SURFING FOR PUNKS: THE INTERNET AND THE PUNK SUBCULTURE

IN NEW JERSEY

by

AARON ROBERT FURGASON

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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AARON ROBERT FURGASON

Dissertation Director

Professor Linda Steiner

This study examines the influence of the Internet on the punk subculture in New Jersey. Previous research by academics on the effect of the Internet on popular music has centered on the impact of Napster and peer-to-peer networks on the distribution of recordings (Alexander, 2002; Ayres & Williams, 2004; Bishop, 2004; Daniel & Klimis, 1999; Fox, 2004; Mardesich, 1999; & Oberholzer & Strumpf, 2004). However, unexamined is the influence of the Internet on a specific music subculture, punk. This is important because the subculture is occupied mainly by youth engaged with both the Internet and punk music. The Internet's influence on the punk subculture is a particularly important area of study because the Internet alters how participants in the subculture (punk fans, bands and independent labels) communicate with one another, as well as changes the distribution of punk artifacts and information.

Central to this study is the history of the major labels' dominance over the distribution and promotion of punk music, a domination examined via critical political economy theory. The Internet may offer a new outlet that removes the stranglehold of the major label system over punk.

Focus group research with punk members and interviews with punk label personnel and band members suggest that the Internet has made it easier and faster for punk fans, bands, and labels to communicate with one another. However, most of the online communication between punk fans, bands and labels now takes place on social networking sites (MySpace.com), where the central method of communication is one-to-many, instead of one-to-one. Recently, major labels have increasingly made both distribution and promotional deals with MySpace.com (and other social networking sites). These deals offer major label content prominent placement on social networking sites at the expense of independent label recordings. Ultimately, tours by punk bands will continue to play an important role in the promotion and marketing of punk music, as well as offer subculture members the authentic punk experience. Initially, the independent labels utilized the Internet to promote recordings more than major labels, but recently, major labels have begun to embrace the Internet to promote new recordings.

To my family

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Introduction:

In April of 2004, 6500 kids converged on Asbury Park, New Jersey for the seventh annual Skate and Surf Festival. The sold-out festival featured three 18-hour days of mind-shattering punk rock music (I was there, so I know). Over 200 bands, such as 'Brand New,' 'The Starting Line,' 'Eighteen Visions, 'Fall Out Boy' and 'Matchbook Romance' performed on five different stages. What was interesting about this show was that most of the bands performing at the festival were not signed to a major label, but instead were either signed to an independent label or the bands were completely independent (no label representation). Many of the bands that performed had only recorded a single seven-inch recording; many others had yet to record a single piece of music. What many of the bands had in common was that few if any, had received commercial radio airplay or MTV video exposure prior to the festival. Yet, the festival was sold out. How? I believe the answer was the Internet.

Promoter of the festival Tony Pallagrosi, president of Concerts East, said, "The artists make it very accessible, with tickets relatively inexpensive, merchandise and CD relatively inexpensive, and it's all communicated through the Internet" (Quoted in Shields, 2004, p. AA4). If Pallagrosi was indeed correct, the Internet had become a new form of communication method for punk rock fans, bands, and labels. Before, the major methods of promotion within the punk subculture were mainly college radio, fanzines, and touring. The claim thus raised the question: how specifically do punk fans, bands and labels use the Internet? This dissertation attempts to understand the online relationships among these parties.

The subculture of punk has been examined by many academics since its inception in the mid-1970s. Some recent tomes include the examination of the punk subculture from economic perspectives (Thompson, 2004; see also Thompson, 2001), from sociological and historical platforms (LeBlanc, 1999; Marcus, 1993; Sabin, 1999; Wooden & Blazak, 2001), a postmodern examination (Davies, 1996), as well as from individual genre-specific subcultural perspectives (Henry, 1989; Moore, 1993; Weinzerl & Muggleton, 2003). Several punk studies have examined specific issues within different subgenres of the subculture. For example, Lewis (1988) examined the birth and sustainability of the Los Angeles hardcore punk scene via fanzines and films. Willis (1993) examined the musical factors that led to the Los Angeles hardcore punk scene. Irwin (1999) studied drug education and its potential impact on the 'straight edge' punk subculture. In his study of four regional punk music scenes (Washington, D.C., Austin, Texas, Toronto and Mexico City), O'Connor (2002) found that regional musical scenes were important in their ability to sustain a punk subculture lifestyle. What has not been examined is the impact of the Internet on a specific music subculture, particularly the punk subculture. This dissertation examines how punk fans, bands, and labels use the Internet to communicate with one another.

Chapter one defines the term punk and identifies key aspects of the punk subculture, with special attention to punk style and music. The middle section of the chapter features short biographies on four bands important to the development of the punk rock sound (Velvet Underground, the Stooges, MC-5, and New York Dolls). Following this discussion is an examination of popular music of the 1970's and its impact on the development of the

punk rock sound. The chapter ends with an initial discussion on the commodification of punk music by the major labels.

Chapter two begins with a discussion of the key elements of political economy theory and its relationship to this project. Of particular theoretical interest to this dissertation is the control over the manufacturing and distribution of music recordings by conglomerates. The second half of the chapter highlights the power of the conglomerates to dictate the terms of production, distribution, and marketing of music. Issues of distribution and economic power are examined via critical political economy theory, an offshoot of political economy theory. The rest of the chapter examines the methods used by major labels to control the distribution of music.

The expressions 'selling out' and 'do-it-yourself' are introduced and ramifications of the terms on the punk subculture are examined in chapter three. The chapter starts with a discussion on the relationship of the term 'selling out' to punk music. Of special interest is how the major labels introduced of new wave music via commercial radio and MTV airplay and its impact on punk music. The second half of the chapter focuses on the rise of the Southern California hardcore punk scene, as a direct reaction to the 'selling out' of the first wave of punk by its association with new wave music. Key terms linked to the Southern California hardcore punk scene including 'do-it-yourself' and underground network, are defined and described. Of particular importance to this work is the development of an underground network of clubs, non-commercial radio stations, and fanzines that promoted hardcore punk music across the United States. The chapter

concludes with an analysis of the co-option of the underground network by the major labels.

Chapter four examines the different techniques used by independent and major labels to promote and market music. Of particular interest are the financial costs that all record labels must confront when promoting new music. Promotional costs, which are often substantial, caused major differences in how major and independent labels promote new recordings. The remaining sections of the chapter highlight these differences, as well as the pros and cons of several promotion techniques used by recording labels including commercial and non-commercial radio, print, videos, and tours.

Chapters five and six reflect on the impact of the Internet on the distribution and promotion of music. Chapter five begins with a brief history of the Internet and examines how the Internet's design makes it impossible to be controlled. This introduction then leads into an examination of the impact of new technologies including MP3's, peer-to-peer networks, and broadband Internet access on the recording industry. Central to this discussion is the response of the Recording Industry Association of America and the major labels to the free distribution of music online through policy and technological initiatives. The next two sections discuss the pros and cons of online distribution for independent labels, particularly punk labels. Finally, the chapter concludes with a historical overview of the major labels failed foray into the legal online pay music distribution services.

Chapter six looks at the similarities and differences between major and independent labels music promotion and marketing techniques online. Specific areas of interest include the word-of-mouse phenomenon, MP3 samples, and online aggregators. The chapter then focuses on the importance of social networking sites, particularly MySpace.com, on the promotion and marketing of online music. This discussion expands to include the pros and cons of online promotion, and concludes with a bibliography of prior research on the Internet and music and my four research questions.

The next chapter focuses on the three research methods used in this study: content analysis, interviews, and focus groups. The chapter highlights the pros and cons of focus groups and phone and in-person interviews. The procedures used for each method are discussed and the chapter concludes with information about focus group members and short biographies of the bands, independent labels and employees interviewed.

Chapter eight discusses the results of the focus groups and interviews in relation to the four research questions. Question one seeks to understand the impact of the Internet on the relationships between punk fans, punk bands, and punk independent labels. The second question asks label personnel and punk bands how they utilize the Internet to communicate with punk fans. Research question three uses interviews with label personnel and punk band members to understand how both entities use specific Internet technologies (Websites, e-mail, etc.) to promote new punk music. The last question relies on focus groups with punk fans to understand how punk fans utilize the Internet to find punk music.

Chapter nine highlights the main findings and draws some conclusions from the findings. Findings suggest that independent punk labels spend very little of their promotional and marketing online initiatives, specifically targeting individual punk fans. Instead, most independent punk labels distribute their content to as many online sites as possible, trying to place content on Websites that punk fans frequently visit. This type of online initiative by punk labels may in fact be the best strategy, according to most focus group participants. They indicate that they actively use the Internet to search for punk content and music. This promotional blanketing the Internet technique relies on the fact that independent punk labels have access and the ability to post information and advertisements on key online punk aggregators sites (PunkRock.org; PunkBand.com; AbsolutePunk.net; and PunkHardcore.com, etc.); social networking sites (MySpace.com) are becoming increasingly important as promotional sites. However, the recent inundation of major label content onto these social networking sites (through advertising, distribution and promotional deals, etc.) will make it increasingly difficult for any type of independent music label to utilize the social networking sites in the same manner.

Findings also suggest that one-to-one online communication among punk band members and individual punk fans is not a common occurrence. While punk fans often attempt to communicate one-to-one with punk band members (particularly on their MySpace profiles), band members rarely respond beyond adding fans to the band's profile page. The main reason for such little interaction is that most fan messages are questions that do not require a response from band members. Instead, most of the communication between

punk fans and bands takes place through one-to-many communication that features mainly information concerning new recordings and tour information.

A central issue facing independent punk label promotion of content on MySpace.com is that the site has increasingly come under the control of the major labels. At its start, the majority of MySpace.com profiles featured unsigned bands or independent label bands and only a few major label artists. However, recently major labels have increasingly made both distribution and promotional deals with MySpace.com (and other start-up social networking sites). These deals allow major label content prominent placement on social networking sites. In addition, technological advancements by social networking sites that allow them to offer advertisers increased abilities to target their advertisements at specific audiences has led to an increase in the cost of advertising (banner ads, placement on front pages, e-mail blasts, etc.) on the social networking sites. Such an increase in advertising costs may effectively exclude independent recording labels from one of the fastest-growing online communication sites.

The ramifications of the Internet for the punk subculture are two-fold. While the Internet does indeed make it easier to spread all aspects of the punk subculture worldwide (news, music, tours, etc.), it also increases the ease in which new musical movements in the punk subculture can be corrupted by the mainstream. Prior to the Internet, sub-genres of punk, such as hardcore and emo had long gestation periods before crossing over to the mainstream (each remained underground for over ten years). However, the major labels' co-option of the last underground movement in punk (Screamo) happened within two

years of its inception. The problem for the punk subculture (and any other underground music with mainstream potential – e.g., Reggae or Heavy Metal) is that this co-option does not allow for the building of extensive recording catalogs. This rapid co-option by the mainstream culture means that future generations of punk participants will only be exposed to punk music that acquires major label "sheen" (perfectly produced punk recordings). Independent punk labels will no longer have large back catalogues of recordings that are financial windfalls once the band does cross-over. Such a scenario may be detrimental to the financial well-being of punk independent labels.

Ultimately, touring by punk bands will remain one of the most significant tools to promote and market new punk music. While the Internet will greatly improve communication among punk fans, bands and labels concerning all aspects of touring, the live punk show offers punk subculture members the authentic punk experience. Unfortunately for the punk subculture in New Jersey, the introduction of 'pay-to-play' tactics by club owners is making it increasingly difficult for punk bands to secure gigs. In addition, the recent purchase of local music venues by national concert promoters, AEG Live and Live Nation, may in fact make it more difficult for independent punk bands to secure a show.

Finally, chapter ten suggests that the net neutrality issue currently undergoing government scrutiny may play an important future role in the marketing and distribution of punk music. The chapter concludes with participant's suggestions on the future of both the music industry and punk music. Participants note that the recording industry may

begin to rely heavily on branding techniques to promote music online. They also suggest that the recording labels will phase out the album; instead bands will only produce single recordings. For punk music, they also suggest that the current fad of major label-supported pop punk music (All-American Rejects, Green Day, Paramore, etc.) and style supported by the major labels will continue. In addition, focus groups suggest the influx of rap music and its fashion styles may begin to influence the overall sound of punk music, as well as fashion styles of punk participants.

Chapter 1: Punk and the Punk Subculture
1.1. What is Punk?

Savage (2001) described punk as an "international outsider aesthetic; dark, tribal,

alienated, alien and full of black humor" (p. xiv). Colegrave and Sullivan (2001)

indicated that "from its inception, the roots of punk lay in subversion, which carried the

inherent acknowledgement that you were somehow living apart" (p. 12). Punk clearly

defined itself by what it was not, the mainstream. Punk's mantra was: "Screw your

mainstream, this is our way" (Greenwald, 2003, p. 56). Lull (1987a) noted that by

distancing itself from the mainstream, participants within punk were seen by mainstream

culture as deviant, disrespectful, sick, or weird. Confrontation was a common theme

within punk. Punks confronted society by detaching themselves from the mainstream

culture and instead formed their own subculture.

Thornton (1997) defined "'subcultures' as social groups that were perceived to deviate

from the normative ideals of adult communities" (p. 2; see also Brake, 1980, p. 7; Lull,

1987b, p. 164; Shepherd & Wicke, 1997, p. 30; Thornton, 1996, p. 178). Youth were the

most common members of subcultures. De La Haye and Dingwall (1996) concluded that

"membership within subcultural groups whose ideas and lifestyles are at variance with

those of the dominant culture, is usually dominated by the young" (p. 3). Several scholars

concluded that youth subcultures often assembled around different genres of music and

the punk subculture was such an example of this occurrence (Blair, 1993; Clark, 2003;

De La Haye & Dingwall, 1996; Hebdige, 1979; Straw, 2001). Youth subcultures such as

punk resisted societal standards through the various rituals and styles that were designed

to be different from the mainstream. According to several scholars, a common form of

resistance within subcultures emerged through style (Cagle, 1995; Frith, 1988; Hebdige, 1979; Stahl, 2003).

Style was an important strategy used by participants of the punk subculture to separate themselves from the mainstream. Multiple scholars have suggested that youth subcultures relied on the "tools" that were most readily at their disposal and commonly would "rearrange" inscribed meanings of the tools and therefore challenge the conventional cultural order (Brake, 1980; Cagle, 1995; Connell & Gibson, 2003). Hebdige (1979) identified this rearrangement as "bricolage," whereby the appropriation and re-organization of objects is enacted to "erase or subvert their original straight meaning" (p. 104). A common example of bricolage within the punk subculture was the appropriation of black garbage bags; although these signified trash within the mainstream culture, these bags were re-appropriated by participants of the punk subculture as clothing. Brake (1980) concluded new subcultures styles were "created by appropriating objects from an existing market of artefacts and using them in a form of collage, which recreates group identity, and promotes mutual recognition for members" (p. 15; see also Hebdige, 1979, p. 103; Schaffner, 1983, p. 186; Shepherd & Wicke, 1997, p. 30). The style of punk, particularly its fashion element, allowed groups of teenagers to recognize one another as participants within the punk subculture. Often the styles that set apart a subculture from the mainstream were later re-appropriated by the mainstream culture.

Hebdige (1979) concluded that "each new subculture established new trends, generates new looks and sounds which feed back into the appropriate industries" (p. 95). Within the punk subculture, the first re-appropriated element of the subculture by the mainstream

culture was, literally, fashion. As it turned out, punk fashion, which originally separated punk subculture members from the mainstream culture, was quickly co-opted by fashion designers as the new trend and produced in large quantities for mass consumption by consumers outside of the punk subculture. Fashion styles that once were utilized by punk subculture participants as a method to separate from and shock the mainstream culture, became part of conventional society. Hebdige (1979) concluded that once the fashion was "removed from their private contexts by the small entrepreneurs and big fashion interests who produce them on a mass scale, they became codified, made comprehensible, rendered at once public property and profitable merchandise" (p. 96).

The availability of punk fashion at mass retailers in both the United States and Britain clearly rendered the fashion style of the punk subculture as a mainstream choice. The punk subculture members also utilized music as a form of resistance to the mainstream culture. De La Haye and Dingwall (1996) concluded that "music, rather than art, politics or literature, was the primary fuel for post-war subcultures, and many emerged in tandem with new forms of musical expression" (p. 3). Punk music was formed by youth who were disgusted by the state of popular music in the early 1970's. By the mid-1970s, most rock music was produced and distributed via major record labels, which were part of large multi-national conglomerates (a point I will return to in-depth later). Clark (2003) emphasized it as "anger at the establishment and anger at the allegedly soft rebellion of the hippie counter culture; anger too, at the commodification of rock and roll" (p. 225). Grossberg (1990) concluded:

> Punk attacked rock and roll for having grown old and fat, for having lost that which
> put it in touch with its audience and outside of the hegemonic reality. It attacked rock

and roll in the guise of mega-groups and arena rock, hippies and baby boomers who
had clearly become part of what was supposed to be outside of rock and roll. (p. 117)

Punk music was a direct negative reaction to the mainstream success of disco, singer-

songwriter, and progressive rock music (all of which were supported financially by the

major labels).

