It is not just the urban cosmopolitan media workers that Lukose describes (she talks about the VJs on music television as examples) who partake in the transnational lifestyle: numerous examples abound in the rock music culture of Bangalore. For upper middle class, English educated urban rock musicians in India transnational movement and travel is a normalized aspect of the habitus: among the people I spoke with and befriended during my time in Bangalore was Divya, who managed a rock band in Bangalore left to go to Pittsburgh to study entertainment management; Guru, who lived in Scotland for 6 years playing in an indie band and working for the railway and then returned to Bangalore to manage bands and produce rock shows; Amrit, who worked for the MNC Infosys and played in a metal band; and Abhijeet, who went to school in Malaysia and Florida and returned to Bangalore to form an avant-garde band, among many, many other similar stories. These young transnational migrants typify what Aihwa Ong describes as "flexible citizenship" (Ong 1999) wherein "flexibility in geographical and social positioning is itself an effect of novel articulations between the regimes of the family, the state, and capital," with "implications for our understandings of the late modern subject" (Ong 1999:3). Maira, drawing from Ong, suggests that certain youth cultures typify a form of "flexible cultural citizenship" that is constructed around and through popular culture practices (Maira 2004). While flexible, classed and mobile, however, these are

also subjects at home in Bangalore where their subjective experiences of translocality inform new formations of locality in the city.

Through my interviews and fieldwork it became clear that, beyond the consumption of musical media or engagement with rock's transnational dynamics, rock music practices were being fostered in Bangalore primarily in colleges, where competitions and festivals comprised a main site of rock music performance in the city; furthermore the English language education and the sociality experienced at college was the start of many people's rock fandom (although during my research in 2009-2010 many younger teens and pre-teens were becoming involved in rock music as well). Annual cultural festivals and college rock competitions have supported rock music performance since the nineteen-sixties (Biddu 2010; Damania 2011), and with the intensification of corporate sponsorship since 1991, college rock competitions have assumed greater visibility (tied into a matrix of local marketing and advertising) as well as begun to offer larger cash prizes and incentives for performers.

As chapter two described, during the period of 1965 and onwards the main audiences and participants in India's rock music culture were primarily self-selecting according to education and age demographic: most rock fans and musicians were young students, educated in English schools located in urban settings such as Bombay, Bangalore or Calcutta. Colleges were one of the primary venues for performance at the time (and for the next five decades), with annual student college festivals a mainstay of rock performance opportunities. From its inception a youth culture music, rock found a natural place in the colleges and schools of Bangalore, where it has continued to thrive into the 21st century in professionalized formats like the Campus Rock Idols tour or the

annual Strawberry Fields competition at the National Law School, held annually for the last 10 years, and supported by sponsors who are enlisted by a student-run "event management committee." Among the past sponsors have been Airtel, Levis, Times of India, and VH1; in 2009 when I attended sponsorship was sparse, limited to the Times of India and Global CPA.

College competitions like Strawberry Fields are judged by musicians, journalists, club owners, managers or producers, who rate bands on merits like technique and stage presence, qualities subjective enough that different genres of rock music can be judged according to the same criteria. Competitions domesticate the genre by putting it into the structured context of the school; furthermore the competition rules introduce a kind of normative framework for band repertoire and performance, requiring musicians to play a combination of cover songs and originals.



Figure 3.6 Flyer for Strawberry Fields 2009

Despite the central role of competitions in the development of the Indian rock scene musicians view the competition with suspicion, and their judging metrics were considered by many to be problematic. Interviewing some of the judges after Strawberry Fields 2009 was over, I found that not even the judges were enthusiastic about the regulatory role of the rock competition. Some felt that to adjudicate the anything but the technical qualities of bands was at best subjective and at worst ridiculous and meaningless. One judge stated simply that he felt that most of the bands were judged according to how well the audience responded to them (Avinash 2010).



Figure 3.7 Abandoned Agony performing at Strawberry Fields 2009 (author photo).

Despite these reservations the role of the rock competition in Bangalore's rock scene has expanded beyond the college campus and is now a staple of performance around the city. By 2010 companies like Levis, Nokia, and Red Bull were sponsoring competitions – some of which offered astoundingly good paydays to Indian rock musicians: in 2008 Campus Rock Idols, for example, offered a prize of 75000 INR

(roughly 1500 dollars) which, given India's great wealth disparity, was roughly twice the national average per capita income at the time. Evident in corporate sponsored competitions is an acknowledgement of the transnational geography of rock music, and more specifically specific locals, venues and images that signify rock's western roots. For example the "Hard Rock Calling" competition, sponsored by the Hard Rock Café offered wining bands a chance to play in Hyde Park, a locale synonymous with British rock culture.



Figure 3.8 Hard Rock Calling competition banner at the Hard Rock Café Bangalore, 2010 (author photo).

In addition to college and and sponsored competitions, which bring rock music into the purview of schooling and education, the rock music schools springing up around the city strengthen the ties between education and rock participation. Increasingly the professional rock musicians in Bangalore (always struggling to make a living with music) are tapping into a deep pool of students interested in playing in bands, and in the last decade several music schools have begun to systematize the practice of teaching rock

music in Bangalore. Chief among these is the Nathaniel School of Music (NSM) whose "Music Methods" course, a ten-week program that costs 15000 INR (roughly 300 dollars) offers guitar, bass, keyboard, drum and vocal classes, along with courses and workshops in marketing, technology and producing music. NSM lists the skills its students will attain by the end of their Music Methods program: technique, or the "co-ordination, control, speed, and endurance" that allows "self-expression" on an instrument; knowledge of music theory fundamentals and thus the development of a "sound musical ear;" music technology fundamentals; and the chance to "get into the



Figure 3.9 Guitarist Naveen Thomas teaching a course at the 2010 Music Methods workshop (author photo)

minds of the famous musicians who have dominated their craft for decades" ("Music Methods"). Employing many well-regarded Bangalore musicians, the courses at NSM represent the extent to which learning rock and ultimately playing in a rock band has become a formalized process, including not only technique and musicality but also the development of skills in songwriting, music technology, and marketing.

Competitions at the Hard Rock Café in Bangalore or the prestigious National Law School; or expensive courses like the ones offered at Nathaniel School of Music demarcate a sphere for rock music performance that is the purview of subjects with economic, social or educational capital. These are subjects who, apart from their class positionality also inhabit a particular set of physical spaces in the city like malls (where rock shows are often held); bars, clubs, and other public spaces in the city, wearing their guitars and band tee shirts (men and women alike), and sometimes partaking in practices that accompany rock performance like drinking, smoking marijuana, staying out late and socializing with the opposite sex. Despite the educational and domesticated aspects of rock music performance, these other practices – by no means partaken by all rock scene participants – have had and continue to have repercussions for the contested place of rock music in Bangalore's public spaces. While the class and educational positionality of transnationally-mobile rock music subjects inscribes a privileged space in the city, their musical and social practices also puts them at odds with civic regulations and morals.

Banning live music: the contested culture of rock in the city

In 2011 after I had returned from my fieldwork I received an email from a friend in Bangalore telling me that the scene had become quiet – that live rock music had been banned in the city. She sent me the following notice, which had been received by clubowners and subsequently circulated through the scene:

> All police stations in Bangalore received the following notice (translated from Kannada) to be served to all the clubs: "This letter is to inform you that it has come to our notice your bar & restaurant is using high intensity bright colored lighting, playing loud western music where clients come to drink alcohol, get drunk and dance causing disturbance to the neighboring houses in the locality. In this regard, you have no clearances authorized. Any such instance reported in the

> future at your bar and restaurant will result in legal action being initiated as well as cancellation of operating licenses by the higher authorities (Subbiah 2011).

This 2011 police action in Bangalore was neither the first time such a ban had been enacted in the city,[38] nor was Bangalore the only city in India to have experienced strict regulation and enforcement of nightlife. Since the nineteen-nineties, public performance of rock music has been sporadically restricted: most recently in 2007, 2008, and 2011, with civic legislation enacted to shut down clubs, to limit the sale of alcohol, and to ban the playing of live music. In my interviews the criminalization of rock music was described as an offshoot of the civic government's conflation of rock bands with "live bands" – actually not bands at all but a short-hand term for the recorded film music that accompanies female dancers, or "bar girls," who dance suggestively (albeit fully clothed) for male patrons in clubs. Bar girls might be considered part of a longer lineage of female dancers, like the 19th century "nautch girls," who were vilified in the colonial era as being akin to prostitutes (Qureshi 2006). There is an intricate and historically constructed cultural politics at work framing public female dance generally and the periodic restriction and criminalization of bar girls specifically,[39] generally, however, the role of public female dancers has undergone circuitous metamorphoses in the years since independence and into the present era, when female dance, via Bollywood, has even become an exercise fad (Morcom 2009).

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[38] As I was preparing for a fieldwork trip in 2008 I began to hear from acquaintances in Bangalore that, due to a ban like the one in 2011 (and 2005 and 2007), there was little, if any, live music being played in Bangalore. Since my research was to be ethnographic, I was forced wait until the ban was lifted and postponed my trip to 2009-2010 when the majority of this research took place.

[39] For example, Anna Morcom (2009) writes about the 2005 ban on bar girl performances in Mumbai that the moral arguments took two almost diametrically opposed positions: on the one hand that bar girls were prostitutes who were "ruining the fabric of society" and on the other that they were exploited victims, "forced to sell themselves through poverty and lack of education" (Morcom 2009:127).

My interlocutors, in describing how the live band ban had affected rock music culture, tended to portray the conflation by police of rock's live shows with live bands as a result of ignorance on the part of police, but this seemed unlikely. Other theories were that the rock band bans were a combination of moral policing (in relation to alcohol consumption) with simple corruption: one Bangalore club owner, whose business was periodically decimated by the bans described to me how his club had in turn benefited, in fact been allowed to reopen, because of bribes paid by the live music bar owners to police. That the ban on live music was not strictly about music was clear. Various types of performances and even some rock performances were still allowed in the city, such as the Live Gig shows, put on at the Indira Gandhi musical fountain in Cubbon park. I interviewed two musicians, Sowmya and Karan, involved with putting on the Live Gig performances, asking them how they had subverted the music bans and overcome the city's notorious bureaucracy:

> Sowmya: Bushra [founder of Live Gig] approached the horticultural department [who run Cubbon Park] trying to give them an idea of how music could do good to Bangalore. Though it took a long time she convinced them, so we started having free shows near the Indira Gandhi Musical fountain (Raghavan 2010)
>
> Chloe: What arguments did you use to convince them?
>
> Karan: We pitched them the idea of Hyde Park and Central Park and we told them how people there have different kinds of performances…so we basically pitched that idea, and we also convinced the horticultural department that this was not a profit making show. We were just trying to provide a platform where musicians can just come and play and showcase what they're made of. They bought it quite well even though they had certain rules that they laid down: we could not have any kind of commercial sales in the venue, you cannot charge the people who come in – beside the 5 rupee entry to the park. But we could not have any branding.
>
> Chloe: Why is that?

> Karan: Because they did not want any commercial element coming into the government parks. (Karthik 2010)

Thus objections to rock music performance were both about morals as well as commercialization of the city's public spaces, but whatever the particulars of each civic enactment of rock music bans, their recurrence reflects more generally the disputed place of rock as cultural performance in the city's public spaces. Rock music's associations with alcohol, drugs, and male and female socializing make its performances a primary locus for contestations over the moral tenor of public culture, but this is not simply a question of morals. It is also a question of who might lay claim to the city's spaces, and who has a right to define what types of culture become public culture, a dispute that is about language and nativity and about the place of English speakers and Kannadiga (Kannada speakers) in the space of the city.

As the introduction to this chapter described, Bangalore's changing economy in the 1990s shaped fractious political discourse in the city, where Kannada nationalism had been roiling for decades, historically fomented by the city's linguistic and class divisions and exacerbated by the influx of workers from other states and later, other countries. Language – who should speak which language where – has been a primary point of contention for Kannadiga activism, which undermines the global developmentalist narrative that characterizes the dominant, if not hegemonic discourse of Bangalore's political leadership. Nair, drawing from Bourdieu, observes that in the state of Karnataka a competence in particular languages bestows or denies access to other types of capital. The acquisition or possession of language is implicated in what Nair calls the "division of labor" in Karnataka and in Bangalore particularly: "defining a restricted sphere within which Kannada may circulate" (Nair 2005:242), and the outcome is that in a city where

Kannada is the "mother tongue," fewer and fewer people actually speak the language. Increasingly Tamil speakers, who have historically come into Karnataka as workers, dominate the city's construction sites and low-wage jobs. At the same time as Raghavan and Manor point out, there has been "comparatively little emigration from Karnataka" (as Raghavan and Manor 2009:9) by Kannadigas, resulting in a populace increasingly marginalized in their own city.

As several people described to me, there had been clashes between Kannadiga cultural organizations and rock music producers in the city, particularly around the Levi's Freedom Jam, a large annual rock festival held in Bangalore (discussed further in chapter four). Jaideep Sen, then editor-in-chief of the magazine *Time Out Bengaluru* described the broad outlines of this dispute to me:

> What happened was that Freedom Jam used to take place in an amphitheater that later became the offices of what is now called the Kannada bhavan, which is the department which looks after the local language and the culture. They began to say, 'you're playing music that is not culturally ours, and it's not even in a language that we speak, it's in English. You can't possibly do that.' And they kicked them out of there (Sen 2009).

This example of a minor power struggle between Kannadiga cultural activists and rock music subjects is but one instance in a larger context of rock music's contested place in Indian culture. In Mumbai in 2011 the Independence Rock festival, scheduled to be held at the Gateway of India, was canceled at the eleventh hour by the local government with fans at the venue awaiting the start of the show. Farhad Wadia, the show's producer, posted a long note on the Facebook page of Independence Rock (since deleted) detailing the fifteen permissions he had "begged, pleaded, cajoled groveled, namedropped, and bribed" and describing how he had finally been denied for reasons transparently about the nature of the music being played at Independence Rock [all *sic*]:

> The commissioner started by telling me that - How Could I have wanted to stage a ROCK CONCERT at the Gateway? He kept stressing repeatedly that the Gateway was an inappropriate venue for this Kind of Music and told me that the Sound will Damage the monument. I assured him that this was the same Contractor - Roger Drego and the Same Sound system that had been used 4 times in the past 6 months for 4 different shows at the Gateway and authorized by his office: 1) The Mumbai Festival featuring Al Jarreau & other Jazz artists 2) Shakti featuring Zakir Hussain & John Mac Laughlin. 3) The Mumbai Mirror Launch function. 4) Bal Thackeray's Book Launch. To this he kept insisting that these were all Government Shows & not commercial events. When I told him that the Al Jarreau Gig was an MTV &VH1 Show which Charged an average of Rs 2000 & the Shakti show was organized by my friend Shashi Vyas who owns a private event company and had an average ticket price of Rs.1500; & also the Launch of a private newspaper is a Commercial event... & that Balasaheb Thackeray is a private Citizen with no official Government Post he said that those shows were all right BUT ours was not Suitable for the Gateway (Wadia 2010).

What such occurrences indicate, arguably, are the increasing disjunctures between local, civic and national politics and transnational economic outcomes and cultural forms. Throughout India the outcomes of liberalization and the diverse cultural and economic effects of its policies have created a variety of ambiguous and complex social outcomes. Faizal bin Yahya, for example, describes a "crisis of aspiration" in Andhra Pradesh brought about by an deepening divide between "haves and have-nots," wherein the "'have-nots' in the rural areas see the 'good life' on television, but are unable to attain it themselves, creating a political backlash against the state government" (bin Yahya 2009: 376). Similarly Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase argue that liberalization has led to "growing inequalities in India," where since 1991 "richer households are reaping a far greater monetary reward over the corresponding period" (Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2001:145). Though not necessarily about economics, what the ban on rock music underlines is the extent to which mandates about appropriate public morality often clash with the public and consumer culture social formations ushered in with economic globalization.

Conclusion

Language, jobs, and morality have been central issues under dispute in the political culture of Bangalore but rock music has not been, of course, the sole flashpoint around which these issues erupted. Ritty Lukose and Mary John have written extensively about the 1996 Miss World competition held in Bangalore (Lukose 2007; John 1998), which was protested both by leftist feminist groups who viewed it as a problematic commodification of women's bodies in a neoliberal vein, and by right-wing Hindu nationalists who were offended the performance on the grounds that it undermined the traditional position of women in Indian culture. As Lukose points out, while the Miss World pageant was by far the most visible protest spurred by globalization's changes, there were many other protests as well, as with the introduction of and subsequent riots around the introduction of Kentucky Fried Chicken, and the protest by the *Rajya Raith Sanga* (Karnataka Farmer's Union) over the introduction of the multinational seed company Cargill (Lukose 2007). Stremlau writes, however, that protests to Cargill faded by 1997 based in large part on their skillful public relations campaigns (Stremlau 1996), and, indeed, while in the 1990s protests against Enron (forced to give up their plans of building a 2.8 billion dollar power plant in Maharashtra), Coca Cola, and IBM were rife, by the new millennium protests died down as the presence of MNCs in the city were seen as more and more of an inevitability

Bangalore has for more than two decades been an emblem, a marker of the new economically successful India, and its job market attracts people from across the country and around the world. As a result, as this chapter has described, the city's infrastructure has become sorely overtaxed, with constantly congested roads, polluted air and water,

and a bewildered local citizenry whose talk about the city is often laden with nostalgia and sorrow for the green spaces, tanks (ancient water resevoirs) and neighborhoods that no longer exist. To speak about the "local" in Bangalore (whether the local population or the local musical culture) is to engage with the myriad ways in which its urban identities have been configured and reconfigured by transnationalism, immigration and emigration, industry and globalization, but also to grapple with the ways in which history and nostalgia animates and motivates notions of locality and belonging, particularly in performed and musical cultures. A central argument of this research, indeed, is that rock music's subjects, through their involvement with this musical form, mediate the "complex and contingent" conjunctures between economy and culture (Rajagopal 2009) that characterize globalized Bangalore, in the process negotiating flexible and differential expressions of subject-hood via cultural production. But if rock music is, for participants, a mode of mediating the global turn within a locally-produced musical field, its performance and the rock music culture of clubs, pubs and youth sociality is also, for some, an example of the negative effects of globalization and a morally suspect foreign import.

CHAPTER FOUR

MUSIC, IMAGE, MEANING: ADVERTISING, SPONSORSHIP AND THE MUSICAL COMMODITY

In the beginning weeks of my Bangalore fieldwork I lived in the affluent neighborhood of Indiranagar, in the eastern part of the city; a once sleepy suburb dotted with temples and mantled by banyan trees. Known both for the charming bungalows and villas that line its quiet byways and the busy commercial sections where businesses bring endless foot traffic, cars, buses and oxen, in 2010 the neighborhood was being disrupted by the building of a public monorail that was to ease Bangalore's heavily congested roads and connect the suburb to the city center. Indiranagar, pleasantly removed from the city's thronged central areas and a relatively well-off neighborhood, was also, as an Indian acquaintance remarked, "where all the foreigners stay," and indeed, as I landed and got my bearings in the city, I lived with an American who had been in the neighborhood for ten years and who, I soon realized, was charging me the exorbitant rates that the city's residents had become accustomed to commanding from international business travelers making extended stays in the city. This was a transformed Indiranagar, I was told, a largely high rent area with "paying guest" houses (PGs) accommodating workers from around the country, western entrepreneurs renting pricey housing and a shopping district that sold Levis, Nikes and Benetton for prices relatively few could afford.

I was little more than a flâneur for the first jet-lagged weeks of my fieldwork, wandering around looking into shop windows, reading local papers and magazines in Odyssey, the English-language bookstore, and beginning to make contact with rock musicians, finding my way to the lounges and nightclubs in the neighborhood where

bands regularly played. As it turned out, although I was to shortly decamp from Indiranagar for more affordable housing, and to spend more time with musicians and at shows than wandering around window-shopping, these activities in Indiranagar constituted a suggestive and meaningful opening into my research. As I walked the neighborhood I had become increasingly aware of the sounds and images of rock music proliferating in various places: in the Wrangler flagship store window on Indiranagar's hundred-foot road, for example, where a collection of mannequins "played" a drum set and electric guitar, dressed in Wrangler's artfully faded and exorbitantly expensive denim. Boys and girls I passed by on the street wore tee shirts of the Beatles, Iron Maiden, or which just proclaimed "rock star."



Figure 4.1 shirt for sale in the Forum Mall, Koramangala (author photo).

There was a ubiquitous mobile phone print advertisement that showed a spiky haired, tattooed young man jumping in the air while playing an electric guitar. These sights were not in any way out of the ordinary in this affluent neighborhood or in some of the other middle class neighborhoods around the city, and as I began my research I tried to take

special heed of them, knowing that they— a kind of repetitious multitude of images— might fade into the background as I began engaging with people and their music.



Figure 4.2: The Mobile Store in Indiranagar (author photo).

At the end of my fieldwork, however, I looked back on my records of these early impressions, documented in fieldwork notebooks, with renewed interest. Although my interviews had addressed topics such as songwriting practices and musicianship, the history of rock music in Bangalore and the business of making music in the country, at the end of my time in the city I was left with a clear impression – borne out by myriad oblique references and my own observations – that the practices of advertising, sponsorship and branding framed the musical culture in a complex and affective series of ways, even shaping, in some cases, its sounds and discourses. It seemed clear that the goods advertised at shows or the advertisements that used rock music sounds and images were part of a symbolic taxonomy (one that also included fashion) in which rock music was also gaining or forming some of its meanings for participants and audiences. In public spaces billboards and shop windows were implicated in an emergent aesthetic

order in which rock music signs were part of what Osamu Note, in his discussion of billboards in Chennai, describes as a "new system of codes" a "semiotic paradigm" marking the post-liberalization period of street-level visual culture in India: a regime of signification indicative of a transforming habitus (Note 2007:131-132).

Pursuing an ethnographic focus on the commodities and images of the rock music culture in Bangalore turned out to be a somewhat paradoxical exercise. For one thing, the material images and signs of rock music are, in Bangalore as in many other places in the world, either so commonplace as to be practically unnoticeable or glossed over as instances of globalization's more superficial manifestations. In addition, although during my fieldwork I saw many particular examples of the confluence of rock music and commodity logic, typified by the advertising that almost without fail appeared at shows, when I approached this topic in interviews it was in many (though not all) cases not of any special interest to the people with whom I was speaking, even though corporate support and branding was considered an integral and functional aspect of the rock music scene. I was convinced, however, that the larger network of quasi-musical commodity symbols was indeed important as a focus of study precisely because they were so unremarkable to participants while at the same time enabling rock's continued performance and discernibly contributing to rock's public meanings. As Bourdieu's work has illustrated, it is often the most taken-for-granted cultural objects or symbols that have the most ideological force (Bourdieu 1984), and while much of my research was guided by the issues participants raised themselves, in this particular case I felt certain that such normalized print and television advertisements and brand symbols were a rich source of

meaning because of their ability to disappear into the background even while shaping the terrain upon which rock and its meanings were playing out.



Figure 4.3: Stage for Rocktoberfest 2009, Bangalore (author photo).

It might seem farfetched to claim that Bangalore's public and visual culture of consumer appurtenances and their advertisements support an ethnomusicological investigation. Although the branding and sponsorship of shows by both nationally-based and multi-national corporations (MNCs) is a materially crucial aspect of the financing and support of rock music culture in India, the claim that this chapter will explore is somewhat more specific: namely that rock's images and by extension its meanings are embedded in – and critically shaped by virtue of being embedded in – an intertextual field of commodity symbols that can be decoded, that is itself taxonomic, and that directs subtle shifts in the cultural politics of rock music in the city. This line of reasoning takes for granted the idea that the intersection of musical practice and commodity logic displayed by the sponsorship of rock music performance (as for example with the "Kingfisher presents Rock in India," or the "Nokia Iseries Independence Rock" concerts)

is only the most tangible concretization of an intricate symbolic system in which rock music functions not as sound but also as sign, embedded in consumer culture and socially effective. Following Lee and and Lipuma (2002) I suggest that this field of visual signs might be thought of as a "culture of circulation" defined as

> [A]…process with its own forms of abstraction, evaluation, and constraint, which are created by the interactions between specific types of circulating forms and the interpretive communities built around them (Lee and Lipuma 2002:192)

Rock music, by virtue of its history and global span is a potent symbolic force — although what it symbolizes in Indian public culture, the avenues through which that symbolism is mobilized, and the ramifications of that symbolic trajectory are the questions that this chapter will explore. The semiology of rock images in the wider consumer landscape may not be coeval with or equivalent to the embodied meanings of the genre for musical subjects; however, observing rock music's symbolism and how participants make sense of or interpret that symbolism enables analysis of the rock music culture as a practice of reflexive identity formation via aesthetic practices, one of the outcomes of the late capitalism's proliferation of signs and symbols (Lash and Urry 1994). The sedimentation of these commodity-images in a visual public culture along with the material corporate support of rock shows make a persuasive case for interpreting Indian rock music culture as a form of consumer practice – and specifically a globally-oriented youth culture consumer practice in which issues of taste index crucial issues of class, gender and identity differentiation.

Observing the image of a generic "rock musician" in an ad selling a cell phone or a real musician at a show performing in front of a huge brand logo calls into question how or in what ways these images are meaningful – and this is in a way an ontological

question: how do such images hold, transmit, or adumbrate meaning, and to what end? In following this question, this investigation begins to trace out an emergent scenario in which not only does sponsorship enable a particular type of musical culture to continue, but rock music symbolism and practice is revealed to be deeply implicated in the constitution of particular types of Indian consumer culture formations. Furthermore, as stories from this fieldwork illustrate, the increased importance of branding generally in Indian public culture has led to subjects' transformed understandings of their own musical practices, opening up questions regarding the extent to which neoliberalism in the Indian context extends into the musical realm, shaping and directing some of the practices of the rock scene. The following theoretical discussion contextualizes these questions by following the maneuvers by which the luxury good comes to have both sign-value and social value (the path that takes us from electric guitar as instrument to electric guitar as signifier of prestige via the symbolic system of advertising); and contextualizes the sign value of such musical commodities in relation to branding, a preeminent modality in Indian public culture generally and rock music culture specifically.

Consumption, sign value and social positioning

With the advent of capitalism as the dominant world economic system, the mass-produced commodity re-defined and problematized the meanings of consumption. As Schor and Holt write:

> Goods have symbolic meanings in all societies. However, capitalism poses a new problem—imbuing functionally and materially similar products with different symbolic meanings. The marketer needs to induce the consumer to pay a premium for products that are mere commodities (i.e. mass produced, identical goods) (Schor and Holt 2000:xii)

Miller points out that as anthropologists have expanded their scope to try and account for the rapid development and intensification of consumer practices around the world, their approaches have often been Marxist in orientation, motivated by the sense that resistance is the appropriate response to the rapid globalization of commerce that seemed to be supplanting older forms of exchange and culture (Miller 1995). For cultural theorists, this position was perhaps most thoroughly elucidated in the work of the Frankfurt School, and particularly in Adorno and Horkheimer's oft-referenced work on the culture industry (Adorno and Horkheimer 1944).[40] Despite their dystopian outlook on the systematization of mass culture, Adorno and Horkheimer articulated a persistent fear that has run through theoretical treatments of consumption: the sense that the urge to consume is a never-filled void within which corporate interests run rampant. As Raymond Williams points out, however, although this type of critique of consumer culture makes it seem as if the citizen is already *too* materialistic, what the proliferation of advertisements and commodities in the modern world shows us is that we are not yet materialistic *enough* – that the "magic system" of advertising is in place to ensure that the consumer remains motivated by the perceived need or desire to buy the newest commodity (Williams 1980).

The negative valuations of consumption-as-practice that partially characterized early and mid-twentieth century writing has been productively problematized in examinations of consumption which recognize not only the potential of the consumer to utilize imaginative agency to redefine the meanings of consumer practices (Appadurai 1996) but also the significant symbolic and social aspects of those practices. The theory

[40] Scholars have extensively theorized the cultural industries since the Frankfurt School's critique of a monolithic "mass culture" industry in the 1940s and 50s. Hesmondhalgh notes that presently conglomerate companies "operate across a number of different cultural industries" and that these conglomerates are connected; however, he also notes that small, medium and large culture industries have proliferated with outcomes that reflect this increased complexity of structure (Hesmondhalgh 2007:2)

that frames this investigation draws from the basic premise that not only does the consumer capitalism emergent in Indian public culture require that goods be imbued with symbolic meanings in ways that disguise their "mere" commodity status (Schor and Holt 2000) but also that consumption is related to the differential classification of social hierarchies (Veblen 1899; Bourdieu 1984).

Baudrillard identifies advertising, the proliferating signs and images of consumer-capitalist society, as promoting the commodity in a differential taxonomy that extends the meaning of the commodity beyond use value or exchange value and into the realm of "sign-value": the value that an object inheres and emits within a system of symbolism. Sign-value, then, is not reducible to the good's primary functionality or even its symbolic value as an object but rather indicates the object's role as a signifier among an array of other signifiers (Baudrillard 2000). In his early work Baudrillard describes a "social semiology" in which goods and symbols are understood to have meaning insofar as they are imbedded in social life – or insofar as they are "invested" with meaning as part of their interplay within social life (Baudrillard 2000). It is with the consumption not simply of the commodity but of its sign-value that the individual displays his social prestige or standing. Consumption thus entails a system of active manipulation of a differential sign system in which the social activity of consumption becomes one manner of "integrating group relations" (Featherstone 1990).

Branding India

Brands, as distinct from commodities, promote the identificatory feelings that are integral to the promotion of consumption of particular goods over others; what Baudrillard calls "connotations of affect," the "secondary function" (Baudrillard 2000) of

the advertisement that, after the brand signals the product, then engenders a range of feelings about or around that product. Lash and Lury differentiate the commodity and the brand, and their description is worth quoting in full:

> The commodity is produced. The brand is a source of production. The commodity is a single discrete, fixed product. The brand instantiates itself in a range of products, is generated across a range of products. The commodity has no history, the brand does. The commodity has no relationships; the brand is constituted in and as relations. The commodity has no memory at all; the brand has memory. The products in which a brand instantiates itself, indeed actualizes itself, must somehow flow from the brand's memory, which is the brand's identity." (Lash and Lury 2007:6)

Crucially, in both critical and marketing conceptions of the brand there is the idea that the brand has relationships, memory, and identity – subject qualities. As marketers conceptualize the brand as having an "ersatz personality" (Mazzarella 2003), it becomes possible to then suggest that its appeal for consumers has to do with resonance between indices of identity, or through psychology. Rosemary J. Coombe writes about the function of the brand that "its force is directed, not to utility or use value, but to desire" (Coombe 1998:56), and through desire and emotion the brand makes its appeal to the consumer. Banet-Weiser argues, then, that brands are "about *culture* as much as they are about economics," and suggests that "brand relationships have increasingly become cultural contexts for everyday living, individual identity, and affective relationships" (Banet-Weiser 2012:4).

The intensifying importance of branding in Indian public culture is the backdrop for an analysis of the role of sponsorship in the rock music culture. As chapter two described, corporate sponsorship of the Indian rock scene has been in effect since the first All-India Simla Beat rock competition in 1969. In the following decades, and particularly since the 1990s, local and foreign brands such as Coke, Pepsi, MTV, Seagrams, Bacardi,

Nokia and Kingfisher have figured prominently as sponsors at shows and competitions. These types of partnerships make practical sense for both festival promoters and corporations as, for example, when an alcoholic beverage company might choose to sponsor a rock competition held in nightclub in order to promote the drinking of their brand of beverage. Even as the club owner holds up a bottle of Absolut vodka before the band takes the stage and the band itself wears Levis to perform, whether or not the effects of these types branding can be calculated or defined is less important here than the recognition that such instances of branding presuppose an already extant cultural gestalt in which rock music images, practices and sounds are symbolically interwoven with the commodities and brands of contemporary Indian public culture.