1.2. Music of the 1970s
Duncan (1984) concluded that "disco was the ultimate commodity music, entirely

formulaic and endlessly mass produce-able" (p. 130). The production of disco music was

time-consuming and required a high-priced and technologically advanced studio that was

equipped with a skilled engineer/producer. Shank (1994) observed that "the best disco

performances were wholly studio creations" (p. 82). Disco was dance club-friendly music

that spread across the United States from incessant airplay on commercial radio.

The direct opposite of disco was the music of singer-songwriters. Songs by Carole King,

James Taylor, and Elton John offered confessional, introspective lyrics. Tucker (1980)

argued that "rock music had always been a vehicle to express frustration, rebellion, and

obloquy, but as the 1970's proceeded, these themes were often softened to achieve mass

acceptance" (p. 520). Singer-songwriters achieved mass acceptance in the 1970's. Morris

(2003) commented that "in 1974, just prior to the birth of punk rock proper, albums by

The Carpenters, Chicago, Jim Croce, John Denver, Gordon Lightfoot, Olivia Newton-

John, and the inescapable Elton John reached #1 on Billboard's pop album chart" (p. 25).

Notably, all of these artists (except Chicago) were singer-songwriters.

The final musical movement of the 1970's that punk rebelled against was the progressive

rock movement. Classical music heavily influenced the sound of progressive rock music.

Street (1986) concluded that "progressive music was presented as an 'improvement' on its popular predecessors (rock 'n' roll or 'commercial' pop); it allied itself with classical music or with the avant-garde" (p. 190). The introduction of classical elements within progressive rock music changed rock music forever. Street (1986) concluded:

> Progressive music was serious; pop was trivial. Its seriousness was demonstrated by the length of the song (because the music had something important to say, it took a long time saying it) and by the "concept" albums in which a single theme was pursued (the idea of the symphony provided the model). The audience was expected to listen and nod. The music's complex structuring and barrage of sounds denied any opportunity for popular involvement. (p. 191)

Practitioners of progressive rock were musicians who had mastered not only their instrument, but also the recording studio. The concept album, classical elements, and the need for a studio equipped with advanced technology led to higher costs associated with the production and live performance of progressive rock music. The recording of progressive rock albums could take months or even a year to complete. This meant that only major labels could finance such endeavors. The division between the concert attendee and the band also marked the progressive rock movement. Progressive rock shows required large concert stages because of the numerous musicians needed to recreate the music live and the extensive usage of stages props during the performance. Lentini (2003) suggested that "by the mid-1970s, many bands established huge physical and psychological barriers between themselves and their audience. Punk musicians sought to reduce these forms of space and exclusivity" (p. 156).

Punk music was a direct reaction to disco, singer-songwriters, and progressive rock music. Miles Copeland, manager of the Police and co-founder of the punk independent label I.R.S. Records, said, "Our music (pop music of the 1970s) was love songs, with

long melodic guitar riffs and funky rhythms, theirs (punk) was anger and angst,

expressing the frustrations of their generation" (Quoted in Copeland, 1995, p. 205). A

small segment of the youth population started punk music out of their frustration with

popular music of the 1970's.

1.3. Punk Music

The origin of punk rock music remains uncertain. Starr and Waterman (2003) identified

three commercially unsuccessful rock bands, all of them American, as the prototype for

punk rock bands: the Velvet Underground, the Stooges, and the New York Dolls. To this

list, I would also add the MC-5. Each band contributed elements that, when combined,

formed the punk sound and style. The Velvet Underground contributed the lyrics, the

amateurism and the noise; The Stooges supplied the loud and abrasive sound; The MC-5

added the politics; and the New York Dolls gave the music its swagger and fashion style.

Legs McNeil, writer and co-founder of the first punk fanzine Punk, said: "I think it

started with the Velvets, the whole thing, in about 1965. No one was writing about real

experiences - the Velvets did" (Quoted in Colegrave & Sullivan, 2001, p. 32). The lyrical

content of the hippie music movement of the late 1960s concerned itself with peace, love

and happiness. Lyrically, the Velvets were just the opposite. Colegrave and Sullivan

(2001) concluded:

> The Velvet Underground was a first person look at the usage of speed, heroin and
> marijuana by the lower east side hipsters of the mid-1960s. The Velvets wrote lyrics
> about everyday life and struggles of a hidden subculture in New York City. They were
> the first to make people question conventional entertainment, and in doing so created
> an ethic that was at the heart of punk rock. (p. 19)

The Stooges' music relied on the beat and the rhythm instead of lyrics to convey the

band's message. Schaffner (1983) said, "the Stooges though less arty than the Velvet

Underground, were just as loud and anarchic" (p. 185). The music was more important than the lyrics in Stooges songs. While Velvet Underground lyrics told stories of urban decay, the Stooges' lyrics were absurd. Garofalo (1997) noted that "the Stooges material seldom included songs in the conventional sense; instead they were unstructured ramblings with titles like 'Dance of Romance, ' 'Asthma Attack,' and 'Goodbye Bozos'" (p. 309). The Stooges would heavily influence the first American punk band, the Ramones.[1]

The Motor City 5 (MC-5) music influenced the political tilt in punk lyrics. Miller (1999) identified "the MC-5 as a quintet of self-avowed rock and roll revolutionaries" (p. 320). The revolutionary leanings of the band were due to their association with The White Panther Party, through their manager John Sinclair. The White Panther Party had formed in support of the Black Panther Party, a primarily African-American group of men and women who were involved in the fight against poverty and racism in the late 1960's and early 1970's. The White Panther Party supported not only the causes of the Black Panther Party but also the spread of rock and roll music, dope, and the abolishment of capitalism. The MC-5 portrayed many of these philosophies within their music. The MC-5's bent towards political lyrics heavily influenced the first wave of British punk, particularly the Sex Pistols.

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[1] Each band influenced the initial wave of punk in the United States (Ramones, Television, Dead Boys, etc.) and in turn, tours by first wave United States punk bands in England, influenced the first wave of British punk. While the British punk rock movement is important to punk history, only the impact of the Sex Pistols on the second generation of United States hardcore punk will be discussed.

Finally, the New York Dolls influenced punk through their stage presence and fashion.

Schaffner (1983) described the New York Dolls as the first true example of the "punk

aesthetic" (p. 185). In the early 1970's, the New York Dolls' stage show fashion was

women's clothes, worn in order to shock and bait the audience to react. Savage (2001)

found "their costume regularly included makeup, dresses, high heels and women's clothes

picked up in thrift stores" (p. 60). Near the twilight of the band's career, a London

clothing shop owner, Malcolm McLaren, became the band's manager for a short period.

After leaving the band, McLaren returned to England and recruited young unemployed

boys to form a London-version of the New York Dolls, with the express interest of

promoting his clothing store. That band was the Sex Pistols. Colegrave and Sullivan

(2001) argued it "was the New York Dolls who provided Malcolm McLaren with the

blueprint for the Sex Pistols in all but clothing. They were absolutely essential to the

formation of punk" (p. 19). The shock value of the Dolls' fashion style would be

amplified and extended by the Sex Pistols and the rest of the punk subculture.

All four of these bands laid the foundation for the first wave of punk in both America and

Britain. Arnold (1993) argued:

> Punk was an outbreak of new talent that happened all over the world and opened the
> door to a whole new generation of people who had ideas to replace the bankrupt swill
> that was being regurgitated by people who blew a lot of their talent and shot their
> wads in the sixties, but who maintained a stranglehold on the airwaves in the seventies
> by churning out repetitive pabulum and what not. (p. 16; see also Shank, 1994, p. 92)

Punk music was a direct reaction to the aforementioned mainstream music. According to

Ian Copeland, co-founder of the independent punk label I.R.S. Records: "That, it seemed

to me, was what the punk scene was all about. Just about anyone that wanted to could

give it a go" (Quoted in Copeland, 1995, p. 208). Punk music took rock back to the

basics. Bayton (1998) concluded that "punk simplified music, in terms of structure and

rhythm, making spirit more important than expertise so that, for a while, amateurishness

and mistakes were in fashion" (p. 64). Anyone could form a punk band and participate.

This was a radical departure from the pop and rock music scenes of the 1970's.

Punk inspired thousands of youths to form a band, practice in someone's garage and

perhaps record a single that they played live at a local venue. Schaffner (1983)

concluded:

> Thousands of new bands sprang up virtually overnight, most of them practically interchangeable, recharging those three magic chords in a machine-gun volley that threatened to level the superstars' vaunted pedestals, re-consecrate rock and roll as a force for subversion and anarchy, and put fear and loathing back into the hearts of upstanding citizens. (pp. 184-185)

Two punk bands that exemplify this strategy were the Ramones and the Sex Pistols.

1.4. The Ramones & Sex Pistols

Four kids from Queens, New York formed the Ramones in 1974. The Ramones' dislike

of popular music in the 1970s aided in the development of the Ramones sound.

According to lead singer, Joey Ramone:

> By the mid-seventies, music was all about Emerson, Lake and Palmer and corporate rock and '*Disco Duck*' and '*Convoy*' and '*The Night Chicago Died*.' There was no spirit left, no spark, no challenge, no fun, and so many artists had become so full of themselves. We just weren't hearing any music that we liked anymore, so we stripped it back down and put back the passion and energy and emotion that were missing from the music we were hearing at the time. (Quoted in Schinder, 1996, p. 34)

Tommy Erdelyi, drummer and producer of the Ramones' legendary sixteen-song demo

and co-producer of the first four Ramones LPs, said:

> There was never anything like the Ramones before. It was a new way of looking at music. We took the rock sound into a psychotic world and narrowed it down into a straight line of energy. In an era of progressive rock, with its complexities and

counterpoints, we had a perspective of non-musicality and intelligence that takes over for musicianship. (Quoted in White, 1990, pp. 444-445)

The Ramones relied on minimal chord progressions, fast tempos, and absurd lyrics to get their musical message across in two minutes or less. The blueprint for the "punk sound" came from the Ramones.

The other significant contribution by the Ramones was that they were the first New York punk band to tour England. This tour was important because of its impact on the English version of the punk subculture. Joey Ramone, singer for the Ramones, said, "We started playing at CBGB's in New York (early punk venue), and in 1976 we went to London and were playing crowds of 3,000, and it seemed like everyone who came to our shows started bands" (Quoted in Schinder, 1996, p. 34; see also White, 1990, p. 440). Attending the Ramones' London shows were future members of the Sex Pistols, the Pogues and the Clash. The tour showed British youth how easy it was to participate within the punk subculture. Danny Fields, ex-manager of the Ramones, said:

> I remember when Paul Simonon met the Ramones at the Roundhouse. Johnny asked him, 'What do you do? Are you in a band?' Paul said, 'Well, we just rehearse. We call ourselves the Clash but we're not good enough.' Johnny said, 'Wait till you see us - we stink, we're lousy, we can't play. Just get out there and do it.' And they did within a few weeks. (Quoted in Colegrave & Sullivan, 2001, p. 234)

By touring England, the Ramones were able to spread the punk subculture ethos to new potential members and inspire them to make their own British version of the subculture. Touring was (and remains) a central method for the dissemination of punk music and will be discussed in-depth in chapter four.

Sex Pistols

Friedlander (1996) described the Sex Pistols as "the seminal punk group, shock rockers

assaulting the strictures and conventions of mainstream society. For them it was fun and

games. Other bands and artists traveled similar paths, diverging from the Pistols model at

certain junctures to produce their own punk parables" (p. 255). Similar to the Ramones,

the Sex Pistols' tours also inspired others to form bands. Colegrave and Sullivan (2001)

noted:

> When the Sex Pistols played at the Lesser Free Trade Hall in Manchester, a gig
> organized by the Buzzcocks, the audience was full of future stars, including Mark E.
> Smith of the Fall, Morrissey of the Smiths, Bernard Summer of New Order, Mick
> Hucknall of Simply Red and Peter Hook of Joy Division. Up until that point, none had
> considered a career in music. Wherever the Pistols played, they left behind a gang of
> hopefuls who thought, 'I can do that.' (pp. 110-111; see also Shank, 1994, p. 93;
> Ward, Stokes, & Tucker, 1986, p. 559)

The Pistols differed from the Ramones in their lyrics. The Pistols' lyrics had an agenda.

While the Ramones sang of "Beat on the Brat" and "Teenage Lobotomy," the Sex Pistols

were attacking the monarchy with "God Save the Queen." The song was so controversial

in Britain that its label A&M Records fired the band one week after signing the Pistols.

Harron (1988) described A&M as "particularly alarmed about the reaction" of the public

to the song during the same year that England was celebrating the Queen's Jubilee (p.

202). Although banned from the airwaves in Britain, "God Save the Queen" was an

instant sensation and hit Number One a few weeks after its release (Ward et al., 1986).

This song and several other Sex Pistols recordings inspired subsequent punk bands (The

Clash and Gang of Four) to write and record fierce anthems denouncing perceived

injustices by the British government.

Lull (1982) concluded that the punk movement in England was noted for its oppositional

"extremism" (p. 24). While London punk called for oppositional extremism and

detachment from mainstream culture (common in the American punk rock experience)

both subculture movements were part of a commodity system controlled by major labels

with significant corporate backing. Cagle (1995) remarked:

> Subcultural members are often rabid consumers who appropriate objects that are then recontextualized so as to subvert the original meanings connected with such objects. But because subcultures are often consumed with the process of consumption, the exploitative process whereby the subculture faces its own commercialization is not something that is easily examined as an absolute category (p. 33).

This was and remains one of the central contradictions of the punk subculture, the need to

commodify the subculture.

1.5. Punk Commodities

Lull (1987a) observed that "contradictions exist everywhere in the punk subculture" (p.

250; see also Marcus, 1980, p. 451). Throughout the history of punk, contradictions

appear on many levels and in numerous forms. Taylor (2003) suggested "punk was an

anti-commodity movement that manifested through commodities" (p. 8; see also Lull,

1987a, p. 232). A central contradiction of punk from its start in New York City,

continuing onto the first wave of British punk and beyond, was that most of the

participating punk bands produced commodities. In addition, many of these first wave

punk recordings were produced and distributed by major labels. Punk bands songs

attacked conditions of social ills, oppression, and economic control in mainstream

society. Nonetheless, most of these songs were manufactured and distributed by

companies involved in the oppression, the major labels. For instance, Shank (1994) found

"the English punk rock rhetoric of revolution, destruction, and anarchy was articulated by

means of specific pleasures of consumption requiring the full industrial operations that ostensibly were the objects of critique" (p. 94).

The forefathers of punk -- The Velvet Underground, the Stooges, MC-5, and New York Dolls -- were all associated with major labels at different stages of their career. Most of the first wave of punk in New York City also signed to major labels. For example, the Ramones, Talking Heads, Dead Boys, and Richard Hell and Voidoids were all signed to Sire Records, an independent from 1975-1977 (although final product was distributed by ABC Records, a subsidiary of the American Broadcasting Corporation and Paramount theater chain). Spitz and Mullen (2001) recall that by the end of 1977, Sire Records recordings were distributed by the major label, Warner Brothers Records. According to Thompson (2004), the definition of a punk band was that the "band must be capable of producing, distributing, and performing material with little or no specialized training, without prohibitive financial investments, and without ties to corporate investors" (p. 160). Yet, few of the United States originators of the punk sound were without some type of multi-national corporation connection.

Similar to the American experience, most of the British first wave punk bands were connected to major recording labels. Thompson (2004) commented:

> In 1977, the Sex Pistols signed with Warner Brothers, the Clash with CBS Records, The Damned and The Adverts with Stiff Records, The Stranglers and The Buzzcocks with United Artists Records, X-Ray Spex with Virgin Records, The Vibrators with RAK Records, Generation X with Chrysalis Records, and Chelsea with Step Forward Records, and these bands were only the most famous partaking in that year's business arrangements. (p. 32; see also Gilmore, 1998, p. 167; Laing, 1985, p. 138; Reynolds, 2005, p. 17; Savage, 2001, p. 313)

Of the aforementioned, CBS Records and United Artists Records were major labels; and Virgin Records and Chrysalis Records were independents with major label distribution. The only truly independent labels were Rough Trade, Stiff Records, RAK Records and Step Forward Records. As with the American experience of punk, few of the British punk bands were without some type of multi-national corporation connection. According to Thompson (2004) "as the New York Scene had in 1976, the English Scene dissolved when its various desires were subordinated to commercial forces that originated outside of the scene itself" (p. 32).

However, as noted above, the first wave of punk began as a direct reaction to the current state of rock and roll. The aim of punk music was to present itself as a direct challenge or threat to the dominant culture, perhaps even confronting the power of the dominant culture with its own power: "we want the world and we want it now" (Grossberg, 1983-4, p. 110). However, to want the world and want it now, the first wave of punk had to be known to the world. In order to be known, punk was required to produce a commodity (record or tape). Yet, to make a record or tape was to produce a product that was similar to the industry that the first wave of punk was rebelling against, the mainstream music industry. To what extent should punk buck the system? Should punk bands make records? If so, should they sell them or give them away for free? Should they sign with an independent or major label? This dilemma confronted the first wave of punk. Street (1986) observed that "commercialism and the industry remained enemies of 'true music' the business, however, remained a necessary evil. Punk musicians, like their

predecessors, had to balance the competing pressures of the industry and the music's ethos" (p. 144).

The industry in which punk found itself, the recording industry, has remained under the control of several major recording labels for decades. In the next chapter, I examine this control and power that the major labels had over the recording industry and the punk subculture in particular.

Chapter 2: Political Economy Theory

Significant changes to ownership occurred within both the recording and radio industries

in the last twenty years. Common to both industries was the rapid consolidation and

concentration of ownership among just a few players. This chapter explores the potential

ramifications of those changes on the punk subculture. The first part of the chapter

discusses political economy theory and its relationship to this study; the second half

examines the recent consolidation of the recording and radio industries and the potential

impact of such consolidation on the punk subculture.

2.1. Political Economy Theory

Murdock and Golding (1974) noted that "the obvious starting off point for a political

economy of mass communications was the recognition that the mass media were first and

foremost industrial and commercial organizations which produced and distributed

commodities" (pp. 3-4; see also Mosco, 1996, p. 105). During the past half-century

companies that distribute media content had seen significant changes to media industries.

Mosco (1996) concluded that "a chief influence on the development of political economy

approach was the transformation of the press, electronic media, and telecommunication

from modest, often family-owned enterprises, into major businesses of the twentieth

century industrialist order" (p. 73). What were once small family-owned media

businesses transformed into massive consolidated behemoths controlled by large and

powerful corporate organizations. What impact might these changes in ownership

patterns have on the production and consumption of media? Negus (1998) and Wasko

(1994) noted that political economy often analyzed ownership patterns and control, to

understand how they impact the production of cultural products. Of particular interest for

production was "the structure of access to the means of production and the structure of

the distribution of the economic surplus-as the key to the structure of domination"

(Garnham, 1995, p. 70; see also Banks, 1996, p. 173; Goodwin, 2000, p. 104; Mosco,

1996, p. 257; Murdock, 1982, p. 121; Steeves & Wasko, 2002, p. 19).What were the

ramifications of conglomerates control of media production and distribution on society?

Central to this dissertation is the impact of the aforementioned ownership changes on the

punk subculture. Hesmondalgh and Negus (2002) concluded:

> Political economy provided an initial impetus and inspiration for many researchers, as
> it enabled insights into the ways that corporate ownership impinges upon musical
> production, drew attention to how production occurs within a series of unequal power
> relations, and showed how the control of production by a few corporations can
> contribute to broader social divisions and inequalities, not only within nations but
> across the world. (p. 145; see also Negus, 1999, p. 15)

2.2. Critical Political Economy Theory

An offshoot of political economy theory is the critical political economy theory. Critical

political economy theorists are interested in the interplay between economic organization

and political, social, and cultural life. Golding and Murdock (1991) noted that in the case

of the cultural industries they were "particularly concerned to trace the impact of

economic dynamics on the range and diversity of public cultural expression, and its

availability to different social groups" (p. 18; see also Mosco, 1996, p. 27). Particular

areas of concern were issues of access to media products, as well as the marketing and

distribution properties of media commodities. Murdock (1995) noted that "critical

political economy theory examined where the contents had been produced and promoted,

who had access to them, and the links between the 'freedom' of choice enjoyed by

shoppers and the denial of choices" (p. 93).

Mosco (1996) suggested that the "growth of critical political economy theory was built in part on an effort to understand the marketing process critically, i.e. to connect mass marketing to wider economic and social processes and to criticize them from a range of humanistic values" (p. 12). Given that particular interest here is whether the Internet facilitated the marketing and distribution of the punk subculture by punk bands and labels to fans, critical political economy theorists' interest in the impact of corporate entities' control on the distribution of media content is highly relevant. Golding and Murdock (1991) concluded:

> Critical political economy theorists focused on the distributional consequences of capitalism for communications processes and institutions. This meant analyzing the implications of markets for patterns of cultural distribution, and of the availability of differing forms and structures of meaning. It also meant a critical concern with the distribution between public and private. (p. xvi)

Finally, a central issue for critical political economy theorists was the issue of power. Golding and Murdock (1991) concluded that while "mainstream economics focused on the sovereign individuals of capitalism, critical political economy started with sets of social relations and the play of power" (p. 18; see also Mosco, 1996, p. 118).

2.3. Issues of Power

Babe (1993) and Mosco (1996) showed that research by political economists emphasized questions of power. Specifically, Mosco (1996) noted that "one can think about political economy theory as the study of the social relations, particularly the *power relations*, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources" [italics in the original] (p. 25; see also Golding & Murdock, 1991, p. 26; Curran, Gurevitch, & Woollacott, 1982, p. 18). Of particular interest was the increasingly power of the media industries over public discourse. The question of power was pertinent on account of the significant changes within the control of media industries. Murdock (1990) concluded

that the "form of media enterprise was no longer a company specializing in one particular activity, but a conglomerate with interests in a wide range of communications industries, often linked to other key economic sectors through shareholdings, joint ventures and interlocking directorships" (p. 311; see also Murdock & Golding, 1974, p. 19). The ultimate goal of these partnerships was to increase the profitability of the conglomerate. Schiller (1989) indicated that "the main objective of the American corporate economy was to maximize profits in whatever were the given circumstances" (p. 28; see also Goldsmith Media Group, 2000, p. 20; Negus, 1999, p. 15).

For example, within the recording industry power was solely under the control of corporate controlled major labels. By the mid-1990s, control of the recording industry rested with the 'Big Six' global music companies: Sony, Bertelsmann BMG, Electrical and Musical Industries (EMI), PolyGram, Universal, and Warner Bothers, Elektra and Atlantic (WEA). By 1998, PolyGram merged with Universal, to form the Universal Music Group. Further mergers took place in 2004, when Sony and BMG merged to form Sony BMG. The 'Big Six' now became the 'Big Four': EMI, Sony BMG, Universal, and WEA. This last consolidation to the 'Big Four' further tightened the power of the major labels over all aspects of the recording industry. Lopes (1992) indicated that "major labels maintained their control by monopolizing large-scale manufacturing, distribution, and access to the major avenues of exposure - radio, television, and film" (p. 57; see also McChesney, 2004, pp. 183-184; Peterson & Berger, 1990, p. 143; Rossides, 2003, p. 226). Independent artists and labels did not enjoy this same type of control over the manufacturing, marketing, and distribution of its recordings. To reach mass consumers,

independent artists and labels were required to make deals with major labels for these services.

Within the radio industry, recent governmental changes allowed for corporations to consolidate a once relatively un-consolidated radio industry. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 led to massive consolidation within the radio industry. The consolidation transformed radio from an industry with significant local market ownership presence, into an industry in which distant corporate owners controlled several radio stations per local market. This control allowed conglomerate owners to dictate both programming and advertising decisions, meaning that major labels and radio conglomerates ultimately decided where, when, and if consumers had access to musical recordings. The power of these large media corporations allowed them extraordinary degree of power over many aspects of cultural life (Compaine, 2000; Golding & Murdock, 1991; Goldsmith Media Group, 2000; Goodwin, 2000; McQuail, 1992; Mosco, 1996; Murdock, 1982).

Power over many aspects of cultural life by conglomerates took many forms. Burnett (1992) indicated that the power to control "the market then strongly influenced the independence granted to popular culture creators, which in turn affected the degree of innovation and diversity in the products that were produced" (p. 760). This level of concentration directly affected the product choices offered to media consumers. Rothenbuhler and Dimmick (1982) concluded that "concentration in cultural industries, as in other sectors of the economy, led to an increasing homogenization or lack of diversity in cultural products" (p. 2143; see also Ahlkvist & Fisher, 2000, pp. 302-303;

Christianen, 1995, p. 55; Lopes, 1992, p. 56; Peterson & Berger, 1990, p. 145). For

recorded music, "the nearly absolute control of an industry by a small group of

companies, directly affected the ability of rock/pop audiences to determine the nature,

direction, and cost of their favorite music" (Friedlander, 1996, p. 291).

2.4. Economic Power
Economic factors also played a significant role in the power of large conglomerates over

cultural life. One of the common features highlighting the power of corporations over

cultural life was the ability to dominate through access to large amounts of capital (Bettig

& Hall, 2003; Garnham, 2001; McChesney, 2000; Mosco, 1996). Significant portion of

this capital was obtained through corporate relationships with Wall Street. Reliance on

Wall Street meant that corporate gatekeepers' decisions concerning media content were

increasingly driven by the potential impact of the media content on profit margins,

expenses, and shareholders return on their investment. Shapiro (1999) concluded that

"the flow of unrestricted, quality content was inhibited because, no matter how many

outlets there were, they were increasingly owned by a handful of mega-conglomerates

who cared only about the bottom line" (p. 41).

In response to these bottom line pressures, critics have argued, media companies focused

its manufacturing, marketing, and distribution capital at content that would not offend the

public. Ryan and Wentworth (1999) suggested "almost by definition, much of media fare

was intended for consumption by the largest potential audience. Often this led to a

strategy of focusing more on not offending and alienating rather than attracting" (p. 18;

see also McChesney, 2004, p. 195; Robertson, 2000, pp. 4-5). From the mid-1980's to the

present, concentrated media owners of record labels offered the public recordings by non-

controversial 'Boy Bands' (such as Backstreet Boys and 98 Degrees) and radio-friendly 'Power-Pop Punk' (such as Good Charlotte and All American Rejects), designed not to offend anyone.

The success of these products through sales of millions of recordings suggested that the major labels were "giving the public what they wanted." However, according to McChesney (2004):

> To some extent 'we give people what they want' argument was circular. People were exposed to the media fare that the giants could profit from, they developed a taste for it, they consumed it, and then the media giants claimed they must make more of it to satisfy demand. (p. 200; see also Street, 1986, pp. 94-95)

While this philosophy may sound reasonable to the major labels, a significant question was left unanswered: What content was the public denied exposure to? Murdock (1982) suggested "the need to attract and keep large, politically heterogeneous audiences meant that the popular media tend to play it safe and pick up the conservative rather than the radical strands in popular culture" (p. 147; see also McChesney, 2004, p. 195; Robertson, 2000, pp. 4-5; Ryan & Wentworth, 1999, p. 18).

Most of these radical strands of popular culture not associated with large corporations found support through independent companies. Truly independent companies that sponsored radical strands of popular culture were faced with many roadblocks caused by the power that large corporate entities had over the manufacturing, marketing and distribution of media products. Economic power allowed corporations to dictate the conditions in which all media companies compete. Golding and Murdock (1991) noted:

In addition to the power they exercise directly over the companies they own, the major media moguls also have considerable indirect power over smaller concerns operating in their markets or seeking to break into them. They establish the rules by which the competitive game will be played. They can use their greater financial power to drive new entrants out of the marketplace by launching expensive promotional campaigns, offering discounts to advertisers, or buying up key creative personnel. (p. 24)

An example of this type of economic power in the recording industry was the ability of major labels to control access to end-caps (prime retail display areas at the end of each aisle) locations within 'Big Box' retailers such as Best Buy, Wal-Mart and Target. Martin Mills, chairman of the independent labels Beggars Group and Impala, said:

Consider a practical example. If HMV wants U2 records, it has to get them from Universal. If MTV wants a U2 video, Universal is the only label that can supply it. When there's space for just 'X' titles to be racked at the front of the store and just 'Y' videos on the playlist that gives Universal the clout to get another space in that rack or on that playlist for another Universal artist. Fair enough, you might say, but when you've got four or even three big companies using such leverage, especially in a declining market in which it's increasingly expensive to operate, it's not hard to see how a great new artist on a small, quality label can quite simply get squeezed out. (Mills, 2006, p. 8)

The ability to control access to numerous successful artist recordings gave major labels significant power in the decision-making processes of record stocking practices of retailers. Another factor was the sheer cost associated with prime retail display cases. To obtain placement in these prime retail locations, major labels spend millions of dollars per year, an expense most independent labels cannot afford. Mills observed:

Four big companies can impose their will on retail and media in a way that fifteen did not. In battling each other for space and attention - and leveraging their strength - they intentionally or unintentionally reduce opportunities for smaller players. (Mills, 2006, p. 8)

This power at retail led to significant barriers of entry for product that was outside of the major label mainstream fare.

No matter the industry, for all conglomerates the key to success was the elimination of

competition. McChesney (2000) found "the less competition that conglomerates must

compete with in the marketplace for sales, the greater the chance of increased profit

potential" (p. 9). One of the key methods used by corporations is the ability to set the

price of products. McChesney (2004) asserted conglomerates "had greater control over

their own fate: they were price makers, not price takers. This was a much more desirable

market structure for a firm than was a competitive market; it could lock in profits,

through maintaining higher prices, because new firms probably would not enter the

market" (p. 139; see also Wallis & Malm, 1984, p. 76).

For instance, in 2002 the major labels settled a forty-state sponsored class-action lawsuit

caused by the major labels adherence to minimum advertised pricing policies at retail.

The suit claimed that the major labels along with large retailers "colluded to keep the

price of CD's artificially high through their minimum advertised pricing policies"

(Deutsch, 2002, p. C1). Minimum advertised pricing policies meant that major labels paid

the retailers advertising costs (TV and newspaper ads) with the understanding that the

retailers would sell CDs at or above a certain price set by the recording labels. Retailers

that did not participate in the major labels plan led to reductions in the "subsidies that the

distributors regularly paid to retailers to advertise and promote recordings" (Fried, 2000,

p. B7; see also Ordonez, 2003, p. D1). Cash subsidies required for retail advertising was

not financially viable for independent artists and labels; therefore, indies product was

rarely part of any type of national retail advertising campaign. Independent bands and

labels unable to assist retailers with advertising costs did not receive advertisements for its product, nor given space within the retail store.

Finally, barriers to entry made it difficult for new competitors with fresh ideas and motivations to compete alone against established media conglomerates. McChesney (2004) suggested "a major development in media markets over the past century has been the manner in which they work to the advantage of the largest players, making the possibility of becoming a commercially viable media producer difficult" (p. 177; see also Fox, 2004, p. 204; Napoli, 2001, p. 107). For instance, in order to reach large consumer music markets, barriers to entry forced many independent artists and labels to contract with major labels. McChesney (2000) concluded that the "role of small firms in this classic scenario was to conduct the research and development and experimentation that large firms find insufficiently profitable, and then, when one of them finds a lucrative new avenue, they sell out to existing giants" (p. 140). Many independent artists and labels sign distribution deals with the larger and more powerful major labels. The major labels offered greater clout in the manufacturing, marketing, and distribution of independent product than any independent recording label offered artists. Because of this, the major labels retained control over the recording industry, discussed next.

2.5. Control of the Recording Industry through Distribution

Control of the recording industry has long remained in the hands of a few major companies (Bishop, 2004; Connell & Gibson, 2003; Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; Gomery, 2000a; Roberts, 2002; Rothenbuhler & Streck, 1998). At the turn of the twentieth century, "two major label companies controlled the manufacturing, promotion and distribution of all recorded music: the Victor Talking Machine Company, formed in

1901, and the Columbia Phonograph Company formed in 1898" (Chapple & Garofalo, 1977, p. 1; see also Eliot, 1989, pp. 36-37; Fink, 1996, p. 5). This control allowed for the major labels to profit considerably, as they were the largest companies competing in the recording business. This large return of profit gave them the capital reserves immediately available that allowed major labels to continual tighten its control over the industry. Control, in a similar manner to their inherent power over the independents, came from the ability of the major labels to "own and operate the recording studios and the expensive disk recording and cutting equipment" (Mabry, 1990, p. 416).

By the mid-1940s, the basic structure of the modern music industry was in place. Frith (1988) concluded that during the 1940's and into the early 1950's, control of the recording industry still "depended on the ownership of the means of record production and distribution and was also now organized around the marketing of stars and star performances" (p.19; see also Escott & Hawkins, 1991, p. 96; Roberts, 2002, p. 33). By the mid-1940's, "six major record companies (Columbia, RCA, Decca, Capitol, MGM, and Mercury) dominated the record business; of the 163 records that sold over one million copies all but five were recorded by one of the major record companies" (Mabry, 1990, p. 413; see also Gillett, 1983, p. 7; Peterson & Berger, 1990, p. 141). While the majors focused on stars, small independent labels began to sign and distribute product that was outside of the mainstream pop market.