The importance of strategic branding as a practice has taken hold in India as an organic byproduct of its rapid national and global economic development. In the late twentieth century and into the early 21st century, the concept of "brand India" was a buzz phrase not just for investors and business people but as a modality gaining traction in public discourse. As commodities are exported and have to compete in unfamiliar markets, the brand is the leverage used to carve out its place in the marketplace, and it is the persuasiveness of the brand identity, in part, that enables it to flourish or sink. The India Brand Equity Foundation, established as part of India's Ministry of Commerce, sums up the focus on branding in India:

> IBEF's primary objective is to promote and create international awareness of the *Made in India* label in markets overseas and to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge of Indian products and services. IBEF is engaged in building Brand India. ("IBEF:About Us")

In addition to its role as buttress for investment, the practice of branding has infused various fields, including tourism (for tagline "Incredible India!") and also, notably, in the

Hindi film industry, where megastars such as Saif Ali Khan, Shah Rukh Kahn, Karina Kapoor, Ashwariya Rai, among many others, appear in multiple commercials as "brand ambassadors," promoting cosmetics, comestibles, automobiles and a plethora of other tangible and intangible goods.

The significant, albeit subtle way that the concept of branding has permeated the social world of Indian rock music was made explicit to me in many small but powerful ways throughout the duration of my fieldwork. An acquaintance in Bangalore in a new and popular band talked to me one evening about his goals of "branding" the band properly – by which he meant finding the right combination of materials and descriptions in the marketing packet he was putting together to send out to prospective performance venues. At a workshop for musicians at a rock music school in Bangalore I talked to a teenager, a metal guitarist who had just formed his first band, who expressed that their first project was to "brand ourselves properly." When I recounted this to another Indian friend who had been involved in the rock music scene for 15 years in Bangalore and in Europe, he scoffed, "how about you actually play a song first, you wankers, before you start polishing your brand." Another particular instance sticks in my mind. I spent a good deal of time talking and emailing with a musician who had been having trouble with his band mates. The lead singer of a classic rock and cover band, he had become increasingly annoyed both with the side projects of the other musicians, which he saw as taking away from his project, as well as the lack of audiences for his own shows, which he blamed on the fact that cover songs he specialized in had begun to fall out of favor. A highly emotive individual, he had been expressing to me the ways in which he felt slighted by his fellow musicians and audiences. "I'm leaving the scene," he wrote in one angry email

message, “And I’m going to re-brand myself and then come back a hundred times stronger.”

My friend’s use of marketing terminology here represents more than a transformed vocabulary – I suggest that it is representative of the beginnings of a transformed understanding of cultural and creative production. What this story pushes towards is the implication that rock music branding might be best understood in the context of neoliberal governmentality and the production of neoliberal (musical) subjects. Neoliberalism as described by David Harvey

> [I]s in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey 2007:2).

Neoliberalism both enables and produces a state of affairs in which economic logics suffuse other realms of life with outcomes like the transference of consumerist motivations into politics, and “the apotheosis of the entrepreneur as a creative genius” (Kanna 2010:101), the latter a readily apparent trend in Indian business discourses and, as chapters five and six will demonstrate, partially responsible for the validated role of entrepreneurism in the grassroots businesses of Indian rock. Barnett, Clarke, Cloke and Malpass call for a need to supplement an understanding of neoliberal economic formations with insight into “biopolitical dynamics of market-mediated subject formation;” in this vein Timothy D. Taylor writes that neoliberalism “emphasizes a kind of hyperindividualism by wielding ideologies of consumer choice” (Taylor 2013:155). What the stories above indicate, I suggest, is the emergence of a phase in the development of a neoliberal, musical, consumer-subject, a figure for whom branding oneself is a normalized part of being a cultural producer.

The following case studies historicize and develop this idea by examining three different arenas in which rock music and sponsorship or advertising are conjoined. Firstly, I focus on the historical conjuncture of rock music media and advertisements, making a critical reading of advertisements that appeared in the Indian rock magazine *Rock Street Journal* between 1993 and 2000. I observe how corporate sponsors both marketed themselves to the young consumer audience and also in some cases shaped the content of what was for several decades India's only rock and roll magazine (as for example with the "Pepsi Reader's Poll" that was a mainstay of the magazine for four years). Secondly, I address some instances of rock music symbolism in Indian commercials where rock imagery – including signifiers such as electric guitars, mohawks, or leather jackets – is used to evoke certain ideas or meanings within the storyline of the commercial. Finally, I inquire into the function of marketing and branding at live shows, describing the strategies and the material benefits (and sometimes the negative outcomes) felt by musicians, promoters and club owners who gain these types of sponsorships. The interpretation of advertisements, the close readings of their signs and texts, reveals an emergent picture of the proliferating visual and symbolic meanings of "rock music" circulating in public culture and suggests, also, avenues for nuanced interpretations of the concept of aspirational consumption that drives rock-oriented marketing campaigns.

Foreign brands in the Rock Street Journal 1993-2000

The following case studies focus on the interventions of foreign brands, via advertisements, in the magazine *Rock Street Journal* (henceforth RSJ), first published in 1993 in New Delhi by the rock musician Amit Saigal. RSJ's original focus was on

western bands favored by Indian rock fans: top-of-the charts artists like Iron Maiden, Guns and Roses, Metallica were all featured on the cover in the early years of the magazine. Into the mid-nineties RSJ began to cover more local Indian rock, writing about the competitions and small shows that were hosted by colleges or community organizations, holding annual reader's polls, and producing compilation tapes of local bands. While chapter five will deal with the editorial content of RSJ in some depth, the focus here is on the types of advertisements found in its pages, rich recent-historical documents that are informative about the types of strategies used by advertisers from the early days of India's liberalization into the new millennium (the magazine transitioned to an online format in 2003). Advertising by foreign brands was part of the magazine from its first issue: when I interviewed Amit Saigal, he mentioned in an offhand way that in 1993 "some advertiser gave us a tiny amount of money, 7000 rupees, nothing – enough to slap a cover on it… I think it was Pepsi or someone." Throughout its run as a print magazine RSJ would be reliant on foreign advertisers, foreshadowing the scenario for live Indian rock performances of the following decades.

As Mazzarella observes about the tensions prevailing in the 1990s Indian advertising industry:

> On the one hand, aspirational consumerism spoke in a language if universal address, even as its aesthetic efficacy depended on an exclusionary calculus of social distinction. On the other hand its promise of membership for Indians in a global "ecumene" of world-class consumption was uttered in the same breath as the claim that globalization was in fact all about recognizing and acknowledging the cultural specificity of Indian desires (Mazzarella 2003: 34-35).

The advertisements in RSJ represent some of the opening forays of foreign brands in to the Indian market: strategically partnering with the only print media (at the time) dedicated to Indian rock, marketers must have perceived rock music as a bourgeoning

locus for well-off middle class youth culture. The ads thus reveal much about the cultural politics of marketing campaigns at the time, with themes of familial relationships, identity, and taste harnessed to speak to local audiences and advertise foreign goods. A general overview of the advertisements in RSJ from the mid 1990s reveal several main types of products or businesses being advertised: firstly, record companies including Sony, Polygram, HMV, and BMG and their goods; secondly, instrument and stereo equipment makers, including Roland, Korg and Gibson; jeans, including Levis, Lee, Wrangler and Pepe; television channels MTV and Channel V; as well as soda companies Coke and Pepsi.

Some brands, new to the Indian market, were seeking simply to introduce themselves: for example the copy for Sony's ad in the January 1996 issue of RSJ stated simply "Meet Sony and Company" with a list of the artists on the Sony label. Polygram's ad campaign in 1996 also introduced their artists with advertisements showing cassettes from Lionel Richie, Ace of Bass, Joan Osborne, and Def Leppard among others.[41] Unlike Sony, however, Polygram employed culturally and generationally specific taglines to address RSJ readers, with one full-page ad (showing cassette covers) reading "You'll stay at home. That's why your parents will pay for them;" in another "Unless you're waiting for the music channels to start playing them" (referencing the absence of Western music on MTV and Channel V); and finally "Time you educated your cocky American cousins on the latest in music."

[41] Strikingly, very few of these artists (with the exception of Def Leppard) were popular in India at the time as the advertising company responsible might have known from reading the magazine, and Polygram's ad campaign was either the result of ignorance of the predominant tastes of the time, or more likely an effort to introduce Indian rock fans to different types of music than the largely classic rock and heavy metal that was popular in the mid 1990s.



Figure 4.4: PolyGram ad in RSJ February 1996



Figure 4.5: Coca-cola and MTV contest ad, RSJ June 1996

In many cases marketing campaigns involved themselves directly with sponsored contests or polls. Often different companies would combine to co-sponsor a competition, like the one advertised in RSJ's June 1996 magazine: "MTV and Coke Videogaagaa" (with the words "gaa gaa" written in Devnagri script, indicating the Hindi word "to sing"). In this competition entrants were asked sing three of their favorite songs, hum the Coke jingle and send in the cassette recording along with a photo and biographical data in order to win the chance to make a music video. For rock musicians, the prospect of having a rock video made was enticing, as was the implied prospect (not explicitly offered) of having a video on MTV. The ad copy exhorts: "This is your chance to be famous. World famous in India" and the tagline reads "Coca-Cola makes you sing. MTV makes the video."[42] In keeping with MTV's bratty, tongue in cheek brand identity,

[42] Such marketing schemes were and continue to be prevalent in the Indian rock scene with prizes and opportunities routinely offered in sponsored competitions. The chance to "record an album" or "make a

the ad also included an image of a group of shiny jumpsuit-clad men, with the headline "Bhaizone," a pun on Boyzone (a pop band at the time) and the term *bhai*, which in Hindi means brother or friend. Plainly MTV, whose dismal ratings in the early 1990s motivated its reboot into a Hindi film song station in 1996, had internalized the lesson of the importance of marketing to Indian "difference" and were dedicated to "Indianizing" their products and marketing campaigns via an appeal to what was perceived as a locally rooted yet aspirational form of musical culture.

While Coke teamed with MTV for its video contest, Pepsi was involved with RSJ not just as advertisers but also as sponsors of the RSJ annual Reader's Poll, where the tag line was the same as Pepsi's slogan "ye hi hai right choice baby," (which like the English copy "you've got the right one baby," translates as "this is the right choice").



Figure 4.7: Pepsi ad in RSJ July 1997

video" are, however, somewhat meaningless without distribution or a more general music industry infrastructure.

In addition to the Reader's Poll, Pepsi also sponsored rock festivals, like one in 1997 in Kolkata (where the ad for the concert read "Rock and Roll is our birthright!" Pepsi's involvement with RSJ was long-standing, but as with all the companies that involved themselves with sponsoring actual shows or festivals, global economic patterns dictated how much capitol was directed into niche audiences like rock music culture. Indeed, the fact that foreign brands were advertising to what was admittedly an extremely limited audience of rock music fans points to the perceived importance of the young urban, English-educated consumer. Pepsi, Coke, Sony, PolyGram, and Levis were instantiating their brands in a nascent youth culture magazine that in the nineteen-nineties was still oriented towards the rock and popular music coming out of the west. The ads in the RSJ reveal a snapshot of a historical moment of early liberalization in which foreign brands were beginning to make their first forays into the Indian marketplace and reveal, also, some of the specific contours of the emergent relationship between brands and rock bands.

Rock tropes and imagery in Indian advertising culture

As Goldman and Papson observe, the mutually defining relationship between the spectator and the advertisement is an integral aspect of an advertisement's functionality:

> Interpreting the stories that ads tell is always conditional on how they address, or "hail" us—how we are positioned, how the commodity is positioned. When ads hail us, they *appellate* us, naming us and inviting us to take a position in relation to the advertisements." (Goldman and Papson 1996:83)

The commercials touched on here utilize jingles that reference rock aesthetics, and traffic in rock imagery as an integrated aspect of the commercial's story. The first example is Kotek life insurance's "Chotu child plan" television commercial, which aired on the Star

network. An upper middle class mother and father, recognizable by their dress and surroundings, sit on a couch with their young male child standing in front of them. A voiceover discusses the merits of life insurance and the plan in question in which invested monies increase with market rise and stay stationary as the market drops. In the ad, as the parents watch, the child magically appears in the garb of various professions: first an astronaut, which provokes an amazed response from the parents; then a doctor, wherein much celebration ensues on the part of both mother and father; then a



Figure 4.8: Still from Kotek Chotu Child Plan commercial

cricketer, upon which the mother is displeased and the father is secretly thrilled; finally a mohawk-having, leather jacket-wearing, electric guitar-holding "rock star" (so the jingle playing behind the images sings). At this sight both parents scream in horror and the mother wrings her hands in misery.

A second vignette in which rock music imagery signifies a form of modern masculinity is in an advertisement for Taj Mahal tea that aired in March of 2010 in which the actor Saif Ali Khan appears in different types of dress to represent the relative strength of the different types of tea available from Taj Mahal: dressed in a white tuxedo and playing a white grand piano while sipping a milder tea, the actor then is shown in a

jeans, tee shirt and bandana, holding an electric guitar, represent a stronger Taj Mahal tea variety. Particularly interesting in this commercial is the fact that the campaign using Saif Ali Khan (playing guitar and piano) replaced a long-running branding partnership between the Taj Mahal brand and the tabla player Ustad Zakir Hussein, an endorsement that was highly successful as well as slightly controversial.[43] Saif Ali Khan, an A-list actor who has appeared in many Hindi blockbusters including the cult classic *Dil Chahta Hai* (The Heart Desires) plays guitar in real life, and has appeared in other campaigns or marketing events with a guitar, most notably as a brand ambassador for the Chevrolet Beat, a sporty hatchback selling for under five crore (a mid-level luxury car). In the Bangalore launch of the Chevy Beat Khan played onstage with the band Parikrama, a two decades-old hard rock band from New Delhi in front of a model of the car, performing one of Parikrama's songs while the band's vocalist Nitin Malik sang.

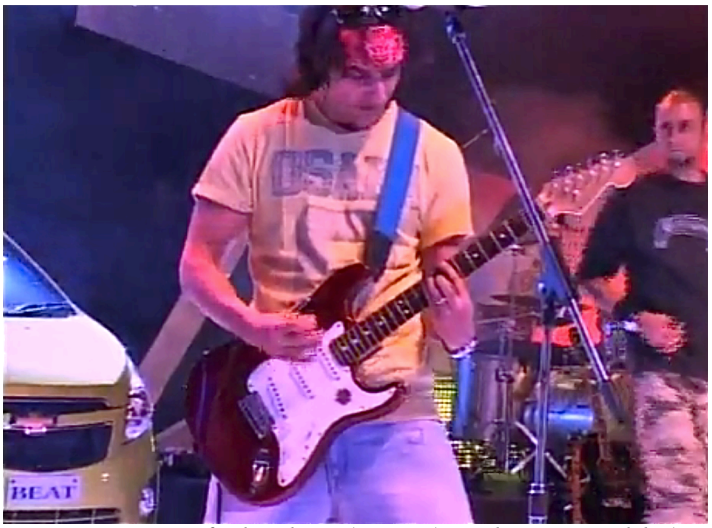


Figure 4.9: Saif Ali Khan (center) and Nitin Malik (right) at Bangalore launch of Chevrolet Beat

[43] The master tabla player at one point vowed to give up playing the instrument if someone found a better quality of tea, a moment of hyperbole he surely regretted when it was taken seriously by the chairman of the Federation of All India Tea Traders Association, who indicated that a number of other tea producers were eager to enter into competition with the Hindustan Lever-owned Taj Mahal brand. (Mandal 2002)

Rock music played a more central role in the marketing campaign for the MTV Micromax phone, a mobile phone that represents a canny aggregation of brands and functions. With digital music players a prohibitive expense for many young lower-middle and working class Indians and CDs and CD players becoming outdated, the cell phone has become for many a de facto digital music player, particularly among young fans of popular film music for whom the latest film hits are stored on phones or enlisted as ringtones. In 2010, the cell phone company Micromax joined forces with MTV to sell a new kind of product: with built in amplifiers, the Micromax MTV mobile phone was marketed as a first of its kind tandem cell phone and music player, with both functions touted equally in the ad campaign. The Micromax phone, with its Yamaha and Wolfson speakers, was being "co-branded" by both MTV and Micromax (CMN correspondent 2009), with the cell phone company presumably gaining musical credibility with youth via its association with MTV, and the music conglomerate (or "leading youth multimedia brand" as the press release calls MTV) making a canny move by recognizing the large market share that is comprised of young people who use cell phones as music players. Sandeep Dahiya, the Vice President of Consumer Products and Communications for Viacom 18 (parent company of MTV) stated about the partnership:

> Mobile phones are an extension of today's youth and it was only a matter of time before MTV entered this category. This partnership between MTV and Micromax is a potent combination that merges Micromax's expertise in product design, production and distribution with MTV's strengths in creativity, youth insights and marketing (Dahiya 2009).

Part of the marketing strategy of the Micromax phone was touting it as the "Heavy Metal of Music," with rock music sounds and images an integral part of the phone's branding and the commercials from its release: at the release party the phone was unveiled by

MTV VJs Rannvijay and Anusha, with a performance by the rock band Saadhak.[44] The primary commercial portrayed a young man getting ready to go out, dressed in a button down shirt and distressed denim, ready to hit the town. Finding his tube of hair gel empty he has a bright idea: he plugs his earphones in, connects them to his phone, and heavy metal music blasts out, knocking him backwards onto the floor. Springing once again to his feet we now see his hair standing on end without the assistance of gel, buoyed upwards by the sheer auditory force of the music coming from his phone. The tag line appears: "MTV Micromax phone. More cool maal" (more cool stuff).[45]



Figure 4.10: Still from commercial: "The Heavy Metal of Music"

The case studies presented here are less about sounds and more about image, although this work suggests that sound and image in this case are meaningful in their intertextual interplay. As ethnomusicologists and musicologists have turned their attention to the role of music in advertising and to the practices of jingle and commercial music writers, the interpenetrations between popular music and the field of advertising have become more apparent (Klein 2009; Taylor 2009, 2012). Timothy D. Taylor's work on music, branding and commercials provides a critical perspective on the

[44] Completing the closed circuitry of corporate symbiosis, Saadhak, a self described "Sufi rock band" were the 2009 winners of the MTV show "Kurkure Desi Beats Rock On."
[45] The word *maal* is also Hindi slang for marijuana.

interpenetrations between music and advertising – a subject that is often addressed in journals of marketing research that discuss the efficacy of particular music in advertisements or the role of branding in within cultural organizations (for example see Kellaris and Cox 1989; O'Reilly 2005; Leenders 2010). Taylor contends that

> [T]here is no longer a significant distinction to be made between ''commercial culture'' and ''culture'' it is virtually the same, increasingly driven by the omnivorous advertising and marketing industry (Taylor 2009:406).

This claim is especially persuasive in relation to popular music where mediation and commercialization have been an integral part of the lifecycle of popular song since the songs of Tin Pan Alley. As Taylor observes, however, in the early twenty-first century, advertising has begun to overlap so significantly with the production of popular music that the fields often cannot be functionally separated.[46] Popular musicians gain financial remuneration from having their music in commercials, and commercials and brands benefit from the inclusion of hip music. The efficacy of this musical and advertising symbiosis is increasingly apparent: Leslie M. Meier notes that "corporations have taken an increasing interest in the roles that affect and sentiment play in building brands." Popular music, which Meier correctly describes as "arguably the most affect-laden and portable of cultural products" is used, she suggests, to "enhance these emotion-based qualities" (Meier 2011:400). The mutual signification and implication between advertising and popular music seems to loop continuously: Bethany Klein draws from Richard Middleton (2000) to argue that popular music adheres "layers of meaning" construed in and through the interplay of multiple recontextualizations, and that its

[46] As examples of these types of mergers, Taylor points out Sting's Jaguar commercial, the use of a Phil Collins song for Toyota Avalon, Céline Dion's partnership with DaimlerChrysler, R and B singer Mÿa's "Real Compared to What" Coca-Cola commercial and the Sprite Remix campaign that featured various hip hop artists (Taylor 2009).

increasing imbrication with advertising renders the commercial text an important locus of signification for popular music (Klein 2009).

For Klein, the meanings produced by the interpenetrations of popular music and advertising rely a priori on what Fiske describes as the "polysemic openness of popular texts" (Fiske 1989:30), and it is here that we might find some insight into the meaning of the musical yet non-sounded signs functioning in the Indian rock culture. Taylor points out that "[i]n today's landscape of an endless array of commodities and the sign-values, signs do not simply float about in space: they are organized by how particular social groups use them" (Taylor 2009:420). Taylor theorizes popular music and advertising in relation to a reevaluation of Bourdieu's theories of cultural capital in which it is not high art that occupies the top of the cultural food chain, but rather, the "trendy": as Taylor writes: "[t]he yardstick by which taste is measured is now more likely to be knowledge of trendy than knowledge of high art" (Taylor 2009:421).

The rock commodity-symbols under discussion here are mobilized towards and about a young, urban, middle class audience, and the complex of signs and symbols that make up this body of commodity-signs are implicated, I argue in the emergent construction of "the trendy" – implicated in the construction of a category of Indian "hipness." The complex of fashion, image, plot, and sound in these commercials and marketing events paint a two dimensional portrait of the modern Indian rock fan or musician: young, male, middle class, with a degree of disposable income and a familiarity with and appreciation of global youth culture forms like rock and roll – the ideal consumer for post-liberalization India. With a touch of the counter-culture mythos, albeit defanged, (as in the Kotek commercial), in these images rock music seems to be a

useful signifier for advertisers to reference when they want to signal a desirable type of young, hip consumer. Playing but a minor role in the vast repertory of images that make up the world of Indian television commercial symbolism, these rock music signs nonetheless offer brief moments of insight into the modes by which brand identities utilize rock symbolism in the mobilization of the gendered cosmopolitan consumer.

Sponsoring and branding the rock show: the Levis "music initiative" and Nokia Independence Rock

Commercials and advertisements like the ones described above represent discursive and visual aspects of the rock music-branding conjunction, sketching a picture of how the signs of rock culture and its material goods are enjambed with other commodity-signs. The following section focuses on shows that are staged with corporate support, a relationship that ranges from moderate involvement, such as donating money and having a visible brands or signs present at the staging of a show, to more involved, as with mounting a series of performances or recording sessions that are paid for by corporate underwriters or organized as part of a larger marketing campaign. Throughout my time in Bangalore and Mumbai, there were numerous examples of these types of events, too numerous even to list here, but some of the more publicized shows included the Levi's Freedom Jam music festival and the competition Nokia Nseries Independence Rock in 2007; and from 2009 to 2011 the Harley Davidson Rock Riders show, Seagram's Fuel Great Indian Rock Festival, Bacardi NH7 Weekender festival, Ray-Ban Never Hide Sounds, Jack Daniel's Rock Awards competition, and Hard Rock Rising Rock competition, among many others. The considerable extent to which corporate sponsorship enables Indian rock performance is matched by the verbalized and demonstrated feeling

by many scene members that such branding is not only a positive and fruitful cooperation, but that it represents a natural affinity between brands and audiences. Although not all musicians feel completely positive in regards to corporate branding (as chapter seven will describe), the extent to which corporate support has enabled the scene to continue and expand is widely considered to be a beneficial dynamic.



Figure 4.11: Billboard for Levis Freedom Jam on 100 foot road, Indiranagar, Bangalore (author photo).

To explore the relationship between musical performance and corporate sponsorship in greater detail, the following section focuses on Levis, a brand that has a long history with rock sponsorship in India, and draws from my own interviews with people involved with the Levi's "music initiative," the marketing campaign designed for implementation at rock music performances (Thomas 2010). During my fieldwork in 2007 a billboard outside my window advertised the "Levis Freedom Jam," a concert ostensibly held to honor Indian independence day. Intrigued by the show and its branding (I had already attended several other Bangalore rock shows and was beginning to

recognize the vital role played by corporate sponsorship in the scene) I set out to see what I could discover about the Freedom Jam and soon was having curd rice in a spotless apartment with one of the festival's founders, vina player Geetha Navali. From our conversation I gained some insight into how corporate sponsors were viewed by show organizers and promoters; three years later I would meet and interview Naveen Thomas, a Bangalore rock musician and former marketer for Levis who had been part of the company's marketing initiative that was responsible for sponsoring Freedom Jam. From these two sources I was afforded a glimpse into the processes by which corporate sponsorship of rock in Bangalore takes place, how it helps or hinders the scene, as well as the motivations for such sponsorships on the part of the corporate underwriters.

Levis has a storied history in the Indian marketplace. In 1994 the brand was preparing to launch their product in India where, according to market research, they already had "enormous awareness and equity," despite being available only through "informal channels" (Mazzarella 2005:268). Foreign denim brands Wrangler and Pepe had been sold and marketed in India before 1991, and Wrangler, drawing on its equity as a foreign product, had been priced at twice the cost of the locally produced Flying Machine jeans. Levis, following Wrangler, was not only going to be expensive, but their marketing was also exclusive in that the jeans were only to be available in a select number of outlets. In the 1990s when MNCs were attempting to first penetrate the Indian marketplace there were substantial internal tensions around the marketing of foreign luxury brands. Many MNCs were considered to be vastly overestimating the buying power of the oft-cited 200 million strong middle classes. Localization, however, while a necessary response to entering a new marketplace, was also feared as a process that

diluted brand value. As Mazzarella's research in the 1990s Indian advertising industry has demonstrated (Mazzarella 2005), Levis' advertising strategy when it formally entered the Indian market in 1994 was predicated on the expectation of aspirational consumption, and the enhanced equity of Levis "depended on the brand maintaining a certain degree of exclusivity and difference" (Mazzarella 2005:267). Thus Mazzarella quotes an ad executive who states:

> Look at Levis! What do they do? There's a person who's familiar with Levi's and who is buying what Levi's stands for. Which is not just the fabric and that thing, it is the *magical aura around the brand.* That is what I am really paying the premium for […] That Levi's magic is what the brand stands for in America. (Quoted in Mazzarella 2005:269)



Figure 4.12 Levis advertisement in the Rock Street Journal 1998

Mazzarella suggests that the value of the Levis brand in India is not "what it stands for in America" but rather "the way in which the brand stands *for* America" (20005:269).

Levi's had begun marketing to rock music fans soon after their arrival 1990s. In the1990s, the company's cross-platform music initiative began sponsoring RSJ's annual

festival Great Indian Rock, in which Levis paid for much of the festival costs as well paying for bands' transportation from around the country (Saigal 2010).[47] According to Naveen Thomas, Levis had made the decision that rock musicians and fans "were the people who they wanted to wear their clothes," (Thomas 2010) and festivals like Great Indian Rock gave the brand access to that demographic, a group who – before extensive Internet penetration into the country – were still highly invested in attending live shows (Thomas 2010). As Naveen put it: "Youth in college at that point in time, '98,'99, was not the Internet. It was college and college based music festivals" (Thomas 2010) and so how Levis insinuated themselves into rock music performance spaces was very straight-forward:

> In a college fest I would just go in for the music – handle the band cost and give you a product. Fests are very special to college students, so I take care of the music and the college tee shirts. So I want to always have a constant presence in their lives. But also I tie up with the really big events, DNA [large Bangalore production and marketing company] bringing international artists down so we can do also do merchandising for that (Thomas 2010).

Curious as to the extent to which Levis products were integrated into the experience of the show I questioned Naveen about the particulars of brand involvement at a show, and he said that in fact his own classic rock band, Galeej Gurus, regularly wore Levis clothes at Levis sponsored events. At the Freedom Jam and Great Indian Rock Levis would instantiate the brand through different modes and practices:

> I want to have visuals of the Levis brand, my logo. I want to try and get the band to dress up in Levis apparel. This gives people a sense of 'I wish I was there onstage and if I was up there I want to be dressed in that (Thomas 2010).

[47] Levis' rock music marketing initiative at this time also included sponsorship of the American band No Doubt in their first and only Indian tour in 1997 (at the height of lead singer Gwen Stefani's henna and bindi-wearing phase).

In his capacity as a marketer Naveen also described how his goal was to motivate consumers to stay involved with Levis beyond the space of the show:

> I try and create an activity at these events, like give out passes: everybody gets, say a hundred bucks, two hundred bucks off at the Levis store. If I look at the rate of redemption, for every hundred tickets I give out thirty will be kept by the guys. Seventy will let that ticket go. Out of these thirty guys maybe ten guys will bother to check it out, out of which three guys will actually buy. So for me, I've given twenty-thousand off as a whole, but all that gets activated is 600 bucks. But what does it create? It creates an entire platform: if I want to go and buy stuff at Levis I have 200 bucks off…I have to buy a pair of jeans now, I have a Levis voucher, so…what it does is it keeps Levis on the top of their minds constantly (Thomas 2010).

In sponsoring Great Indian Rock and RSJ Levis was maintaining its "aspirational" focus, marketing to a cosmopolitan segment of English-educated youth for whom, it was assumed, an interest in western music would be a natural flow into an interest in Western brands – particularly those like Levis that already were associated with youth and popular culture formations around the world. For musicians and local Bangaloreans attempting to put on festivals branding held great financial appeal, as the story of the Levis' Freedom Jam music festival attests to.

By 2004 husband and wife Gopal and Geetha Navali had been producing weekly Sunday Jams and the annual Freedom Jam rock festival in Bangalore for seven years. As Geetha described, Sunday Jams had emerged organically out of an older jam session in the city, a weekly gathering of musicians in Bangalore's Cubbon Park that had met periodically over the past decades but that in the 1990s had been shut down by police on suspicion of drug use (Tambe 2010). The Freedom Jam, first held on the 50th anniversary of Indian independence was a laid-back affair, free for audiences and open to any band who registered. The weekly show and the annual festival (tag line: "free jam – no bread") expanded to Chennai and Pondicherry, and the Navalis, with some help, kept all three

afloat out of their own pockets (Navali 2007). Limping along financially for several years, when Levis offered their sponsorship in 2004 it was providential timing. As Geetha described it: "corporates came in and decided 'these people [i.e. the rock fans and musicians] fit our brand," (Navali 2007) a process both overt and relatively transparent. Levis took no role whatsoever in the musical or artistic aspect of the Sunday Jam; what they did do however, was pay for the venue, the stage, the janitors, the permissions necessary for the festival, and the sound system. Naveen described the Sunday Jam as part of a "grassroots initiative" for Levis, where "month to month, I have a touch-point with a consumer or a potential consumer, which also promotes a young person to come up and express themselves through music" (Thomas 2010).

With Levis' sponsorship from 1997 to 2007 The Freedom Jam became an institution in Bangalore's rock scene, but in 2007, due to financial constraints, the brand pulled out of the partnership, and Freedom Jam was forced to take a hiatus, returning in a smaller setting outside Bangalore in 2012. The motivations that brought Levis into partnering with rock music were not persuasive enough to maintain the music initiative in the face of a global recession. In addition to financial considerations, in the decade that Levis had been involved with rock music, advertisers had recognized that MNCs that did not sufficiently localize (no matter their aspirational equity) were not going to succeed in the Indian middle class market – a group of people for whom English language rock music was not necessarily significant or aspirational. By the time the recession hit, necessitating a limited marketing budget on the part of Levis, the brand had pulled out of Freedom Jam and focused their attention on the real money-making mass media of India: Bollywood. Making appearances at the Lakme fashion week with brand sponsors like

Shushmita Sen and Akshay Kumar appearing in their clothes, Levis was not letting go of their aspirational, premium brand identity but was transforming it to reach a broader audience.

"I Am Nokia Independence Rock"

While the Levis music initiative is illustrative of some of the practical elements of rock music sponsorship, the following vignette engages with one sponsored performance (the Independence Rock competition, sponsored by mobile company Nokia Nseries), making a close interpretation of the advertisement's discursive permutations and significance, and bringing together the themes that this chapter has discussed.

In August of 2007, at the end of my first trip to Bangalore, I took an autorickshaw through the rain to attend the "Nokia Nseries Independence Rock Band Competition" being held at Le Rock Club on Church Street in the commercial center of the city. One of two bars in town owned by garrulous middle-aged guitarist Ashish Kothare, Le Rock Club was in full swing by six in the evening in deference to Bangalore's recently instituted nine pm live music curfew. When I arrived the band Afterburn was half way through their set and their stentorian death metal rumbled from the club's speakers while the audience head-banged on the small dance floor. Two professional cameramen filmed the performance and the competition's judges took notes and thanked the show's sponsors (Nokia, Coke, and the Times of India) after each song.