These newly formed labels recorded, manufactured, promoted, and distributed musical genres that the major labels would not, such as Country and Rhythm and Blues. Chapple

and Garofalo (1977) found that "the major record companies at first tried to ignore the new music, which was marketed largely on independent labels" (p. xiii; see also Ennis, 1992, p. 176; Starr & Waterman, 2003, p. 205). Sam Phillips, founder of the independent label, Sun Records, commented: "The major labels used to laugh at the indies. Atlantic, Aladdin, Sun, Dot. They figured these damn people would go away - and what percentage of the market are they gonna get anyway? One or two percent?" (Quoted in Escott & Hawkins, 1991, p. 6) However, by the late 1940's, some 400 new independent record companies were started (Chapple & Garofalo, 1978, p. 29; see also Gronow, 1983, p. 71). Most of these upstart independent labels were recording the new form of music, rock and roll.

During the early days of rock and roll, independent labels such as Atlantic, Chess, and Sun Records could survive and flourish by signing a band and recording a single song. If enough of them sold, the label would produce a follow-up single. If that single also sold, only then might an entire album be produced. Barnes (1988) observed that during this time-period "the album had served as an afterthought to the single, being hastily assembled collection of often second-rate tunes designed to capitalize on the hit single's appeal" (p. 14). Technological improvements in recording would also assist independent labels.

What has always assisted independents was that they usually were the first to grasp the benefits that technological changes could bring to the recording industry. Frith (1986) concluded that "each new development in recording technology enabled new voices to be

heard and to be heard in new ways" (p. 278; see also Coleman, 2003, p. 22; Lovering,

1998, p. 38). Technological improvements in sound recording via the introduction of

audiotape allowed for early rock & roll independents to flourish. Toynbee (2000)

concluded:

> As the literature has it (Chapple & Garofalo 1977, Frith 1983, Gillett 1983/1970, Chambers 1985, Cohn 1989/1969) the small independent record companies which introduced rock 'n' roll were predicated on the existence of such cheap recording facilities. Tape became the harbinger of a revolution in popular culture that brought the means of production within the ambit of a political economy of local entrepreneurs, so opening up access and allowing a more decentralized music-making culture. (p. 80)

The introduction of audio tape to the recording process was the important technological

breakthrough that contributed to the rise of the new independent record companies. Starr

and Waterman (2003) concluded that magnetic tape recording "was better able to capture

the full range of musical sounds than the older process of recording directly onto master

phonograph discs" (p. 155). Prior to audiotape, all recordings were recorded to acetate,

which was a time-consuming and expensive process that resulted in poor sound quality.

In contrast, tape was relatively cheap, and allowed for ease of editing and multiple takes

on multi-track recording devices. The second breakthrough in recording technology was

the multi-track recorder. Gilbert and Pearson (1999) concluded that "the advent of multi-

track recording enabled musicians to compose music in which the single musician was

able to adopt multiple musical roles" (p. 118; see also Chambers, 1985, p. 155; Jones,

1992, p. 133; Starr & Waterman, 2003, p. 155; Wallis & Malm, 1984, p. 6). Multi-track

recording on tape meant that musicians could edit together several performances into a

single perfect performance. The combination of tape and multi-track recording allowed

independent record companies to compete with the major labels.

Connell and Gibson (2003) remarked that "the music industry boomed; between 1955 and 1959 record sales in the United States more than doubled, most of this by the small independent record companies that promoted rock 'n' roll" (p. 55; see also Coryn, 2002, p. 81; Roberts, 2002, p. 36; Sanjek & Sanjek, 1996, p. 363; Wells, 1987, p. 161). However, by the end of the 1950's, major labels were very much back in control of the recording industry. Dannen (1991) found "as rock became the rage, the big labels discovered that the independents were bumping them off the singles charts. So they opened their checkbooks and bought rock musicians' contracts or acquired independents outright" (p. 32; see also Coryn, 2002, p. 103; Peterson & Berger, 1990, p. 144; Wells, 1987, p. 161).

Since the 1960's control of the recording industry by major labels has been a cyclical phenomenon (Alexander, 2002; Lopes, 1992; Peterson & Berger, 1975; Rothenbuhler & Dimminick, 1982). Researchers agree that there are periodic moments of mass concentration and control by the major labels followed by periods of less concentration within the popular music industry. As noted earlier, concentration of the industry leads to homogenized music. During periods of less concentration just the opposite occurs. During these periods of less concentration consumers had access to a less homogenized musical landscape. Ryan and Wentworth (1999) described the cyclical phenomenon of music in action:

> Segments of the market become bored and alienated bit by bit, dissatisfied with products that appeal to the majority. When a critical mass of these dissatisfied consumers is reached, small firms come into the market in an attempt to attract those consumers. These firms offer new and different products. Competition increases and so does diversity. In time, if the new firms begin to hurt the larger firms, the big firms react and buy up the small firms, incorporating their innovation and then, eventually,

returning to their conservative approach and the cycle begins again. (p. 149; see also Burnett, 1992, p. 764; Frith, 1981, p. 90; Longhurst, 1995, p. 34; Toynbee, 2000, p. 9)

The aforementioned birth of rock and roll was a prime example of this phenomenon. Major labels' capacity to regain full control of recorded music rests on its ability to dictate the terms of distribution. This control of the distribution channels was an important distinction between the major and independent recording labels. Rothenbuhler & Streck (1998) argued "control of distribution was so important that the traditional distinction between 'majors' and 'independents' was based on whether a company owns its own distribution system. The majors could control their own distribution; independents had to contract with other companies" (p. 214; see also Dicola & Thomson, 2002, p. 64; Kruse, 2003, p. 37; McDonald, 1999, p. 95; Reynolds, 2005, p. 39; Toynbee, 2000, p. 16).

Major label distribution was quite different from independent distribution. Major labels could distribute product worldwide on account of their ability to strategically place distribution outlets throughout the world. The creation of a worldwide distribution network was "expensive and open to significant economies of scale" (Kretschmer, Klimis, & Wallis, 1999, p. 167). Only major labels with significant corporate backing could establish such a distribution network. Major labels through several distribution models (to be discussed below) had almost total control over the distribution of its recordings and associated independent label recordings. This was important because it allowed the major labels not only to control distribution, but also to dictate the terms of promotion, marketing and retail of recorded music. This distribution system was developed "to give each of the majors' total control of its marketing plans and efforts"

(Steinberg, 1998a, p. 2; see also Burnett, 1995, p. 49; Coryn, 2002, p. 175; Greenblatt,

1998, p. 82; Rothenbuhler & Streck, 1998, p. 215; Stokes, 1976, p. 151). A central

strategy used by major labels to control the distribution of recorded music was the

'branch system.'

2.6. Branch System

In the late 1960's, the branch system was developed by CBS Records executive Bill

Gallagher as a method for dealing with rapid changes taking place within the recording

industry. In the 1960's the recording industry transformed from an industry with many

independent record companies to an industry under the control of a few large corporate

conglomerates. In the latter half of the 1960s, "a large number of companies in the record

industry bought up or merged with other companies involved with music, or were

themselves bought out by large conglomerates from outside the industry" (Chapple &

Garofalo, 1978, p. 82; see also Huygens, Baden-Fuller, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda,

2001, p. 988; Roberts, 2002, p. 36; Robinson, Buck, & Cuthbert, 1991, p. 47). For

example, in 1969 Kinney Corporation (parking garages and funeral homes owners)

acquired independent labels Warner Brothers, Atlantic, and Elektra Records. The

consolidated new company called Warner Communications (later WEA) meant that one

company was now the primary distributor for several different formerly large

independent and major labels. Major labels development of the branch system

streamlined the distribution process, with the express goal of making it "more efficient

and more profitable" (Chapple and Garofalo, 1978, p. 90; see also Frith, 1981, p. 139).

The branch system featured strategically placed manufacturing plants and distribution

outlets on both coasts and in the center of the United States. For instance, WEA had in

place large manufacturing plants and distribution warehouses situated in strategic

locations nationwide including both coasts (Olyphant, Pennsylvania and Chatsworth,

California) for manufacturing purposes and a large warehouse for distribution in the

Midwest (Carbondale, Illinois). The locations of these plants and warehouse allowed

WEA to manufacture and distribute product nationwide as demand called for it. Fink

(1996) found "only the largest record manufacturers could afford to maintain their own

branch offices" (p. 73; see also Chapple & Garofalo, 1978, p. 204; Greenblatt, 1998, p.

82; Stokes, 1976, p. 7). The impact of the branch system on independent distribution was

two-fold. First, prior to the branch system major labels routinely contracted with

independent distributors to distribute its product to markets standard distribution could

not reach. Gillett (1974) said "the development of these branch offices meant the severing

of ties with the independent distributors who had acted for major labels previously" (p.

279). Second, independent labels that once relied on several different independent

distributors to distribute its product nationwide, now contracted with the major labels'

branch system. Dannen (1991) concluded that when combined, these two elements

devastated independent distributors: "One by one, the little labels would turn to the big

labels to distribute their records, finding them on the whole more reliable than the

independents" (p. 64; see also Lopes, 1992, p. 60). This was an important change within

the recording industry.

The branch system meant that all the major label distributors had a long list of

independent labels that they distributed along with their own recordings. Some

independents were owned all or in part by the major label; "while some independents

were totally independently owned, but have contracted with the major label for

distribution of their recordings" (Greenblatt, 1998, p. 83; see also Aldermann, 2001, p.

24; Connell & Gibson, 2003, pp. 62-63; Hesmondalgh, 1998, p. 243; Pasternack, 1998, p.

92; Rothenbuhler & Streck, 1998, p. 208). The most common type of distribution deal

between an independent and major was the joint venture.

2.7. Joint Ventures

Since the 1960's, joint ventures were a common feature of the record industry (Goodman,

1997, p. 150; see also Zero, 1994, p. 4). A joint venture is a "co-venture where the major

label put up the risk-capital and would derive more than half of the possible profits from

the venture" (Dane & Laing, 1998, p. 6; see also Chapple & Garofalo, 1978, p. 178;

Coryn, 2002, p. 215). Joint ventures were business arrangements that gave worldwide

distribution control to the major labels over the smaller independent labels and

distributors. Joint ventures served an important economic function for major labels by

injecting product into "the enormous worldwide distribution networks that the major

labels had established" (Biederman, Silfen, Berry, Pierson, & Glasser, 2001, p. 583; see

also Dane & Laing, 1998, p. 6; Frith, 1987, p. 68; Hesmondalgh, 1998, p. 243; Negus,

1999, p. 152). The aforementioned branch systems of the major labels required

"tremendous volume to keep them running at a profitable capacity. A huge 'pipeline'

must be filled all the time or else the system does not pay for itself" (Dannen, 1991, p.

112; see also Biederman et al., 2001, p. 583; Haring, 1996, p. 100; Steinberg, 1998b, p.

13). Joint ventures kept the major labels manufacturing plants and distribution systems

operating at full capacity during lull periods in the release schedules of the major labels.

In addition, major label distributors "always wanted more and could handle more

(product). They would sooner buy, build, or rent more space then miss out on what might be money-making opportunity" (Greenblatt, 1998, p. 83).

Joint ventures connected major labels to companies that were inherently risk-takers with respect to new music. The independents were often "more daring, searching out new talent, creating specialized niches, and feeding new styles into the musical mainstream" (Starr & Waterman, 2003, p. 9; see also Frith, 1981, p. 89; Harari, 1999, p. 31; Roberts, 2002, p. 24). Therefore, according to Burnett (1995) and Pasternack (1998), nearly every new musical trend or genre of music began at an independent label. Hence, major labels sought joint ventures with independent labels because "without this assistance, large companies lost sight of what was happening in the music scene. The key to survival for record companies was to remain in touch, at some level, with underground movements in order to predict trends" (Colesta & Leshner, 1998, p. 184; see also Sanjek & Sanjek, 1996, p. 657; Savage, 2001, p. 515; Schiller, 1989, p. 42; Wallis & Malm, 1984, p. 105). Joint ventures were the preferred methodology for major labels to keep abreast of the rapidly changing styles and trends in popular music.

Joint ventures were also the primary method that major labels utilized to deal with inherent unpredictability of record sales. Rothenbuhler and Streck (1998) concluded that "predicting what will be considered the most desirable music by millions of strangers was (and remains) a most uncertain business" (pp. 215-216; see also Goldberg, 2003, p. 71; Keightley, 2004, p. 380; McDonald, 1999, p. 97; Negus, 1999, p. 175). Unknown (and still not known) by the recording industry was which particular recordings will become hits and which will not. In order to deal with this unpredictability of record sales, major

labels were required to release a wide-spectrum of releases from a variety of different

genres of music (Ryan, 1992). Establishing joint ventures with a large number of

independent labels allowed major labels to respond to the "unpredictability of the music

market and ensure that successful new artists and musical styles were quickly

incorporated into the popular music market they effectively controlled" (Lopes, 1992, p.

57; see also Perrin, 1997, p. 25; Peterson & Berger, 1990, p. 155; Weissman, 1997, p.

41). Conglomeration of the recording industry continued and increased exponentially in

the 1970's. By the end of the 1970s, six companies controlled the recording industry:

Capitol-EMI, CBS, MCA, Polygram, RCA, and Warner Communications (Ward et al.,

1986, p. 521; see also Wells, 1987, p. 161).

The impact of the major labels control of the recording industry through joint ventures

and its branch distribution system was detrimental to the survival of both independent

distributors and labels. Dannen (1991) concluded that "unlike earlier eras, where

independent distributors could survive the loss of large independents, for the first time in

the recording industry, the signings meant that independent distribution was virtually

dead" (p. 112). Numerous independent distributors that distributed exclusively

independent label product closed; these closures made it increasingly difficult for

independent labels to manufacture and distribute its product. Independent labels that

wished to continue producing and distributing product were required to either make deals

with the major labels, with the few remaining independent distributors, or distribute the

product themselves. The impact of this consolidation was that artists looking for record

deals in the 1970's had a limited number of labels to choose from "because the overall

number of independent labels had shrunk drastically" (Dannen, 1991, p. 112; see also

Stokes, 1976, p. 205). As noted earlier, most of the first wave punk bands signed with or

were distributed by in some manner the major labels. While a majority signed with

majors, a minority did not. The punk bands and labels that did not sign with majors either

signed with a truly independent label or self-distributed its product.

2.8. Punk Distribution
Distribution was always a serious problem for independent record companies. "The

success or failure of an artist or label rests on the effectiveness of distributors in getting

the product to retailers. It was in this area where independent labels experienced the

greatest difficulty" (NAACP, 2002, p. 51). All music genres distributed by independent

labels without assistance of a major label experienced difficulties distributing its product

because they lacked the manpower, financial backing, strategic distribution system, and

relationships with retail that major labels offered its artists. This section examines several

of the distribution difficulties faced by the punk subculture. Throughout its history, punk

labels had relied on three distribution methods: self-distribution, independent distributors,

and major label distributors. All of these methods were fraught with problems for

independent punk labels.

The first method, self-distribution meant exactly what it implies: independent punk labels

self-distributed recordings themselves. Independent punk labels mainly directly mail-

ordered to consumers or hand-delivered to recording stores. As noted earlier, many of the

American first wave punk bands were signed to major labels; therefore, mail-order

distribution first began to be a common punk distribution method in England. For

instance, Stiff Records, the first British independent label to distribute a punk recording,

"New Rose" by The Damned, relied on direct mail-orders to consumers. Stiff Records

"had no national distribution: it was all mail-order" (Marcus, 1993, p. 228). Punk bands

not signed to any recording label also relied on mail-order. Richard Boon, manager for

the Buzzcocks, said, "Mail-order was very important" method to deliver records to

consumers and stores (Quoted in Reynolds, 2005, p. 27). The result of the mail-order

approach yielded sales of 16,000 copies of the Buzzcocks first EP, Spiral Scratch.

The second wave of punk, hardcore also relied on mail-order as a central method of self-

distribution. Dischord Records' first run of 7" records sold for $2.50, and LP records sold

for $5 postpaid by direct mail-order from the label (Goshert, 2000, pp. 91-92; see also

Andersen & Jenkins, 2003, pp. 391-392). Later, hardcore punk labels expanded self-

distribution to include hand delivery to independent record stores. Ian MacKaye, a singer

for Fugazi and Minor Threat and co-founder of the influential hardcore punk label

Dischord Records, observed:

> Distribution? The first concept was just selling it (first record of Minor Threat) at
> shows and local stores. We'd take them up to Bleeker Bob's (in New York City) and
> Newbury Comics (Boston) when we went up on weekends to visit our friends who
> were in college there. It was supposed to be on consignment, but they only cost a
> dollar each. So the store would ask for five singles and tell us to wait for the money,
> and we'd be like, 'Jeez, can't you just give us five bucks?' (Quoted in Arnold, 1993, p.
> 48; see also Blush, 2001, p. 281)

Throughout the history of the punk subculture, independent record stores have played an

important role in the dissemination of the culture. Felder (1993) and Shank (1994)

concluded that typically independent punk bands and labels distributed its product

directly to independent record stores. Kruse (2003) described the importance of the

independent record store to subcultures outside of the mainstream culture:

> Record stores are not merely retail outlets; they were spaces of social interaction and socialization. Customers often sought advice from, or sought to exchange knowledge with, store employees, and through this process learn not just about various artists, records, and genres, but also about the local music culture. (p. 94; see also Andersen & Jenkins, 2003, p. 16; Arnold, 1993, p. 27)

Independent record stores were not only locations for information to be gathered, but also a focal point for the distribution and promotion of punk music. While punk bands and labels were self-distributing recordings to the stores, they could also put up flyers about upcoming shows and new releases. For the independent punk bands and labels, independent record stores were the lifeblood. Overall, self-distribution was a labor-intensive endeavor that resulted in only minimal sales and profitability for distributors. These issues inspired independent punk labels to seek relationships with independent distributors.

The second method used by independent punk labels was signing a contract with an independent distributor. Most "independent distributors were 'regional operations' that were either individually owned or part of a national independent distribution chain" (Fink, 1996, p. 74; See also Weissman, 1997, pp. 72-73). Independent distributors offered independent labels cobbled together nationwide distribution through various national and independently owned distribution outlets. "The standard practice of this system was to promote independent records to a few markets at a time in order to concentrate independent distributors' limited resources for maximum results" (NAACP, 2002, p. 49). This process was rarely successful. Kruse (2003) concluded that "independent distribution often resulted in some areas of the country not receiving a label's releases" (p. 40). Within the punk subculture, the first national independent distributor dedicated to

punk was the distribution network 'The Cartel,' by the British punk label, Rough Trade.

Kruse (2003) noted,

> When punk emerged in England, independent labels making punk records often
> wanted their records to be available nationwide, and many sought to achieve this goal
> without the help of the mainstream music industry, instead relying on non-major
> distributors like Pinnacle and Spartan, or the newer network centered around
> London's Rough Trade record store and label. (p. 38; see also Savage, 2001, p. 417)

The design of 'The Cartel' was similar to the major label branch system. 'The Cartel' was

an association of seven regional distributors, based mainly on specialist shops, "which

was able to provide a national sales and distribution service for independent companies

throughout Britain" (Hesmondalgh, 1998, p. 259; see also Laing, 1985, p. 18). 'The

Cartel' "sought to mirror the vertical integration achieved by the major labels by

controlling the process from production to retail sale" (Kruse, 2003, p. 51). 'The Cartel'

continued to distribute punk and new wave music through the 1980's until "it folded due

to bankruptcy in 1991" (Felder, 1993, p. 11; see also Kruse, 2003, p. 51). The legacy of

'The Cartel' was that the 1980's saw a re-birth of independent distributors in the United

States that modeled themselves on Rough Trade and were able to provide independent

labels access to national and even international markets (Kruse, 2003, p. 38). For

instance, numerous independent distributors mirroring 'The Cartel' existed within the

hardcore punk movement (Systematic, Greenworld, & Faulty Products) in the 1980's.

Independent distributors offered greater nationwide coverage to punk bands (particularly

hardcore) than self-distribution.

While independent distribution offered independent punk labels greater distributive

potential than self-distribution, this system was also fraught with problems. One of the

most common issues was the inability to receive payment in a timely fashion.

Payments from independent distributors to bands and labels were often late (Eliot, 1989;

Kruse, 2003; Schwartz, 2002; Walters, 2001). For example, in 1978, Rick Harte opened

Ace of Hearts Records in Boston, Massachusetts. The label signed short-lived punk bands

such as the Neighborhoods and Classic Ruins, as well as the semi-legendary punk band,

Mission of Burma. Mission of Burma sold well in Boston, and once it hit the road for

tours the band had become a semi-hit in the independent punk scene. While the band was

a success on the road, it sold few actual records. Why? Rick Harte, former owner of Ace

of Hearts (now defunct) recounts his problem with distributing Mission of Burma

records. Harte recounted:

> Distributors were very good about paying me for records sold, as long as I had another
> hot release coming up. You can get paid by distributors if you have something that
> they want. Often distributors would not pay for records sold. I would threaten not to
> send anything else, but it was an empty threat. The fact was Ace of Hearts needed to
> get its records out there more than the distributor did. (Quoted in Azerrad, 2001, p.
> 103)

Delays in payment not only hurt financially, but also often delayed the release of other

recording projects. Jeff Nelson, co-founder of Dischord Records, said, "Projects were put

on hold while Dischord waited for money from distributors to finance the next release"

(Quoted in Andersen & Jenkins, 2003, p. 133; see also Arnold, 1993, pp. 49-50).

Another key issue that plagued product released from independent distributors was that

the service provided only limited nationwide coverage. As noted above, for nationwide

coverage independent distribution relied on several distributors. This often meant that

many sections of the country did not receive adequate distribution coverage. This was a major issue for punk bands (and any genre of music that operated outside of the mainstream culture – i.e. Reggae, Death Metal, etc.) that relied on touring (or traditional radio airplay, press coverage, etc.) as the central method to promote new recordings. A common occurrence for punk bands was that when they toured in support of a new recording, often the record stores in towns where they performed did not have records to sell. This was another problem faced by Mission of Burma as it went on tour to support its debut album. The band found that in each city that it appeared, many of the local stores had no records to sell. Clint Conley, bass player for Mission of Burma, said: "Distribution was weak at best. When we got to cities, everybody was saying 'We've heard about your single…Where is it?'" (Quoted in Azerrad, 2001, p. 107; see also Arnold, 1993, p. 98) The band toured across the country, yet sold few records due to Ace of Hearts' inability to provide adequate distribution. While punk bands could sell copies of new releases at shows, the actual number of recordings sold was limited by the travel arrangements of the tour. Most punk bands toured in vans, which meant recordings that they wanted to sell at shows had to share space with band members and music equipment in usually cramped vans. For punk bands, only major label distributors could offer worldwide distribution and consistent payment for records sold; therefore, many independent punk labels sought distribution deals with major labels.

2.9. Joint Venture Deals and Independent Punk Labels
Joint venture deals served several pressing distribution issues for independent punk labels. Avalon (2002) noted that "major distributors offered wider and more consistent distribution, as well as, were more likely to pay the artists and labels when compared to independent distributors" (p. 117; see also Lane, 1994, p. 2). This meant that independent

punk labels received payment on a quicker and more consistent basis from major label distributors. Joint ventures also offered independent labels not only the "ability to get recordings into the major stores and to get them into the stores quicker" (Negus, 1999, p. 59; see also Avalon, 2002, p. 88; Kruse, 2003, p. 41). Larger and more consistent nationwide distribution meant that independent punk labels might reach greater profitability. Colesta and Leshner (1998) and Zero (1994) concluded that major labels offered independent recordings global distribution.

Several harmful ramifications existed due to independent labels' joint venture relationships with major labels. First, many independent punk labels entered into joint ventures due to financial duress. As noted earlier, independent distributors offered only limited nationwide distribution and thus minimal profitability. Minimal profitability potential from independent distributors meant limited capital was available for independent punk bands and labels to produce and promote and market recordings. This limitation led some artists to flee independent punk labels for major labels. Independent punk labels that wished to remain in some semblance of control of its artists' future were forced "into making joint venture deals with majors to stop acts from fleeing to the major labels" (Boehlert, 1996, p. 21; see also Burnett, 1992, p. 760; Lee, 1995, p. 15; Martens, 2006e, p. 23; Neely, 1998, p. 70).

Second, joint venture deals between independent and major labels meant that the product of the independent was at the mercy of the major labels' business plan. Major label decision-makers decided weekly production and manufacturing schedules, marketing and

promotional budgets, and distribution schedules for each recording, without the input or

consultation of the independent. Joint ventures meant that independent labels

relinquished control and granted final authority with the major label distributor on all

aspects of its existence and potential success. Therefore, while independent labels could

sign anyone they wanted, it was the parent company that decided who got distributed

(Jaquet, 1997, p. 10; see also Frith, 1981, p. 138; Hesmondalgh, 1999, p. 54; Lane, 1994,

p. 3; Negus, 1999, p. 59; Rothenbuhler & Streck, 1998, p. 214).

Ultimately, the potential of increased sales and profitability led many independent punk

labels to sign joint venture deals with major labels. Arnold (1993) described the impact of

Frontier's Records with a major:

> For example, in 1980, the hardcore independent punk label Frontiers' first year profit
> was $30,000 and by 1985, the label's year end profit was $500,000. By the nineties,
> after leaving independent distribution for more solid backing from BMG, Frontier
> grossed in the $1 to $2 million range. (p. 41)

Distribution via the major label BMG allowed Frontier Records to reach a larger

audience. However, it also re-invigorated accusations from the punk subculture that the

label had sold out.

Chapter 3: Selling Out and DIY

The first wave of punk as a subculture was short-lived. Carson (1990) concluded:

> That punk began in mid-summer 1977, when Sire Records released '*Sheena Is A Punk Rocker*,' a new single by the Ramones. That summer was the high-water mark of the punk era - an era that had begun the year before, when the first wave of New York underground clubs bands started getting record contracts and would end, for all practical purposes, with the breakup of the Sex Pistols in January of 1978. After that, though punk survived, it was no longer a revolution. (p. 441)

The first wave of the punk subculture fashion, style, and music was co-opted by the mainstream and transformed into the 'New Wave' movement. Garofalo (1997) identified "New Wave" as "less oriented toward shock, with better musicianship, and was infinitely more successful commercially" (p. 329). The major labels developed the marketing concept 'New Wave' in the late 1970s. Blush (2001) concluded:

> A watered-down version of punk - marketed as 'New Wave' - was cranked out by major labels planning to soften the punk image for mainstream consumption. Clean production, keyboards, sharp suits, angular haircuts, wrap-around shades and skinny ties defined the moment. Perhaps the industry's diversion of 'anti-social' punk into the more palatable 'New Wave' bin delivered a more attractive product to the anxious consumer. (p. 12; see also Stewart, 2003, p. 7)

'New Wave' served as a marketing tool for major record labels to promote a cleaned-up, less threatening version of punk music. 'New Wave' marketing models inverted punk from subculture status to acceptable entertainment for mainstream culture consumption, which might then lead to increase profitability for major labels. First wave punk bands that refused to make the transition to 'New Wave' were dropped or received less marketing emphases from the major labels.

Major labels developed and implemented new marketing campaigns to promote first wave punk bands such as Blondie, the Clash, and Talking Heads for mainstream

consumption. Major labels also signed new bands such as Flock of Seagulls, The Police, and Soft Cell and marketed them as 'New Wave' music. While major labels had minimal success with punk in terms of sales, 'New Wave' sales were tremendous. Lopes (1992) concluded:

> By 1982, 23% of new artists in the *Top 100 Albums* chart and 27 % of new artist in *Top 100 Singles* represented the new wave style. New wave's success peaked in 1983, when 43% and 50% of new artists in the annual albums and singles charts were new wave. New wave continued to represent a significant percentage of new artists until the end of the 1980s. (p. 66)

Major label bands marketed as 'New Wave' enjoyed greater sales success than independent punk recordings. Lopes (1992) indicated that "except for a few artists distributed by the major independent labels Chrysalis and Arista from 1979 to 1982, all 'New Wave' music in the annual Billboard Top 100 charts were manufactured and distributed by major record companies" (p. 67). Of these two labels only Chrysalis was truly independent, given Arista's distribution deal with the major label BMG. Reynolds (2005) concluded that "punk totally failed in America, whereas New Pop ('New Wave') reigned triumphant" (p. 344).The success of 'New Wave' introduced the term 'selling out' within the punk subculture.

3.1. Selling Out
Lull (1987c) described selling out:

> When alternative music first developed it was resisted by industry primarily on financial grounds, then was reluctantly accommodated by them when profit was more clear, and was finally brought under their financial and artistic control, a process that almost always demands substantial modification in the music itself. Recording artists and industry decision makers who initiated or tolerated these changes in order to make a profit were sometimes accused of 'selling out.'(pp. 21-22)

'Selling out' was and remains a central issue within the punk subculture. Within the punk

subculture mainstream success (by commercial radio airplay, press coverage, etc.) often

alienated the band's original fan base. Kruse (2003) concluded:

> 'Selling out' can take a number of forms, but in general it depends on the perception
> that an artist had changed his/her musical style or relationship to his/her core audience
> on the road to becoming more popular. Narratives of selling out and musical
> cooptation are recurrent in rock and pop music history. (p. 14; Lull, 1987a, p. 227)

The aforementioned first wave of punk bands marketed as 'New Wave' were identified

by participants within the punk subculture as selling out.

As noted earlier, one of the central contradictions within the punk subculture was the

commodification of the subculture by the mainstream culture. Lull (1987a) concluded

that "commercial success was unacceptable within the punk community" (p. 228). Many

of the bands in the first wave of punk were signed to major labels did not reach

mainstream success; therefore, they were not regarded as selling out the punk subculture.

Thompson (2004) concluded that for "punk to have succeeded, especially economically,

meant succeeding in the very realm that it positioned itself against. Such a success would

amount to a profound betrayal of punk's commitment to economic resistance" (p. 143).

Economic resistance was a key component of the first wave of punk's philosophy. First

wave punk bands marketed as 'New Wave' relinquished its resistance to this philosophy.

For instance, the band Blondie, which formed in the early days of the New York first

wave punk scene as a tough straightforward punk band, was transformed by 1979 into a

'New Wave' band. Released in 1979, the album *Parallel Lines* featured the disco-

influenced hit Heart of Glass, as well as the pop rock song One Way or Another. The

success of these two singles propelled album sales to over one million during the album's initial release. A few years later, the introduction of MTV and its constant playing of Blondie videos, propelled *Parallel Lines* album sales to ten million. While 'New Wave' marketing enabled some first wave punk bands to cross over to the mainstream, a new genre of the punk subculture, hardcore, was developing outside of conventional parameters of popular music. I now turn to the impact of hardcore punk on the punk subculture.

3.2. Hardcore Punk
The selling out of the first wave of punk through 'New Wave' marketing techniques did not lead to the demise of the punk subculture. Instead, the reaction of the subculture was to devise music that was even more aggressive and anti-mainstream than the first wave of punk. This new genre of punk music was called hardcore. Taylor (2003) suggested "hardcore was a reaction against the commercialization of punk and the softening of the genre that had become known as 'New Wave'" (p. 71). While 'New Wave' music was embraced by the mainstream culture, hardcore punk music was not. This section examines the impact of the hardcore movement on the punk subculture. Of particular interest is the impact of hardcore on the development of regional scenes and the do-it-yourself (DIY) movement.

Blush (2001) found that Southern California was ground zero for the hardcore punk movement. According to Arnold (1993) hardcore bands from Southern California included bands such as Black Flag, the Circle Jerks, TSOL, the Descendants, the Adolescents, Middle Class, Social Distribution, and Redd Kross, "along with a bunch of

worse ones" (p. 37; see also Blush, 2001, p. 13; Thompson, 2004, p. 32). The Sex Pistols

inspired many of the early hardcore punk bands. Taylor (2003) found:

> The American bands who would give rise to the hardcore movement were inspired by
> the Sex Pistols' tour and only album, and began making music themselves just as
> conditions in the United States began to echo repressive conservatism, plunder
> economics, and recession that had attended British punk's birth a few years earlier. (p.
> 70; see also Gilmore, 1998, p. 187; Jovanonic, 2004, p. 35; Lentini, 2003, p. 169)

The Sex Pistols were just one of the several first wave British punk bands that influenced

the hardcore movement. The extensive recording history of EP (Extended play albums),

albums, as well as live performances by the first wave of British punk bands influenced

the hardcore movement. Lull (1987a) observed in his ethnography of the San Francisco

punk scene:

> The young history of punk still lives, and a profound reverence was expressed for
> 'Original Punk' or '77-Punk,' a reference to the first well-known punk bands from
> England, especially the Sex Pistols and the Clash. Many punks continued to listen to
> this 'old' music. The first albums made by these bands had become classics within the
> community and, to a certain degree, American punk bands had all been influenced by
> them. (p. 228)

Hardcore music diverged from the first wave of British punk via the speed within which

the music was played. Greenwald (2003) found that "hardcore punk featured beats that

were monochromatic and the instruments were raced as fast as they possibly could go"

(p. 9; Taylor, 2003, p. 73). A central component of hardcore was the sheer repetitiveness

of the music. "Hardcore's music limited chordal and rhythmic palette fostered a sameness

of sound" across the musical movement (Azerrad, 2001, p. 180; see also Greenwald,

2003, p. 9; Spitz and Mullen, 2001, p. 72). Hardcore music was the antithesis of 'New

Wave' music. Initial members of the hardcore punk movement coalesced in a similar

fashion to the first wave of punk, by forming scenes.