I sat with some friends in a booth on the club's upstairs level, surrounded by televisions that were simul-casting the band's performance. Young jeans-clad women in matching Nokia tee-shirts went from table to table inviting patrons to follow them to a corner of the club where a kind of live-action advertising ritual was taking place: on a

little makeshift stage stood a life-size cardboard cutout of a shirtless man, headless, wearing a peace symbol necklace, an electric guitar slung around his shoulders and his arms outstretched as if basking in waves of adulation coming from an invisible crowd. His purpose soon became clear as, persuaded by the young women, several patrons lined up to place their heads atop the cardboard rock hero and get their souvenir photos of the Nokia Independence Rock competition. This pre-fab rock idol was a striking avatar. He appeared not only as a headless figure but also in posters all over the club, albeit with head attached and thrown back (as if in ecstasy) and I read and re-read his slogan: "Others worship Icons. I discover them. I am Nokia Nseries Independence Rock." His advertisement text intriguingly conflated subject position, consumer product, and musical event, all couched in a familiar discourse of rock music rebellion and rock hero idolatry.

Nokia, sponsoring a rock music competition, was directing this advertisement at certain subjects with characteristics that the advertisement's functionality depended on: speaking English, involved in rock music, and with the disposable income to buy overpriced drinks or perhaps specialty cell phones. Nokia was, however, also apellating its subjects in the voice of its own rock icon figure, in the process articulating a particular kind of subject as its ideal audience member. A sketch of this subject might be drawn from the themes emergent in the advertisement's text and image: "Others worship Icons. I discover them," evokes an individualist (even perhaps an entrepreneur) and obliquely signals a kind of rock music rebellion in the form of a generalized unthreatening iconoclasm. The subject does not "worship Icons" (in this case these might be gods, luxury goods or rock stars); rather, he "discovers" new icons, the action of a subject who goes against the herd – a construction that evokes capitalist-democratic ideologies of

freedom and individuality. In the invocation of "discovery" within the text of an advertisement for a cell phone there is also the implicit definition of freedom as a consumer right – a process within which lifestyle and even personality is defined through consumer purchases. This "I," then, is a neoliberal subject "discovering" an icon in a sea of commodities and defining his positionality via this choice – but the "I" in the ad text is also a luxury product (a cell phone), a slippage made explicit in the line "I am Nokia Nseries…"; and this "I" is also the "independent" consumer and proud global Indian citizen (the Independence Rock festival was nominally an Indian Independence day celebration); and finally this "I" is a rock musician – a mediated, stylized "rock" music figure representative of a valorized globalized Indian masculinity.

Conclusions

Happening side by side with and even overshadowing Afterburn's death metal performance the Nokia advertisement and indeed the whole scenario seemed to encompass the peculiar leviathan of live performance, mediation, and commodity symbolism that form a network of meaning for rock music production in Bangalore. The Nokia rock idol is a figure so overdetermined that he seems destined to collapse under the weight of his signifiers, reduced back to a cardboard cutout to be shoved in a corner, with nothing to say about the performance and production of rock music like that being played in the background by Afterburn. Throughout the following chapters of this dissertation the case studies and analyses of rock media and musical performance and the accounts of subject's music-making practices press up against this overdetermined figure, an advertisement object-subject whose dimensions (fuzzily) frame, unable to fully contain, the subjects who animate the accounts in this study. Nevertheless, as this chapter has

demonstrated, this is also a figure who must be taken into account, who must be "listened to" for the information he delivers about the imbrication of consumer and musical practices.

Despite the recession, corporate sponsorship of rock, film and non-film music continues apace in India, with ever more sophisticated initiatives between global brands and various genres of music. Some of these new initiatives are broadly cross-platform, involving television, social media, music and branding**.** The mediations of corporate sponsor are in part pragmatic: these case studies have given a glimpse into how performance opportunities for rock musicians are increasingly tied up with corporate sponsorship and thus embedded in a system of consumer symbolism first emergent in Indian public culture in the 1990s. What this chapter has tried to demonstrate is how the emergent ideologies within advertising discourses link modernity, consumerism, and rock music in a network of symbolic value that emplaces musical participants as proper consumer-subjects of global capitalism.

In his ethnographic work on advertising companies in India (Mazzarella 2005) Mazzarella describes a process of "globalizing consumerism" in which consumer good markets and their advertisements and brands have ideological and socially re-configuring effects; in his fieldwork in an Indian ad agency Mazzarella describes how, via the marketing and domesticating of "difference," multinational corporations commodify images of the Indian consumer, images that are then fed back to those consumers as mediated self-images, but which can not fully encompass subject positions which they mediate. For Mazzarella this insight into the instability of the commodity image offers a space in which to critique Baudrillard's vision of the symbolic system of commodity-

signs, a position that Mazzarella notes is uncomfortably close to the vision of the world that advertisers take themselves, "quasi-totemistically" relating social groups or demographics to brands and to goods.

Following from Mazzarella's critique, this research suggests that the branding practices at work in Indian rock music imply and evoke images against which participants read and understand their own musical experiences as symbolically related to the practices of consumption. Stories like the ones in this chapter, in which musicians market themselves like products and brands infiltrate the practices and performances of a musical culture suggest that conceptualizing the confluence of branding and music as mere symbolic proximity does not adequately address its implications. The logic of branding, so prevalent in Indian public culture, and so intertwined with the practices of Indian rock also inflects the narratives that subjects tell about their own involvement in the rock music scene and, indeed, even how they consider their own musical output.

CHAPTER FIVE

PROCESSES OF ADAPTATION IN

INDIAN ROCK MUSIC MEDIA 1990-2010

Among Bangalore's rock music participants a barometer of the quality of one's fandom was a 2009 Hindi film *Rock On!!* about the travails of a rock band, scored by the music production team Eshaan Shankar and Loy in a "classic rock" style. Mocked by savvy rock musicians, to show enjoyment of the film was to demonstrate that your fandom of rock music was unserious or uneducated – appreciation of the music from *Rock On!!* in this context was not just a musical distinction but a social one: as one blogger I knew put it, "it's rock music for the masses" (Ravi 2010). A similar measure was the television show *Kurkure Desi Beats Rock On*[48] on MTV, which the hip Indian music website Indiecision described as "cringe-inducing," and "a travesty" (Kakodkar 2010). The show was criticized among rock musicians as pandering to film music styles and audiences and as having nothing to do with the on-the-ground practices of Indian rock.[49]

These examples are not unique. In the past twenty years rock musicians have defined their fandom, musical knowledge, and the dimensions of the rock culture in and through various print media, television, film (and in the last eight or nine years on the internet) in opposition to film and in an attempt to define a sphere of popular music practice that is not just a subgenre of film music. In addition to enabling the

[48] This unwieldy title combines the name of the show's sponsor, snack-food company Kurkure, with the company's ad campaign tagline, "desi beats."

[49] This is somewhat disingenuous, as many rock musicians in the Indian scene go on to be involved in film music, and thus many film musicians and producers today are former rock band musicians

dissemination of popular and rock music's material culture, media channels arguably produce a supra-musical field of discourse in which ideas about music circulate: classifications of genre, ideologies of taste and style like those seen in the distinctions between film and rock music, along with textual and visual iconography and expressive gestures. What the complaints and critiques mentioned here exemplify, as this chapter will demonstrate, is the hierarchical nature of the field of rock media in which subjects make claims to social distinction through (musical) taste. Embedded in the more general transformations taking place in Indian public culture in the past two decades, rock music media – both the grassroots[50] and the commercial is a multitudinous, diverse, and shifting field that is fundamentally shaped in and through the interface of local dynamics and transnational flows, dimensions and circulations formative to the hierarchies of taste to be found in its discourses.

In the processes of change and adaptation that have taken place over the last two decades within Indian rock music media, the claims to distinction in Indian rock have been animated by a longstanding debates about what Indian rock should sound like and why. As chapter two addressed, transnational media has played a constitutive role in the introduction and circulation of rock music in India, a fact that has contributed to accusations, put forward from some corners, that Indian rock is just "aping the west" (Darshan 2010). Such concerns are partially responsible for the constant calls in the rock scene to "be original," an exhortation that masks a variety of other demands that are themselves situated in a complicated cultural politics. Rather than rehearsing the cultural imperialism thesis or validating the local as automatically culturally legitimate, this chapter describes how mediated ideas and discourses about what constitutes acceptably

[50] Including fan websites, blogs and message boards

"Indian" rock sounds are embedded in a Bourdieusian field of cultural production that spans the local, national and transnational with mandates that negotiate this complex spatiality in a variety of ways and with a variety of outcomes. Johnson describes Bourdieu's field of cultural production as "radical contextualization":

> It takes into consideration not only works themselves, seen relationally within the space of available possibilities and within the historical development of such possibilities, but also producers of works in terms of their strategies and trajectories, based on their individual and class habitus, as well as their objective position within the field. (Johnson 1993:9)

To cast the field of Indian rock media as a field of cultural production, then, is to recognize that actors' position-takings, their musical productions and discursive reckonings make claims to forms of symbolic and cultural capitol within a framework of cultural authenticity. Indian rock music media is a contested field in which the idea of cultural "grey-out" is still feared, and this fear is expressed in a variety of pronouncements and directives by writers, musicians and industry functionaries. The terms of this debate are complicated by the fact that in rock music the onus to "sound Indian" or to display locality is in no way self-evident but comes together through a complicated cultural, linguistic and class politics with subject positions that are regionally contingent, multiply constituted and in flux.

This historical and ethnographic data comes from the time period between 1990 and 2010, a twenty-year span encompassing several phases of India's economic liberalization and a period when many of my interlocutors in this research were children, teenagers or unmarried young people. In order to assess the processes of change within this time period this chapter explores and analyzes content from five specific texts within the four larger categories of print, music television, film, and social media, including the

magazine Rock Street Journal and the influential Indian rock website NH7. As the forms of media here operate in different modalities, this chapter uses textual and historical analysis and ethnography to approach various instances of media production.

These investigations into the mediated field of rock music are not simply about representation and power, but about subject's reflexive understandings of their own positionality in relation to media texts. As Purnima Mankekar asks:

> What spaces do transnational texts create for resistance, subversion, or appropriation through the production of desire, fantasy, and imagination? How do viewers' interpretations of these texts articulate with their social relationships? (Mankekar 1999:350)

From the following examples emerge a picture of how the national and transnational texts of Indian rock music media enable the genre's continued survival; shapes its meanings in public culture; and allows its participants to re-imagine to their positionality and subjectivity through an expressive form – a form well-suited, as this chapter will show, to new articulations of globalized nationalism.

The Rock Street Journal: forming a community of Indian rock fans

In the 1960s and 1970s, *The Junior Statesman* magazine published articles about western rock music and youth culture topics, its audience an elite population of urban youth. It was not until 1993, however, with the introduction of the *Rock Street Journal* (RSJ) that there was a magazine in India devoted solely to the performance and fandom of rock music in the country. I had heard mention of RSJ on numerous occasions from older musicians in the scene for whom the magazine had been a source of information and community predating the instantaneous information feed of the Internet. Though there are archives of RSJ in New Delhi, I was fortunate, late in my fieldwork, to meet

Rajesh Mehar, a musician and journalist in Bangalore who had in his possession eight year's worth of bound copies of the magazine that he lent to me. These bound copies that Rajesh had bought and lovingly saved over the decades provided diverse sources of information: not just accounts of popular international bands and albums, but how those bands were received in India; editorials by the magazine's founder, Amit Saigal, that raised issues that were being debated in the early years of the Indian scene; descriptions of festivals and performances of local rock music; and – intriguingly – classifieds and letters to the editors that were a window into the concerns and voices of the young men who were involved with rock music.

Before reading through the magazine's archives, I met with Amit Saigal in a large outdoor café in a luxury mall in the center of Bangalore. Saigal, with a long ponytail of grey hair, tee shirt and jeans, was opinionated about the scene and candid in describing the magazine's beginnings to me, recounting how as a young man he had played in a band but was frustrated with the lack of performance opportunities and the preponderance of cover songs in the scene. In response to this frustration, he had begun writing "a little journal":

> I had a printing press, my family had a printing press, and finally I put together this journal in black and white, I wrote all the articles and…printed two and a half thousand copies and took it to a few college festivals to try to sell it and get a few subscriptions (Saigal 2010).

As Saigal gave copies of RSJ to a network of musician friends in various cities the magazine began to gain traction with rock fans. Though the magazine got only a few subscriptions at first, Saigal found a distributor and as the magazine circulated, he began receiving letters from around the country from young people "really excited that something like this had come out" (Saigal 2010). Despite the enthusiastic response of

fans, in its early years the magazine's main source of income was from foreign advertisers like Levis, Pepsi, and MTV (as was discussed in chapter three); not a financially lucrative endeavor, Saigal's goal for the magazine was instead to create "a platform to communicate to people into this music. There was nothing before RSJ that existed that brought the community together" (Saigal 2010).

Saigal's efforts created a discursive arena for fans and musicians that would demarcate the dimensions of the Indian rock scene in the 1990s. Throughout the magazine's editorials, in many of the features and in letters to the editor there are two streams of discussion that emerge repeatedly: one about the minutiae of various international rock band and genre definition, the other in which writers and other cultural intermediaries debated the local scene's sounds and directions. Saigal's editorials reached a small but attentive audience, and his comments provide a valuable on-the-ground view of the rock scene at a time when transnational satellite television conglomerates were likewise debating the possible reach and profitability of rock music in India via organs such as MTV. Saigal, attuned to these developments, wrote in March 1996 of "a 'battle for the eyeballs' between well entrenched Channel V and an equally determined MTV" (Saigal 1996c). Debating the role of the music channels Saigal suggests that "there is no denying the fact that the video music channels have considerably increased the size of the music market" and that "the market for international music is…fueled…by the demand generated through the music video channels" (Saigal 1996a); however, he also decries those video channels for "converting us into couch potatoes," as part of a larger trend of increased satellite television and the intensification of consumer culture. In that vein, he writes that "the world seems to have gone mad – everyone's on a permanent shopping

spree" (Saigal 1995b). It becomes apparent as Saigal is writing through 1995 and 1996 is that his assessment of the how the Indian rock scene fits into the larger public culture presents an oppositional binary in which, on the one hand, media and globalization are a negative didactic force that nonetheless enable the spread of international music; on the other, that he thinks that there is a more organic, pluralistic and grassroots way in which rock music fandom "naturally" spreads: "as far as discovering amazing bands like Phish…one still has to turn to the old reliable source—the network of friends [who are] into music" (Saigal 1996a). Presciently, he writes in 1996 that "in the future" perhaps television "will be taken over by the personal computer and its global networking possibilities," and that perhaps "new technology will revert the monopolistic nature of the TV channels and their collusion with the record industry" (Saigal 1996a).

While Saigal's editorials make considered analyses about the relationship between western media and Indian rock tastes, the magazine's annual Reader's Poll was a more pragmatic, even overdetermined exercise. The genres and artists listed in the 1994 Reader's Poll[51] represented only a small portion of the popular music being produced in the west and presents a snapshot of the tastes of Indian rock fans, with Pantera winning best thrash metal band[52] and Pink Floyd's "Division Bell" wining album of the year. Meanwhile Nirvana (whose blockbuster and critically adored "Nevermind" had come out the year earlier) was voted second-to-worst band of the year. In an editorial from February 1995 Saigal writes about how the results of the RSJ reader's poll differed from

[51] Genres included rock, thrash/speed metal, heavy metal, alternative, rock, blues, reggae, pop, and rap/hip-hop.

[52] The separation of heavy metal and speed metal reflect the seriousness with which fans were thinking of these genre distinctions in India (these two genres being extremely popular in India at the time); meanwhile in the rap and hip-hop poll, the first person on the list of choices, Dr. Alban, was voted most popular over Dr. Dre and Snoop Dog, bigger artists with much more critical credibility—leading to the suspicion, as Saigal mentioned in our interview, that perhaps readers simply voted for the first name on the list.

the results of the American Rolling Stone reader's poll of the same year, observing that "while some artists might be globally No. 1, others, like Pink Floyd, Eric Clapton, and Iron Maiden hold a unique position in India" (Saigal 1995a). Saigal ascribes this difference to several factors, contending that the RSJ reader's poll "reflects an Indian outlook…as opposed to an American or European representation that is often thrust upon us via various global media" (Saigal 1995a) Noting that that the Indian and American disparity in tastes results in part from "exposure to new bands and music (band tours, fanzines, radio-play, corporate-backed merchandising, etc)" Saigal finally resorts to a culturally essentialist explanation of why western and Indian tastes differ:

> …there is no denying the fact that the unique Indian psyche is a potent force as well…In a very simple analysis, we seem to have a penchant for 'deeper,' more complex music (Pink Floyd, Iron Maiden, Doors) and can identify more strongly with certain rhythms and instruments that feel close to home (Jethro Tull's flute, Santana's Latin rhythms…) (Saigal 1995a)

That particular rhythms, styles and instrumentation might resonate with listeners is possible, even probable, but readers of RSJ did not often articulate their tastes in those ways. In my interviews with musicians, one of the topics we often discussed was musical influences and why Indian rock had taken the musical directions it had. In interviews and casual conversation I often heard about many of the same bands; namely, the British new wave of heavy metal, classic rock bands like the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin, or speed and thrash metal bands Metallica and Pantera. "Alternative" bands were not as popular in India, and grunge, alternative or indie never seemed to be whole-heartedly embraced among the majority of RSJ readers. In some ways this was a matter of accessibility: in the 1990s the large record companies like BMG and EMI, while present in India already, were just beginning to formulate ways to extend the reach of their

behemoth popular music performers to new markets, and thus the Indian market got, as journalist Bryan Richard put it to me "only the biggest and least obscure acts" (Richard 2009) Money-makers Michael Jackson joined Metallica, Mariah Carey and Michael Bolton in the western music market in India, a scene that already had a history of fandom for a variety of other popular artists like classic rock bands Mr. Big and Deep Purple, pop rock vocalist Bryan Adams or disco performer Boney M. This somewhat more obscure pantheon was comprised of acts who for one reason or another had played live shows in India or those that appealed to young fans for reasons like the speed or ferocity of the guitar playing (Iron Maiden, Pantera, Metallica) or the complexity of the music (Pink Floyd, Rush).

The discrepancies in taste that occur in the transnational field of popular music are evident in other rock scenes around the globe: in his work on the Indonesian indie rock scene, Brent Luvaas recounts how his interlocutors described getting the west's popular music "leftovers" (Luvaas 2009); likewise I wondered at the intense popularity in Bangalore of 1980's holdover bands like Mr. Big or Bryan Adams, acts whose peaks had passed but who were still much adored by many rock fans in India. More than simply a difference of aesthetic opinion, the idea of the pop culture "leftover" has deeper theoretical implications in regards to the spatiality and temporality of cultural globalization processes; furthermore, this difference in popular influences and – thus the emergent sounds of Indian rock – has had lasting ramifications for Indian musicians who attempt to gain access to an international field of popular music in which "influences" partially comprise the logic for style, marketing, and fandom.

RSJ's readers and rock fans

While the editorials and features of RSJ debated larger questions about how the rock scene was developing, in the magazine's columns and letters to the editor readers and fans contributed their own ideas about the scene's dimensions and directions. Discourse that in later decades would be found on message boards and in the comment sections of blogs and websites, in the early 1990s RSJ readers debated the worth of various artists and genres, as well as aired their grievances, and in these writings the scene's subjects begin to take shape. Not merely historical flotsam, these amateur writings (and in addition to letters and classifieds many of the articles were written by young people or amateur journalists) reveal the writers' sincere investments in this small community, in which questions about genre or style, in flux and settling into particular forms, were considered as seriously as were developments in the rock scene at large. Cultural theory has long since problematized the idea of the passive consumer of popular music, instead observing the imaginative, discriminating practices of listeners whose "affective investments" (Grossberg 1992) in music comprise a community with shared values and interests. Keith Negus, discussing the work of Lisa Lewis (Lewis 1992), writes that "Lewis suggests that fans create communities with a collective shared sense of identity that is built around their appreciation of a particular performer" (Negus 1997:26).

The imaginative listener, deeply invested in the meanings or pleasures of his particular types of music, is highly motivated to not only consume media but also to debate and define his fandom in relation to the fandom of others. In Indian rock in the 1990s, then, a community was forming not just around particular artists but around the rock genre as a whole, and thus circulated ideas about what it meant to be a rock

musician or fan: Pinku, from Guwahali, wrote in to say that "People seem to forget that rock n' roll is not just another kind of music but a way of life" (Pinku 1996) while Raj, also from Guwahali, agreed with this sentiment, writing that "guys nowadays are into rock music just for the sake of it. They are fascinated by the sex and the glamour of it, rather than the music" (Raj 1995).

As MTV was propagating the images and ideologies of rock as an aspirational lifestyle, attempting to attract audiences by importing western rock and all its accoutrements, RSJ's rock fans were making emotional investments that articulated with but overflowed mere consumer aspiration. Rhetorical excess notwithstanding (and letters to the editor in the rock press are ipso facto replete with rhetorical excess) within RSJ's letters to the editor are clues into the type of role that rock music was beginning to play in fans' lives and life choices. The death of Kurt Cobain, for example, provoked an outpouring of letters, in one, Biplav, from Kathmandu (in response to a tribute by staff writer Rahul Tewari) wrote "Rahul, thanx for writing about my friend of misery Kurt Cobain who used to feel the same pain like mine" (Biplav1995). Similarly Kanwar, from New Delhi, wrote to the magazine in 2002 to request more coverage of the band Korn: "I think their first album definitely deserved a mention. It literally changed the way I look towards life" (Kanwar 2002).

RSJ's readers held their strongest opinions in relation to genre, with constant exhortations to separate rock and pop: Vishal wrote in to request "I'd like you not to include any pop stuff;" (Vishal 1996) from Mrinmoy, "RSJ Rocks, pop Sucks;"(Mrinmoy 2001) and from an A. Huten, "Please shoot those pop things off your magazine" (Huten 2002). These types of letters can be found in the 2001 and 2002 issues particularly, when

the magazine tried to broaden its focus by including a variety of international pop and film stars like Mariah Carey and Halle Berry, for example. As a niche music in the wholly film-music dominated field of Indian popular music, rock in the mid 1990s had been on the decline on the music television channels (as the next section of this chapter will detail). In rock music corners, however, this "Indianization" of MTV was neither welcomed nor appreciated. Instead it appeared to strengthen fans' dislike for anything perceived as "pop," whether Hindi film music or Mariah Carey. Buttressing this genre divide was the persistent idea that the most valuable music and the only valid artists were those who wrote and performed their own music, thereby discounting whole swaths of musical output from Britney Spears to Lata Mangeshkar.

RSJ's brief foray into pop coverage, however, was short-lived. By the late nineteen-nineties the magazine's content had shifted to focus increasingly on Indian rock bands. Previously found in the magazine's show listings and special festival coverage, there started to be features written about the bands who were making it "big," winning the college festivals and sponsored festivals that comprised the performance opportunities in the scene. Compilation tapes from the RSJ-sponsored Great Indian Rock Festival were sold along with the magazine and featured different genres of music. Controversial in this respect was the "fusion" music from bands like Indian Ocean, who sang in Hindi and used Indian instruments along with guitar and drum set. One reader (expressing a sentiment that would still be alive and well 15 years later) complained about the inclusion of fusion music in a rock mix tape Saigal released with one issue:

> Thanks a lot for the marvelous issue and an equally good cassette. But the compilation tape was not flawless. Though the numbers by Orange Street, Gravy Train, Blud and Great Society were of international class, it was apparent that just because Indus Creed found success by using Indian instruments other bands are

> following suit – but resulting in some dull music. It was strange that you included a Nepali folk song on a so-called 'rock' album. (Mayurath 1995)

Encapsulated in this comment is one of the driving themes that runs through a majority of the Indian rock media of the past twenty years and which continues to motivate discussion in the scene; namely, what is "Indian" in our music? And how should such a thing be measured? While such questions were continuing to be debated during my fieldwork in 2010, the forums for those debates had changed markedly. With the coming of the Internet the arena for debate over the dimensions of the rock scene expanded exponentially. By 2003 RSJ had transitioned into an online-only format, only one in a plethora of online platforms for rock music. With the Internet also came a change in the role of the music writer or editor as cultural-gatekeeper, a role that Saigal had played so sensitively for more almost two decades.

MTV India: making an Indian rock band

From its launch in India in 1991 to its withdrawal from the Indian market in 1995 and reintroduction in late 1996 after extensive "localization" of its content, MTV has been a symbol of the complicated trajectory of transnational English-language media in Indian public culture in the first decade of liberalization. A juggernaut cultural force and arguably one of the most potent dynamics in the globalization of youth culture, MTV's history in India has been the focus of much critical work that examines both the economics and the cultural politics of the channels' content and programming (Banks 1997; Page and Crawley 2001; Cullity 2002; Juluri 2003). Page and Crawley make a comprehensive overview of the introduction and reception of MTV's programming throughout India, observing that

> [S]atellite television is thrusting the commercial face of western industrial civilization into almost every metropolitan household and helping create a new global middle class ethos that affects far larger numbers of people. (Page and Crawley 2001:149)

The industry transactions that took place in the early 1990s demonstrate the difficulties which global media conglomerates had trying to assess the interest for international content in the South Asian market.The corporate history of MTV in India is convoluted, with multiple players, mergers, and corporate showdowns of sorts playing out in the company's first five years in the country, and the machinations it was undergoing at this time can be read as part of a larger picture of pop culture globalization, a rich historical juncture that would affect various types of media (including rock media) in India for decades to come.

MTV's introduction to South Asia came in 1990, when the channel's parent company, Viacom, partnered with the Hong Kong-based satellite operator Hutchvision (Banks 1997). Hutchvision's Satellite Television Asian Region Service, known as Star, had a transmission area that covered forty countries and a population of over two billion (Banks 1997). As part of Star Networks, the joint Viacom/Star enterprise MTV Asia commenced broadcast in September 1991, as one of MTV's first global pursuits (Levin 1993). In this early stage the channel simply exported its western programming, and so in the early 1990s rock musicians and fans in India were exposed to the same popular music as their peers in the U.S., including, that year, Vanilla Ice, Madonna, and Sinead O'Conner ("MTV Yearbook" 2006). As Banks observes, however, this programming held little appeal for the mass market that would have made MTV profitable in India (and as RSJ's content demonstrated it was too pop oriented for the rock and metal fans that comprised India's rock music audience). By the end of 1994 the channel's viewership

was in a steep decline for reasons that Jocelyn Cullity, quoting network executive Natasha Malhotra, describes:

> Full-time Western music clearly did not work…and lyrics were perceived as too ideological (Natasha Malhotra, interview by author, 28 July 2000). The graphics were thought to be too numerous and too fast. There was an irreverence, a rebellious quality to the channel that was perceived as too Western. "In India," Malhotra stated, "kids actually respect their parents. It's not cool to disrespect your parents here." (Cullity 2002:412)

MTV's fortunes were rocky by the time that Rupert Murdoch purchased two-thirds of Star TV in 1993 (Banks 1997). MTV's parent company Viacom and Murdoch's Star networks entered re-negotiations over licensing fees and content (Levin 1993) and due in part to disagreements about programming, MTV split from Star in 1994. While MTV regrouped, however, Star TV introduced their competition: a new music channel, Channel [V], which in deference to their Indian audience played Hindi pop songs and featured Indian VJs (Page and Crawley 2001). Star's VJs, and in particular the popular Ruby Bhatia cemented Star's dominance: Bhatia, dressed in jeans and kurtis, switching fluently between Hindi and English, was the perfect globalized yet demonstrably Indian youth culture figure for the fledgling music channel and was soon immensely popular in the Indian market (Cullity 2004). MTV's executives took notice of these developments and re-launched in India in January 1996 with a "much more Indian profile, playing much more Indian film music" (Page and Crawley 2001). Although the channel did not abandon rock music entirely, rock and western popular music only made up about thirty percent of the channel's programming with the other seventy percent Hindi film songs in the prime time slots (Cullity 2004). MTV's strategy was to extensively Indianize not only its sounds but also its images; as Cullity writes:

> Indian VJs with Indian accents replaced foreign VJs. In most cases, producers localized the programming "environment," featuring Indian street scenes with Indian people. MTV India kept its Western format and its focus on youth culture but indigenized it to suit Indian middle-class tastes. (Cullity 2004:98)

RSJ covered the channel's launch party in Bangalore, writing:

> MTV are back and they're here to stay. To make their presence felt Music Television Networks Asia held a star-studded event in Bangalore on Jan 25th to celebrate the return of their 24-hour service in India. MTV's party had Alisha Chenai (of Biddu/Made In India fame), Slash, Bob Geldof, Asha Bhosle. (Saigal 1996b)

The launch party was also the occasion for Peter Jamieson, president of MTV Asia to make a curious analogy about Channel [V]'s popularity on Indian television, saying to the assembled press that 'It's like a soldier returning home to find that someone else has moved in to look after his wife and kids. We want our India back" (Jamieson quoted in Saigal 1996b).



Figure 5.1 Ad in RSJ for re-launched MTV, August 1998

Neocolonialist comments like Jamieson's notwithstanding, the Indian viewing public responded favorably to these changes, while gradually MTV's musical content was overshadowed by the channel's visual and narrative representations. Page and Crawley suggest that in this period MTV became instrumental in the propagation of "global youth culture" but the channel's role in the construction of Indian youth culture formations was arguably a more complicated dynamic. Jocelyn Cullity, whose research on MTV draws from extensive interviews with the channel's executives and workers, suggests that MTV was directed towards the new rich middle class that had supplanted the elite English-speaking upper middle class of earlier periods, a post-liberalization middle class formation that scholars posit as 30 percent of the population (Cullity 2002). Geographically speaking the channel did demonstrably better in cities and in the Northeast tribal states[53] than in the rest of India – a fact that indicates that the global youth culture formations that the channel portrayed were articulating with preexisting social and cultural formations in a variety of ways and along different trajectories of identification.

During my conversation Vivek Darshan, the producer of several shows on MTV India, I was apprised of the taxonomy by which media workers assess the viewing public in terms of "socio-economic class" (described by Darshan as "like a scientific assessment of a scene") via marketing research that posits different groups as A, B, C, or D according to income (A being the highest income level, D the lowest). Curious where rock music fit into this quasi-hierarchy, I questioned Darshan about where Bollywood fit in relation to rock music:

[53] Page and Crawly ascribe this to the region's history of Christianity and the English language (Page and Crawley 2001).

> I don't think middle class - B or C plus - they don't go out and watch something like this or listen to something like this. They're listening to Bollywood. A or B class would listen to rock. A class would mean that his father or the earning member of the family has an English education, can afford an English education for his kid, has a car and has a house and an income of a certain amount. So you categorize it like that. So a lot of channels categorize their viewers as 'Ok this is for B+, A+ this is for A to B, stuff like that. Rock on is B+ onwards. (Darshan 2010)

Although Darshan described these ratings as having to do with income, in actuality they also had to do with education, language as well as regional culture, and the ways that ratings were utilized reflected these distinctions: for example the northeast and Bengal were known to have strong regional rock traditions, so according to Darshan these areas,

> even if they're class D it [rock] is right for there. And in the northeast – the northeast even a cab guy will know his Led Zeppelin track. It's predominantly English speaking (Darshan 2010).

The fight for dominance in the music television market has been cast by both academics and journalists as a battle of local versus western content, with MTV having failed to adequately understand the need for the localization in the Indian market and Star Networks better attuned to the financial potential of airing popular culture programming with recognizably Indian people, sights and sounds. For the rock music scene in India, however, the music channel battles were viewed with some bemusement and with the correct sense that rock musicians or fans were decidedly not Star and MTV's target audience. While the majority of my interlocutors (fifteen years after the music channel wars) claimed not to watch MTV because of its Bollywood content, the significance and influence of the music channels is clear to Indian rock musicians, for whom almost any opportunity to widen their audience was viewed as a positive step.

MTV's Kurkure Desi Beats Rock On

Although focusing the bulk of their programming on Hindi film music videos and reality shows, since 2007 both Channel [V] and MTV have also begun to experiment with reintroducing rock music onto their channels, albeit in the form of making the rock band shows. In 2007 Channel [V] introduced the show *Launchpad*, sponsored by Garnier Fructis and in 2009 MTV produced *Kurkure Desi Beats Rock On*, sponsored by the Kurkure snack company. Although within the rock scene shows like the ones discussed here tend to be viewed with some suspicion and even scorn[54] by rock musicians, it is also recognized that these shows raised the visibility of (something akin to) rock music in Indian popular culture by virtue of their wide dissemination. More significantly, however, the discourses produced in the competitive format of a show like *Kurkure Desi Beats Rock On* present a glimpse into the inner workings of "Indianization," still a motivating force on the music channels fifteen years after MTV's reintroduction. *Launchpad* and *Kurkure Desi Beats Rock On* evince a complex kind of localization – more complicated than simply replacing western rock on MTV with Hindi film songs or switching languages. Conceived of, produced and often hosted by musicians and even members of the rock scene, what happens in these shows is an urge to Indianize rock music itself, to bring this musical form into the Indian popular music fold, so to speak, and thereby broaden its reach beyond its college student audiences – a move that is economically as well as ideologically motivated.

The subject of music-centered reality television has begun to be the focus of ethnomusicologists, who have written about American Idol (Meizel 2007, 2011) and the

[54] Arjun Ravi, editor of the influential rock website Indiecision.com reserved special disapprobation for the promotional ads for MTV's making the band show, which featured film star Kareena Kapoor awkwardly holding an electric guitar.

Eurovision song contest (Bohlman 2004; Raykoff and Tobin 2007; Solomon 2007) in order to interpret this new type of venue for the production of social and musical meanings. Most often in a competitive format, music reality shows like American Idol or the shows under discussion here might be understood as multiply-mediated cultural products: already televisual media, they also construct elaborate scenarios for contestants to participate in, and edit the "reality" portrayed in the show to fit a dramatic or narrative framework. In the case of *Launchpad* and *Kurkure Desi Beats Rock On* (henceforth KDBRO), dramatic tension is created in the competitive format, with musicians regularly subjected to critiques from judging panels that include members of established Indian rock bands, music producers and VJs. These critiques are most often organized around the idea of an indefinable "something" that a band either does or does not have, a kind of presence or musical acumen; and in some cases around an "Indian" quality that a band either does or does not portray, a quality sometimes linked to language, musical style, image or song form.

The Indian quality that KDBRO and Launchpad's judges were in search of was made explicit in press releases. Ashish Patil, the general manager of MTV India and senior vice president of the channel's creative and content division made an interesting statement about a "rock music *gharaana*" in his press release about the show:

> From drums to dhol, from raagas to rock n roll Kurkure Desi Beats Rock On with MTV is your backstage pass to the hunt and making of India's hottest new desi rock band! Its 50 desi rockstars producing music as never seen or heard before. Come join the Rock Gharaana! (Patil 2009)

In a press release for the 2011 season of Launchpad, Channel [V]'s creative director Sheetal Sudhir wrote that the show would "recognize Indian rock music in its rawest form... Bengali, Malayalam, Tamil, Hindi all are invited" ("Channel [V] Launchpad").

Launchpad's sole judge that year, Vishal Dadlani, from the band rock band Pentagram, stated:

> You could be a punk rock band from Shillong, a pop rock from Kolkata, or even a Malayali folk band from Kerala, it's all good – I'm looking for the real thing; music that moves me. If you have it in you then here's your platform. If not, don't bother. (Dadlani quoted in "Channel [V] Launchpad" 2009)

KDBRO was conceived of and produced by Vivek Darshan, whom I interviewed in Mumbai in April of 2010, when then show had finished its first season and was not yet embarked on its second, which would be announced in October of that year. Darshan, a dreadlocked musician who had transitioned from music into a television career a decade earlier, had grown up in Delhi, where he described playing guitar in college competitions with his band. I questioned Darshan closely about how he had imagined KDBRO and his plans for the show:

> The idea of Rock On for me was…as an Indian, I have grown up, yes, I have seen Everybody Loves Raymond and I've seen a few shows coming from around the world. I know New Zealand is a country for adventure sports. I know England is a country where the queen lives, whatever! I'm aware of all this. And I'm not classically trained in Indian classical music. I've grown up listening to Bollywood and everything. But when I go out and I try and ape a Mr. Big or I try and ape whatever's current now, you know, and try and emulate them, I'm never gonna do justice to them. At least maybe there are one or two who could. But I'm not being true to my own sensibilities, my sensibilities are purely Indian. And that does not mean that they have to be based on language or the kind of instruments I use or anything. But there must be something, some form of…some representation of my growing up in my music. (Darshan 2010)

Evident in his description and throughout our conversation was a kind of musical nationalism: musicians had to "express their roots," had to demonstrate their "Indianess" and "be true to their experiences" in order to fit the mold of the show and win its prizes (an album, music video and chance to perform in New York – the last a prize that never materialized). Eschewing the local history of rock music, in which cover songs, heavy

metal and classic rock had been the predominant genres for Indian musicians, Darshan conceptualized a kind of revisionist Indian rock music, in which Indian musical elements formed the basis for a new type of Indian rock music: he was adamant about the idea that Indian rock and the bands on KDBRO were meant to portray something "original," rather than emulate bands from the west – no easy task, and one that the show's contestants would struggle to fulfill. As Vamsee Juluri has written about extensively in his work on Indian music television, Indian televisual and media culture has since the late nineteen nineties been awash in nationalist tropes, albeit a post-liberalization nationalist formation in which Indian pride and national identity are predicated in part on its rising economic fortunes and place in a global political and cultural economy.

The functionaries of transnational media perforce make their goods more "Indian" in order to appeal to a larger audience (Juluri 2003; Mazzarella 2003), with the secondary effect of constructing and embodying a form of nationalism that is articulated and emergent only in concert with the needs and logics of capitalist globalism. Rock music's association with Americanization, however, makes it a particularly fraught cultural arena. When Darshan asks of the KDBRO contestants "What is it that you bring that makes you stand out from the rest of the world? What is the Indianess in it?" he betrays an anxious maneuvering in which the directive is to display and sound like one's national – or even better, regional – origins, over and against "the world;" a mandate which elides the inextricably intertwined dynamics of globalization, cultural expression and economic rational that together motivate a show like KDBRO. How contestant's "Indianess" would be discerned motivates the present analysis: language choice, musicality and stage presence all serve as nodes in a construction of a global, cosmopolitan, musical Indian.

The cultural politics of globalization at work here – in which Indian participants enact and perform their own desi identities musically on a mediated stage to the satisfaction of a panel of judges – reveal much about the extent to which mass media like MTV are implicated in the construction of youth culture's musical subjects.

By the time that KDBRO came on the air in August of 2009 (sponsored by Wrangler, who produced a special co-branded "Rock is in my Jeans" Collection; Rolling Stone magazine; movie house chain PVR; mobile phone T Series; and "official deodorant partner" SPINZ) producers had held auditions throughout Indian cities and had narrowed down participants to a group of fifty guitarists, drummers, keyboardists, vocalists; some contestants, more mysteriously, were put in a "category x," like rapper Colin and beatboxer Vineth, both from Bangalore; and finally some contestants were put in the "desipann" category like classical flautist Parth, from Bangalore, and percussionist Naitik, from Mumbai, whose "desipann quotient is demonstrated by the fact that he can play the dhol as well as other desi instruments" ("Rock On Contestants" 2009) That "desipann," which loosely translates to "natively Indian," is even extant as a category for contestants (all of whom are desi) demonstrates the somewhat tortuous cultural politics of rock music as it tries to fit the mandates of the MTV's marketing and audience; but it is also a result of the show being sponsored by Frito-Lay-owned Kurkure, whose advertising campaign that year centered around retelling English fairytales with a "desi twist."[55] Performances would be judged for their "desipann quotient" along with "pagalpann quotient" (loosely, "madness", or in this case, "intensity" onstage), and for

[55] Naveen Kumar, on the website adtube.com, describes one of the ads in question: "Kareena Kapoor plays the character of a desi Cinderella who is confident and unabashedly proud of her desi roots. After being ill-treated and spurned by her stepmother and sisters, Kapoor finds her own identity as a 'Desi Girl' after the fairy Godmother introduces her to the triangle shaped crisps. The TVC, promoting Tomato and *Masala* flavors, ends with the tag-line 'No Fun Without *Desipann*'" (Kumar 2010).

their "music quotient," or technique and musical performance (Darshan 2010). Contestants, assigned each week to a different group, performed songs from themes that included wedding, Bollywood, Sufi, Bhakti, carnival, reggae, Bhangra and regional. Conspicuously absent from these categories were any rock genres, which were left out because the bands were presumed to already be expressing a rock character by virtue of their instrumentation and ensemble configurations, which always had guitar, drums, lead singer and then an "extra" instrument like keyboard, violin or flute. Darshan described why the show's themes excluded rock:

> I stayed away from rock and roll or eight bar blues because they bring their own heaviness that's natural. A kid picks up a guitar in India he usually starts with Smoke on the Water… it's the same across the world (Darshan 2010).

Judging the show were musicians Kailash Kher (desipann quotient judge), Ram Sampat (music quotient judge) and VJ Nikhil Chinappa (pagalpann quotient) as well as occasional guest judge Palash Sen from the Indian band Euphonia. Kher, who is known for his classical and folk singing and his work in commercials and films stated to a Bangalore paper about his role on the show that

> My job here is to see that the Indianess is retained by the participants. The soil which you come from should be seen in your music. The culture, the tradition and the roots should all be present in our art. In the name of the west, we should not be aping them (Kher quoted in Manour 2009)

Clearly the judges and contestants were all on message about the aims of the show, and in the opening scenes of the first episode, before introducing the contestants, a spiky-haired sunglasses-wearing VJ reiterated the show's directive

> If the West has their rock stars then we Indians have the Pandits and Ustaads. If they have guitar gods then we have the maestros of Sitar and Tabla. You can be a rapper or a beat boxer but all we are looking for is someone who can rock the entire nation with Indian rock music. ("Episode 1")

In a series of jump-cuts the contestants then introduced themselves and their instruments, each with a tagline about themselves, their music, or their goals for the show: Ankur from Delhi states "I am here to get some desi flavor in rock music" while Rahil from Kolkata says "music is my freedom and I am the rebel that shouts out from the stage." Naitik and Parth, two of the "desipann" contestants, give taglines that perfectly express the show's stylistic imperative, with Nitik stating "I have come here to add some spicy Indian flavor to rock music" (shades of Kurkure snack food), and Parth opining that "My flute is just like me. A perfect blend of western and Indian" ("Episode 1"). Colin, the rapper, introduced himself in a credible Brooklyn accent with a great deal of bravado:

> Hello everybody I'm Colin from Bengaluru. Yes, I'm the rapper from Bengaluru, and we're gonna break it down like this on your TV and my TV and everybody's TV. Later, see me ("Episode 1")

Colin Terence was a contestant who polarized the judges. A graduate of St. Joseph's Boys High School in Bangalore (a prestigious Jesuit school founded in 1858) Colin was one perhaps a half dozen hip-hop musicians in Bangalore and the only rapper on KDBRO, and his language, style and mode of expressing himself brought him into conflict with the show's judges early on in the season. In our conversation Darshan described an incident that occurred in the show's audition process in Bangalore:

> When he [Colin] started rapping in English people weren't impressed, the judges were not impressed and he was full of angst – he picked a fight with one of the judges, with Ram Sampat in fact. And so Ram told him— and Colin is Kannada and Tamil mixed and he had done a couple of lines in I think Kannada or in Tamil—so when he did those and he switched back to English Ram told him 'Stop stop stop stop stop stop!' He said, 'When you do this in English there are a hundred of them. And it's gonna take you years to get your rap down so smooth that you can compete with something like that.' Because very rightly so, nobody's gonna love you just because you're an Indian rapping in English – 'oh, an Indian wanting to be black.' The minute you start rapping like that you're immediately gonna be compared to Eminem or Nelly or whoever but the minute you start rapping in your own language…bringing your own language, your own style, new

> words… the crowd went berserk. I went mad, I loved it! Which was exactly what I thought of when I started the show (Darshan 2010).

In our interview I had pressed Darshan about the idea of "Indianess" or desipann he was repeatedly espousing, questioning whether he thought of it as a musical or linguistic quality, both suggestions he denied. Despite his contention that specific language was not a factor, however, the idea that the language of one's music should match his regional or national heritage was apparent throughout our conversation, both in relation to the show and in relation to the Indian rock scene at large. Attuned to the complications of breaking into an international popular music industry as an Indian band, Darshan at one point noted that "If you don't sing in English you'll never become a success abroad. You'll be a world music person;" in the same conversation, however, he observed that "singing in English, people here don't identify with it" (Darshan 2010). Despite outlining a state of affairs for rock musicians in which singing in a local language puts you in the "world music ghetto," when it came to KDBRO Darshan was more clear about what was required of contestants, stating:

> Stick to your own language. Whether our language is Hindi, Hinglish, like mine, or Kannada like Raghu Dixit [a singer from Bangalore]…anything. People will be drawn to it. It could even be English – if you're from Goa and you speak English, you're a Catholic, give me that (Darshan 2010).

Throughout the show, then, language is often cast as a predictor of expressive authenticity, but how this was negotiated on the show was more complicated. On KDBRO the default language (as on all MTV India shows) was a kind of slangy, fluent Hinglish, sometimes defaulting to English entirely, as with the show's announcer, Anusha Dandekar, an MTV VJ who had been raised in Sydney, Australia. For the musicians, language was often a point of worry particularly in the regional song rounds

(billed by announcers as "the day that will show you the true sound of the nation" ("Episode 4")) when contestants sang in Malyalam and Punjabi, among other languages. The judges would often comment on language or pronunciation, as when Ram Sampat commented to Colin, "fantastic on the Malyalam part. Your flavor has a different magic and I have not seen it in many rappers." Thus in their band groupings contestants would often help each other or (more often) complain about issues of language and pronunciation, as with singer Githarthi, from Assam, helped by singer Iman on her Punjabi, but later castigated by one judge for her poor singing in Hindi:

> You are a limited vocalist and you can't put Assamese in a Hindi song and escape from this. Githarthi, you will have to accept honestly that your singing is lacking in many places. Even in the last parts where you tried to put in Assamese it still didn't move me ("Episode 4")

Even as the show's producers may have espoused, like Darshan, a contestant singing in his or her regional language, this directive was complicated by disjunctures between ethnic identity, education, and even popular culture identification, as with Colin, the English-educated, ethnic Kannada, Bangalore native speaking with a Brooklyn accent. And although Darshan stated in our interview that singing in English would be appropriate "If you're from Goa…If you're a Catholic" on KDBRO there were no songs performed in English. The excision of English language songs from KDBRO is perhaps indicative of the extent to which MTV and the show's producers envisioned the English language as incompatible with a "truly Indian rock band" but more likely reflects the fact that the show was being marketed to a wide segment of youth culture, not all of whom spoke English.

While questions about language emerged periodically throughout KDBRO's first season, another primary arena for conflict and resolution around perceptible qualities of

"Indianess" was in the field of musical elements: in instrumentation, song style, and decisions about rhythm, melodic lines and song structure. Here contestants were left to their own devices, hashing out the particulars of each song in well-appointed rehearsal spaces. Through these musical negotiations were revealed not only how individual contestants dealt with KDBRO's desire for demonstrably Indian rock sounds, but also how judges discerned such elements in the realms of style, rhythm, melody, and performance. Under discussion here are performances from three episodes of the show in which musicians performed Bollywood songs, regional songs and Bhangra songs. Organized into groups of four or five, each band had rhythm instruments, lead guitarists, bassists and vocalists, with the addition of extra performers on keyboard, flute, violin, sitar, or turntables. Cameras were on the contestants as they rehearsed in their practice rooms before the show, critiqued each other or talked about musical and performance strategies. After each band played the three judges gave their opinions, and at the end of the show eliminated five musicians were eliminated and one musician was voted by the judges "desi rocker of the day."

Throughout the episodes, it was clear that while "desi" sounds were always desirable and comprised a portion of the judges' criteria for a band's success, a desi sound or "Indianess" was actually secondary to good musical technique and tight performance, particularly for judges Kailash Kher and Ram Sampat, themselves both musicians. Stage presence and performance style figured prominently in judge VJ Nikhil's critiques, but for all the judges the questions of cultural identity that motivated the show's producers took a backseat to issues of musical competence. For example, the first band to perform, called Just Chilling, opened with vocalist Wili singing an

rhythmically-free improvised line – almost an *alap,* though not *raag*-based – over tabla player Hitin's spoken *bol* (rhythmic mnenomic syllables), and despite admiring this opening, judge Ram Sampat found much to critique in the performance, urging Wili to "rock the stage, work the stage better;" meanwhile judge Kailash Kher criticized Wili's singing for sounding like shouting, saying that: "you are making use of this shouting and trying to sell something for a thousand bucks that's only worth a hundred-fifty." VJ Nikhil did not mince words, saying "It sucked. Apoorv [the drummer], it sounded as if your sole purpose was to drown out the dhol. Where was the dhol? I couldn't even hear it" ("Episode 5"). Throughout the show contestants were criticized for "weak rhythm," for having a "thick voice," among many other complaints, and the least successful band of the Bollywood episode, Banyan Tree, was criticized for almost every element of their performance, with Ram Sampat pointing out that sitarist Bhushan was "in a different key altogether"[56] than the rest of the band, and telling bass player and vocalist Jared that "you didn't sing very well and your bass playing was very pathetic" ("Episode 5").

While concerns about proficiency and technique affected some bands, for many others the judges' main concerns had to do with performance style: ascriptions of "intensity," "energy," "soul," "zest," "feel," "honesty," "singing from the heart," and "emotion" signified judges' satisfaction with not only the technical aspects of a band's performance but also their stage presence, a quality at once easily discernable and yet vague and subject to seemingly paradoxical or even competing claims. Judges often compared contestants favorably to western rock musicians including Dave Navarro, Flea, Steve Harris and Eddie Van Halen; on the other hand, however, judges mounted critiques

[56] Implying that Bhushan, despite playing this traditional Indian instrument should have moderated his technique to reflect western harmonic logic in deference to the song and the band.

of musicians who they did not perceive as authentic either musically or performance-wise. Perhaps the most vehement critique in this vein was directed towards singer-guitarist Rahi, singing with the band Jam Room Nine in the Bollywood round. Following the band's performance of the song *Main Hoon Don* (I am Don), VJ Nikhil attacked Rahi's performance, saying "you are over-estimated. When you were on stage it was as if you are an actor from a C-grade movie trying to act like a rock star. You were comical. What were you trying to do?" Rahi, chastened, replied softly that he believed that "all rock musicians are actors to some degree," to which VJ Nikhil replied "Absolute bollocks. I think that is the biggest nonsense I have heard in my life" ("Episode 7").

Issues of authentic performance were often couched in discourse about the "desipann" of particular bands or musicians, as when Sampat praised the band Transition's performance by saying "every influence you were trying was clearly heard, yet it was Indian. Very well done" ("Episode 4"). Transition's lead singer, Iman, who had been chastised earlier for his Hindi pronunciation, was praised for singing in Bengali by Kailash Kher, who enthused, "thank god that you sung in Bengali! Fantastic! You are a Bengali and you should take it everywhere you go, remember this. Your performance has blown me away" ("Episode 4"). Iman, who during the rehearsal before the performance had been shown arguing with his band mates stated that he had decided to sing the song "more in the way I would sing it. I put in some classical Indian touches and changed the rhythm" ("Episode 4"). In this case vocal ornamentation and timbre as well as language were indicators of Iman's "desipann quotient." For some instrumentalists and particularly guitarists, drummers and bassists, attaining an acceptable desi quality was difficult. For other instrumentalists, however, (particularly those recruited to play in the desipann

category) this mandate was easy: Sachin, the sole violinist on the show was often praised for his playing and innovation, as when Sampath stated of one performance "You were blending a subtle Indianess in it. Thank god that you play the violin. We need more instruments like this on this show." Guest judge Palash Sen, from the band Euphonia, commented during the regional round about one drummer,

> In my view, you have kept the Indian feel of this song still alive which is very important for a show like this. The strongest point that you have is dhol, and in the entire world there is nothing as solid as a dhol ("Episode 4").

How the "desi rock band" that KDBRO was searching for were looking for would musically express the "sound of the nation" seemed to have made sense in the discourses of producers and judges, but the sounds of the music greatly problematized those discourses. Meant to be retaining "desipann" in the rock band performances of Bollywood, bhangra, wedding songs, and regional tunes, performers had a great deal of trouble fusing a rock sound with the Indian song forms they were covering. It was made clear in several performances that there were often insurmountable complexities inherent in finding a correctly Indian sound when playing songs from genres like Bollywood and Bhangra, genres already extremely eclectic in terms of the musical elements they draw from. During the Bhangra round, for example, violinist Sachin's band Side Effect (each new grouping of musicians came up with a new band name each week) covered the song "Pyaar Karke Pachtaya" from the 2006 film *Pyaar ke Side Effects*. The song typifies early 21st century Bhangra film song with rapping (in this song in English) and rhythm and blues vocals joining Punjabi bhangra/hip-hop vocalist Labh Janjua's vocals, tumbi (an Indian plucked chordophone), over a characteristic dhol bhangra rhythm with synthesizer providing harmonic depth. In the rehearsal room the band Side Effect

discussed how to make the song their own, and violinist Sachin described how the band tried "changing the cross line of the song," with the original female vocal line replaced with a violin solo, the tumbi replaced with electric guitar playing in a high register, and the dhol beat replaced with guitar and bass riff. Wili replaced Janjua's nasal tenor vocal line and rapping with a hoarsely sung rock line over heavy bass and guitar riffs. The resultant song was almost unrecognizable, but judge Kailesh Kher opined that "the transformation of the song was very nice and it became more interesting than the original itself" ("Episode 7").

Another cover of a Bollywood song, "Main Hoon Don," was less of a success with judges. A hit song from the blockbuster film *Don: The Chase is On*, the version of "Main Hoon Don" that the band Jam Room Nine on KDBRO was covering (sung by Shaan with lyrics from Javed Akhtar and produced by the team of Ehsaan Shankar and Loy) was itself a reinvention of the song (from music producers Kalayanji-Anandji and sung by Kishore Kumar) from the original 1978 film *Don*, starring Amitabh Bacchan. Listening to the original version of "Main Hoon Don" next to the remake and then next to the rock cover reveals a complicated trajectory of sounds, both "western" and "Indian": the original "Main Hoon Don" opens with cascading runs from a violin section and a Spanish guitar joined by a synthesizer and Kumar's dulcet, full-throated voice. As Gregory Booth notes, in the 1970s (when the original *Don* was released) music producers R.D. Burman and Kalayanji-Anandji were known for interpreting "Western popular styles for the mass Indian audience" (Booth 2011:216). By the time of the release of the 2007 version from Eshaan Shankar and Loy, which features a retro sixties guitar sound, a moody synthesizer undertow and a driving beat under heavily reverbed vocals from

Shaan (a former Indipop artist now predominantly playback singer), the use of popular western sounded elements within the production of film songs was taken for granted. The KDBRO version of the song from the band Jam Room Nine is almost a dystopian version of the song, a mess of styles and sounds – a walking bass line joined by tabla, with interludes of electric guitar doing a walking riff in a blues/rock and roll chord pattern (I IV V). The judges' faces – and even some of the audience member's faces – were pained as the song limped to a close. The ad hoc hybridization of rock and Indian sounds occurring on KDBRO's stage seemed a kind of jerry-rigging the process of syncretism that had been occurring in film music for decades before, and the musical outcome made audible the tortuous cultural politics at work in the mandates of the show.

The show's winners, vocalist Wili, percussionist Naitik, bassist Raj, drummer Tonmoy, violinist Sachin G and guitarist Nirdosh formed the band Saadhak and later released one music video through their T-Mobile contract. Saadhak, who had won the final elimination round by playing a song of their own composition, were not necessarily the contestants who displayed the most musical prowess, but rather, as Darshan described them, they were the "most adaptable individuals":

> The kids who actually made it in the end were the kids who actually adapted to various styles who were open as musicians, to adapting, to playing out—they were talented enough not just to listen but to adapt in their playing. The guys we ended up with were brilliant, they were set for being in the studio, in the live act, and they were composers (Darshan 2010).

Following the musical transformations of Bollywood songs in the duration of the episode, as well as listening to some of the covers of a variety of Indian folk and popular song forms throughout the show it is clear that there are no straight-forward processes of musical Indianization or Westernization possible in the mediated framework of KDBRO

but rather a web of competing claims to authenticity and cultural heritage playing out through and around musical performance. Whether with a band like Saadhak, transitioning from their KDBRO win into film music jobs in 2010, or evident in the fandom of Indian heavy metal bands, professing their scorn for the industry in order to demarcate their own tastes, film music shapes the field of popular music in the country, offering employment to some fortunate popular and rock musicians, as well as producing and circulating rock-tinged music and characters in a variety of recent films, as the following section will describe.

Rock music and Hindi film

Indian popular film, which includes the Mumbai-based Bollywood industry as well as several regional popular cinema industries, releases more than a thousand films a year with profits in the billions of dollars (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 2009). Indian popular film has a distinctive style with movies regularly running over three hours, and h lavish song and dance routines sprinkled throughout. Ashish Rajadhyksha has called the genre's dominant narrative paradigm "epic melodrama" (Rajadhyksha 2009) in which conflicts are writ large, emotions are externalized, and realist linear narrative often takes a back seat to the resolutions of moral dilemmas or fantasy sequences. The following discussion analyzes the Hindi film *Rock On!!* in order to assess how the "rock musician" is becoming a recognizable figure in the Bollywood character lexicon, and exploring what these representations might signify. Released in 2008 to wide critical acclaim and box office success, *Rock On!!* portrays a quartet of young rock musicians in Mumbai and conjures up a classic rock and roll myth: band forms as an egalitarian unit, faces strife and break-up, and then reunites, in the process healing psychic wounds. Produced by and

starring Farhan Akhtar and directed by Abhishek Kapoor, the movie won seven prestigious Filmfare awards and received a host of accolades from various influential Hindi film magazines.

Rock On!! is part of an emerging genre of Hindi film known as "hatke,"—literally translated as "off-center"—in which films have smaller budgets and feature quirky subject matter with an urban tilt. With a sensibility that is often more realist than melodramatic, films in this genre have been critically favored more often than they have been blockbusters, although many, like *Rock On!!*, do well at the box office. *Rock On!!* was the first Indian film specifically about a rock band to be both financially and critically successful, but in recent years there have been a spate of films in India that have featured rock bands or musicians primarily. In 2005 a rock and roll movie called *Paanch* received some media scrutiny after the Indian film censor board vetoed its release due to its depictions of drugs and violence. In 2009 a film called *London Dreams*, about an NRI guitar player living in London who aspires to win over the popular music world was widely panned for what critics described as unrealistic depictions and bland pop soundtrack; and 2011 saw the release of the moderately successful *Rockstar*, featuring Pepsi brand ambassador and youth heartthrob Ranbir Kapoor in the titular role. Between 2006 and 2010 the Tamil, Bangla and Kannada film industries also released films about rock bands all with limited success. Thus the rock band story used as thematic material in Hindi film has, arguably, become common.

Rock On!! is a film with musical numbers, but it is also about musicians, and so this interpretation looks at two strata of music and musical representation: firstly, the sounds, lyrics and performances of the songs in the film; secondly, some of the

generalized ideas about rock music and musicians from which the film's characterizations and conflicts draw. Making textual and musical analyses of the film's musical sounds and images, this discussion then extrapolates from those interpretations some larger claims about the film's representations of particular types of musical subjects, and draws some conclusions about the role of film within the larger context of the field of Indian rock music media with which this chapter is concerned.

The soundtrack of *Rock On!!*, written by the music production team of Shankar Ehsaan and Loy, was the 12th highest-selling film music album of the year featuring songs that varied in style from soft rock ballads to "hard rock" anthems sung in Hindi – songs akin to the trio's work in other films, deviating from the norms of contemporary film song aesthetics only by virtue of the mode of production. Rather than having playback singers on the soundtrack while the film's lead characters lip-synched, amateur singer and rock enthusiast Akhtar, (playing Aditya, the band's lead singer) sang four of the film's seven songs. The musical numbers in *Rock On!!* are composed in a verse-chorus-verse form, in four-four time with semi-distorted guitars playing riffs and solos and a pronounced drum sound—in short, they do not differ markedly from other popular rock-inflected Hindi film songs but unlike the rock, big band, folk fusions of 1960s music directors like RD Burman or some of Eshaan Shankar and Loy's pop rock productions in other contemporary films, Rock On's music sounds much like the music played by Indian rock musicians, albeit with slicker production and Hindi, rather than English lyrics.

Although the idea that Hindi film song has "western musical features," has been reiterated throughout ethnomusicological studies of the genre (Arnold 1988; Manuel 1988; Booth 2000; Morcom 2007), mapping Rock On's sounds along a kind of Indian-

Western musical continuum is not necessarily the most useful paradigm for understanding its meanings – rather, an interpretation of its songs might best be made via reading them in the context of the film's plot. *Rock On!!* is significant not simply because of the ways in which it slightly reworks some of the contemporary norms of Hindi film song and film song production, but also for the ways in which, within the persuasive world of the film's plot, it portrays rock music as the activity of particular types of idealized characters emplaced in a particular kind of idealized socio-cultural milieu in urban upper middle class India. Film theorists have long explored the ways in which Indian popular cinema functions as a kind of unofficial ideological apparatus, validating particular types of subjects and making significant interventions in the project of imagining the Indian nation. Music, lyrics, and plot in Rock On work to interpellate particular types of musical subjects, doing so via fictive resolutions of the film's conflicts. These are conflicts that unfold within a moral framework that is structured on the one hand according to classic Hindi film narrative tropes like family responsibility and the importance of heart or passion (Rajadhyksha 2009), and on the other hand by a contemporary Indian version of the rock music ideology, specifically in a struggle between commercialism versus creativity that animates various moments of the film's plot, music and lyrics. In order to mount this interpretation, it is necessary to (as briefly as possible) outline the film's plot here.

The band Magik is made up of Aditya, Joe, KD, and Rob, four friends who we see in the opening scenes of the film joyriding around Mumbai, rehearsing in a dusty basement and playing shows for crowds of screaming fans. Flashing abruptly forward ten years we see that lead singer Aditya is now a successful investment banker living in a

Mumbai high-rise with his wife, Sakshi, with whom he has a strained relationship. He's secretive and cold and denies his past as a musician; she's pregnant but so unhappy with their relationship that she doesn't tell him. The band members aren't in contact: KD, the band's drummer, is now working in his father's high end jewelry store, and striking out with women at night in swanky clubs, Rob, the band's keyboardist, is now a jingle writer for commercials and Joe is struggling to support his embittered wife and child by teaching guitar lessons. When Aditya's wife happens to meet KD at his jewelry store, she gathers the members of the band for an awkward reunion at Aditya's house. Through a series of flashbacks we see the events that have led to the band's breakup.

Eager to take their band to the "next level," Magik has entered a competition hosted by Channel [V] (presumably *Launchpad*) and win a record deal and a chance to make a music video. In the process of making their video, tension arises between Aditya and guitarist Joe, as the music video producers obviously favor Aditya. The strife reaches a culminating point when the band signs their record deal and the producer demands that Joe's love song to his girlfriend be taken off the album to make room for a remix of wedding songs that will "help the album sell during wedding season." Persuaded by his furious girlfriend that Aditya is only has his own best interests at heart, Joe leaves the band, after bitterly accusing Aditya of "selling out," and Magik breaks up. Flashing forward again 10 years later, Aditya is convinced by Sakshi's walking out on him that he needs to have music and friendship in his life and the band begins playing together once more. They are persuaded to play a Channel V sponsored show, motivated to do so by Rob, the keyboardist, who, it emerges, has a brain tumor and not long to live. After a rousing final performance, Magik disbands once and for all. The film closes with

conflicts resolved: Aditya and his wife have a son named after Rob, who has died from his brain tumor, while Joe and KD have turned their musical passions into a sound business—a recording studio, and are both happily married.

In *Rock On!!* the commercialism versus creativity opposition at the core of Frith's rock ideology is re-imagined in an Indian musical context as a conflict between playing film and wedding music and playing rock and roll. This straw man dichotomy is one of the driving forces of the plot, at work when the band break up over the inclusion of a wedding song remix on their first album, but symbolically and musically worked through in another scene in the film: it is still in Magik's early days, and the band need to raise money for new equipment before entering the Channel V competition. They hear of and reluctantly take a job at a Navratri celebration (a Hindu seasonal or agricultural festival) playing what they scornfully call "*purani* Hindi" — old or washed up Hindi music. Deciding that they can stay true to their musical vision if they play guitars, drums and keyboards rather than "harmonium and tabla" we then see the band playing a 1990s film song version of *dandiya raas*, the folk dance music of Gujrarat, on their electric instruments and, as Aditya says, with a "Magik touch."