3.3. Hardcore Punk Scenes

Early underground venues including CBGB's in New York City and the 100 Club in

London allowed like-minded individuals within the punk subculture to congregate,

interact, and communicate punk. Connell and Gibson (2003) identified the "first punk

scene was commonly attributed to the influence of CBGB's nightclub in New York

(whose acronym ironically stood for Country, Blue Grass and Blues)" (pp. 77-78). This

venue attracted a community of musicians and fans interested in similar genre of music,

punk. Colegrave and Sullivan (2001) concluded:

> Centered in the club CBGB's, the whole scene kicked off with bands such as Wayne
> Country's Queen Elizabeth, Richard Hell and Tom Verlaine's Television, Patti Smith,
> the Dead Boys and, most importantly, the Ramones, all of whom played at the club.
> Alive but yet un-christened, punk was born. (p. 19)

Live performance venues were the main conduit that allowed punk fans to congregate

and start individual punk scenes. Exene Cervenka, a member of the second wave of

California punk band X, said:

> The greatest thing about punk for me originally was that it was all about creating a
> new art and culture, replacing something shitty with something great, and having a
> community, which none of us had because everybody was from bad families, so this
> was like the first family that some people had. (Quoted in Spitz and Mullen, 2001, p.
> 224)

As noted above, the initial punk scenes in New York and London were co-opted by the

mainstream. However, a second wave of punk, hardcore, formed from its remnants.

Thompson (2004) observed:

> The California hardcore scene inherited the remains of the New York and English
> scenes and redirected some of those scenes' desires, revivifying them in new forms in
> San Francisco and Los Angeles. Each scene learns from past scenes and attempts to
> avoid their capitulations to commercialism. In California, the punk scene melded
> together desires from the two earlier scenes to create new strains, more resistant
> hybrids. (p. 41)

Central to the development of the hardcore scene was the band Black Flag. While major label 'New Wave' music relied on commercial radio airplay and videos on MTV, Black Flag re-established the importance of scenes, as an underground network where the promotion and marketing of hardcore punk music could take place. From its beginning "Black Flag's main importance to the Los Angeles scene was organizational: more than any other early punk band, they were adept at finding places to play, getting permits for outdoor concerts and booking one-offs into town halls" (Arnold, 1993, p. 37).

Black Flag was instrumental in developing and implementing the first hardcore punk scenes by playing out live in the Los Angeles area. However, unlike the first wave of punk, many of the Los Angeles hardcore venues were quickly shut down. Thompson (2004) concluded:

> The difficulty for hardcore punk was that from 1979 through the early '80s, a whole series of small, noncommercial clubs that catered primarily to punk opened and closed, including: 330 Grove Street, the Deaf Club, the A-Hole, Club Foot, Club Generic, Jet Wave, Temple Beautiful, and Valencia Tool and Die. (p. 34)

Hardcore punk shows were banned in most clubs because of audience participation in 'slam dancing.' Gilmore (1998) described slam dancing as: "Dancers gathered into kinetic clusters and collided off one another like pool balls caroming around a snookers table. To most observers, it resembled a microcosmic version of pandemonium" (p. 187; see also Blush, 2001, p. 57; Spitz & Mullen, 2001, p. 199; Ward et al., 1986, p. 565). Unlike the arena rock shows of the 1970's, a hardcore show was interactive. Punk fans became part of the show by actively participating in the breaking down of the barrier between the audience and performer through crowd surfing, stage diving, and slam dancing. Audience participation was crucial to punk rock. Thompson (2004) found that

"hardcore bands such as Black Flag offered its fans a space in which they could affect

and be affected by mass culture in material ways - through physical contact, through

shouting and being shouted at" (p. 37). Slam dancing, crowd surfing, spitting at the

performers, fighting with the performers, grabbing the microphone from the performers,

and singing lyrics was all part of the hardcore punk rock show experience.

This lack of demarcation between fans and hardcore bands drew a negative reaction from

the mainstream culture. Thompson (2004) claimed:

> This breakdown led the local press in Los Angeles to cover what they perceived as the violence of hardcore and whether or not a direct casual link could be established between one newspaper article and ensuing behavior of club owners and the Huntington Beach Police Department, the emerging hardcore bands in Los Angeles were prohibited from playing shows. (p. 33)

This prohibition by local police forced hardcore (particularly Black Flag) to find

alternative hometown venues within which to play its music. Keith Morris, founding lead

singer of Black Flag, said: "We just wanted to play. We'd play for whoever would let us

play. We played backyard parties. We played in basements. People's living rooms. Teen

parties. Anything. Anytime. Anywhere. Anyplace" (Quoted in Spitz and Mullen, 2001, p.

195; see also Blush, 2001, pp. 53-54; Greenwald, 2003, p. 145). When there was no place

left to play, Black Flag hit the road. "Black Flag toured doggedly, often playing smaller

towns that had never hosted a punk show before" (Andersen & Jenkins, 2003, p. 153).

The importance of these tours by Black Flag was that they established an underground

network of hardcore punk scenes across the United States. These nationwide tours laid

the foundation for all future generations of punk rock subcultures. Neely (1998)

concluded:

By the end of the Seventies, trail-blazing bands like Black Flag, X, and the Dead Kennedys, who put an angrier darker spin on punk, had formed and were making records, and before long other bands had cropped up in their wake in cities across the United States, among them the Minutemen, the Circle Jerks, Fear and Flipper from California; Husker Du and the Replacements from Minneapolis; and Minor Threat from Washington, D.C.. (p. 4; see also Andersen & Jenkins, 2003, p. 376; Arnold, 1993, pp. 25-26; Azerrad, 2001, p. 77; Greenwald, 2003, p. 17)

In a repeat of the impact of the Sex Pistols' live shows on the hardcore punk subculture, nationwide tours by Black Flag transported the hardcore punk rock ethos and inspired countless individuals to develop and devise their own particular hardcore punk scenes. According to Taylor (2003):

This knowledge allowed for a rebirth of hard-edged, politically charged rock that persisted outside the spotlight, in small clubs, squats, and garages, fostering a widespread network of fanzines and independent labels and generating a sense of community among interested teens and young adults in the United States and Europe. (p. 72; see also Arnold, 1993, p. 42; Duncan, 1984, pp. 145-146)

This underground network spanned nationwide and was central to the survival of the punk subculture.

The underground network was needed due to lack of interest among the major labels to sign hardcore punk bands. Brendan Mullen, founder of the Los Angeles punk rehearsal space, the Masque, said, "The major labels never wanted to touch this new stuff, let alone distribute it" (Quoted in Spitz and Mullen, 2001, p. 233; see also Arnold, 1993, p. 17; Pasternack, 1998, p. 89). In addition, whereas some of the first wave punk bands assimilated into new wave, the major labels had no idea how to market hardcore punk. Shawn Stern of the Los Angeles hardcore band, Youth Brigade, observed:

It was never, 'Should we sign to a major?' There was never even a consideration. They didn't want to know about us. They just wanted us to die; they couldn't kill us and we wouldn't go away; the scene kept getting bigger and they just scratched their

heads and didn't understand it. (Quoted in Blush, 2001, p. 275; see also Copeland, 1995, p. 237)

Lack of interest from the major labels required hardcore to develop its own independent labels. Black Flag issued its debut EP Nervous Breakdown on its own label, SST Records. This EP was one of the first hardcore recordings and the EP inspired other Los Angeles-based hardcore bands to pool together money, record and start new independent punk labels. Slash and Frontier Records soon joined SST Records in releasing Southern California punk recordings in the preferred EP format.

An EP was an important demarcation line between the major label system of recording an entire album and the punk system, which prided itself on singles and EP's. As noted earlier, the recording process of a major label act in the 1970's usually required the completion of a full-length album. While major labels were completing album-length recordings, independent hardcore punk labels and bands were recording EP's. An EP was a recording with more than a single recording, but less material than a proper album. Many hardcore punk labels and bands recorded EP's in both 7" vinyl and cassette format. Gerard Cosloy, co-founder of Matador Records, said: "Back then EP's carried a lot more weight. An EP was not necessarily thought to be precursor to an album or a promo item. An EP could exist as its own entity" (Quoted in Azerrad, 2001, p. 329; see also Blush 2001, p. 138; Kruse 2003, p. 59). Independent hardcore punk labels embraced the cheaper EP because the format could be quickly produced, manufactured, and distributed to consumers. Brett Gurewitz, guitarist for Bad Religion and founder of the punk label Epitaph Records, said: "We launched Epitaph Records in 1980 with a Bad Religion EP… six songs that [Greg] Graffin and I co-wrote. We sold out 1500 copies straight away"

(Quoted in Spitz and Mullen, 2001, p. 232). In addition, EP's became the most common

recording created by punk bands and labels because they were quick, easy, and cheap to

produce in any type of recording studio.

The recording process of hardcore punk music was the complete opposite of traditional

major label recording practices. Frith (1981) concluded that "punk seemed to challenge

capitalist control of mass music - there was an emphasis on do-it-yourself, on seizing the

technical means of music production" (p. 158; see also Blush, 2001, p. 281; Savage,

2001, p. 418). The ultimate goal of the recording process for hardcore punk was to

recreate the energy and sound of the live show. Thompson (2004) asserted,

> Many punk bands, past and present, do not aim to produce technically proficient recordings of their music to correct the mistakes that they make live but endeavor instead to create a representation of the energy of a live show, complete with mistakes but without establishing a substitute for live performance. (p. 123; see also Azerrad, 2001, p. 66; Copeland, 1995, p. 206)

To capture the essence of the live show did not require a high-priced recording studio to

record hardcore punk music. Actually, hardcore punk could and was recorded just about

anywhere due to advancements in recording technologies. Similar to the introduction of

tape and its impact on independent record labels in the 1950's, advancements in tape

recording technology allowed for the recording of hardcore punk to take place outside of

the high-priced record studios. During the early 1980's, the cost of tape recording

equipment fell to affordable levels for independent punk bands and labels to purchase.

Jones (1992) observed:

> The four-track cassette decks introduced by Tascam and Fostex in 1980 created an unprecedented interest in home recording. The decks, priced at $1300, were portable, built into their own small mixing console, could bounce tracks, used inexpensive cassette tape, and just needed a microphone or cable plugged into a channel to record.

The editing capabilities were limited in that cassette tape is thin and difficult to splice, but low cost and portability more than made up for that drawback. (p. 141)

Four-track cassette decks allowed hardcore punk musicians to record and produce rudimentary live-sounding recordings. Hardcore punk recordings did not feature multiple sound collages or layering of sound. Instead, artists produced stripped-down recordings that featured a single vocal, bass, guitar and drums (also known as the 'garage sound'). Some hardcore punk recordings did not even bother with four-tracks and instead, recorded music on just two. Chris Ashford, founder of the hardcore punk label What? Records, described the recording of the hardcore punk band, The Germs' first EP, *Forming*:

> When they recorded '*Forming*,' they just got a roll of tape and they set up in Pat Smear's garage and recorded three versions and some other song. We used the version with the most echo on the voice. The echo was an accident. Somebody hit a button by mistake. It was just a two-track recorder. The voice was on one side and the music was on the other. We were gonna put mono on it, but we realized it's just real crude stereo. The first batch was a thousand. And they all had the labels on the wrong side reversed. The A-side, '*Forming*,' was listed on the B-side, and the plain black '*Sex Boy*' live label on the A-side. (Quoted in Spitz and Mullen, 2001, p. 114; see also Azerrad, 2001, p. 126; Blush, 2001, p. 267)

The intent of these basic punk recordings was to capture on tape the inherent 'live' aesthetic of the punk sound. While some hardcore punk recordings did take place in conventional recording studios, the outcome of those recordings was quite similar to the aforementioned session. No matter the recording location, the final master was usually transferred to a cassette tape for distribution.

Jones (1992) indicated that "the cassette was introduced by the Philips Company in 1963" (p. 36). At first consumers did not embrace cassettes, but by the mid-1970's the technology was a financial windfall for the recording industry. For example, "by 1975,

total retail cassette tape sales would climb over one-billion dollars and represent more than 40% of all estimated record sales" (Sanjek & Sanjek, 1996, p. 549; see also Morton, 2000, pp. 165-166; Wallis and Malm, 1984, p. 77). Cassette technology, a hit with consumers, was also popular with hardcore punk bands and labels. Theberge (2001) noted that "musicians and consumers alike used the cassette as an alternative medium of distribution for forms of music that would not otherwise gain the support of the record or radio industries" (p. 19). Cassette tape allowed hardcore punk bands and labels to distribute recordings as they embarked on nationwide tours. Frith (1986) concluded that "the commodification of punk via a commodity through the use of tape and cassette technology, allowed for the punk culture to reach a much larger audience" (p. 278; see also Blush, 2001, p. 66; Cohen, 1991, pp. 104-105; Longhurst, 1995, p. 242). For example, the cassette-only hardcore label ROIR Records, released the first recordings by the Washington, D.C.-based hardcore band, Bad Brains. By selling cassettes at shows and through mail-order, the label sold "150,000 copies in the first ten years of its release. The cassette expanded the band's reputation nationally and even internationally" (Andersen & Jenkins, 2003, p. 104). The hardcore punk cassettes distributed by bands such as Bad Brains on the independent hardcore punk labels such as ROIR or SST assisted in spreading the subculture across the United States. Thompson (2004) noted:

> Each scene's economic underpinning was different, but each testified to the lesson that the California scene seems to have taught all punks: a scene only begins to free itself from the capitalist economy after it controls aspects of its own economic production and distribution. (p. 46)

Unlike the first wave of punk, the traditional popular music channels were not opened for hardcore, so the movement developed its own. Bands such as Black Flag and SST Records embraced a mentality identified as Do-It-Yourself (DIY).

3.4. DIY Movement

Mike Watt, former bass player for the California-based hardcore band, the Minutemen,

described DIY punk as:

> Punk was something you have to do to know it, and the only ones who understood it
> were the ones who did it. Punk was about more then just starting a band it was about
> starting a label. It was about touring, it was about taking control, it was like
> songwriting: you just do it. You wanted a record? Just pay the pressing plant. That's
> what it was all about. (Quoted in Arnold, 1993, p. 40; see also Clark, 2003, p. 234)

While some of the DIY principles did exist within the first wave of the punk subculture

however, as noted earlier, many of these bands were associated in some manner with a

major label. The hardcore punk movement full embraced the ethos of the DIY movement.

Thompson (2001) concluded that for hardcore punks DIY referred to:

> Producing commodities and performing without any financial support (for recording,
> manufacture, distribution, or publicity/advertising) from the major labels (the Big Six
> until 1998 and now the Big Four). The terms 'DIY' and 'independent' could be used
> interchangeably, where 'independents' meant 'independent' of the major labels. (p.
> 52)

Washington, D.C.-based Dischord Records was a clear example of a DIY hardcore punk

label. In 1980, Dischord Records was started by three friends when they decided to pool

their money together to form a hardcore label. Andersen and Jenkins (2003) found the

initial plan of Dischord co-owners Ian MacKaye, Jeff Nelson, and Nathan Strejcek was to

release a Teen Idles single (all three were members of the band). However, with the scene

burgeoning in Washington, D.C., the label decided to expand to recording and releasing

other local band recordings. Jeff Nelson said, "Our goal was not to make a lot of money.

But to help as many of our friends' bands as we could" (Quoted in Spitz & Mullen, 2001,

p. 81; see also Goshert, 2000, p. 89; Jovanovic, 2004, p. 49; Thompson, 2001, p. 52).