If playing film and wedding music represents the commercial realm in the plot of *Rock On!!*, friendship and loyalty represent the conditions that foster a proper creative dynamic and the realm from which the authentic rock impulse has to come. The persuasiveness of Magik's music is portrayed as a function of the individual creativity of each band's member, but an individuality that is also both subsumed in the band's collective energies and sustained by them. This idea and variations of it pepper the film's dialogue, as when Aditya tells his band mates in the film's opening scene "brothers, no

one takes over in this band." The rock music ideology is sustained via the illusion that rock music itself is a terrain upon which creativity and commerce must battle; moreover, in this system it is only the social rebel who has the fortitude to stick to his rock and roll guns and combat the pressures to sell out. In *Rock On!!* rock and roll's rebellious figure is re-imagined but also preserved in the trope of "following your dream." The theme of following your dreams (also the film's tag line) is a kind of backdrop against which the creativity versus commerce opposition plays out and is visited in various ways in film's song lyrics, specifically in the songs "Sinbad the Sailor" and "Rock On," which were written by famed Hindi film lyricist Javed Akhtar (producer Farhan Akbar's father). In the lyrics of "Sinbad the Sailor," the quest for one's dreams are expressed metaphorically via Sinbad's journeys over the ocean; in the song Rock On the same directive is issued, with the added exhortation to "Rock On" as "it's the sign of the times."

In the concluding scenes of the film we see the resolution of the constructed conflicts between following a dream and selling out revealed as, in fact, no conflict at all—the characters of the film can be happy family men, successful business people, and have fulfilled their passion for rock music simultaneously, an integration of family values that represents a particularly Indian reworking of the rock music story. Gautam Thakur writes that Hindi film "participates in the ideological construction of a globalized cultural subjectivity through the construction and privileging of a new ethics of globalized living." (Thakur 2010:75) The film's plot is based on the realities of the Indian rock music scene: Channel V of course did have a making the band show that hosted band competitions like the one Magik entered, and the crossover between playing in a band and going into Hindi film music or jingle writing as Rob, Magik's keyboardist, is shown

doing, is a common career path for Indian rock musicians, as Vivek Darshan recounted in our interview.

The plot of *Rock On!!*, then, draws from existing musical subject categories even as it mediates those subject categories by creating idealized characters in the fictive world of the film. These characterizations interpellate a gendered musical subject, for one: in the course of the film the homosocial nature of the rock band Magik is affirmed both against the girlfriend who keeps them apart as well as against the wife who brings them back together; but it also gives us a musical subject who is also implicitly classed – financially successful, and fluent in the transnational media that informs the post-liberalization, urban middle class popular culture context in India. In their introduction to the edited volume "Global Bollywood" Anandam Kavoori and Aswin Punathambekar write that contemporary Hindi films must be understood in relation to the "specific historical conjuncture of India's entry into a transnational economy over the last 10-15 years, and the centrality of the non-resident Indian figure to India's navigation of this space" (Kavoori and Punathambekar 2008:4). While the hero of the NRI film is the diasporic, globally mobile Indian, a citizen-consumer subject par exemplar, wearing Nikes and Levis but with an Indian heart and sensibility, in *Rock On!!* we find a reworking of this construction, perhaps the next logical step in its historical progression, in the idealized character of the upper middle class, cosmopolitan Indian national, financially adept, forward looking, who has the world of transnational popular culture at his fingertips and the values of family life and friendship in his heart.

Conclusions

With the Internet has come a completely revised picture of the accessibility and reach of international popular music for Indian rock fans, who no longer rely on television or expensive imported albums or CDs to see and hear the latest or more obscure videos and bands. While rock print media has continued in the form of Rolling Stone India and, for a brief run Blender India, online sites such as Indiecision.com have increasingly replaced print media in the lives of fans. Print media, like Rolling Stone's Indian edition, which was launched in March of 2008, seemed to be lumbering along after the online rock sites, with a format better suited to previous decades. As the founder of the Indian rock website Indiecision.com, Arjun Ravi remarked, "No one wants to buy a magazine once a month when they can get free, up-to-date content everyday online" (Ravi 2010). Rolling Stone's format differed from RSJ or the online sites, covering the Indian rock scene while also integrating content from its U.S. edition; occasionally it featured Indian bands on its cover but also imported some of its cover stories wholesale, making a kind of hybrid local-international magazine, with local content shoehorned into the U.S. Rolling Stone format. Even while Rolling Stone did provide Indian bands with a format for recognition and publicity, musicians and fans in Bangalore were curiously unenthused by the magazine: put off by its price and unwilling to subscribe to a magazine that featured international pop (rather than rock) artists as well as local and international rock bands.

Thus by 2005 and through the next 6 years Indian rock websites largely replaced magazines as the community forum that Saigal envisioned when he started RSJ. In the early 2000s sites like gigpad.com and Indianrockmp3.com had acted as platforms for

bands to upload their music and discuss and debate local and international bands, but by 2008, the website www.Indiecision.com had arguably become the most popular of the many Indian rock websites: comprehensive, well designed and organized around the sophisticated indie-oriented tastes of Mumbai-based scenester Arjun Ravi. By 2010 Ravi's site had been folded into the production and marketing company Only Much Louder (OML), founded by 28-year-old Vijay Nair. Only Much Louder, Ravi and Nair arguably represent a new phase of the business of Indian rock music, with strategies that recognize the audience's tastes and limitations (often monetary); international partnerships with record producers and journalists; and with an acute sense of the way that the Indian scene measures up in the international arena. After its merger with OML, Indiecision.com became NH7.com (named after the trans-India highway NH7) and in its journalism astutely cast the Indian rock scene as, for the first time, an independent music scene within a larger network of "indie" scenes around the world. The site now has articles on Indian bands, on international indie bands, on issues in the rock scene (lately the shut-down of clubs in Mumbai by a zealous police chief), and about shows and festivals around India. Ravi and Nair have also expanded the scope of the website to also feature some classical, electronic, and some folk music, recognizing the benefits of coalescing non-film music around the country into a coherent marketing genre.

By understanding that the Indian rock audience, though small, might support a variety of tastes and different types of rock, folk and even classical fusion music, NH7 has positioned themselves as canny cultural intermediaries in a phase of Indian rock media that carries on Amit Saigal's audience-centric media while extending the boundaries of the rock genre beyond progressive rock, metal and Top 40. NH7 localized

Indian rock media in a manner different from the Indianization of global media conglomerates like MTV. The prospect of getting a "big record contract" and breaking into the international market (never realistic for Indian bands in any case, for reasons explored later on in this dissertation) was supplanted by the prospect of finding a niche market somewhere in a network of smaller record labels and Internet-based media. Maureen Mahon observes that

> In many postcolonial contexts, professional cultural producers have the burden of creating images of the nation that address such potentially divisive issues as differences of class, gender, region, and ethnicity, that articulate which aspects of culture will "count" as representative of the nation, and that manage the tension between tradition and modernity. Such challenges speak to the larger struggles associated with nation building and more generally to the cultural politics of representation (Mahon 2000:471).

This overview of rock music figures and discourses in public culture has tried to demonstrate how changing representations of rock music coming from different cultural producers in print, television and film have offered insight into an emergent cosmopolitan musical genre. Rather than occupying a circumscribed elitist corner of popular culture in India, the figure of the rock musicians has increasingly become a conduit for negotiations around which types of globalized cultural subjectivities are appropriate and valorized not only in the fields of Indian media but also in a transnational cultural context.

CHAPTER SIX

BECOMING ORIGINAL: COVER BANDS, FUSION BANDS AND "SOUNDING INDIAN"

This chapter is about the idea of musical "origins" in relation to how one's music sounds – and what it means, both abstractly and practically, for Indian bands to sound one particular way rather than another. In the transnational field of popular music in which Indian rock music plays out, how a band sounds not only indicates musical lineage and genre and demarcates potential audiences; but also resonates with questions about the relationship of sounds and how they indicate locality and originality. Some Indian extreme metal bands, for example, may be able to tap into the network of music festivals in Scandinavia and find an audience who care only about heaviness or speed of their sound rather than their national identity; meanwhile Indian indie rock or experimental bands face a difficult task in finding audiences abroad, firstly because of an underlying assumption in that genre that that some type of cultural "authenticity" (or a self-aware take-down of the notion of being authentic) is a necessary component of artistic validity; and secondly, because of that genre's fetishization of obscure intra-genre musical references.[57] In this chapter I address cover bands and fusion bands two genres that take divergent approaches to the production of rock music in Bangalore, via their differing performance opportunities, audiences and modes of musical creativity.

[57] Despite widespread use of the Internet to find new music, for a majority of Bangalore's rock musicians, obscure indie bands from the West aren't primary influences. Unlike in Indonesia, where Luvaas has described a purposeful affiliation by local rock musicians with transnational alternative rock and punk scenes, (Luvaas 2009) these genres – they might be termed hipster music – have yet to make real inroads in Indian rock, much to the chagrin of music journalists there.

The competing claims to the cultural and symbolic capital that inhere in the attributions of musical authenticity are at the crux of the value hierarchies participants bring to bear on the cover bands and fusion bands. Aihwa Ong, pointing out that in Bourdieu's discussion of cultural capital he was addressing a relatively homogenous social system (despite France's ethnic heterogeneity) asks instead "[w]hat are the effects of cultural accumulation in a cross-cultural, transnational arena where there is not one but many sets of competing cultural criteria that determine high symbolic value?" (Ong 1999:89). This question sets the stage for the following discussion that describes how Indian fusion and folk rock bands are lauded for their "original sounds" even as cover bands (or bands who play cover songs) are considered an embarrassing anachronism – as one music blogger I interviewed put it, they are "on the way out."

Theorizing locality in globalized rock genres

The representational disjunctures of the global cultural economy are apparent in the arena of popular arts: the fact that India even has rock bands surprises many Americans, who associate Indian music with sitars or Bollywood.[58] Ethnomusicologists have observed that in the marketing category of "world music" musicians tend to have the most success when their music sonically represents their place of origin. The nuances of this truism differ according to geographic, social, and historical contexts, but in India it is an influential factor in the development of a rock musician's career path. Through observing cover and fusion bands, this section explores how participation in the transnational rock music industry subjects Indian rock musicians to the critical mandates of a marketplace that regularly expects them to strategically discard their historical

[58] Film is another example: while the Avengers, for example, is released throughout India and Jennifer Aniston is a familiar face to Indian middle class television viewers, superstar Shah Rukh Khan is unfamiliar to American audiences who might be hard-pressed to name even one Bollywood blockbuster.

cosmopolitanism and instead adhere to some type of easily recognizable "local" identity. In the last two decades the global popular music industry that Wallis and Malm named a "transculture" (1984) has splintered, with major record labels losing market shares and struggling to keep up with the changes ushered in by the Internet and digital market. These technological and economic shifts have changed the terrain and possibilities for Indian rock musicians; however, the cultural politics and representative dynamics at work in defining Indian bands and delimiting their possible reach or audiences have remained in place, and are especially prevalent in the journalism, marketing, touring and performance and production that comprise the Indian rock music industry – an industry tied in a multitude of ways to a transnational rock industry with its own expectations and ideologies.

Motti Regev, a sociologist who has written extensively on rock music styles around the world, proposes that participation in rock music allows musicians and fans to act as agents and reflexive subjects of a local cultural production via a "paradoxical" involvement in "American culture":

> [C]onstructing local styles of rock and their meanings as 'local authentic' music is an aesthetic strategy of identity formation which is determined by the 'thrownness' (Lash 1994) of musicians and audiences into two social spaces, or fields, of cultural practice: the field of contemporary popular music and the field of national/local identity. Making local rock music 'solves' the apparent contradiction of participation in both these fields" (Regev 1994)

The article quoted above observes the various fusions, modes and styles by which musicians have conjoined so-called "local" musical elements with what Regev calls the "rock aesthetic" – an aesthetic outlined at the beginning of this dissertation which roughly entails a conglomeration of musical elements, instrumentation and delivery styles that originated in the U.S. in the 1950s. Regev outlines a wide variety of types of music

produced from this combination around the world, from "imitative" bands who cover the Anglo-American top forty using English or local languages, to "hybrids" such as Zimbabwean *chimurenga*, Argentinean *rock nacional*, or Israeli *musica mizrakhit* in which, he suggests, a "local authentic" quality is "inscribed in the essence of the sonic texture and affective impact of [the] music" (Regev 1994:134). For Regev, these musical hybrids allow participants to reflexively participate in both the fields he mentions above.

The concept of musical hybridity, however, is perhaps insufficient to describe the complex interplay of elements by which musical styles combine and emerge – the political, historical and social dynamics which, via the disjunctive flows that animate the global culture industry, contextualize the fusing of styles by socially-positioned musicians and participants. Timothy D. Taylor mounts a critique of the concept of hybridity as it is deployed to signal difference in musical forms (Taylor 2007). Noting that some scholarly usage of the concept fails to be historical and focuses on "binary, asymmetrical social formations," Taylor reclaims Bhabha's notion of the "third space," (Bhabha 1994) as recognizing the "constant flux of cultural production," and capable of "forging distant and local affiliations" (Taylor 2007:160). Though Regev is not ascribing to musical style a non-socially constituted essence, the concept of a "local authentic" sonic texture is one that needs careful handling if it is not to collapse into the idea that musical elements such as timbre, rhythm, melodic structure or ornamentation are intrinsically capable of expressing essential difference.

Despite this critique, Regev's theory brings into focus some of the primary themes at work in an investigation of global rock music, particularly an emphasis on viewing rock music production as part of processes of reflexive modernization (Giddens,

Beck and Lash 1994). Reflexivity is understood as an outcome of disorganized capitalism and its attendant "economies of signs and space" wherein what are increasingly produced by the uneven and intensified flows of globalization are "not material objects but signs" (Lash and Urry 1994:4). One outcome of this economy is that subjects are becoming "increasingly reflexive" with respect to the circulation of aesthetic signs, or "postmodern goods," which include cultural products such as music or film (Lash and Urry 1994:4). Reflexivity in this sense enables the modern musical subject who draws from a proliferation of musical signs and styles; in addition it sets the stage for questions about the concepts of "originality," "authenticity," "imitation," "Western," and "Indian" – concepts that are strategically deployed or rejected as an aspect of participation in Indian rock genres. At stake is the ascription of "cultural authenticity" (a designation that may offer musicians cultural capitol in the context of Indian popular music); assumptions about what constitutes appropriate musical cosmopolitanism; and, as Luvaas has written about in the Indonesian context, constructions of new types of positionality within a field of local popular music that is in turn in a "dialectical relationship" with the global (Luvaas 2009). Drawing from interviews and performance description and analysis, the following discussion juxtaposes cover band and fusion band practices and discourses in order to bring into focus core issues of musical expression and social identity as they play out in the Indian rock culture within a larger transnational music industry.

Simulation and stigmatization; or, why do cover bands get no respect?

Deena Weinstein argues that rock and roll critics often wave a "Romantic flag that valorizes creative artists expressing their unique selves in innovative ways," in the process dismissing cover songs as "inauthentic ugly ducklings" (Weinstein 2010:243).

This strain of critical judgment, one that finds an inherent lack of artistic value or worth in the cover song, holds purchase in Bangalore's rock scene for various reasons that this chapter will explore, and the inverse of the widespread disapproval of cover songs is the valorization of fusion or folk rock[59] bands in the scene: bands whose use of Indian and Western instruments, as well as regional languages, clothing styles or musical forms make them accessible to local audiences and intriguing and marketable to international fans. Cover songs have long held an ambiguous place in Indian rock music culture. Since the nineteen-sixties, playing covers has been a pedagogic practice, a pleasure for musicians "bringing to life" their favorite music, and also a strategic move for bands whose audiences cheered for Led Zeppelin or Metallica songs and not for original music. Despite their entrenched place in the scene, however, cover bands face criticism by the savvier fans and critics who accuse them of being imitative and out of touch; meanwhile fusion bands garner the admiration of local fans and foreign record labels for being original, interesting, or musically "authentic." While many musicians and audiences still enjoy cover songs, the dominant discourse in Bangalore and indeed throughout India has become staunchly anti-cover song: covers, and their continued performance, are accused of representing a lack of originality that is in turn cited as the cause of Indian rock's lack of global success.

The cover song is so deeply rooted in the history of Indian rock that despite the anti-cover song sentiment prevalent in the early 21st century, there are still many performance venues and contexts in which cover songs are expected and valued; namely, in settings such as pub gigs, corporate gigs, and college competitions. Pub gigs, where the

[59] Bands in this category call their own music either fusion or folk rock but the distinction seems to be largely semantic – whether described as fusion or folk rock, these bands share musical, linguistic and sartorial characteristics.

band is sometimes paid a flat fee or makes a portion of the door, have existed in the scene since the 1960s as have the college band competitions that are a mainstay of the scene. College festivals and competitions, described in chapter 3, take place throughout the country and are usually organized by a student body with sponsorship from national or multinational corporations. Competitions are an integral part of the Indian rock scene, giving musicians recognition and validation in the absence of an industry that might compensate them financially. While festivals usually have a variety of different types of bands playing, competitions invite entrants to play short sets and are judged by a panel of musicians, club owners, or journalists who make assessments using a variety of scoring categories.[60] Finally, the corporate gig is one in which a band is hired to play at a social event for companies like Infosys.[61] According to one musician in Bangalore these types of events are a kind of necessary evil for working musicians and entail:

> [F]illing time between the meeting and the dance party…you have to play stuff that those guys will want, recognize, know and try to slip one or two of your own in there and hope that two out of one-hundred will know that it's something – not even like it – but know that it's something they haven't already heard. Because the most requested song is Hotel California (Vaz 2009).

There is also a social and historical context that keeps cover songs alive as a genre in Bangalore's rock culture. Firstly, audiences are implicated in the continued popularity of covers. Through describing particular performances and types of audience participation in Bangalore, I make the argument that the reception of covers can be seen

[60] Despite the fact that college competitions allow – and in some cases call for – cover songs in a band's set, their judging criteria sometimes (as in the case of the National Law Schools Strawberry Fields Competition I attended) includes scores for "originality."
[61] Infosys is an Indian multinational business technology corporation

on an experiential trajectory with the social consumption of mediated musics[62] that takes place in pubs and social spaces of the city and that engenders an appreciation of cover bands. Secondly, rock pedagogy valorizes a canon of classic rock songs and in the process contributes to the formation of a foundational rock repertoire for musicians, a scenario that – while negligibly implicated in the continued popularity of covers for audiences – does in part foster the conditions for the continued learning and playing of cover songs by young musicians. Thirdly, musicians have their own financial and artistic reasons for playing covers: I draw from interviews and conversations to explore the ways in which musicians describe their ideas about what it means to play covers, their justifications for playing them, and address in various oblique ways the problem of cover song stigmatization.

Tying together these dynamics and drawing from my interlocutors' stories and anecdotes I analyze the dominant anti-cover song discourse in the Indian rock scene observing the many reasons, both spoken and unspoken, why these types of performances are denigrated by the bloggers, producers, and industry functionaries for whom the direction and trajectory of the Indian rock scene is a paramount concern. At stake in the consideration of the cover song, as George Plasketes observes, are "issues such as contextualization, authenticity, repetition, ownership, originality, cultural exhaustion, homage and conflicts between commodity and concept" (Plasketes 2010:2). In the transnational field of popular music the issues that Plasketes raises are complicated, with claims to musical authenticity or originality often translating to the ability to access to

[62] Some ethnomusicological study has been made of the sociable, communal consumption of recorded musics; for example, Lise Waxer's research on the tabernas and salsotecas of Cáli, Columbia, where fans listen and dance to salsa records from around the world (Waxer 2002).

economic, social, and cultural capital as well as performance and life opportunities for musicians.

Audiences: looking for the "real thing" in mediated music and live experience

Hanging out at the Pecos pub is *de rigueur* for the college kids of Bangalore. Open since the nineteen-seventies, the tiny bar on Brigade Road is situated on an upper floor high above a crowded shopping street, necessitating a steep climb up a spiral staircase into the pub's slightly grotty but inviting interior. Murals and posters of classic rock idols decorate the walls, with John Lennon abutting Miles Davis, catty-corner to Led Zeppelin, who partially covers Eric Clapton, watched over by a line-drawn mural of Elvis Presley with his sneer and hooded eyes looking like a Tamil film star. Pecos is the "original rock pub" of Bangalore, where for thirty years young people have come to eat the masala dosa and drink the watered-down Kingfisher beer while socializing and listening to rock music. The owners of Pecos have a particular way that they play music, in effect since their early days: they play entire albums from start to finish, in the seventies on vinyl, in the eighties and nineties on cassette tape and then into the present day on CD. Unlike other places in town that play only the hit singles, Pecos, a place for true aficionados, will commit to the whole album, whether Deep Purple, Metallica, or Michael Jackson, the b sides as well as the familiar tunes. The pub does not draw Bangalore's professional types, tech-employed and into spending money and listening to electronica at swanky clubs; rather, it brings students who sing along with their favorite bands when the mood takes them and discuss the merits of particular musicians and songs. Pecos on a Friday evening is a scene of ur-karaoke, with the emphasis placed on drinking and sociality rather than singing or good performance, but the little bar, just one

corner of the rock music scene, fulfills a particular role for the casual rock fan. As a local friend described it when taking me there for the first time: “the beer’s cheap and watered down so you don’t get too drunk, and there’s no cover charge for a live [Indian] band pretending to play rock. Instead we get the real thing.”

Pecos is not the only place Bangalore where mediated, recorded popular classic rock music (the “real thing” as my friend described above) provides experiences to rival live bands. On Saturday nights the hard rock club Purple Haze plays Slayer, Iron Maiden, and Pantera videos to crowds of young men who head-bang in front of the huge screen. The club, painted black and densely packed in the evenings, caters to Bangalore’s metal-heads, and there are many of them – Bangalore is commonly described as the “metal capital” of India and a few of the bands that play on Purple Haze’s video screen have performed to crowds of thousands in Bangalore’s Palace Grounds. The abandon with which fans head-bang in front of the video screen may be directly related to the quantities of beer being consumed in the club, but the pleasures are also musical. As one young man I spoke to mused about the a video of eighties hair band Poison, “it’s not the real thing but it’s almost as good.” For this more serious rock fan (with his long hair and metal band tee-shirt) into metal and its attendant fandom practices, the floating “real thing” in this case (as opposed to the recordings my local friend referred to as the “real thing” in Pecos) was the live metal band, and the videos provided the almost-as-good simulacrum. Without diverging into an ontological discussion of what constitutes the musically or experientially “real” in these cases, it is worth noting the repeated use of the term to describe various types of musical experience – especially as an aspect of the culture of

cover songs in which "real," "mediated," "original," and "authentic" are thematically related and differentially constituted issues.

Pragmatically speaking, locations like Pecos and Purple Haze represent a resilient strain of Bangalore's nightlife: not subject to the civic restrictions on "live bands" discussed in chapter three, pubs like these occupy a central role in the social and leisure activities of the college students and locals who make up the rock music audience. What, if anything, is the significance of these venues and the modes of musical experience to be found therein? The type of fandom found here, not exceptional in its characteristics, is prevalent in Bangalore's live music scene, with the pleasures of familiarity making up many young people's attraction to one performance rather than another. Musicians often claim that is the casual rock music fan, uninformed and lacking any special knowledge about rock music who demands the continued performance of the cover song and keeps it as a central musical practice in the Indian rock scene. [63] Historically speaking, the role of the cover band was quite overtly about providing a kind of "real" or live experience. Bryan Richard, a journalist and musician in the cover band Parousia, notes that

> [Th]e Beatles wouldn't come here, so the sixties and seventies bands would play Beatles songs, and you would have a live connect with this music. Iron Maiden was never going to come down in the eighties, so you needed a local band to cover Iron Maiden (Richard 2010).

When in the 1990s bands like Iron Maiden and Metallica and the Rolling Stones did begin coming to India to perform (this logic proceeds) there was no longer any need for the cover bands of yesteryear, and thus the natural progression of bands in India was to

[63] Much popular music research has focused on fan identities, often in the context of youth culture studies, (Thornton 1998; Maira 2002) In India less, if any, research has been done on rock fans as a youth culture category, but participants in Bangalore define fandom exclusion or inclusion implicitly based on the possession or lack of specialized knowledge, a dynamic also prevalent in a variety of musical youth culture formations around the world.

become “original.” This roughly evolutionary, or teleological model of rock music’s development in India is one of the predominant narrative elements that participants use to describe the scene’s historical development and relationship to the larger transnational field of popular music. It came up regularly in my interviews and research, and bears close scrutiny; it runs through aesthetic judgments of rock music as well as discussions of the industry, and animates questions of musicianship and pedagogy, as the following section observes.

Students: pedagogy, imitation, and the rock repertoire

In the last 50 years the practice of learning and playing rock music has transformed, with schools, lessons and instructional videos (often on YouTube) joining the printed charts, solitary bedroom noodling or sociable jamming that earlier comprised much of the substance of rock “pedagogy.” Nevertheless, for many budding rock musicians there are still classic songs to learn and inspiring figures to emulate and even imitate; these figures and their tunes make up the rock repertoire. Even the most informal rock pedagogy, a friend-to-friend transmission of one lick or another, plays a role in enshrining this repertoire of classic songs that then may comprise a musical influence on performance or composition styles. There are bands or songs that seem to fulfill this pedagogical role better than others: the relative popularity of a song might make it more likely that a beginning guitarist will gravitate toward it; or the melodic, rhythmic, or chordal structure of a song can be more or less difficult for beginning and intermediate students. Furthermore, students of different instruments are often attracted to bands in which “their” instrument is featured or the instrumentalist is considered particularly expert (for example, a drummer I spent a lot of time with in Bangalore often mentioned

how influenced he had been by the progressive rock band Rush, whose drummer was known for his complex rhythms and extravagant drum kit).

The imitative impulse is, arguably, the fundamental modality of musical pedagogy, but in popular music sources of tradition may also come from multiple media, and the modes of learning that accompany those sources encompass imitation as well as other types of learning. Jeff Schwartz, arguing that rock pedagogy is a form of folkloric tradition writes that:

> T]he folk process of local oral transmission works differently here; performance technique, the physical motion of playing an instrument, is passed from person to person… but the text, the music itself, does not change. It is fixed, canonical. The popular music recording serves as an even stricter model than the classical music score. (Schwartz 1993:281)

Schwartz's point raises interesting questions about what students of popular music learn from media sources such as recordings or videos. Whether or not students perceive the recorded song as a fixed model from which they should not diverge (unlikely), the use of aural and visual recorded material as a pedagogical tool can teach something other than the chords or lyrics. Particularly with the proliferation of rock performance videos on the Internet – which arguably represents one of the major shifts in musical consumption in recent years – gesture, style and stagecraft, integral parts of a band's appeal, are some of the types of information that beginning rock musicians glean, making these recorded sources important rock pedagogical tools in India as in other places around the world.

Throughout my interviews with musicians, when I asked – as I always did – about how someone started playing rock music the answers fell into three categories: watching more advanced musicians and copying them; listening to recordings in order to pick out the melodies, chords, lyrics and rhythms; or taking lessons from a teacher in college or in

a private music school. Older musicians were more likely to have been self-taught, while those under the age of twenty-five were increasingly taking guitar, drum or bass lessons from private teachers in the city, or enrolling in one of Bangalore's rock music schools, described in chapter 3.

Whether Indian rock music students learn on their own, from recordings and videos, from playing with other musicians, or from formal training, repertoire is most often pulled from a pool of western popular music, not from Indian film music or, for obvious reasons, from Indian classical or western classical traditions. As quoted in chapter 5 Ashish Patil, general manager of MTV India, has gone so far as to call rock music "the new gharaana," (Patil 2009), a comment to be taken with a grain of salt but one that also points to the extent to which (with media like MTV propelling it) rock music has become a normalized pastime and arena of study and avocation for certain urban middle-class youth. With the Internet has also come a proliferation of videos and a wide variety of genres and subgenres that previously had been less than easily accessible to Indian audiences. While students still begin with basic musical techniques, the pool of recordings, videos, sheet music, and thus influences has deepened considerably in the last decade. These pedagogical elements enter into a discussion of cover songs inasmuch as rock pedagogy works not only to increase musicianship but also appreciation of certain types of music: learning to play rock songs not only makes one a musician, it also arguably makes a more discerning fan and audience member.

Musicians: playing "other people's stuff" and the problem with not being original

In the spring of 2010 I attended a performance by the cover band Retronome at Jimi's, a bar downstairs from the metal club Purple Haze on Bangalore's Residency

Road. Jimi's, fancier and more expensive than the heavy metal club it shared a building with was filled that night with young professional types, some of their older colleagues and a few metal band shirt-clad college kids, who sat outside the main lounge smoking and ignoring the live band. Retronome's members (Chris Avinash on guitars and vocals, Santosh "Saggy" Gnanaken on vocals and bass, Trinity D on guitars, Ryan Colaco on drums and Uday Jose on vocals and keyboards) played a set that included Tom Petty, Deep Purple, INXS, Toto and Pink Floyd while the audience chatted, ate and drank. During the band's break the big flat-screen televisions around the club showed classic rock song videos, and when the Doors' "Light my Fire" came on suddenly people's attention was caught by the video: the old classic garnered as enthusiastic a reaction as the one provoked by the live band. Roy Orbison singing Pretty Woman also had many in the crowd singing along enthusiastically, and when Retronome interrupted the video to come back on stage they had a difficult time getting the crowd's attention from the screen. The lead singer and guitarist for Retronome, Chris Avinash, took this in stride; as a long time participant in the rock scene, had a complicated relationship to the audiences and the scene in Bangalore where he made a living as a musician but where, as he would later express to me, he had had to make some compromises and adjustments over the years.

While students and casual fans may not think twice about playing or enjoying cover songs, for those musicians who perform covers regularly the stakes are somewhat different. As Indian rock enters its sixth decade, the call from the numerous industry functionaries, club owners, promoters, and journalists is to "become original," or perish. Cover songs are relegated to specific performance categories that musicians learn to

navigate in order to appeal to audiences or to make some money from shows. Thus, although playing cover songs has been a common practice in the scene and pub gigs such as the one just described provides regular (though limited) sources of income and



Figure 6.1 Poster for Retronome at Take 5 Club, Indiranagar, Bangalore

performance opportunities for musicians, when asked about playing covers the musicians I talked to would often (and unprovoked) make justifications for it – clearly aware that the predominant view in Bangalore was that playing cover songs was less important or respectable than playing original songs.

The musicians playing cover songs in Bangalore are self-aware about their musical choices and about the place of the cover song in the larger scene, and the musicians I write about here, Chris, Rajeev, and Bryan, were no exception. All three of these musicians were in their mid-thirties at the time of this research, married, and had been playing rock music since their teen years. None played solely cover songs and all three had different approaches to playing or writing original music. The conversations I

had with these musicians very often came back to the "scene," its directions, why one thought it was or was not thriving, or how to "make it." What it meant to "make it" was a theme that came up in almost all my interviews with musicians in various forms, and I understood it to be a desire less motivated by the promise of massive financial remuneration (not usually a possibility for Indian rock musicians), and more about promulgation and dissemination: bands wanting to be heard, wanting to have fans, have shows, tours in India and abroad, and the possibility to playing for a living on a grand scale. Thus, while the personal reflections and experiences these musicians shared provide some insights into the discourses circulating about the concepts of originality and creativity and how musicians navigate or understand those concepts in relation to their own work, these concerns were always also framed by the practical issues of making a living (or not) from rock music.

Chris had worked in the Bangalore rock music scene for almost 15 years and when I interviewed him was working part time as a recording engineer and producer and in the evenings playing the rounds of upscale Bangalore pubs fielding requests from the after-work crowd. An excitable, talkative self-taught musician, Chris had had a wealth of experience in bands, as an event organizer, a composer (for other musicians as well as for advertising jingles), a teacher of guitar at Jothimas College, a judge in competitions and – utilizing his MBA in marketing – a branding specialist who used his knowledge about marketing and music to find sponsors for his rock shows. In our conversation, which took place in his home studio in a small tower room above his family's flat, we talked about his history in the rock scene, about performance opportunities and the problems with being a working rock musician in India. As we talked it became clear that Chris was

fairly cynical about the idea that Bangalore was some kind of haven for rock music – an idea mostly bandied about by promoters when comparing the city's nightlife to other metropoles in the south – and stated in response to my comment that Bangalore seemed to be home to a lot of bands: "yes, but how many of them are making a living playing music? I've been doing that for years." The problem of making a living with rock music was one that for Chris, as a father and husband, was a paramount concern. Chris's band, Retronome, which plays "not a single original" as he put it, is out of the ordinary for Bangalore in that three out of its five members are "only doing gigging" as Chris said – that is to say, making their living only from playing music. While my interview questions expressly did not touch on people's finances or income levels, Chris did talk about the role that performing rock music played in his career goals and employment, although it seemed clear that simply performing was in no way enough to make a living without other forms of support, whether from other jobs or family. Chris, very aware of the limitations and benefits of playing in a cover band, stated that he no longer played original music because

> [Th]ere's no point. I don't want to be cynical but at this point in time I'd rather be known as a cover band that can entertain than a band that's trying to attempt getting a sound together. I'd rather just play covers people know, and do a REO Speedwagon, or a Toto…I don't know, Pink Floyd (Avinash 2010).

Hiring Retronome assured pub owners that their audiences would be getting familiar and enjoyable classic rock songs rather than amateur death metal or experimental rock that would likely scare away business. When I asked Chris about whether he ever felt compelled to write original music today, he replied "if anyone wants my originals now, they have to pay for them," referring to the work he was doing writing jingles and producing for other singers and bands in Bangalore. In the case of his own music, Chris

was quite clear about the boundary between original music and covers in that he had decided for himself that the production side of the music industry was where he would funnel his creativity, and the performance side was where cover songs would be the most financially remunerative. Although resolute about his own reasons for playing covers, Chris also mentioned that each of the musicians in the band had had extensive experience in other, original, bands pointing out that they played covers not because they couldn't play original music but by choice. He described his earlier band, Angel Dust, which had won multiple competitions and which he described as "heavily original;" as he explained their "concepts were original," with the band once putting on a whole show meant to sound like a radio show, including advertisements and sponsor messages.

While not being taken seriously as an "artist" is one disadvantage to playing covers, many musicians resort to playing them because they feel that audiences don't appreciate their original music. Rajeev, a club owner (of the respected venue Kyra, in Indiranagar) in 2010 played with a band called Wolfpack that played a combination of covers and his own original music. A native of Kerala, whose family of origin had emigrated to the Persian Gulf as part of the diaspora of migrant workers during the oil boom of the late seventies, Rajeev had returned to Bangalore to marry and he and his wife had invested in the live music scene via their venue Kyra. Committed to songwriting, he nevertheless played mostly cover songs in performance, including Nirvana, U2 and Led Zeppelin. As a venue owner and musician Rajeev had experienced both hosting and promoting original and cover bands and playing original and cover music, and had clear ideas about the importance of original music and about the history, parameters and limitations of the scene:

> In 2000 there were bands in Bangalore but they were still covers. They were not doing much of their own material. Once they did their own material it was all like very heavily influenced by eighties music; they just pieced it together without knowing how. Songwriting is pretty intricate, it's an art. So there was nothing substantial, nothing good coming out. And bands who played originals were not treated all that well (Fallen 2009).

I did not during our interview ask Rajeev to expand on his comment that original bands were not "treated all that well," but in subsequent conversations at his club and throughout the period of my research in conversations with other musicians I became more clear about what that perceived mistreatment entailed, and for musicians the list of grievances was long and detailed: not being paid by venues; being cheated by promoters who made promises they never kept; having no audiences, or audiences who complained about the door price, or lack-luster audiences who called out for Pink Floyd in the middle of a set, among other problems. On the other hand, as Chris pointed out, many musicians in Bangalore "have jobs going and this is their passion…so they don't care how much they get paid." Rajeev, whose band Wolfpack broke up and re-formed with different members twice during the period of my fieldwork was patently frustrated with his own opportunities as a musician but had channeled that frustration into making the dinner theater Kyra an oasis for live music in the city, a place that was not often troubled by the police shut-downs from which other bars suffered.[64] Kyra programmed a combination of original bands and cover acts, and some of their most popular shows were their weekly tribute acts, which included various Bangalore musicians playing the corpus of the Doors, or the Beatles or Deep Purple.

[64] A rumor going around was that Rajeev had a personal connection with an aspiring rock guitarist who also happened to be a close relative of Bangalore's police commissioner.

While Rajeev and Chris were involved playing, composing as well as the business aspects of music, Bryan, who I interviewed early on in my research, was a journalist who had just written a history of the rock scene in Bangalore and who played guitar with the cover band Parousia. Christian, with a degree in theology, Bryan was also involved in the community of music journalists who considered how the rock scene was changing in Bangalore. During our conversation he took a long view of the development of the scene, placing it in a historical context in which access and live experience motivated fans and live performers:

> I think that also a lot of guys have realized, heck – we can't become rock stars doing this, or at least live the dream as fully as some people seem to. I mean we can keep getting gigs in pubs and stuff, maybe just be working musicians but we'll never actually have a tour and do that kind of stuff. You can't break through to the next level just playing other people's stuff. It seems to be patently true on some level at least (Richard 2009).

Bryan, whose writing and studies took precedence over playing with his band Parousia, was less concerned with his own band's originality or lack thereof and more interested in the ways in which the scene generally might support bands beyond the college circuit. For many of the musicians I talked to this was the thread running through our conversations: everyone had an opinion about which way the scene was headed and whether or not it was sustainable. Cover bands like Retronome, Parousia and Wolfpack, as well as the popular band Galeej Gurus were popular within a prescribed arena of venues and contexts; however, opinions about gaining success in a wider national or international field seemed to concur with Bryan's sense that in order to "break through to the next level" you can't be only playing "other people's stuff."

Notwithstanding the paid gigs for corporate events and the shows at pubs, the amount of money one could make playing covers was negligible when held up against the

idea of international success, the dream that motivated many musicians. Questions about originality were considered important inasmuch as they had to do with the onward momentum of the scene, and the onward momentum of the scene was measured in terms of paying gigs, festivals, bands on international tours, number of album downloads (to be discussed further in chapter seven), and attention from mainstream media in the country and outside the country. If measured by these metrics, without a doubt the genre that seemed poised to attain the most success in the larger Indian rock scene was fusion rock, in which, as the following section will describe, the use of Indian musical, linguistic and lyrical elements evokes a musical "authenticity" that resonates with an international audience.

Fusion and folk rock: regional roots in a transnational field

Indian fusion rock, or folk rock as it is sometimes also called, is akin to film music or Indipop in the sense that it audibly evinces Indian elements via language, instrumentation, song form or singing styles. Unlike cover, metal or indie bands in India whose national or regional identities are often inaudible, fusion rock bands make explicit their cultural "roots" (Kahn-Harris 2000). In terms of ensemble structure fusion rock is perhaps most closely related to (though still sounds significantly different from) the "raga rock" of the nineteen-sixties in which electric guitars, bass and drum kits were supplemented by sitars, tabla, flute, or tanbura, among other instruments (examples include the Yardbirds, the Kinks, the Beatles and Jeff Beck). In the case of raga rock these additions were often used as a kind of exotic icing; in fusion rock of the early 21st century, bands such as south India's Swarathma, Raghu Dixit Project, or Thermal and a

Quarter draw eclectically from a variety of Indian folk, classical and pop traditions to inform their song structures, lyrics and band style. The band Indian Ocean, formed in 1990, is often described as the first group to play in this genre, but the multiple syncretisms at work in Indian popular music in the twentieth century make such a claim uncertain at best.

While Bangalore can claim a particularly successful folk rock band, the Raghu Dixit Project, the city is not known as a center for the genre. Kolkata in particular is home to a thriving Bangla rock scene where much fusion rock is produced, but as one musician from Bangalore I spoke to described it, the Bangla rock scene tends to be insular, "too regional" as he put it (Tambe 2010), because of their adherence to Bangla-language lyrics, and are not as tapped into the national circuit of festivals, competitions, and shows that bands from Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai or Bangalore regularly attend. Fusion bands like Krosswindz (Kolkata), Advaita (Delhi), Avial (Kerala), among many others play forms of fusion music along a continuum of styles, sometimes using regional languages with a traditional rock ensemble or utilizing traditional folk or classical elements as part of their song structure, or using subject matter for lyrics that has to do with their place of origin.

Rock-oriented Indian fusion and particularly the "west-east" musical exchanges of the 1960s have received some (albeit scant) attention from scholars (Farrell 2000), but ethnomusicologists have also studied the many musical forms coming from the South Asian diaspora in the U.S. and U.K., music that includes bands like UK-based indie rock band Cornershop, the bhangra genre, and artists like Apache India, Talvin Singh, Asian Dub Foundation or Rishi Rich, who use a variety of hip hop or dance music elements

along with Indian folk or classical instruments and song forms (Taylor 1997, 2007; Maira 2002).[65] What Indian diasporic musical sounds might offer an investigation of India-based fusion bands is open to debate. Taylor has observed music's "malleability" (Taylor 1997), a characteristic that has intensified in the last decade: traveling light as digital ephemera, subject to manifold re-interpretations, remixes and influences, musical fusions resist explication that rely on national or ethnic origins. Furthermore the last decade has seen the digitization of musical media effect changes in consumption that seem to represent a decentralization of the music industry (Jones 2002, 2004), although these claims are often overstated (Azenha 2007). Referring to the place of popular music in the flows of cultural globalization Negus suggests that "a process of mediation occurs which involves struggles and relations of unequal power" (Negus 1996:171) and plainly the paths traveled by the elastic and mutable musical "object" can be complex, asymmetrical, and random.

Even as translocal affiliations constitute the scene logics of genres like metal or indie rock, the inverse of the increased ephemerality of the popular musical product and the postmodern pastiche of sounds accessible in the digital sphere seems to be a definite pressure from the music industry (whether on MTV in Rolling Stone, or voiced by label representatives, producers and managers) for non-western musicians to enact their otherness in more clearly audible ways. Not only deemed necessary for sales and marketing, "sounding Indian" is cast as an almost moral demand: as one industry

[65] The affinity between hip hop and South Asian sounds has had other offshoots: American hip hop had its late 1990s moment with Indian film music samples (Jay-Z, Truth Hurts, Black Eyed Peas), a trend that has faded somewhat in the last decade, and in 2008 the hip hop group Das Racist, two of whose three members are South Asians raised in Queens, New York, came out with the song "Combination Pizza Hut and Taco Bell," a track some mistook as novelty rap but which was in fact the first sortie of the group's hyper-literate, politically-conscious musical project in which jokey lyrics make cogent cultural critiques about race, class and identity.

functionary put it at a popular music industry conference I attended in Mumbai, "you should sound like your cultural background, whatever that is." As Taylor has observed, however, it is never the rock musician from the west who is supposed to sound like his "cultural background." The New York-based indie band Vampire Weekend are "eclectic" when they play their self-described "upper west side Soweto," while an Indian progressive rock band is derided by the same industry functionary for "sounding like Mr. Big." Maureen Mahon, discussing "politics of authenticity and representation" in the production and reception of cultural forms notes that

> categories as indigenous media (versus media), "minority art" (versus art), and "world music" (versus music) contribute to a kind of ghettoization that treats "their" productions differently from "mainstream" ones even as these categories constitute a space for the creation and reception of these forms (Mahon 2000:480)

The following discussion explores how two Bangalore-based bands, the Raghu Dixit Project and Thermal and A Quarter musically negotiate the politics of authenticity through claims to locality, through lyrical and musical emplacement, and through a conscious cultural rootedness. Notwithstanding the industry's demands, in these two bands musicians reflexively draw from their experiences and history to make music that also fits into and is self-described as rock music. Akin to but considerably more complex than the directive to "sound Indian" present in the mediated spheres of public culture, the reflexive localization taking place here evince subjects' strategic use of a variety of elements and themes that signify locality.

Strategic authenticity and reflexive locality: Raghu Dixit Project and Thermal and a Quarter

In November of 2010, *Later…with Jools Holland*, a long-running music television show on BBC 2 featured Robert Plant, Mavis Staples, Adele, and the Raghu Dixit

Project, (henceforth RDP) a folk-rock band from Bangalore. The program, hosted by a long-time studio musician, TV personality and producer Jools Holland, is known for its ability to "break" a band and often receives upwards of a million viewers; RDP had, according to their blog, spent the last of their savings to make the last-minute trip to the UK to play. It was a coup indeed, as while the show hosts "world music" acts somewhat regularly RDP was the first Indian rock band to play the show.



Figure 6.2 Album Cover of "Raghu Dixit" 2007

Following Adele, RDP played a stripped-down acoustic set, absent their bass player, Gaurav Vaz, and dressed in their usual performance clothes of *longis* (long sarongs), tee shirts and with Dixit wearing the *salangai* (ankle bells) that accompany the band's percussion. The show's producers had asked them to play the song "No Man Will Ever Love You Like I Do, what RDP calls a "simple love song" that repeats the titular refrain, sung in English, interspersed with poetic lyrics in Hindi about the object of affection:

> *Anjana dil mera, jabse tujhse mila*
> *Begana pal bhulake, apna banake tujhe chal pada*

Meri janejaan, oh, janejaan

Since my wandering heart met you
I lost the time we were strangers, made you mine on the journey I began
My love, oh, my love

By all accounts a great success, after RDP's appearance on the show "No Man Will Ever Love You Like I Do" was the most downloaded song on iTunes UK for the month. RDP's performance on the Jools Holland show came shortly after the band had played Glastonbury, England's premiere summer music festival. Since forming in 2008 RDP played the festivals and gig circuit around India but unlike most of their contemporaries they also spent much of 2010 and 2011 touring in the UK and Europe and by summer of 2012 were making the rounds of festivals in the U.K., including the SAMA Festival, the Salisbury international Arts Festival, the Cambridge Folk Festival, the Solas Festival and WOMAD.

Among the multitude of Indian bands now performing and participating in the local industry, fusion bands have had the most success breaking into the international market, but not all fusion bands share similar success stories. RDP is the exception to the rule, and much of their popularity can be attributed to their mixture of musical talent, presentation, and careful negotiation of the overlapping fields of Indian popular music – they work in the Kannada and Hindi film industry, play the rock circuit, and do international world music festivals. Raghu Dixit (trained in Bharatnatyam and a former microbiologist) has powerful, soulful voice, and sings with the ornament and melisma characteristic of popular film singers; his songs are composed in a verse-chorus form with Hindi and Kannada lyrics. RDP released their first album after the music producers Vishal and Shakur heard Raghu sing at a gig at Mumbai venue Zenzi and signed the

group to their label; Raghu Dixit now has a recording deal with the German world music label Wrasse, as well as (unprecedented for an Indian rock musician) a music publishing deal with Sony ATV.

Raghu, who was raised in a "traditional South Indian household" (Vaz 2010) did not pick up a guitar until he was in college, and his first musical success came when he was living in Belgium for work. Raghu's landlord, impressed with his tenant's talent, took a CD of Raghu's music to a local radio station who invited him on air to play. Bolstered by the approbation he received from the performance, Raghu returned to India, settled in Bangalore and started his first band, Antaragni, a fusion band that broke up after eight years. I was never able to interview Raghu due to his busy touring and working schedule, but Gaurav, the band's bassist, lived down the street from me in the Koramangala neighborhood and one day we sat down in a coffee shop to talk about RDP and Vaz's own musical history. Gaurav played bass in RDP but had started playing the guitar in church – he was raised Roman Catholic in Mangalore and his mother had urged him to play music as an avocation:

> I was always learning the guitar. I did learn Indian classical vocal and violin for three months. It went into temple-based music, though, and I didn't identify with any of those songs, and my parents at that time were listening to ABBA…that's the music I had at home…I knew all those songs, so the guitar was just natural (Vaz 2009).

Gaurav, working full time as a musician in RDP, had also played hard rock for some years as well as worked in radio and in managing and promotions in the rock scene. As RDP become more successful, however, much of his time was taken up with the project as he was the band's unofficial webmaster, maintaining a frequently updated blog and good looking and professional website. On the home page of RDP's website is an official

biography of the band that offers an interesting narrative. Although self-promotion is the prime motivation of a band biography, self-description is also an integral part of the reflexive project that bands undertake, and so these writings can be a useful tool in understanding a band's perception of their own positionality and the audience they hope to reach. RDP's music, in their band biography account,

> [Is] not only a symbol of metropolitan India's blossoming alternative music scene, but is also making waves internationally. As Raghu recounts, the music that The Raghu Dixit Project makes, [sic] is a true representation of today's India. Ethnic and rooted at the core, but at the same time, global in its outlook [sic]. It's not a surprise that Raghu has been referred to as India's biggest cultural export of recent times ("About Raghu Dixit")

"Ethnic and rooted at the core" but also "global in its outlook" is a trope so pervasive in post-liberalization public culture that it might easily be transposed as a tagline for a BPO office, a fashion house, or any other business seeking to enter a competitive transnational marketplace. This is not to suggest, however, that RDP are only marketing themselves here: their biography as well as their musical and individual identities are representative of the "flexible articulations" between regional, national and globalized markers that anchor a post-liberalization generation of upper middle class Indians (Lukose 2009). In the case of RDB the ease with which the band draws fluidly from regional, national and global influences is apparent not only in their discourse, but also in their musical output, as Gaurav and I discussed:

> Raghu Dixit coined this phrase that it is "Indo-world folk rock" because it's Indian folk largely and we use Arabic and Latin percussion instruments and percussive elements and there's a very distinctive lead guitar. All songs are Indian folk songs…the style is very folk and the Kannada songs we sing are traditional folk songs in the sense that they've been written by this poet of the 18th century in Karnataka. His name is Shishunal Sharif – a Kannada folk poet. He used to write these quirky lyrics about everyday life, with many interpretations: in the sense that many people composed melodies – he only wrote the lyrics. So Raghu really

> took to this and he's been giving melody to those words and that's the music we play (Vaz 2009).

The use of a Kannada folk poet for lyrics was one of the reasons that RDP was considered to be regional and rooted; the use of a "strong lead guitar" here clearly signifies a rock element, and the band fits into an eclectic, world music category via their use of instruments from other traditions. Language choice, however, is the most audible evidence of the band's difference from other Indian rock bands, as Gaurav describes when I asked him why they chose to sing in Hindi and particularly in Kannada (the only band I heard in Bangalore to do so):

> It makes us unique. Raghu was born and brought up Mysore and came to Bangalore 10 years back but he still talks and thinks in Kannada. And these folk songs that we sing mean a lot, it's not just that we're hooking up songs that we don't identify with. We had the exact opposite with Phenom [his college band] because I think and speak in English, I don't think in my regional tongue at all, though I can speak. I am a Mangalorean so my mother tongue is Konkani – that's what we speak at home. And I speak Kannada to the locals, but I still think in English (Vaz 2009).

One song in particular speaks to Raghu Dixit's emplacement: "Mysore se aayi" (I'm from Mysore) describes the city of Mysore in the metaphor of a beautiful woman:

> *Mysore se aayi woh, akhiyon se teer maar gayi*
> *Bole na bole re, dil ko churake le gayi*
> *Chand ka tukda hai chehera*
> *Beheti baalon ki dhara*
> *Usme moti ka gajra*
> *Aankhen jo chain maar gayi*
> *Hey aajare, sajni, aajare*
>
> The girl from Mysore, shot arrows from her eyes
> With only a few words, she stole my heart
> Her face is like the moon
> Her hair, flowing like a river
> In it, a garland of pearls
> Eyes, that take away all my peace!

RDP's connection to roots typifies, I suggest, a kind of strategic authenticity – strategic authenticity a formulation that is meant to highlight the constructed nature of the "authentic" as it relates to the politics of cultural performance within a transnational economy. Following Timothy D. Taylor's notion of "strategic inauthenticy" (Taylor 1997:126), the mode by which non-western artists may utilize a variety of disparate cultural elements in their music to subvert expectations of cultural homology, the notion of strategic authenticity as presented here is an inversion of that formulation: the reflexive use by non-western rock musicians of locally regional or national elements in their rock music. Positioning themselves as a folk rock band, RDP's music makes reflexive claims to Raghu's cultural roots through language, lyrics, instrumentation, and through the use of traditional clothes to perform. These maneuvers arguably allow Raghu an increased mobility in the field of musical performance: while from the vantage point of the Jools Holland audience he represents an authentically local musician whose cosmopolitanism (rock line up and English language lyrics) renders him interesting and accessible, for local audiences he represents a symbol of the new India – rooted in his heritage but sophisticated and globally appealing.

Raghu Dixit Project gets much acclaim from the Indian popular music industry but the band Thermal and a Quarter, known as TAAQ (their name is a pun on the bands' ethnicity – three Malayalee members and one member who is a quarter Malayalee), are one of the bands most respected in Bangalore by journalists and other musicians. Often cited as the first band in Bangalore to play exclusively original music, the band has been playing together since 1996, and lead guitarist and singer Bruce Lee Mani is widely regarded as one of the best players in the city. Two out of the band's four members have

made music their only job, supplementing their touring and festival income with the TAAQademy, a music school for aspiring rock musicians. In an interview on NPR in 2009, Bruce Lee Mani recounted what it was like being a band in the 1990s in Bangalore, and always being asked for covers: "It took a long time before people started coming to concerts and asking for our songs – we just kept playing and playing and playing them" (Mani 2009). TAAQ describes its music as "Bangalore Rock; a sound as unique and layered as the fast-growing city of its birth," and their music as having a "Phish-meets-Steely Dan-via-Mahavishnu-Orchestra vibe." Unlike RDP, Thermal and a Quarter's music is not at all folk-oriented; rather, their music is funk and rock based (they are fond of writing in 5/4 and 7/8 time), and their lyrics are exclusively in English.

In the case of TAAQ their locality, their identity as cosmopolitan Bangaloreans is readily apparent in their lyrical matter, which includes topics that are often under discussion in Koshy's, the historic hangout for journalists and artists on St. Mark's Road. In "Kickbackistan" Mani sings: "Common are these games, these games of wealth/ Common is the shame my country has felt"; while in "Clean up," he sings "New plug-and play/ Steel and glass duplex/ And that burning desire to be green and grounded/ It's taking too long, and time's running out." Government corruption and worries about air and water pollution, particularly in Bangalore's crowded and overtaxed urban environs are two of the issues often under discussion in the English-educated middle class, people who work in journalism and the arts, and who claim their locality not only through ethnic or linguistic identification, nor as part of the go-go enthusiasms for economic and business developments in the city, but as part of a cosmopolitanized, intellectual class. TAAQ's reflexive localism, then, is engendered by an urban rather than a national or

regional identity, and their lyrics reflect this orientation. In "Brigade Street," a song about Bangalore's historic shopping avenue, Bruce Lee Mani sings "This is where I find myself, my true identity/ Lost in a crowd searching for who I want to be." The band's cosmopolitanism and urban orientation is perhaps most fully described in their song "Look at Me":

> Look, go ahead, look at me
> Black hair, brown eyes, brown man
> Never mind the goatee
> Oh yes, I'm from the exotic east
> The heat and the dust and the burden of the beast
> The smells, the spices and the mystery
> Of people just trying, just trying to be
> I speak four tongues/ Hell, here we all do
> And we find the space / To think in yours too
> Oh yes, I' m cool and mean / And I play that rock n' roll
> I don't use gasoline / I get around on petrol
> The Empire went back and Skywalker came
> But Asha still sells on forty-five fame
> Then John, Paul, George and the other guy
> Crossed the Universe and got real high
> Don't you see it yet? Don't you see it yet?
> I like my toast in the morning
> But you can't take away my full meals by the wayside
> I like Chinese you know the chow
> But mama tears me down when I eat the holy cow
> It's still an odd situation / Every time I realize
> That I'm foolish with pounds/
> When my brothers are not even penny-wise
> But I've got my karmic law and all/ I accept so much so easy
> I'm a rampant intellectual/When I' m with my glass of bubbly
> Don't you see it yet? Don't you see it yet?

While in their lyrics TAAQ reveal their rooted identity as urban Bangaloreans, their music is not thought of as "local" in the same way as RDP's. Without the markers of language, clothing and instrumentation, and with their funk-rock sound, the band struggles to book performances outside the country and has less opportunity to play the world music festivals that are RDP's entre onto the international stage. While RDP's

strategic authenticity allows them to claim locality in a way that translates onto the world stage, TAAQ's urban cosmopolitanism, no more or less complex than RDP's, is less readily representative of an easily recognizable "Indian" identity. Their "authenticity" is in representing a Bangalore that is neither demonstrably ethnic (via language) nor invested in portraying an "India rising" type of nationalism. Thus despite their musical acumen and strong lyrics TAAQ's prospects in the international arena will very likely never equal those of RDP's.

Conclusion

When I first arrived in Bangalore, a rock musician I'd met in 2007 and been in contact with for several years told me that I should go see Raghu Dixit play at the Rocktoberfest: "Go check them out, they're very…original," he said to me. "Raghu wears a *longi* onstage." "Really?" "Yeah," he replied, "He comes to the venue in jeans and a button down shirt and then changes backstage into the *longi* and ankle bells, and comes onstage to play. He used to be a microbiologist…but now he sings Kannada songs." My friend was quick to add that he admired RDP and their successes, but his statement, though delivered good naturedly, seemed ambiguous. He was not the only person I met in Bangalore to suggest that RDP's musical practices evinced strategic marketing, and while no one was denigrating the idea of marketing in and of itself, there seemed to be something about the way that RDP marketed themselves that other musicians were ambivalent about. Chris, from Retronome, while saying he admired RDP's music and successes also observed that as English was his first language and rock music his first musical love he didn't see why he "should have to have a sitar" in his band

in order to "make it internationally," implying that these two bands were successful in part because of these aspects of their music:

> Raghu Dixit, Swarathma [another Bangalore-based fusion band] those guys…Raghu Dixit would not have gone to London [on tour] if they did not have an Indian element about them. And it's a good thing that they're able to do it in that way, there are very few bands who can pull it off.

Comments like the ones above serve to underline the negotiations that take place as part of the reflexive process of making rock music in India. Chris commented as well that

> I realized the hard way…you know you have the stage and you think 'I want to go to London, I want to go to America'…and then I realized the only way I would be able to do that was to play guitar in a band that has an Indian instrument in it OR learn to play guitar the Indian way as in the Indian scales – Indian classical on guitar. And that was the only way I was going to be successful, but why would I be doing that? Just to travel Europe or America, why would I force myself to be in a band that is doing fusion music with a sitar player and a flautist – that's not the music I've grown up on. Strangely, being in India. I've only grown up on a staple diet of Western music. As a kid I'd hear ABBA, Boney M…little black LPs the neighbors had. And I went to school where we learned western music, English songs (Avinash 2010).

This is a comment about musical output, presentation, and marketing, but it is also, in part, about subjectivity, as Rajeev, from Wolfpack, made clear to me:

> You have bands that are purely into the regional thing, like Swarathma, Raghu Dixit, those kind of things. They've done well for themselves. It's just, I've had to hear things over here which are pretty racist, pretty sad, I've had to hear things like 'you're a brown-skinned guy, why do you sing English? – I mean screw it! I grew up speaking English, listening to rock music, exactly! (Fallen 200).

Unfortunately, these types of cultural essentialisms were somewhat commonplace. At the independent music conference Unconvention, two label industry functionaries, one a label owner and one a well-known producer demonstrated how these issues played out in an international context while discussing the Indian rock scene on a panel on "Industry":

> The thing is, with the majority of the bands I've heard here is that there's such a desire to get away from anything Indian that they end up sounding like carbon copies of things from other countries…it's not about a condescending white person saying 'for god's sake put a sitar in that Black Sabbath song…
> Be original, show your roots. No one wants a classic rock band. Mr. Big sells 20 thousand tickets here and it's no good! (Bianchi 2009)

"Roots" here is synonymic for "local," "authentic," and even "original;" however, these attributes and the musical elements associated with them, while often deemed "natural," culturally "organic," are instead, reflexive, constructed and subject to dispute. While widely divergent musical practices, the cover bands and fusion bands discussed in this chapter are – based on their emplacement in the transnational field of rock music – subject to the same expectations of "cultural authenticity."

The ramifications of these types of issues have shaped Indian rock since its inception, as in the oft-cited (in Indian rock circles) case of the band Indus Creed, who in the early nineteen-nineties was a Mumbai-based hard rock band called Rock Machine. Having attained a U.S. manager the band traveled to Los Angeles where they were urged to change their name and sound to become more "recognizably" Indian; subsequently the band added a tabla player to their line-up and became known as Indus Creed. Despite these strategic changes the band never "made it" abroad and has for the past twenty years continued to play the Indian circuit. Although comprised of respected musicians, Indus Creed's difficult negotiation of the transnational music industry has made them something of a cautionary tale in the industry. As Rock Machine they perfectly represented Indian rock music of the time for fans – English language heavy metal – but were viewed as undesirably imitative by their U.S. manager; as Indus Creed they were viewed as "sell-outs" by their Indian fans, and also could not make in-roads on the international stage.

Locality and forms of ethnic or national identity which previously functioned as stylistic anchors for musical sound no longer work in the same way: comparing hip hop coming from a Queens-raised Punjabi American to hard rock from Kolkata with Bangla lyrics, for example, serves only to illustrate how woefully inadequate national origins and ethnic identities are as a predictor of musical output in the globalized field of popular music. To phrase this formulation positively, in the field of global popular music translocal affiliations (in part defined in the realm of the imaginary[66]) can and often do overshadow forms of identification that previously rooted cultural products. Appadurai suggests that to understand the disjunct flows that characterize processes of globalization "our very models of cultural shape will have to alter, as configurations of people, place and heritage lose all semblance of isomorphism" (Appadurai 1990:20). Music industry insiders such as the one quoted here are guilty of reifying cultural output; nevertheless what they do have a finger to the pulse of is what types of cultural output will be popular in the stratified genres of the transnational music industry. Having "high symbolic value" in the transnational music industry eases the pathway to attaining economic capital as a successful participant in the same; thus the attribution of authenticity or cultural rootedness is a functional cog in the machinery of "making it" – both theoretically and in the practices and discourses of scene participants.

[66] "the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (both in the sense of labor and of culturally organized practice) and a form of negotiation between sites of agency ('individuals') and globally defined fields of possibility." (Appadurai 1990:5)

CHAPTER 7

METALHEADS AND IND(I)EPENDENTS: SUBJECTIVITY, CREATIVITY AND THE FORGING OF AN INDUSTRY

While the previous chapter discussed the notions of originality and authenticity as quasi-prescriptive dynamics negotiated by cover and fusion musicians, the present chapter explores how musical production in the metal and independent (the latter sometimes called indie or alternative) genres mediates modes of social belonging in the urban middle class Indian milieu, with subjects whose agency takes shape through creative and entrepreneurial practices and as well as through the performative and discursive enactment of gendered forms of fandom. Though musically disparate, metal and independent bands in Bangalore deal with many of the same issues as cover and fusion bands, including the lack of a developed audience base; negotiation of the barriers to professionalization and monetization; and the onus from the (national and international) popular music industry to represent an "Indian" sound.

The metal and independent genres share the characteristic that their participants are, to use Emma Baulch's phrase, in some ways "gesturing elsewhere" with their music, toward a transnational scene and audience (Baulch 2003). Metal bands play in a translocal network in which geographically disparate scenes adhere through aesthetic and musical mores and specialized media. Indie bands in Bangalore tend not to be able to transcend their locality to the same extent, for a variety of reasons, but due in large part to the expectation of a place-based scene logic in that genre (Straw 1996). The issues for these musicians are not always about originality (although they are too concerned with the need for it in the scene) but rather about how musical participation presents avenues

for the expression of identity through fandom and participation in business practices that intersect with subjects' life projects. Many of Bangalore's rock scene subjects are involved in the "grassroots"[67] rock music industry in urban India: the do-it-yourself (DIY), formerly purely avocational network of affiliations, publications, venues and performance opportunities that in the last fifteen years has created a small alternative alongside the film music industry in India.