Dischord Records owners would gather singles from their friends' bands and release them

as EP's and/or compilations. For example, the Dischord Records 1981 compilation Flex

Your Head, "included songs by many bygone groups, including Teen Idles,

Untouchables, Minor Threat, Youth Brigade, SOA, and Red C" (Andersen & Jenkins,

2003, pp. 97-98). The distribution of hardcore punk band compilations throughout the

entire United States served an important function to the overall health of the punk

subculture; this was part of spreading the music, the subculture and ethos of the

movement nationwide and internationally. Each cassette compilation was the blueprint

for other DIY scenes to flourish. Thompson (2004) concluded,

> Greg Ginn of Black Flag/SST Records, Jello Biafra of the Dead Kennedys/Alternative
> Tentacles Records, and Ian MacKaye and Jeff Nelson, co-owners of Dischord
> Records, helped found, between 1979 and 1988, an independent and underground
> economic punk network across the United States and Western Europe whose purpose
> was to socialize the means of production - to improve upon them and make them more
> easily available to a larger number of people - within the international punk scene. (p.
> 40; see also Felder, 1993, p. 48; Sinker, 2001b, p. 15)

This underground DIY network established by hardcore punk was also influential on

other genres of rock music in the 1980's. Aaron (2005) concluded:

> The underground network developed by the pioneers in the hardcore movement was
> co-opted later by the indie/college rock movement. Gradually, as more bands toured
> widely, an outsider circuit emerged based around independent labels and record stores,
> college radio stations, and fanzines. As a result, throughout the 1980's, strong scenes
> formed in places as unlikely as Athens, Minneapolis, Austin, Seattle, and Chapel Hill.
> (p. 12; see also Azerrad, 2001, p. 6; Matula, 2000, pp. 224-225; Sanjek & Sanjek,
> 1996, p. 678; Sinker, 2001c, p. 73; Starr and Waterman, 2003, p. 346)

The burgeoning underground music scenes drew the attention of major label scouts. In

the mid-to-late 1980s, major labels (particularly Warner Brothers) signed several

underground rock bands (REM and the Replacements) to recording contracts. Warner

Brothers were also the first major label to sign a hardcore punk band, Husker Du in 1986.

Husker Du's signing to a major label was the initial point of entry for the second co-option of the punk subculture by the major labels. This co-option of the punk underground network is my next area of interest.

3.5. The Corruption of the DIY Underground
The signing of Husker Du in 1986 was according to many hardcore punk participants and academics occurred near the end of the musical movement. Blush (2001) suggested "that if 1976-80 were the punk and new wave years; hardcore happened 1980-86. If punk peaked in '77, then hardcore glory days were '81-'82, when it was still undefined and unpredictable" (p. 13; see also Clark, 2003, p. 223; Spitz and Mullen, 2001, p. 281; Thompson, 2004, p. 42). Husker Du, the only hardcore punk band to sign with a major label (Warner Brothers), released two albums that sold poorly (*Candy Apple Grey* and *Warehouse: Songs and Stories*). The next noteworthy co-option by major labels of the punk subculture occurred in early 1990, with the signing of Nirvana.

Nirvana formed in the late 1980s and signed to Seattle-based independent label Sub Pop Records in 1988. Through word-of-mouth, touring, and Sub-Pop's marketing skills, Nirvana became one of the most important underground bands. In 1990, the alternative noise band Sonic Youth members suggested to its label Geffen Records that Geffen should sign the band. In 1991, Nirvana signed with Geffen Records and subsequently released the album *Nevermind* near the end of 1991. In early 1992, the album became the number one selling album in *Billboard's Music Charts*.

The impact of Nirvana on hardcore and punk in general cannot be understated. Andersen

and Jenkins (2003) concluded:

> Nirvana entered the public consciousness and that changed everything. Into this pretty
> picture floated *Nevermind*, a dozen songs that introduced garage-land to the wasteland
> and blasted whatever was left of punk rock straight out of college radio ghetto into the
> central social arena…. Not since the Sex Pistols mouthed off to British television geek
> Bill Grundy in 1976 had one group single-handedly gouged such a deep dent into
> society's armor. (p. 375; see also Hesmondalgh, 1999, p. 48; Konow, 2002, p. 339)

Nirvana's success signaled the beginning of the collapse of the hardcore underground

network. The success of Nirvana meant that "like it or not, (the punk) subculture was

now big business and regional and independent acts gained access to the national stage.

There was no such thing as national punk until Nirvana" (Greenwald, 2003, p. 19; see

also Andersen & Jenkins, 2003, p. 375; Arnold, 1993, p. 193; Azerrad, 2001; p. 495;

Felder, 1993, p. 140; Fred, 1994, p. 9; Kreilkamp, 2003, p. 26). The success of Nirvana

opened the door for heritage hardcore (i.e., Circle Jerks – Mercury Records and Bad

Religion – Atlantic Records); and newer pop punk bands such as Green Day (Warner

Brothers) and the Offspring (Epitaph Records/Columbia Records) to sign with major

labels. Fred (1994) argued the signing of Bad Religion was not expected to benefit the

major label financially, but instead, "help bolster the image of their label (Atlantic

Records) in the 'alternative' marketplace" (p.10). If the major label could not get a band

individually, it often made joint ventures deals with the independent label.

As noted earlier, joint ventures between major and independent labels had been part of

the recording industries business model since the 1960's. The success of Nirvana created

a rush of major label signings of imitation sounding bands and joint venture deals with

independent labels connected with the emerging alternative music scene. Negus (1999)

asserted,

> The absorption of independent labels has been a feature of the music business
> throughout the 20th century and has become increasingly institutionalized through a
> series of joint ventures, production, licensing, marketing and distribution deals which
> have led to the blurring of 'indie/major' organizational distinctions and belief systems.
> (p. 35)

The distinction between the punk underground (independent labels/bands) and the

corporate world (major labels) was becoming quite blurred. Ted Leo, singer and guitarist

for the punk band, Ted Leo and the Pharmacists, said:

> It is so infuriating to come across someone who treats punk as a farm league for the
> majors. I don't blame Nirvana, but the blitz that surrounded *Nevermind* has had a
> really strange and long-lasting effect. In the '80s, when a major signed an underground
> band, chances were they had a pretty sizable following already. But the difference was
> that they were rarely groomed for superstardom. By and large, they were basically just
> salaried to keep doing what they were doing. Somewhere down the line, they got their
> houses and lived comfortably but remained unrecognized by the guy who works at
> their local Blockbuster Video. I'm not lauding that system, but it was less damaging to
> those who chose to remain independent. Now we find ourselves in a time not unlike
> the early days of rock 'n' roll, where anyone can land a crazy fucking deal, have one or
> two massive hits, make some bucks or get ripped off, and disappear. That's the rock 'n'
> roll dream: The underground degenerates make good! But what's unfortunate about it
> now is that it fosters a disrespect for work and art and a lack of perspective among the
> up-and-comers, who have a very different concept of 'success' than what has
> traditionally been the punk 'ethos.' (Hooten, 2001, p. 330; see also Kruse, 2003, p. 68;
> Powers, 2001, p. 245; Thompson, 2004, p. 149)

Again, the punk philosophies of DIY were under attack by corporate conglomerates. Zero

(1994) observed that "the issue was one of why we as an independent scene needed to be

attached to the mechanics of a multi-national corporation, and how does that attachment

relate to the ideals of DIY ethics that our scene was supposed to possess" (p. 3; see also

Middles, 1996, p. 91). The important issue of 'selling out' increased tenfold in the punk

subculture with the success of Nirvana and the subsequent massive co-option of punk by

the major labels. Prior to Nirvana, a majority of hardcore punk bands recorded several

EPs and full-length albums for truly independent labels only. In support of new

recordings, punk bands would tour the country promoting and marketing the recording

through live shows, fanzine coverage, and college radio airplay, building their fan base

one show at a time. The success of Nirvana completely disrupted this model and instead

many second generation hardcore punk bands, with only a "a single 45 or two" recorded,

were plucked up from relative obscurity and signed to major label contracts (i.e. Drive

Like Jehu from San Diego; Tad from Seattle, Washington; and Jawbox from Washington,

D.C.) (Azerrad, 2001, p. 495). Many of these bands' subsequent major label debuts failed

to meet sales expectations and the bands were quickly dropped.

While most of the second-generation hardcore punk bands associated with major labels

failed to meet sales expectations, Green Day, a pop punk trio signed to Warner Brothers

sold quite well. Green Day's major label debut album, *Dookie*, sold ten-million copies.

The success of Green Day led to another wave of major label signings of punk bands

(pop punk) with only an EP or album recorded (i.e. Good Charlotte, Blink-182, All-

American Rejects, New Found Glory, Bowling for Soup, etc.). This next wave of pop

punk identified as 'Mall Punk,' due to the mass acceptance of punk within the

mainstream culture. Diehl (2007) suggested:

> Some might argue that the beginning of mall punk began with bands like Offspring and Green Day signing to major labels and playing big package tours like Lollapalooza; that's when punk T-shirts and haircuts started appearing at the mall on a regular basis. When stores like Hot Topic (a clothing and shoe store) starting multiplying exponentially in malls across the land, any middleman between mainstream and underground was eliminated in the process. (p. 74)

Increasingly, new pop punk bands that chose to sign with major labels instead of independent punk labels, had to deal with the stigma attached to such a move within the punk subculture.

Punk subculture members felt that bands attached to major labels were "slicked up for commercial consumption and as a result of this almost always that band would no longer be cool among fans and friends who'd known them when they were idealistic punk-rock nobodies" (Karlen, 1994, p. 55; see also Greenwald, 2003, p. 129; Hirschberg, 1995, p. 62; Kruse, 2003, p. 42). However, some within the punk subculture argued that 'selling out' was irrelevant, given the complicated nature of the recording industry. In 1994, Greg Wreckman, general manager of the independent punk label Alternative Tentacles, said:

> Alternative Tentacles is distributed exclusively through the independent distributor/label Mordam Records. Mordam in turn sells to other stores and distributors including Caroline Distribution (owned by EMI). Granted, in a perfect world we wouldn't want to have anything to do with distributors like Caroline and Relativity (owned by Sony). But if we can use their channels to spread our message around and to hopefully enlighten some people, I don't think it is a legitimate problem. Unfortunately, in just about all aspects of our life, one can trace back to a major corporation. A percent of every CD made is paid to the Philips Corporation because they have the copyright on the format. (Quoted in Zero, 1994, p. 3; see also Greenwald, 2003, p. 129)

In response to the criticism of Nirvana's and Green Day's 'selling out' of the punk subculture, major labels designed and implemented fake independent labels and distributors to hide the connections between the subculture and the corporations. The major label would create a spin-off label and send the resulting product through both the major and independent distribution networks. Neely (1998) observed:

> By this time, at least a few major labels were aware of the marketing value of underground cachet. In the past, the majors had tended to watch indie bands until they'd built up word-of-mouth in the underground, signing them only after they'd

amassed significant followings who would ostensibly stick around and make things easier when it came to breaking the band into the mainstream. The flip side of that, of course, was that a certain, elitist segment of any given band's earliest followers had a tendency to ditch them once they'd 'sold out' to a major label, and move on to look for fresh blood. Eventually, some of the majors caught on to this and began creating boutique labels for the new bands they signed as a means of easing them into the mainstream gradually, minus the telltale corporate trimmings that wreaked havoc with street credibility. (p. 36; see also Diehl, 2007, p. 66; Haring, 1996, p. 183)

Fake indie recordings received the full support of the promotion and marketing departments that a traditional major label release would. Fake indies also worked closely with the newly devised fake independent distribution outlets. Roberts (2002) found:

In this scenario, a major label purchased all or half of an existing large independent distributor and allowed that distributor to keep their name, therefore hiding the major label connection. Examples of fake independent distributors included Sony's purchase of RED Distribution (Now also releasing BMG product as part of Sony BMG); EMI's interest in Caroline Distribution; and Warner's partial purchase of ADA distribution. (p. 38; see also Bemis, 2004, p. 3; Biederman et al., 2001, p. 583; Burnett, 1995, p. 61; Fred, 1994, p. 6; Martens, 2005, p. 28)

Universal Music Group did not purchase an independent distributor, but instead, launched Fontana Distribution in 2005. Hundreds of smaller and larger punk labels were (and still are) associated with these fake independent distributors: ADA distributes Touch & Go, Side One Dummy, Epitaph and Sub Pop Records; Caroline distributes product for Fat Cat, Earache and Drag City Records; RED Distribution distributes Fat Wreck Chords and Victory Records; and Fontana distributed Vagrant, BYO, MySpace, and Southern Records. The main goal of these fake independent distributors was to hide the punk labels connection to the major label distributor from members of the punk subculture. The key reason for these agreements was the superior distribution that a fake distributor could offer in comparison to traditional independent distribution.

3.6 Punk Retail

During the 1990's, the retail business associated with the recording industry changed

profoundly. These changes significantly affected record distribution. Kusek and

Leonhard (2005) concluded:

> In the 1990's, the labels shifted their primary distribution channel away from the
> traditional record store and over to the 'Big Box' retailers such as Best Buy, Target,
> and Wal-Mart, all of which sell CDs at heavily discounted prices in order to attract
> crowds into their stores. (p. 7; see also Bettig & Hall, 2004, p. 63; Negus, 1999, p. 56)

Big box retailer held a distinct advantage over their smaller competitors in its ability to

purchase recordings in bulk. Christman (2006c) noted that "because big box retailers

purchased in such large quantities, the wholesale cost for their CDs dropped to as low as

$7.00 (normal wholesale cost was $10.50)" (p. 8; see also Kusek & Leonhard, 2005, p.

88). These low retail prices were significantly less than the cost of the same CD at a

traditional record store (average price in traditional record store was $18.99), therefore

consumers bypassed traditional record stores for the big box retailers for their CD

purchases. In 2006, "big box chains were responsible for 65% of all music sales

according to estimates by distribution executives, up from 20% a decade ago" (Smith,

2007, p. B1; see also Christman, 2006d, p. 15).

The negative of big box retailers was that they stock fewer titles than traditional record

stores (Ordonez, 2002, p. A1; see also Kusek & Leonhard, 2005, p. 7). The smaller retail

space available for music led to increased costs for record distributors at retail and made

it "more competitive for record companies to secure prime shelf space" at big box

retailers (Ordonez, 2002, p. A1). Distributors paid premium prices for key placement of

its product within the big-box stores. The two key placement locations were front display racks and end caps.

Front display racks positioned product at the entrance to the music retail section of the store. These front display racks prominently displayed an artist or a labels' product by separating it from the rest of the racked product. End caps were also another key product positioning location within the big box retailers. End caps located product at the end of the aisle and similar to the front display rack could be dedicated to one label's recordings. Martens and Christman (2006) concluded "the costs of front display racks and end caps were real estate reserved for the very rich, and the very rich were the major labels" (p. 24). During certain key retail periods (particularly the holiday season), the cost of product positioning escalates at big box retailers. Hart (2002) indicated that "one prominent (non-major) label executive was told by a big-box retail chain that in order to gain even a semblance of fourth quarter visibility in their stores, he'd have to spend a minimum of $100K-$150K just to get in the game" (p. 8; see also Kerr, 2002, p. 72).

Another significant cost associated with big-box retailers is co-op advertising. Martens and Christman (2006) noted:

> In its textbook definition, cooperative advertising occurred when retail and manufacturers equally share the cost of advertising a product. But in the record business, it usually meant that the labels and/or distributors foot the bill for any advertising, albeit through programs set up by stores. The retailer kicked in its share by placing the title on sale, taking a hit on the profit margin. The album was also given prime-in-store real estate - such as hit walls, end caps, and kiosks. (p. 24)

The goal of co-op advertising was to drive consumers into the retail stores to purchase the manufacturers' product and other products. Greenblatt (1998) concluded that "big box

retailers and recording labels, particularly major labels often worked together on co-op

advertising campaigns" (p. 75). Co-op advertising was also an expensive proposition for

any independent label. Martens and Christman (2006) noted:

> Cooperative programs with national retailers were a massive investment for
> independent labels. Best Buy's smallest national program is $20,000 for a two-week
> hit wall; its top program costs $55,000. Trans World programs include a $12,500
> price-and-position package. Target recently raised its cost to $57,000, pointing out
> that the chain now has more stores. (p. 24)

The excessive cost associated with co-op advertising made it prohibitive for

independents. These high costs associated with product positioning and co-op advertising

required many independent labels (including punk) to seek joint venture relationships

with major distributors in order to gain retail placement at the big box retailers.

Since the mid-1990s, large and small independent punk labels have been connected in

some manner to a major label. Frith (2000) concluded that by the late 1990's the major

labels' view of the business had thus become the dominant view. However, not all punk

labels associated themselves with a major label. For instance, Dischord Records remained

fiercely independent and this independence assisted in the promotion and distribution of

the next movement in DIY punk, emo.

The collapse of the hardcore DIY underground did not mean the end of independent punk

music, but it ultimately led to the rise of a new strain of punk music, emo. Emo, short for

Emotional hardcore, began in the Washington D.C. hardcore scene in the mid-1980s.

Bands such as Rites of Spring and Embrace (both signed to Dischord Records) were the

forefathers of the movement that was similar to hardcore punk, but with lyrical content

that deal with emotional aspects of youth (mainly love and separation). Hardcore

independent labels such as Dischord and SST Records released emo recordings and emo

bands toured through an underground network of clubs and fans basements. In the mid-

1990s, bands such as Sunny Day Real Estate and Texas is the Reason formed, using

many of the same traditional promotion and marketing techniques used by punk bands

since its beginning (word-of-mouth, fanzines, radio airplay, etc.) and new technologies

(the Internet), emo spread worldwide. Clark (2003) concluded that "*punk never died*

Instead, punk had, even in its earliest days, begun to articulate a social form that

anticipates and outmaneuvers the dominance of corporate-capitalism" (p. 224 [italics in

original].). The next chapter examines traditional promotion and marketing techniques of

punk.