The preceding chapters in this dissertation have demonstrated how rock music is a significant example of a public, youth culture formation that is partially created and indelibly shaped by the increased, intensifying, and changing role of media and consumption in India, a process that is in turn implicated in the shifting character of the middle class. Appadurai and Breckenridge suggest that late-twentieth century public culture has been a "contested terrain" upon which what is at stake is "no less than the consciousness of the emergent Indian public" (1995:6). In this chapter I explore how an analysis of rock music culture can provide insight into the valorization of particular mediated subject categories, but also how, as a type of imaginative practice, rock music allows subjects to reflect upon, express something about, or negotiate their positionality. The musical practices under discussion here, rife with concerns about individuality, identity, musical aesthetics and the problems of forging an industry provide insight Bangalore's urban globalized and gendered youth culture formations in the early 21st century.

[67] This is a term used strategically by scene participants, particularly in the independent music genre for a variety of reasons that this chapter outlines.

Metal rules in Bangalore: business, fandom, and gendered subjectivity

Metal has ruled the Bangalore rock scene for more than two decades, and most weekends one can find a metal show at a pub or on an outdoor stage with a singer tearing up his vocal chords to a crowd of college-aged boys moshing and throwing horns. With a dedicated audience, a canonical repertoire of idols and songs, and a prescribed set of influences and aesthetics revisited by each new generation of fans, the metal scene in Bangalore has a national reputation – the "Dravidian army" as one Mumbaiker I met put it, referring to the language grouping spoken by many South Indians. On a warm night in 2010 I sat down to interview Nolan Lewis, lead singer of Bangalore's best-known death-thrash metal[68] band, Kryptos. Long-haired with hooded eyes, wearing the tee shirt of an Norwegian black metal band, Nolan had been playing in Bangalore since 1998 and was now in his early thirties, working a corporate job during the day and making music in the evenings. Our three-hour conversation touched on the partying habits of Indian college kids, the tyranny of the engineering profession, Bangalore's malls (Nolan's vitriol overflowed here), the unpleasant necessity of having a "real" job, metal timbre and fashion, conspiracy theory and the Mayan calendar. Nolan was sarcastic, pessimistic, politically disgusted, aesthetically purist and had a bone-dry sense of humor; he wasn't enthused about the metal scene in Bangalore but represented one of its success stories. Kryptos had in 2008 signed to the California-based label Old School Metal Records, and

[68] Thrash as a subgenre is generally distinguished by its speed, and adherents claim its aggression, particularly in the drums. Death metal can be instantly identified by its growling, guttural, or shrieking vocals. Although musicians and fans tend to be deeply invested in the distinctions between genres, often genre sub-definition continues ad absurdum and includes the spontaneous invention of new subgenre monikers. Throughout this chapter, then, I will be limiting the definitions of musical characteristics to more common subgenres like black, death, thrash, doom and power metal.

in 2010 mounted a fairly successful tour in Europe (they broke even) called Invasion Europa.

Some time after our interview I heard Kryptos perform at the Furtados music shop in Bangalore. Crammed into a brightly-lit second floor instrument showroom, three-dozen sweaty young men and two young women cheered, head-banged and flung themselves around in a controlled frenzy, careful to avoid the store's instruments and glass cabinets. Catharsis, physical release, and the unabashed pleasure in speed, volume and musical aggression are arguably the engines of metal fandom in Bangalore as elsewhere around the world, and Kryptos engendered that familiar, almost primal physical response in its audience, even while fans were almost polite in their moshing. Unlike the anti-Christian Norwegian black metal of the 1990s from which Kryptos drew musical influences no violent anti-social undertone animates the scene in Bangalore, though lyrics often do express or at least describe the familiar blood, death and anguish themes that black metal bands are known for.

Among the variety of globalized popular music genres heavy metal is distinctive in its adherence to specific aesthetic norms, and involvement in metal usually means embodying a specialized type of fandom that conjoins particular fashion choices, concert etiquettes and behavior, and expectations about musical tastes. The onus of a certain type of authenticity is a key component of Bangalore's metal fandom: as one young man I spoke with put it, "a real metal head always recognizes another real metal head" expressing in shorthand the ties that fans of the genre often feel for one another through recognition of kindred tastes. Fans of metal around the world practice an often strict maintenance of taste boundaries, but this fact alone does not account for the genre's

popularity. Despite not always gaining mainstream industry success, metal and many of its myriad subgenres have thrived, supporting a network of underground (not mainstream) media comprised of specialty magazines and fanzines, websites, message boards and social media. These networks have enabled the global expansion of heavy metal music to diverse locales, through a variety of routes (not only via MTV or large record labels) and based in part on the devotion of its followers. The devotion might be characterized as "purist"; as Wallach, Berger and Greene write in the introduction to their edited volume "Global Metal":

> [No] matter where it is found, metal music answers the question of how ethics…fit into a disenchanted universe by offering a promise of community and significance built around powerful emotions and amplified sounds (Wallach, Berger and Greene 2011:8)

Since Robert Walser's influential work *Running With the Devil: Gender, Power and Madness in Heavy Metal* scholars have argued for the need to take metal music seriously musicologically; that is to say, to pay heed to the ways that its sounded characteristics (even absent the trappings of performativity and spectacle) constitute its strength and resilience as a genre. Perhaps more than any other genre under discussion in these pages, an investigation of the appeal of heavy metal must take into account its sounds: the speed, volume, power chords, and timbres that define its aesthetics. This is not to say that the sounds of fusion, independent, or cover bands do not matter; rather, it is the extent to which Bangalore's metal fans care about and are invested in the specific sounded elements of their music and how much this investment informs their fandom discourses that sets them apart from these other genres.

Bangalore's metal scene is one that has thrived despite the genre's weakness in other parts of the country. One reason for this is the city's forgiving approach to alcohol

and its low entertainment tax that has enabled the city to host a large number of international metal acts, including some of the giants of the heavy metal pantheon. Metallica, Iron Maiden, Amon Amorth, Slayer, Lamb of God, among many others have brought thousands of fans out to venues like Palace Grounds, and such shows have done much to strengthen the genre's fan base and appeal among young Indians generally and Bangaloreans specifically. These practical elements have much to do with metal's success and popularity in Bangalore, but India's metal scene has also been facilitated by the availability and propagation of metal media in the last two decades. Shared fandom and appreciation of these forms of media contribute to the consolidation of fandom, but much of the appeal of the genre must also be understood in light of the subjective and expressed experiences of its fans and their reflexive understandings about their own fandom.

Indian metal history, tours and performances

While Indian bands of the nineteen-sixties and seventies drew inspiration from groups like the Beatles, Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones, during the nineteen-eighties many Indian musicians were listening to, covering, and being influenced by hard rock guitar-driven bands like Black Sabbath, Deep Purple, and the new wave of British heavy metal bands like Def Leopard, Iron Maiden and Judas Priest. How and why some particular bands and genres like hard and progressive rock and heavy metal grew to be so immensely popular in the Indian rock scene while other genres like punk or hip-hop are virtually non-existent is an intriguing question, with no straightforward answer. It does seem clear that part of the appeal of hard rock genres is technical: for (mostly) young male guitar students, heavy metal songs were replete with guitar licks and power chords

to imitate and emulate. Furthermore in the nineteen-eighties and very early nineties hard rock (Guns and Roses, ACDC, Aerosmith) was still fairly successful in the west, which meant it was the music that was making its way to India rather than more obscure or less mainstream genres. Piracy may have been another reason for the propagation of particular genres: with the lack of accessible media, fans tended to get their music through pirated tapes passed along from person to person, with various colleges fomenting their own types of musical lineages and archival bases of knowledge. One musician I spoke with jokingly told me he thought that the entire pantheon of Indian hard rock and metal idols came from a "patient zero," one young man whose music collection was passed around the colleges of metropolitan India. Though the days of tapes are over, with the advent of Mp3s sharing or pirating one's music collection – particularly for computer savvy Indian college students – became easier than ever and continues to enable most music consumption in the scene.

Whatever the reasons for the genre's emergence and resilience in India, the heavy metal scene was well established by the mid-nineteen-nineties. Hard or heavy metal bands had first made an appearance in the nineteen-eighties, with bands like Rock Machine (later Indus Creed) and Millennium, the latter based in Bangalore. Rock Machine, formed in 1984, began as a cover band playing songs by Thin Lizzy, Rush, and Iron Maiden but soon began writing original music and in 1988 released *Rock n Roll Renegade*, an album of hard rock anthems, on CBS records. The video for the titular track shows the band members in leopard print and ripped jeans, scarves tied around wrists and foreheads, smoke machines on overdrive, legs spread in full power metal stance: a true homage to hair metal. Rock Machine achieved as much success as was possible for an

Indian band at the time, touring all over the country and playing the UK Womad festival, having their videos released on MTV Asia and performing with Slash of Gus and Roses for the re-launch of MTV India. As chapter five discussed, this success was stymied when the band attempted to "go international" (RSJ staff writer 1995), that is, court international industry attention by changing their name to Indus Creed and bringing Indian instruments into their lineup. Nevertheless, Rock Machine's popularity and their original music arguably shaped the tastes of fans in India, whose appetite for hard rock seemed to outpace that for other genres in the following decades.

Another important band in the early Indian metal scene was Millennium, formed in 1986. Millennium, made up of medical students (three of whom were born abroad in England, Italy and Iran respectively), burst onto the scene with an infamous two hour set at the "Spirit of Iron Maiden" show, a festival entirely comprised of Iron Maiden covers. With a heavy metal, rather than hair metal or hard rock sound, Millennium is widely considered to be the first real metal band by Indian fans today; though their sound was heavy rather than black or death metal, their 1992 video "Peace Just in Heaven" features all the accoutrements of a black metal band, including a dead girlfriend lying in a coffin surrounded by candles and crosses. In 1995 Millennium opened for the band Deep Purple when they played in Bangalore, and in an interview with RSJ magazine in 1995 Millennium's lead singer Vehrnon Venturini Ibrahim commented on the importance of bands like Deep Purple playing in India, remarking that opening for the band had forced the band to write more original material:

> The set we're doing tonight is 95 percent original material. It would be kinda crazy opening for Deep Purple and saying, 'Okay guys, this one is by Deep Purple'. It's kind of silly and it's obviously not done. Actually, that's what we're

> going to do from now on—80 percent or more will be our own stuff. (RSJ July 1995:19)

Concomitant with performances by international acts in India was increased coverage of the metal genre in local and transnational media like Rock Street Journal and Rolling Stone India, but more significantly for the local scene were the opportunities these large shows presented for opening acts. Tours have always been an integral aspect of the global metal network (Weinstein 2000), and a disproportionate number of the international bands that have come to India to perform have been metal bands. In chronological order (and this is not a complete list) these bands include Scorpion in 2001, Deep Purple in 2001, Iron Maiden in 2007, 2008 and 2009, Sepultura in 2007, Megadeth in 2008, Amon Amarth in 2009, Lamb Of God in 2010 and 2012, Meshuggah in 2010, Purified in Blood in 2010, Metallica in 2011, Suidakra in 2012, Opeth in 2012, and Kreator in 2012. Sponsored by alcohol, mobile phone, clothing or other companies, put on by local production companies like Overture India or DNA Networks (both based in Bangalore), these international acts can command high prices for India – for Metallica's 2011 show at the Palace Grounds tickets were 2750 INR, or roughly 50 dollars.

For college students living at home with parents these types of prices represent a large outlay of cash and the shows do not always go as planned – or go on at all, for that matter. The Metallica tour of India is a case in point: organized by DNA Networks, a 20-year veteran of entertainment and sports event management based in Bangalore, Metallica's first-ever show in India was to be played in Delhi in tandem with a racing event, the "Formula 1 Airtel Grand Prix of India." "F1 Rocks," as the show was called, ran into some unexpected difficulties when the venue's security proved to be insufficient for the crowds and the band, citing safety concerns, refused to play. The show was

cancelled and irate fans stormed the stage, throwing rocks and causing 20,000 dollars worth of damage to the stage and LCD screens. The return of the ticket monies was not forthcoming; DNA's event team looked so bad for this that three days later four of the them were actually arrested for fraud and "cheating and criminal breach of trust" (Kumar 2011). Despite this ignominious beginning Metallica's show the next day in Bangalore went smoothly attended by approximately 30,000 fans from Bangalore and cities all over the south of India.

Metal entrepreneurism

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of tours like these for scene members, as they not only provide events around which people's fandom crystallizes and gets renewed, but also present a tangible link with the larger international metal scene. While fans may have a few of these large shows per year, however, the metal scene in Bangalore is maintained the rest of the time through pub shows and festivals organized by locals. Keeping a scene going requires not only bands and fans but also a host of functionaries – managers, producers, event organizers and sponsors, and even journalists. Many of the musicians I interviewed, including metal musicians, acted as their own managers and producers, but there were a few people in the scene who were not musicians and whose main occupation was the business of metal. Salman was someone with whom I interacted frequently when attending metal shows. A fan of metal since his college days, Salman had begun putting on shows in 2007 after a "life-changing" experience at Iron Maiden, which he described to me in some length:

> The band that came down in March 17 2007 it changed the – the entire music scene in India. That was when Iron Maiden came to Bangalore. There were 45,000 people at the venue, Palace Grounds. I still remember 6:30 in the morning

> I got there just to stand right in the first row. So. And 6:30 in the morning there were already 200 people waiting to get inside. So that was huge (Syed 2010).

Salman's experience at Iron Maiden intensified his involvement in the scene; no longer simply a fan, he began to organize shows, trying to remedy what he saw as a lack of performance opportunities for amateur and professional bands in Bangalore. Some of these attempts were rocky to begin with – during the first show he organized with bands from Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi, it poured rain and put a literal damper on the event:



Figure 7.1 Summer Storm Metal Festival, Bangalore 2010 (author photo).

> The crowds didn't turn up much. So as an organizer I turned up under a loss. At the age of 17 I went under a loss of rupees sixty thousand bucks [about eleven-hundred dollars]. It took me like a year or so to get that money together and pay back my loans and stuff. But I never gave up. I thought should still keep doing shows. During 2008 I did 37 shows in Bangalore, and shows in Mysore too… In 2009 what I thought was I'm doing all these shows, and I know most of these Bangalore bands – why don't I get everything under one roof and support everyone? So I started an artist management company (Syed 2010).

With his company, Infinite Dreams, Salman brokered sponsorship deals for events and organized a variety of shows with both local and foreign acts; however, his optimism about the metal scene in India and his passionate involvement in the production of shows and events was not always rewarded financially or otherwise. Like the first show he'd put on there were other events as well that didn't go quite as planned. After one such event he wrote a long post on Facebook apologizing for the problems that had arisen at a multi-band show put on at the top of a hotel in an emptied swimming pool. Long wait times for bands and an early cutoff infuriated the metal fans who came to see the show and Salman was disconsolate that his reputation had been tarnished. Despite these setbacks, however, his involvement in the metal scene was something that, as he expressed to me, was non-negotiable. His love for the genre was palpable and affective – metal "takes out all the frustrations," as he put it, and this devotion translated to a financial and lifestyle commitment for the twenty-one year old, despite his parents' displeasure:

> I'm the black sheep in the family. I'm a Muslim and my family is pretty orthodox and stuff. And well…[he holds out his shirt which has a picture of an upside-down cross on it and we both laugh]. I had all posters on the wall and when I was went to the Maiden concert I had long hair down to here – I had the most expensive haircut – I think my mom paid 35,000 rupees to have my haircut! That's because she bought me a new computer so I would cut my hair (Syed 2010).

With a college degree in visual communications and art, Salman was headed for a job in one of the media industries in Bangalore like advertising or marketing, and for his parents a job managing rock bands, no matter how entrepreneurial, was not what they'd hoped for an educated first son. As Salman said, "they have come up the hard way, so for them work is nine to five" and nine to five means a steady paycheck (Syed 2010). Committing to metal as a job, then, was a sacrifice as much as a passion. Fandom was an

integral part of not only his work but his relational and reflexive social identity; it dictated his approach to his family life, his friends, as well as to other types of music both foreign and local; and it was a practice that had changed throughout his life as he grew up:

> The first tape I listened to was Bryan Adams. Then for a while I was into hair metal, Whitesnake, Skid Row. Then when I came to 9th standard the first album I got into was the Black Album. I thought, 'This is music! This is not downturn American culture (laughs) Ok I hated pop, so I called it downturn American culture. I wouldn't say that rock and metal is the ultimate form of music, but it is a good way of communication. For me rock and metal music is… it relates a lot of things to me. You have certain posers who just like listening to metal because it's cool. I don't think anyone can listen to metal overnight, start liking metal overnight. It's a phase—you start with rock and you grow up with it and come to metal. And you start with heavy metal and then you listen to thrash metal and then you go heavier and heavier and heavier and when you're 40 years you come back to jazz and stuff like that (Syed 2010).

Maintaining a knowledge of the difference between pop and metal and making taste choices based on that knowledge was for Salman, as with many other members of the metal scene in Bangalore, a prime directive of fandom, and designated whether or not one was a real or authentic fan or not. Such designations take place visually, through markers like long hair and black band tee shirts, but they also take place in the discursive realm, through conversation or in online forums. Whereas in the 1980s and early 90s the letters to the editor and articles in RSJ (as discussed in chapter five) were a main source of discussion and negotiation around fandom, the importance of this type of discursive realm increased exponentially with the advent of the Internet. Metal message boards, Indian rock websites, streaming music websites where Indian bands put up their demos and albums, and Facebook all present arenas in which metal fans jockey over taste issues, using videos, pictures, protracted posts or mocking and irony to distinguish "real" fans from "poseurs." Posts like the one that read "Your [sic] not a real fan unless you know

the bass player's name," or the one in which a well-known metal musician in the scene recounted a conversation he'd had with a "poser" fan at work about the upcoming Metallica show in which this man called the band "Metallics," provoke comments and "likes" by the hundreds and allow fans to maintain their sense that it is they, as possessors of insider knowledge, who are best able to patrol the boundaries of the scene and keep it alive.

Over the course of my research I attended roughly two-dozen metal shows, at malls, in a music store, at bars, clubs, at colleges, and in large outdoor venues like the Palace Grounds. The types of metal played spanned the gamut of metal genres including some new, self-described genres like "powerthrash" or "experimental doom metal" but many of the bands in Bangalore were playing death and black metal. Both subgenres are offshoots of thrash, and share some musical characteristics like double kick or "blast" drumming, distorted guitars, growled or shrieked vocals and often complex rhythms and melodic interludes. One very popular Indian black metal band, Demonic Resurrection, came from Mumbai to play a show at the club Kyra in Indiranagar. Kyra, a supper and music club had good sound and lighting and a nice small stage; it was a venue that bands and fans appreciated despite its somewhat high prices.

For metal fans, usually younger men without much ready pocket money Kyra's prices could be a problem, and the Demonic Resurrection show, despite the band's fame in the scene, was ill attended. Lead singer Sahil, who also runs a record label (and makes an online cooking show called "Demonic Cookery") told me later that they'd expected

many more attendees. As it was his growling vocals and the band's blackened[69] death metal played out to few more than a dozen young men. Although the audience members



Figure 7.2 Demonic Resurrection at Kyra, Indiranagar, Bangalore (author photo)

linked arms and head-banged, there was little of the cathartic energy that emerges with a bigger audience. Sahil, whose black metal name was Demonstealer, was unperturbed; an entrepreneur, he'd been in the scene for almost ten years, had started his own record label and had organized tours for his band in Scandinavia, funded by the Norwegian Embassy as part of a cultural exchange.

Sahil, mild-mannered, long-haired and bespectacled (when he wasn't onstage as Demonstealer) seemed to be more savvy and clear about the scene than almost any other rock musician I met in India. During our interview in his parent's beachside high-rise in

[69] "Blackened" is the common term in the scene for metal that has elements of black metal in it; in the case of Demonic Resurrection, Sahil's higher timbre of growling vocals and the double kick beat on the drums "blackened" the band's sound

Mumbai, he described the economic realities of being one of the most successful metal bands in India:

> You have to balance [going abroad versus playing in India]. We're still a very small band in the global market and the advantage we have is that we're the biggest band in India. So if we're able to do a bunch of shows here and get paid well for them, that same money can be invested to build ourselves abroad, because when you're starting out it's a very big investment. If we're somehow able to somehow book a tour we have to pay for our own back line, our bus with the fuel, and it's an investment and you're lucky if you break even on a tour. We actually got contacted to do a support tour – you know you pay 5000 dollars and you can tour with this band as a support act. That's what bands actually do, they invest in tours abroad after working and slogging and saving. So now for example we're going to Brutal Assault [a death metal festival in the Czech Republic], and we're paying our own airfare there because they pay us a small fee for playing, but that won't cover the airfare. And here we could do four shows and cover the airfare investment. So for us it's important to continue doing shows in India, college shows, and also do things abroad (Makhija 2010).

Sahil's description summarizes the interplay between local and international industry in the global metal network—a network that creates an almost-sustainable economy for metal bands in India. Though no Indian band has become globally recognized like, for example, Sepultura, from Brazil, the opportunities that are available to them in the form of metal festival abroad are something to aspire to—not simply the same local audiences and college festivals but foreign audiences and perhaps record deals or tour possibilities as well.

Not every band has a Sahil, however, whose organizational skills have kept Demonic Resurrection solvent for almost 10 years. The attraction to metal comes for most at a particular time in their lives and has an expiration date. Most of the metal bands in Bangalore form in college and burn out after graduation when real jobs beckon, or continue on for several years as members get married or get jobs and leave the scene. For others, it becomes a primary aspect of identity, and a central project in their life and

work. The entrepreneurism that many musicians engage in is not simply ancillary to the affective alliances of rock music practices. Rather, it is an integral part of the rock ethos in Bangalore and throughout India, a dynamic that emerges across genres and that offers insight into how the globalization of rock music – and its particular kind of knowledge and tastes – inflects the urban middle class subjectivities involved in creative industries like the ones described here.

Male homosociality as discursive and material fandom boundary

As a non-fan, my experiences during interviews with Bangalore's metal fans and musicians were often stymied to an extent by my lack of specialized knowledge. Asking a metal fan "what is it that draws you to metal?" is a good way to get the answer "I don't know, I just like it" – not exactly a wellspring of information. However, when my partner, a long-time metalhead, came to join me in Bangalore for a month the conversations he had with the same people were markedly different. Touching on particular bands and their sounds or sharing anecdotal stories about band members or particular shows, his talks had a common history and repertoire of experiences that formed the basis of a shared discourse. These shared discourses among fans, as I was to find, have become more important as the metal scene in Bangalore has grown and subdivided fostering various subgenres of metal, including death, black, doom, thrash, and good old eighties style power metal; with the advent of the Internet, such subgenre distinctions began to matter more to participants than they had in the 80s or early 90s. What Baulch called in the context of Bali's metal scene "archival knowledge," (Baulch 2003) the specialized knowledge of inter-genre history and differences is the coin of the realm in metal, and in Bangalore the discourses surrounding metal bands traffic heavily

in differentiation: between pop and rock, between rock and metal, and between death metal, thrash metal, or black metal.

If fans identify one another through shared specialized knowledge as portrayed in conversation as well as in fashion, via the long hair and ubiquitous tee-shirts of band logos, their commonalities are also forged through shared subject positions and strengthened through participation in the musical scene. In particular heavy metal has been linked to types of gender expression, homosociality and masculinity through the use of musical and performance elements. Robert Walser's description of heavy metal's enactment of masculinity is quite thorough:

> [H]eavy metal often stages fantasies of masculine virtuosity and control. Musically, heavy metal articulates a dialectic of controlling power and transcendent freedom. Metal songs usually include impressive technical and rhetorical feats on the electric guitar, counterposed with an experience of power and control that is built up through vocal extremes, guitar power chords, distortion, and sheer volume of bass and drums. (Walser 1993:109)

Walser, significantly, refers to the "exscription" of women in heavy metal; not simply the glorification of sexism and its trappings but the erasure of agentive females in the scene. In Bangalore heavy metal is notable for the preponderance of males who make up its bands and audiences; however, throughout the rock scene and its genres there are many more males than females, as chapter one described. Scholars of "global" metal scenes have explored metal's relation to local forms of masculinity and homosociality. Cynthia Wong has described the 1990s Chinese band Tang Dynasty as one in which members melded historical and ideal conceptions of the Chinese man with heavy metal sounds and performance (Wong 2011); Jeremy Wallach writes about Malay metal as one in which male "hangouts" foster the bands and fandom that make up the heavy metal scene (Wallach 2011).

While rock music fandom is a position somewhat available to Indian women, if not always encouraged, rock performance is a mostly male pursuit. Nowhere is the gender asymmetry of rock music participation in Bangalore more clear than at metal shows, but throughout the scene the absence of women was striking. During the research period I came across three female singer-songwriters and half a dozen instances of women playing in bands: four singers, a drummer and one bass player (in a metal band). The reasons for the gender discrepancy in Indian rock music are manifold. As Lukose has discussed, the "westernized woman" in India is a contested subject: ambivalently valorized in the figure of the NRI who is mobilized at the interstices of globalization and mass media, but figuring as the inverse of the properly "traditional" woman who has figured so prominently in conceptions of Indian national identity (Banerjee 1990; Chatterjee 1990). Not all women in Indian rock are subject to the same expectations; age, religion, and class determine many of the rules of participation in public forms of leisure like pub shows. Generally speaking, however, there are conflicting dynamics that form the framework of expectations for gender behaviors, particularly in the domain of clothing and in public spaces. Though not always the case, there is often public opprobrium or parental pressure which dictates that women are less likely to be allowed to drink or to be out alone or in a group with men in the evening (although this never seemed to be a problem for the older women I regularly saw out at pubs in Bangalore). Furthermore, there is a long-standing tradition of the guitar being considered a male instrument in rock music, and a historical trajectory in India of the rock scene being gendered male. Nowhere in the pantheon of favored performers (Deep Purple, Porcupine

Tree, Rush, Metallica, Bryan Adams) are there any women performers; in none of my interviews did male musicians cite female influences.

Demographically, Bangalore's metal scene was perhaps ninety-seven percent male, and predominantly young men, college age or in their twenties, with some unmarried men in their early thirties. This mirrors the demographics of heavy metal generally speaking, as Weinstein points out (Weinstein 2000), although there are some historically prescribed roles for women in heavy metal and rock scenes. As a woman, and a non-metal fan, during my fieldwork I'd benefitted from a fitting into two kinds of acceptable rock culture roles for women; the first, as Sara Cohen has written about in her ethnography of rock in Liverpool is that of quasi-groupie, going to shows and providing "support" for the band (Cohen 1991); the other was as a kind of amateur reporter, someone whose interest in the scene was intellectual and whose involvement would provide bands with some recognition, and in some cases blurbs for their bands (in fact I was asked to write short band biographies for PR packets on two occasions). These roles notwithstanding, as a western woman with institutional credentials and funding my position in the scene was an exceptional one in any case.

As part of this latter role as documentor of sorts (a role I was infinitely more comfortable with than that of the groupie) during my fieldwork I kept a blog called Rock and Roll Bangalore, where I periodically posted on aspects of my research I thought would be of interest to people in the scene. I wrote in a kind of non-academic, casual manner so that I might attract more readers and envisioned the blog as enabling dialogic ethnography with the people I interacted with. What it mostly did, however, was make me a known quantity to the people I was working with and interviewing, a kind of online

profile and proof that I was serious about my work in Bangalore – not just going to shows and hanging out but actually writing and paying attention. Most of the time the blog was a positive part of the fieldwork, but at one point it brought me into direct conflict with some of the people in the metal scene, an awkward and uncomfortable moment in what otherwise was a quite smooth and enjoyable fieldwork experience, but also an instance that clarified for me the extent to which homosociality and even homophobic discourse defined musical fandom. I'd written a post about a metal show I attended, and as a kind of postscript I wrote how sick I was of hearing homophobic epithets as descriptors for people and music in the scene. I wrote: "I have a beef with people for whom everything is "gay" this "fag" that. What's the point? We get it, you're not gay, and apparently you don't like gay culture."

At this point it was late in my research and I'd made many friends in the scene, mostly male, reflective of the scene's demographics, and self-described as straight. I spent most weekends staying over at people's houses with large groups, traveling with one band on a tour around South India and generally socializing with many of the same people whose bands I was writing about. The casual tone I took about a serious subject in this post was a result of a feeling of ease and a (perhaps inflated) sense of our commonalities as rock music fans. As I was soon to find out, though, two of the metal musicians I hung out with took offense to my comment and one in particular took it very personally, effectively ending our friendship. These were self-described metalheads, men in their late twenties for whom the epithet "fag" was as common as describing something as "fucked-up;" it was a common and somewhat accepted slang term that I'd heard many times. I thought of it as irresponsible and offensive but was cautious about assuming that

it came from virulent homophobia; I was also reluctant (although I am chagrined to admit it) to respond to each of these comments when I heard them in person. My somewhat off-the-cuff written comment about how it disturbed me, however, had ramifications that caused me to look more seriously at the use of such language as a common theme in the metal scene. I began to see instances of its use as a mode of both social and musical exclusion; that is to say, to define what was and what was not "real" music or who was or was not a "real" metal fan.

In part by virtue of women's limited access, male homosociality is clearly a dominant dynamic in Bangalore's rock and metal scenes. Particularly at metal shows, fandom practices like head banging and moshing are ones that women rarely, if ever, take part in. While the social dimensions of the metal scene in Bangalore are undeniably gendered male, however, this is obviously not because the music expresses or embodies stereotypically "masculine" elements. Aggression, speed and virtuosic technique, the elements from which metal purportedly gets its musical "power," evoke the semi-cathartic responses of head-banging and moshing, but these are not physiological responses that only men would have, as women fans of metal around the world attest to. In fact, I suggest that it is the preexisting homosocial discursive dimensions of the metal scene in India that disallow women *prior* to the live experience of the show. That is to say, the discourses around which Indian metal fandom is organized and coalesces are ones in which specific characteristics, usually associated with femininity, though often expressed through homophobia, are posited as generally anathema to metal genre. Metal's other, in this case, is western pop. The claim that one college-aged Indian metal fan wrote as a Facebook status update encapsulates this idea: "everyone who likes pop is

a faggot." These are not just occasional or overzealous fans for whom the shorthand of "faggot" represents all that is wrong with pop music and fans ad infinitum, this is in fact the dominant discourse, and one that coalesced around one particular event during my time in Bangalore, the Rock N' India festival.

Rock N' India is an annual rock concert, started in 2008 and put on by DNA industries in Bangalore. The line-up usually includes one or two international acts on the main stage with a separate stage for local opening bands. In 2008 the headliners were Megadeath and Machine Head; in 2009 the headliner was Iron Maiden. Both of these concerts had ticket sales of over 10,000 according to the production company. In 2010, however, DNA decided to try and reach a different audience, and invited the band Backstreet Boys and the singer Richard Marx to perform. This was a grave disappointment for the legions of college boys who were expecting to see a heavy metal band, and the fallout was widespread, with terrible ticket sales and an outcry that took place mainly on the Internet. These responses in the cyber and discursive realms evinced many of the dynamics that have been under discussion here. The first was the viral spread of a dubbed-in parody video on YouTube, a scene from a 2004 movie German movie called *Downfall* about Hitler's last days, in which he is informed that defeat is near and has a long drawn out tantrum of sorts. This particular scene had been dubbed and parodied on YouTube numerous times in 2009, with Hitler decrying everything from the housing market to not being allowed to borrow dad's car, to a sports team's losses. In the version dubbed by Bangalore's metal fans, the dialogue expresses Hitler's disgust at the choice of Backstreet Boys as Rock N' India's headliners. The dialogue, as printed at the bottom of the screen read as follows:

(Scene opens on Hitler pointing at a map):

> After having copious quantities of alcohol at Legends of Rock Koramangala [a pub] near the Sony World junction, we shall end with a round of extra large shots of tequila for everyone and head to Palace Grounds for the concert at 2:00 pm. Actually I don't want to leave so early, let's just go watch the main acts.

(A general, glancing fearfully around the room):

> My Fuhrer…the headliners…the headliners have been announced. Backstreet Boys is the main act for this year's Rock in India.

(Hitler removes his glasses slowly, with trembling hands):

> If you've ever purchased a CD of Backstreet Boys, NSync, Boys2Men. Get out of here. A butt-kissing boy band! Are you shitting me, a butt kissing boy band! They call the event fucking 'Rock in India'! More like sucking cock in India. They have the balls to call these faggots rockers! DNA gets Megadeath in 2008, Iron Maiden in 2009…but this time…a bunch of cock-smoking, lip-synching fucklings!
>
> …
>
> You'd expect DNA to get Porcupine Tree or Judas Priest or maybe even Whitesnake. But the sponsors need a reputed act, fuckers! They want a band that is commercially viable they say, fuckers. When was the last time you even heard of Backstreet Boys?

(Cuts to show two women crying outside, and one turns to the other to say):

> It's ok Anna…we can watch Rock On later [the 2008 Hindi film much maligned by rock musicians]

(Back to Hitler, a broken man sitting in the corner of his war room):

> I had these two roommates back in the day. They played this song "Words" [hit by the pop band Boyzone] thirteen times in a row. It was torture. When it played the fourteenth time I told them if they didn't stop this horse-shit, I'd stuff their heads into their asses…and proceeded to play Judas Priest's Painkiller (shakes his head slowly). Backstreet's back alright. ("Hitler learns about RoI")

Though absurd, over the top, and plainly meant as a joke, the video is worth taking seriously. In the weeks leading up to the event it was a main topic of conversation for rock musicians; younger metalheads complaining vociferously, and older musicians shaking their head at the firestorm that DNA had brought upon itself. The apex of the protestations came when someone hacked into the Rock N' India website and changed it: from "Rock N' India: India's only international rock festival," to "Cock N' India: India's

Only International Gay Festival." The Indian "independent music" website Indiecision received word about the hacking prank along with a letter from the perpetrator that the site reprinted in full:

> Well well well… ain't we fucked? Motherfuckers. You have tainted the Indian music scene Internationally.
>
> First you retarded lump of faeces, DNA sell-outs, show us dreams of Judas Priest, Lamb of God and other big names and then present us with this fucking Boy Band "Back Street Boys"? WTF? who the fuck even came up with the idea of resurrecting these fucking cunts?
>
> Fuck the pansies who think BSB is "rocking." Fuck the fags who think this is a good news [sic]. Fuck the acts nominating to open for this gay fest [sic].
>
> India Metal Scene (2006-2010) R.I.P Thanks Joe Satriani, Megadeth, Machine Head, Iron Maiden, Opeth, Amon Amarth, Textures, Hammerfall, Eluveitie.
>
> - An Indian Metal Head
> UP the Horns! \m/

Commenters on the site responded favorably to the letter, with supportive comments, including one that read:

> Down with BSB! This is the worst news music has recieved [sic] since it was announced that Barry Manilow is still alive! Down with the cancers of commercialization!

Clearly there is a specific discourse in which there is a binary opposition between, on the one hand "commercialization," pop music, the film *Rock On!!* (and the women who like it), "fags," "cunts," "pansies," "gays" etc; and on the other hand, metal bands. There is no need for the commenters and metal fans quoted here to elaborate quite so much about the other side of this binary: being a real metal fan is in this case is a process of excluding what is not metal rather than describing what it is.

The dimensions of proper metal fandom – insider knowledge, possession of (sub)cultural capital, and gendered community participation – are also animated, made visceral, not only by the embodied physical experiences of heavy metal show

participation but also by the affective alliances, the "structures of feeling" (Mankekar 1999) articulating with one another: disgust, anger, catharsis, and exclusion. A deep investigation of the construction of homophobia in modern Indian society, with its roots in colonial and Victorian mores and its realization across civil society as well as in media is not possible here. For many of the metal fans in Bangalore expressed homophobia was not necessarily connected to a fully realized hatred of gay people, but rather an avenue through which to express a construction of gendered community around a hyper-masculine form of music. These types of homophobic protestations exemplify, I argue, a low-grade anxiety over not just the aesthetic parameters of the death metal scene but its meanings as a potent source of identification for its young male subjects.

Metal music represents an intervention in constructions of modern urban Indian masculinity that privilege family, education and income: as the locus for the formation of globalized masculinity, Indian metal subject's field of affective alliances are a rich site of cultural contestation in which competing claims about masculinity and modernity are enacted and mediated in the performance space of the metal show.

Bangalore's indie aesthetics and DIY productions

The band Lounge Piranha spent much of the rainy season of 2007 in rehearsal in a tiny room at the top of their drummer George's house in a quiet pocket of Bangalore called Jagadishnagar. Removed from the flyovers and shopping malls of the city's center, the tall orange and blue house was strewn with books and art supplies; George, a graphic artist and musician lived alone in this flat *cum* art studio and would often shut himself away for days drawing and playing drums. Fantastical cartoons of aliens, trees and

flowers, and mythical beasts were pasted on the walls and the band's instruments and equipment crowded the living room. From the upstairs window one glimpsed the large banyan tree that previously had been the center of the village of Jagadishnagar, a village that had been transmuted into a suburb of Bangalore in the indomitable tide of development that had swept the city in the prior decades.

The band rehearsed until late in the evenings, running through their intricate, diffuse music: djembe and didgeridoo alongside jangly electric guitars and bass in long-building, rhythmically complex and lyrically sophisticated songs. A self-described "post-rock" band, Lounge Piranha were known in Bangalore for their original music and for George's artwork on flyers, album covers and projected on the walls at shows; they were respected as a band who charted an individual course in putting on shows without sponsorships, and planning a self-funded tour (the Going Nowhere tour) that would see the band take their own bus around south India and to Mumbai. They were, as lead singer Abhi said, looking for independent alternatives to the competitions and sponsored festivals that comprised the performance opportunities of Bangalore's rock scene, and independent was a description that fit them musically as well – not necessarily indie in a self-conscious way, nor discernibly sounding like most of Bangalore's other bands, they seemed too avant-garde for the scene and three years later would be on an extended hiatus with each member pursuing his own music, art or business.

The moniker "independent music" is one that has been floating around the Indian rock scene for several years without ever referring to a precise genre, although it is, as this discussion will show, closely related to indie rock. It has been a fluid descriptor for a number of bands and styles, and since 2008 (with the introduction of the influential

Indian rock website Indiecision.com) it has also been utilized as an organizing metaphor for the alternative music industry that supports rock and original music in India, the network of websites, management companies and record labels that may or may not operate with corporate support and sponsorship. The vagueness of the term is precisely what has made it useful as a descriptor – its most basic characteristic is that it is not film music, but within that larger category it works across various arenas of practice and across the spatiality of the scene. Local bands make so-called "independent music," recognizable mostly for what it is not – these are bands who do not play metal or cover songs, though sometimes they include Indian instruments, and whose music is perhaps more aligned with styles like indie or psychedelic rock rather than the heavy, classic or blues rock played by many other Bangalore bands. The musical context for independent rock in Bangalore is framed by an "independent industry" exemplified by the website NH7, who have made a self aware choice to define themselves as representing a nascent "indie" music scene – one in which a lack of big record deals or stadium tours is natural, rather than evidence of a lack of resources and viability. Modeled on websites like Pitchfork.com (Ravi 2010), NH7 makes a demonstrable effort to connect to a global network of indie music and have attempted to introduce Indian rock fans to indie rock from the U.S. and U.K.

Hesmondhalgh suggests that indie rock "has its roots in punk's institutional and aesthetic challenge to the popular music industry" (Hesmondhalgh 1999:34), and indie rock's ideological claims on locality and community connection are integral to its construction as a genre. Azzerad writes about bands in an "indie underground" who are on "independent labels" (Azzerad 2001) and Holly Kruse suggests that although the

Internet has radically altered people's ability to access music from these independent labels and scenes,

> the decentralization…of music production and dissemination have not resulted in the disappearance of local identities, local scene histories, or the perception that there are local sounds" (Kruse 2010:625).

Although these theorists are describing the west's indie bands and industry, the contours and logics of the western indie music industry have been influential in the development of Indian's independent music scene. This examination of the independent music genre in Bangalore observes how grassroots performances, experimental aesthetics and a self-consciously "indie" media have given rise to an emergent genre of independent music, even as ascriptions of hipness and the cultural capital that animate the indie scene do not always translate easily from one geographic scene to another.

Musically, what so-called independent bands in Bangalore have in common is open to debate, and what they share is the sense that they do not necessarily have a tightly defined musical genre. The independent music scene includes self-described "psychedelic" "alternative" or "hard," "progressive" or "indie" rock sounds; often unsponsored, inexpensive or free performances. Lounge Piranha, Parachute XVI (now defunct) and The Bicycle Days are bands who, like Thermal and a Quarter (discussed in chapter five) have sounds and lyrics either purposefully rooted in the city or in subjective experiences or creative reinterpretations of local elements or styles. Parachute XVI, for example, play what might be considered a classic Bangalorean hard rock foundation (audibly influenced by progressive and heavy metal) under lead guitarist Ananth Menon's psychedelic blues-rooted guitar. Bicycle Days, the brainchild of singer Karthik Basker, play a kind of experimental rock, with spacey, looped electronic sound effects

supporting resonant, ornamented vocals and spare guitar and bass layers. Lounge Piranha, with a plain vocal style and a surfeit of charisma, sing sometimes directly political lyrics, as in their song "Gravedigger" when Abhijeet Tambe sings the line "*Sare jahaan se achaa*"[70] with an ironic twist in it. Also in this category is Tambe's down-tempo project Yoshendra, in which recorded city noises are used in a kind of lo-fi electronica that is meant to document the "secret life of Bangalore through its ambient sounds."

Though the term independent may not, then, describe a particular musical genre, what it provides for this discussion is a lens through which to view a complex of sounds, styles, and approaches to production that Bangalore bands (and independent media from around the country) have begun to gravitate toward. As with the fusion genre, the independent or experimental music genre in Bangalore has many proponents who feel that its sounds best represent an "Indian," even a "Bangalorean" sound. Unlike with fusion music, however, the attribution of a desirable local rooted authenticity in this case is predicated partially on an indie rock valorization of the notion of having a "local sound," rather than the demands of having a materially "Indian" sound; the indie designation also is linked (by musicians) to modes of musical production in the band and to the lineage of musical influences and sounds from which they draw. The band Bicycle Days, for example, describe their songwriting process as "spontaneous": "We hit the jam room and play until we feel all of us are at a similar wavelength. It's a feeling," (Basker 2010) while another Bangalorean band, Drones from the Turbine, describe their songwriting process as an attempt "to express rather honestly about what is affecting us on an individual level at that moment of conception" (Pranav 2009). Karthik, from

[70] This is a quote from a patriotic ghazal from 1904, and the whole line is "*sare jahan se accha hindoostan humara*," which translates as "better than all the world is our Hindustan."



Figure 7.3 Bicycle Days performing in Koramangala, Bangalore 2010 (author photo).

Bicycle Days attributes his sounds and his participation in indie rock to influences:

> When I first played a Nirvana tape back in the day, it felt like home. A simple no strings attached connection was established. Then came Radiohead, Tool, Alice in Chains, Pixies, The Smiths, Blur etc., that really shaped the early noise spectrum in my head. Bill Hicks was someone who really helped me break down many of my walls and get down to doing what I am now. Then the predictable obvious purchase of a guitar was made. Never wanted to do anything else ever since (Basker 2010).

The indie or independent sound in Bangalore is being formed as part of an emergent aesthetics but a particular type of performance style also defines the genre. Since the early 1990s Bangalore has had a tradition of live, unsponsored performances and shows. From the Cubbon Park music strip jams described in chapter three, to the Sunday Jams (pre-Levis sponsorship) in the late 1990s, the tradition of live, free music, has carried on into the 2000s with shows like the "Live Gig," held at the Indira Gandhi Musical

Fountain (described in chapter 4) and the 2009-2010 Mushroom Cloud festival, a psychedelic music festival put on by local musicians. Shows like these operate under the radar: not held at colleges nor with any advertising budgets, they tended to attract serious fans, people for whom the idea of an independent scene is something to strive for. Though free jams and shows like Live Gig welcomed most genres, other unsponsored festivals were organized around aesthetic commonalities: The Mushroom Cloud Festival, for example, was designed with a specific type of music in mind. I interviewed Pranav, one of its founders and a guitarist in the experimental band Drones from the Turbine, who described the festival's beginnings:

> Initially the Big Mushroom Cloud fest was done by a bunch of bands who were making experimental music, that's how the first one happened. The second just focused on getting musicians who made interesting music, which was feel based and had a sense of transcending states of consciousness, sounds that elevate other-worldly experiences (Pranav K. 2010).



Figure 7.4 The Big Mushroom Cloud Festival poster

2009's Big Mushroom Cloud festival was held in an empty building on the outskirts of Bangalore. The bands who played there were experimental, jam bands, or progressive rock – no metal or cover bands – and throughout the night the musicians and audience members were bathed in a psychedelic light show designed for the performance. The DIY aesthetic was apparent in the makeshift stage, but what was striking about the show was the absence of branding. Unsponsored, the show had no merchandise, no special beverages being hawked, and no money to spare for security or a particularly high quality sound system – instead the bands and organizers used their own materials and equipment (laptops, projectors, and speakers). While the Mushroom Cloud festival went on hiatus in 2011 after two years, in 2009 and 2010 a few of Bangalore's bands were experimenting with putting on unsponsored shows, with the most concerted and organized effort mounted by the band Lounge Piranha. In an interview with Abhijeet



Figure 7.5 Lounge Piranha playing at B Flat bar, Indiranagar 2010 (author photo)

Tambe, the band's lead singer, I asked him what his motivations were for doing unsponsored shows, and he replied "there's only so much complaining that you can do before you say maybe we should just do something for ourselves."

Lounge Piranha, who had been playing in the scene for almost a decade, organized their first unsponsored performance at the Alliance Française in Bangalore with the singer-songwriter Gowri and a band from Hyderabad called Native Tongue. Tickets were 200 INR and Lounge Piranha also sold their own tee-shirts, drummer George's graphic novel and CDs. As Tambe expressed to the website NH7.com in an interview about the show, his aim was to experiment with "critical mass," to see if there was in fact enough of an audience outside of the college venue to break even or make money on a show. In a piece written for the Goethe Institute website in Bangalore Tambe wrote:

> If we turn a profit it changes everything. For one, all the artists will get paid, even if just a little bit. But more importantly it will mean that this sort of event can become a regular, sustainable feature on Bangalore's music scene. No sponsors to pull the plug on the show and enough money to pay artists – and they do deserve to get paid. The question is whether we have the critical mass of artistes and audiences to sustain it. And I believe we're fast approaching that point (Tambe 2010b).

Tambe later related to me that at the Alliance Française show the band had only just broken even, and he considered it "a bust," – but not a complete bust because it was "an educational experience" (Tambe 2010a). Without sponsors (and even with sponsors, as with the Levis Freedom Jam described in chapter three) making rock music in India is a dicey financial proposition. Without the "critical mass" of audience members to make even small-scale shows profitable the rock music DIY industry must take circuitous roots to monetize and professionalize.



Figure 7.6 Singer-songwriter Gowri performing at the Alliance Francais, Bangalore (author photo)

Indie India Online

An industry comprised of small, privately owned and run record labels, press and media but also supported by corporate sponsorship, the Indian independent rock scene confounds traditional (though always unstable) indie homologies between sound, ideology and modes of production. Nevertheless, cultural intermediaries like the editorial staff at website NH7.com have made use of the term and its discourses to foster connections and network with other indie scenes around the world, a valuable resource in a musical culture that has for decades been little more than a hobby for the majority of its participants. Arjun Ravi, the founder of the website Indiecision.com (now part of NH7.com) has been instrumental in identifying and fostering particular bands and musicians in India that have what might be termed an indie aesthetic, and his taste has influenced the Indian rock scene in the 2000s as Amit Saigal's did in the 1990s.

I met with Arjun at the Hard Rock Café in Bangalore in November 2009. The mutual acquaintance who introduced us told me I would recognize Ravi by his hair: "look for the kid with the hipster hairdo." Ravi's hair was not the only hipster thing about him; his website Indicision (which when we met was getting upwards of 40,000 unique hits per month) introduced a carefully curated roster of indie bands and "alternative" artists like Mumford and Sons, Bombay Bicycle Club (both English bands), Seun Kuti, and Heems from hip hop group Das Racist, bands and performers who also took part in the NH7 Bacardi-sponsored weekender festivals being held in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Pune in 2012. Besides bringing international indie bands to the attention of Indian rock fans, Ravi has also supported local bands whose aesthetics differed from the usual funk, classic and metal sounds that so many Indian bands draw from: bands like Adam and the Fish Eyed Poets, Peter Cat Recording Co., The Supersonics and The Lightyears reference Brit pop, post-punk, indie sounds with English-language lyrics. Ravi's predilection for bands like these partially reflects his own tastes, but these are also bands who perhaps might fit into a transnational indie industry, unlike many other Indian rock bands whose sounds draw from a more mainstream well of influences.

The aim of Ravi and his business partner Vijay Nair is no less than to get off the ground an alternative music scene in India that is financially viable, lucrative even, but is also a respected node in a transnational scene. With economic capitol in short supply and a relatively limited audience, Ravi and Nair have astutely surmised that cultural capital in the form of translatable hipness is a useful currency in marketing a transnational musical genre like Indian rock. Furthermore, they have recognized that a restrictive or exclusionary aesthetic stance in relation to Indian rock genres is unnecessarily limiting:

as an "independent" "alternative" music website NH7.com has championed artists like Tamil songwriter and Londoner Susheela Rahman and Raghu Dixit, both "fusion" artists; they also feature metal, progressive rock, and even classic rock bands. Since 2010 NH7.com has continued to grow, gain more unique hits and sponsors, and has hosted successful festivals and concerts; part of this growth is due to their savviness and the development of relationships with members of the independent industry around the world (Ravi 2010).

In 2009 in Mumbai Nair's production company Only Much Louder hosted the British Council's independent music conference called "Unconvention," a two-day meeting of indie music industry insiders and musicians from the U.S., the U.K. and India. Unconvention, a self-proclaimed "grassroots" industry conference states their aims:

> It is about looking to the future of music how it will develop and flourish with the opportunities now available in the ever-changing technological age. It is about being independent…Our simple goal is to bring together like-minded individuals to discuss the issues that are important to them and to the future of independent music ("About Unconvention")

Panelists at Unconvention included managers, technology consultants, brand consultants, producers, musicians and writers, all of whom shared an orientation towards what was frequently termed "DIY," "grassroots," "indie," "community-based" "collective," – terms used interchangeably and indicative of a business orientation and ideological approach to the business of music, rather than a particular group of sounds. Panels focused on a variety of issues, with conversations about marketing strategies, ideas for utilizing available technology and advice to bands just starting out, all bolstered by a constant valorization of the "independent" in contrast to the big labels.

Moderator Andrew Phillips (whose biographical blurb on the Unconvention website described him as an "internationally renowned multimedia expert") introduced a panel entitled "Indie India" by stating that "Indie music is for me where tomorrow comes. That's what this is about, it's about tomorrow" (Phillips 2009). Sumit Bothra, former manger for the UK-based Asian Underground electronica artist Nitin Sawney advised that local bands not look outside of India for options but "create your own options inside India, and "get your music everywhere through digital platforms that do that work" a strategy he calls "tubecore," referring to the multi-platform technologies available to bands producing and releasing their own music (Bothra 2009). Similar issues were raised in the following day's DIY panel when David Bianchi, manager of 1980s punk band Killing Joke observed that "fringe" bands were the first to exploit the Internet in order to promote their music. Bianchi, who runs a management company in the UK, made some explicit connections between independent forms of production and promotion and the DIY, anarchist and punk music scenes of the 1980s and 1990s, a connection that, while valid, seemed to have little to do with the independent music of India, where punks, anarchists, squats and political-aesthetic collectives have not existed.

Conclusions

Unconvention's panelists and moderators took part in a dialogue that projected positive alternative modes of production and development for the Indian rock industry; nevertheless some of these dialogues continued to reflect the same types of assumptions of musical and cultural isomorphism – cultural essentialisms – that have plagued the Indian rock genre since its inception, with various panelists commenting on the regularly

trafficked theme of "being original," "sounding like where you're from," and other directives. Despite the validation of small-scale industry, making one's own merchandise, and building an audience from the ground up through small tours, there was also the undeniable sense that financial remuneration – although not to be aimed for or expected – was possible. On the metal panel, John Sullivan, representing the U.K. based Metal Hammer magazine was blunt about their plans and expectations for the Indian market, stating that the small percentage of Indian youth listening to metal was still "more people than in Australia or New Zealand altogether." Sullivan expanded:

> They think that something is on the verge of happening in India. Metal Hammer is here because they're expert in figuring out the right time to go in a market. We're here because we hope – because we think – there's about to be a – and let's not hide this word – profitable scene emerging, you know? (Sullivan 2009)

The allure of the Indian rock scene's middle class consumers has been attracting sponsors, international tours and media, and industry insiders like the ones at Unconvention for decades, determined to find a route by which to make the scene profitable; meanwhile Indian rock participants continue to produce their local industry, enabled by social media digital technology and the Internet.

Whether the independent industry in India will manage to overcome the disjunctures that render the idea of English-language Indian rock music (absent Indian instruments or sounds) anathema in the international music industry remains to be seen. Indian rock music sounds the way it does for many reasons that have to do with its histories with transnational media and its market identity vis-à-vis film music, among other things; and, in the end, as a genre it is subject to its own internal logics of change as tries to straddle the local and the transnational fields within which it is positioned. What is illustrated by the events and issues that I have addressed in this chapter is one

particular nuance of the complexities of these processes of circulation, particularly in relation to rock's cultural capital — which seems to travel in complex and piecemeal ways that have to be read in terms of the place in which they touch down. How Indian rock music will sound in the future, whether it will produce a band with the sounds necessary to "make it" in an international arena is unclear. Meanwhile cultural intermediaries like bloggers, producers and marketers continue to debate the proper sound of Indian rock, a process always unstable and uncertain.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This research and its focus on advertising and music in Indian public culture was kindled on my first trip to Bangalore in 2007, the night I went to see the Nokia Independence Rock Festival and became aware of the integral role of branding in the performance of Indian rock. I had become interested in the confluence of branding and rock music previously, when in 2006 during my master's research on the use of the Internet by Iranian underground rock musicians I came across a video of a metal band in Tehran performing in front of a Nokia banner. As Iranian rock muscians were subject to severe restrictions by Iran's Ministry of Culture and were often arrested for performing rock music I was especially struck by Nokia's sponsorship of this show. The larger question emerging from both of these ethnographic instances seemed to be: how do the economic forces of globalization, represented by companies like Nokia, Coke and Levis, intersect with national cultural mandates in the field of rock music? Or to put it another way, how does the field of rock music, already significantly shaped (one might say enabled) by transnationalism, evidence the tensions between economic globalization (in this case represented by corporate sponsorship) and the desire, need or pressure for the continuation or protection of some type of traditional national culture?

This work has tried to explore what it is that is at stake in such cultural struggles, apparent in the field of Indian rock music, as well as asking for whom these struggles are relevant and why. I have argued that rock music should be considered not a minor outlier in the cultural practices of urban India, nor simply an elitist musical and stylistic orientation, but an emergent significant and under-researched Indian popular music that

figures uniquely in a symbolically hierarchical field of cultural production. Rock music practices, as this dissertation has tried to show, articulate historically rooted but newly transforming urban subject and social formations through the production and consumption of a transnational cultural form that is fed and sustained by an influx of capital from foreign and national brands instantiating themselves in the Indian marketplace – a stream of capital that is in turn dependent on the fortunes of the global economy. I have suggested that in post-liberalization Bangalore the dynamics of mediation and commodification are central to the significance of the form, that their modalities shape how and to whom rock circulates, and that they direct the social meanings that are produced in musical practice. Because of these mediations (and particularly the relationship of rock and branding) rock music has been instrumental in demarcating a globally-oriented urban middle class sphere defined by education, generation and reflexive identification rather than (strictly speaking) income level or ethnic or caste identity, pointing to the emergence of social formations that coalesce around consumer practice, taste orientation, but also around entrepreneurism in the artistic fields.

Rock music, on the one hand the public culture purview of the valorized urban globalized Indian citizen is also a terrain upon which plays out anxious negotiations about cultural identity, demonstrated by the struggles over sound described throughout this work. The concerns over rock music's identity resonate with the myriad long-standing concerns over the relationship of tradition and modernity in India, and Rupal Oza has argued that in the context of India's "intensified encounter with global capital the concomitant loss of sovereignty has resulted in the displacement of control onto national

culture and identity" (Oza 2006:2). The impetus or onus to reflect national or regional identity is perhaps the central concern of Indian rock musicians (manifest in the arguments over "originality," "authenticity" and "Indian-ness") as well as of the cultural intermediaries who are responsible for its representations in the field of mass media, as demonstrated in shows like *Kurkure Desi Beats Rock On* or films like *Rock On!!*.

Through expressive practice, however, Indian rock musicians display a variety of strategic responses to the mandates of cultural nationalism. Although some musicians, as this work has shown, do integrate regional or national musical elements or languages in their music, many others display little concern for developing an audibly national element to their musical output. This work has tried to focus equally on the large amount of rock music being produced that doesn't "sound Indian;" these are also the sounds of Indian rock, and also reflective of subjects' orientation in a postcolonial, post liberalization globalized cultural milieu. I have tried show that in a manner of speaking, *not* "sounding Indian" is historically apposite in a genre that has emerged from the domestic production of colonial-era "western" musical forms and from the mass media circulations (radio and records) that predated liberalization; and this is a position that acknowledges the extensive musical and social reorganizing effects of colonialism and later forms of globalization and capitalist expansion. Such an approach recognizes that the beat musicians of the 1960s were indeed a "sound of the future" as the journalists of the time claimed, but also takes heed of the fact that this prognosticated future does not fit into the contemporary dominant narrative of an economically globalized but culturally nationalist India. Rock's genres, symbols and sounds alternately support and trouble the idea of a musical national cultural identity, illuminating the tense dynamics that characterize the

relationship of economic and cultural globalization in India generally and Bangalore specifically. Rock is a musical culture that asks us to contemplate the nature of the transforming local in a city like Bangalore; furthermore with Bangalore's economy held up as an example for the rest of India, and increasing urbanization and involvement in a global economy a seemingly inevitable fate for many Indian cities, then there is much to be learned from the city's public culture and the cultural practices in which its citizens partake.

The Coca-Cola problem

This dissertation describes the ramifications of commodification on expressive practices and the subjects who produce rock's sounds and discourses, but it also raises further pressing questions regarding musical culture and its possible implication in the reinforcement of neoliberalism and rapacious capitalism. In this work I have tried to avoid casting capitalism as somehow "against" expressive practice or assuming that rock's mediation and commodification is a dystopian example of capitalist predation. However, there are spaces for critique in this narrative of musical branding and sponsorship, and I turn to the story of Coke in India, its industrial practices and its advertising strategies, to explore some of these issues.

The Coca-Cola company, who returned to India in the 1990s after a 16 year hiatus (Aiyer 2007) have worked extensively to instantiate their brand in the Indian market and at the time of this writing accounted for sixty percent of carbonated beverage sales in the country (a result of their purchase of India's four major local soft drink brands) with plans to invest five billion dollars more into the Indian market by 2020 (Gulati and Ahmed 2012). It often seems as though the less intrinsic value a product has the more

compelling its advertising story must be, and soda typifies this equation. For products like Coke, void of nutritional value as a beverage, the brand itself represents and encompasses (to oversimplify considerably) the product's value and thus its advertising strategies are of paramount concern. Douglas Daft, former CEO of Coca-cola has stated that

> Responsibility for the world's most beloved and valuable brand requires extreme care in how, when and why we extend it. We don't risk consumer loyalty to the brand or seek an artificial bump in volume by spinning out product after product to chase the latest fad. But we do ask ourselves continually how we can bring more people to Coca-Cola. (Daft quoted in Foster 2007:708)

From early on Coke and Pepsi have utilized popular music in their advertising campaigns; Bethany Klein writes that "popular music allows the cola corporations to hide the physical content of their products, as well as the politics of their business, behind a veil of fabricated cool." (Klein 2008:17). In India, Coke was an early sponsor of rock music (as chapter five has described), partnering with MTV in marketing campaigns, sponsoring festivals, and taking out ads in the *Rock Street Journal*. Coke has continued to sponsor Indian rock music performances into the present day but in 2011 they also introduced *Coke Studio*, a live musical performance television show that airs on both MTV and Doordarshan and that purports to brings together "a confluence of diverse musical genres" (classical, folk, and film; the only rock band featured on the show thus far has been Raghu Dixit), aspiring to "create a unique sound in accordance with the cultural nuances of India" ("About Coke Studio"). The marketing initiative of *Coke Studio* works to produce a regionally inclusive, recognizably culturally Indian musical platform by showcasing musicians who sing in Hindi or regional languages and who play in Indian musical genres. *Coke Studio* is on the face of it a television show that provides

an opportunity for musicians to collaborate with each other and perform in front of a broad national audience, but it also represents a shift in the company's musical sponsorship practices, from their support of aspirational "English music" to recognizing the need to market to Indian "difference." Coke's brand has benefitted from *Coke Studio India* as well as the original version of the show *Coke Studio Pakistan,* with popular and respected musicians debuting material and collaborating across genres; arguably such musical productions animate Coke's social identity, bringing its brand into the realm of the creative and the culturally "authentic."

Coke's delicate shifts of advertising strategy, its careful and considered maneuvers in addressing the Indian public are, however, but one side of the corporation's janus face. Another side of the Coke brand in India has to do instead with water rights, environmental pollution and the struggles between rural workers and a multi-national corporation: namely, the case of Plachimada. In 2000 Coca-Cola built a plant in Plachimada, Kerala, a lower-caste, impoverished agrarian community. The plant was soon depleting the groundwater at such a rapid rate that in the course of two years the water table had been significantly reduced, drying up the village wells. In addition it was found that the company was dumping their toxic industrial byproducts and contaminating the region's farmlands, rendering the land unusable for the local farmers (Aiyer 2007). Little national attention was paid to Plachimada, however, until a 2003 study done by the Center for Science and Environment in New Delhi found that Coke's sodas were contaminated with pesticides, and in 2004 Indian parliament banned the soft drinks from school cafeterias (Aiyer 2007). By 2006 Coke was briefly banned from Kerala and the company was entangled in lawsuits around their practices there; however, by the time of

this writing in 2012 the Plachimada plant was still in existence and the villagers and workers were continuing to await the compensation that the company had promised them.

This brief sketch of the corporation's multi-sited operations, about its business and environmental practices and about its role in supporting and promoting different types of music in India conjoin what Coke itself would probably prefer to keep seperatedisparate realms. The paradox of poisoning water in rural India and "teaching the world to sing in perfect harmony" (one of Coke's early jingles) is one that neoliberal consumer capitalism increasingly enables and encourages us to overlook. This is not a dualistic tale of heroes and villains but of the entrancements of consumer capitalism in which advertising tells us stories more compelling – with better music and brighter colors – than the stories of political struggle.

I end with this story of Coke to suggest that Indian rock and its implication in the emergence of classed consumer culture formations has political import that resonates beyond the privileged spheres of public culture in which its sounds play out. Ong suggests that

> In a maturing field we may want to broaden the scope of the understanding of power and deploy our disciplinary insights to investigate how the privileged half lives, exercises, and reproduces its domination—all increasingly on a transnational scale (Ong 1999:30).

This research suggests that we attend to the sounds and practices of Indian rock's subjects, the strategies and negotiations that they undertake in the construction of this local, globalized genre and the influence of these mediated sounds in the larger Indian popular music culture as informative about the transformations in the Indian middle class and the shifting life-worlds of its subjects. This dissertation also concludes that the

demands for audibly Indian sounds in rock music are primarily indicative of the processes of essentialization of national or ethnic identity that take place as a result of the entrenchment of neoliberal capitalism. Comaroff and Comaroff write, "In an economy in which social identity is almost wholly mediated through processes of commodification 'ethnicity itself must become a commodity' (Bankston and Henry 2000:403, 385)" and cultural identity [is] at once essentialized and made the made the subject of choice, construction, consumption" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009:150). The outcome is that the "branding" of expressive output—indeed, of identity – has become a step in the process of musical production in Indian rock culture.

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