Chapter 4: Promotion and Marketing of Punk Music

Historically, punk bands and independent labels relied on the various methods

conventionally used by popular musicians to promote and market new recordings. Moser

(1999) identified radio airplay, videos, and live performances as the traditional

promotional techniques to market new recordings in general. This chapter examines the

traditional methods of promotion and marketing of new recordings within the punk

subculture.

All entertainment products including music, television shows, and films must be

promoted and marketed to potential consumers. Walter Yetnikoff, the former president of

CBS Records, said, "In the rough-and-tumble business of selling entertainment products

in cutthroat markets, promotion is the essential tool. Without it you're dead" (Yetnikoff,

2004, p. 188; see also Ryan, 1992, p. 185). Within the recording industry, the goal of

promotion and marketing campaigns is to alert consumers of the availability of new

recordings. Frith (2001) suggested that "without promotion, a record that was neither

seen nor heard might as well not have never been released in the first place" (p. 43; see

also Kusek & Leonhard, 2005, p. 57; Ryan & Wentworth, 1999, p. 180). Recordings

released by major labels held a distinct advantage over independent label releases due to

differences in capital available to fund promotional efforts. Association with large

conglomerates gave major labels a distinct financial advantage over independent labels

on account of the differences in capital available to promote and market new recordings.

Steve Gottlieb, president of the independent record company TVT Records, said, "The

only real advantage the big labels had was their access to lots of capital and their ability

to fund marketing" (Quoted in Cheng, 1999, p. I10; see also Martens, 2006c, p. 27; Perry,

1988, p. 59; Sinker, 2000, p. 90). The costs associated with the promotion of recordings by major labels were substantial. Marketing costs can often reach $100,000 for a fairly standard release and in excess of $500,000 for one by a major artist" (Vogel, 2007, p. 244; see also Eaton, 2003, p. 44; Greenblatt, 1998, p. 75; Kot, 2004, p. 167; Martens, 2006c, p. 27). A significant portion of these costs went to radio promotion. Jac Holzman, founder of Elektra Records and Chairman of the Internet-only, Cordless Records (part of Warner's Independent Label Group), said large label spend between $300,000 to $500,000 to get an album made and an act started (Sexton, 2007, p. 10). Only major labels, affiliated with large corporations, can support such expensive manufacturing and promotion costs.

Funding for promotions and marketing at an independent label was quite different. Sexton (2003) concluded that promotional and marketing expenditures for artists decline precipitously at independent labels:

> For a dealer album price of around $13, estimated distribution expenses of $1.96, with manufacturing, copyright fees, and artist royalties accounting for a further $6.22. 'That leaves $4.90, which has to cover all of your marketing, and so on. [You should] try to keep marketing to $3.27 initially, so you have a bit up your sleeve. (p. 7; see also Schultz, 2003, p. 54)

When the figures were examined, if the independent label presses 10,000 CDs for sale, 10,000 x $3.27 = $32,700, is budgeted for promotional and marketing. The disparity in these promotional budgets suggested that major labels could offer bands far superior promotional budgets than the independent labels. This allowed major labels not only to control the distribution portion of the recording industry, but also to control the promotional and marketing side.

This theory was supported by the fact that in that last twenty years, only one independent

punk record (the Offspring's *Smash*) had become a major hit (nine million copies sold)

without large sums of money spent on the marketing and promotion of the record. The

independent punk label, Epitaph Records, produced, distributed, and marketed *Smash*

without any financial backing from a major label. The sales success of the recording was

based on a simple (and financially cheap) marketing plan that began at non-commercial

college radio. The album's first single, 'Come Out and Play,' received significant airplay

on college radio stations across the United States. Successful airplay on college radio led

to Epitaph and The Offspring to split the costs of a low-budget video of "Come Out and

Play," and MTV screened it over and over (http://www.xent.com; see also Diehl, 2007, p.

175). Success on MTV led to influential modern rock radio station KROQ in Los

Angeles to play the song, and many other radio stations nationwide soon followed suit

(Martens, 2007b, p. 40). While the song never cracked *Billboard's Top Twenty*, the

combination of non-commercial and commercial radio airplay and one MTV video led to

initial sales of nine million copies. This was and remained the only truly independent

punk band to sell such a large number of recordings. As noted above, the band signed

with Columbia Records for its next release, *Ixnay on the Hombre* in 1996.

Since most independent labels were often undercapitalized to promote and market its

records, it was quite common for bands "to flee these smaller labels for larger ones as

soon as the opportunity presented itself" (Perry, 1988, p. 59; see also Dicola & Thomson,

2002, p. 67; Neely, 1998, p. 70). Throughout its history, numerous punk bands have

moved from independent labels to major labels. Examples include the aforementioned

Offspring as well as Green Day, Jawbox, Thrice, Thursday, Bad Religion, and Blink-182.
The central cause for the defection was that major labels offered more money for
promotion.

For most punk bands the move to the major label was rarely successful. For every Green
Day, the Offspring, and Blink-182 that achieved platinum success, the punk landscape
was littered with bands that were signed, promoted, and subsequently dropped by major
labels. Josh Rosenfeld, president of independent alternative/punk label Barsuk Records,
said: "The major label model was good for bands that - for whatever reason were totally
willing to risk their long-term career viability on a shot. Given that no one had come up
with a formula for how to make a song really popular, a major label model was high-
stakes gambling" (Quoted in Martens, 2006c, p. 27). The odds that a new recording
released by any label would go onto be a "success for an artist in the music industry were
very long" (Gomery, 2000a, p.326; see also Goldberg, 2002, p.81; Lopes, 1992, p.57).
While a major label's financial assistance may assist a band in 'getting noticed' by the
public through promotions, 'getting noticed' did not necessarily mean that the band's new
recording would become a sales success (and this applies to all genres of music). Kusek
and Leonhard (2005) found:

> Over three thousand new recordings into the marketplace each month, and only 3% of
> those ever sell more than five thousand copies. The chances of making it really big by
> signing with a major label are ridiculously low (p. 53).

Uncertainty of consumer behavior was just one of the several reasons that the majority of
punk bands, and most other genres of music on a major label failed. Blake (2003)
concluded the recording industry is "subjected to constant and unpredictable change in

consumer preferences and is characterized by the short life cycle of its product" (p. 2638; see also Negus, 1998, p. 364). What even major label personnel can never predict is how the public will react to a new recording and how many copies of the new recording the label will sell. Only a select small group of new recordings will contain numerous singles that become hits on commercial radio. Significant airplay for the singles on commercial radio allows the record to remain charted for several weeks, months or even for a year. These records initially sell hundreds of thousands of copies and continue selling for years, until final sales totals reach into the millions (i.e. *Thrille*r by Michael Jackson has sold 27 million copies and *Dookie* by Green Day has sold 10 million copies) (RIAA, 2008, http://www.riaa.com/goldandplatinumdata.php? table=tblTop100). A slightly larger collection of new recordings features only one hit single. Recordings with only one hit single often have significant initial sales that rapidly decline over a shorter time-period. These records sell significantly less copies than the previous recording examples (i.e. *Feeling Strangely Fine* by Semisonic with the hit single 'Closing Time' attained sales of 500,000) (Slichter, 2004, p. 202). Courtney Love, former singer for the punk band, Hole, said, "Record companies have a five-percent success rate. That means that five-percent of all records released by major labels go gold (500,000 copies sold) or platinum (a million copies sold)" (Love, 2002, pp. 330- 331). The five-percent success rate for most bands in the major label system (including punk bands) is explained by several different factors.

Often finished new recordings by punk bands took months to reach the marketplace due to administrative issues at major labels. Keegan (1998) noted that in the "major label system, the development of promotion and marketing campaign might delay the

distribution of a recording for up to eight-to-twenty-four months after the recording

process was complete" (p. 85; see also Biederman et al., 2001, p. 588; Ferguson, 2006, p.

19; Garrity, 2006b, p. 33; Haring, 1996, p. 7; Karlen, 1994, p. 142; Sparks, 2004, p. 313).

Such a delay would kill any momentum the band had developed prior to the recording

process. The competition among bands signed to a major label for marketing support was

(and remains) heavily contested. Punk bands that signed to major labels had no idea that

they were effectively competing against all of the other bands on the label for the finite

funding available to market and promote new recordings. Avalon (2002) concluded that

the "frigid reality of the major record deal was that, in spite of the fact that a label will

sign about twenty or thirty new pop acts a year, it might only have the budget to market

about six of them effectively" (p. 65; see also Sinker, 2000, p. 83). This meant that many

punk bands marketing plans were under-funded before the campaign even started. Major

label personnel could also refuse to release recordings based on the perceived limited

commercial appeal of the recording (Moore, 2005).

Even with a marketing plan implemented, major labels were often known to pull the plug

on projects not meeting initial sales expectations. Danny Goldberg, the former CEO of

Atlantic Records and Warner Brothers and former owner of the independent label

Artemis Records, said:

> If an album failed to create immediate excitement, word comes from up high to shift
> management and marketing dollars to different projects. After touring tirelessly and
> building a devoted fan base, after a year or two of pouring their hearts out writing and
> recording a record, after hearing cries of genius from friends and fans alike, artists
> naturally believed that with a little more advertising, one more video, and a real shot at
> radio play, they too could move millions. But the attention span of majors nowadays,
> with a few exceptions, resembled that of the 13-year olds at the core of their audience.
> (Goldberg, 2002, p. 82; see also Blake, 2003, pp. 2652-2653)

This was a common experience of many major label punk bands. For example, Matthew

Pryor, lead singer for the emo punk band The Get Up Kids, said:

> I would say that almost every band that had a bad experience on a major label had something to do with the lack of attention or promotion, etc., that they got or didn't get at a label. Most majors will promote a record for a month, and if it's not a hit, then all funding was pulled. (Quoted in Sinker, 2000, p. 90; see also Grad, 2001, p. 41)

Failure at receiving airplay on commercial radio caused most bands (of any genre) to be

dropped by major labels. For instance, the California-based punk band Face to Face

recorded and distributed an album with the major label A&M (Polygram) in 1996. Face

to Face singer Trevor Keith said of the band's experience on a major label: "There was no

feel for how to sell records for a punk band. The entire marketing plan was based on

radio. No radio? It's over" (Quoted in Sinker, 2000, p. 81; see also Savage, 2001, p. 332).

A&M Records subsequently dropped the band. The primary promotional method utilized

was some type of radio airplay.

4.1. Radio as a Promotional Outlet
Prior to the 1930's, promotion for recordings occurred mainly with billboards, newspaper

advertisements, and live music performances. Each of these methods was limited by its

potential market coverage. Commercial radio had no such limitations; so, it was coveted

by recording industry as a promotional tool. Frith (1988) concluded that "since the 1930's

commercial radio and recording industry have had a symbiotic relationship: commercial

radio gave record companies a means of promoting their stars, while record companies

provided radio with its cheapest form of programming" (p. 19; see also Huygens et al.,

2001, p. 985). The result of this relationship was that commercial radio had an

immediate, direct impact on consumers-especially young (ages 10-24) consumers. Cusic

(2001) found that "by and large, the recording industry sells recordings through

commercial radio airplay; i.e., consumers hear it and then buy it" (p. 4; see also Bayton, 1998, p. 3; Karlen, 1994, p. 213; Lewis, 1990, p. 16; Stokes, 1976, p. 156; Strick, 2006, p. 61). The goal of radio promotion for a major label was to have multiple new singles receive thousands of spins at commercial radio.

The costs associated with promoting multiple new singles to commercial radio were quite significant. In fact, during the last forty years radio promotion was the single largest expense in the music industry and crucial to the success of a recording (Dannen, 1991; Fink, 1996; Haring, 1996; Hirsch, 1973; Rothenbuhler & Streck, 1998). A majority of the promotion budget for a major label release was spent promoting new songs to commercial radio stations. According to Kot (2004):

> Most major labels spend at least $100,000 just to get a song on radio, with no assurance that it will be added to a station's regular rotation, much less become a hit. The overall costs for promotional campaigns could add up quickly: it could cost a major label more than one million dollars to promote a major hit single. (p. 205)

Artists signed to a major label had access to this type of funding. Therefore, a majority of the chart-topping radio singles heard on commercial radio were in some way connected to major labels. DiCola and Thomson (2002) examined playlist additions for all reporting Country, Contemporary Hit Radio and Rock stations (Active Rock, Rock, and Alternative) to the trade magazine, *Radio and Records* from 1992 through 2002.[2]

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2 The sample of *Radio and Records* was five-issues for each year, each spaced four weeks apart. They tabulated the songs that made charts from 1992 through 2002, between the end of February and the beginning of July.

Findings suggest that during the examined time-period, 80 percent (early 1992-1994) to 99 percent (1996-1999) of all airplay additions were from artists attached to major labels. In 2002, 87 percent of all playlist additions in the Rock formats were from bands associated with major labels. The findings suggest that new recordings from major labels dominated commercial radio airplay and that new recordings from independent labels rarely received significant airplay.

However, in recent years, research suggests that the time spent by audience members listening to commercial radio has steadily fallen. McBride (2005) noted, "Americans spent an average nineteen hours and forty-five minutes tuned in each week to traditional radio, compared with more than twenty-one hours five years ago" (p. B4; see also Anderson, 2006, p. 35; Rose & Lenski, 2006, p. 12). Even as radio listeners spend less time listening to commercial radio, major labels still deem commercial radio to be the most dominant and efficient promotion medium to sell records. Larry Khan, VP of R&B promotion for Jive Records, said: "No matter how else you try to market your product, the single biggest tool to sell a record is through spins on the radio. We can find fancy ways to cross-market our product in other ways, but radio is still number one way to sell a record" (Quoted in Hall, 2003, p. 52; see also Kerr, 2002, p. 72; Schiffman, 2001, p. 60). While new recordings released by major labels continue to use commercial radio as its main promotional tool, historically, recordings from bands on independent punk labels were much less successful at commercial radio.

4.2. Punk and Commercial Radio

The first wave of punk received only sporadic commercial radio airplay. Conspiring

against the first wave of punk was that the music did not fit the pre-defined commercial

rock radio format, Album-Oriented Rock (AOR), of the 1970's. Lopes (1992) noted:

> In order to garner airplay at commercial radio, the material must be conducive to
> airplay at one of the specifically defined commercial radio formats. New artists who
> did not fit one of the defined radio format categories remained outside popular radio
> airplay. (p. 68; see also Negus, 1993, p. 67)

The first wave of punk band's music received only a limited amount of commercial radio

airplay. The second wave of punk garnered slightly more commercial radio airplay

through the introduction of the Alternative radio format at KROQ in Los Angeles. The

Alternative format began airing on KROQ in 1978 and originally mixed new wave music

(Blondie, Elvis Costello, etc.) with AOR stalwarts (AC/DC, Led Zeppelin, etc.). On

weekends, the format featured specialty shows that highlighted music from the first wave

of punk and emerging hardcore punk scene in Los Angeles. One of the most influential

punk specialty shows on KROQ, 'Rodney on the Q,' hosted by local club owner and punk

aficionado, Rodney Bigenheimer, gave the emerging Los Angeles hardcore punk scene

(and punk in general) weekly commercial radio airplay. Jed the Fish, midday talent at

KROQ from its onset, said, "There weren't many others in America apart from Rodney

playing punk rock on commercial radio at the time" (Quoted in Spitz & Mullen, 2001, p.

58; see also Arnold, 1993, p. 35; Powers, 2001, p. 244). KROQ's format and Rodney's

show at first attracted a small, but dedicated audience that expanded over time. As the

audience grew, the Arbitron ratings of the station began to rise in the nation's second

largest radio market. The success of KROQ's programming techniques led a small

contingency of radio stations nationwide to adopt the format.

By the mid-1980s, a few additional stations in the United States also played punk music

including: WHTG-Eatontown, New Jersey; WFNX-Lynn, Massachusetts; WBCN-

Boston, Massachusetts; WHFS-Washington, D.C.; and KSAN-San Francisco. However,

Andersen and Jenkins (2003), Blush (2001), and Spitz and Mullen (2001) noted that most

of the punk music heard on these stations was restricted to weekend 'specialty programs'

only. Specialty shows aired late on weekend nights that guaranteed only a small devoted

audience would tune in to the show. This limited audience for punk specialty shows

meant that it was not a great promotional tool for punk bands and labels. The Alternative

format did not gain nationwide market penetration until after the success of Nirvana. In

the early 1990's the Alternative format went from fewer than 100 commercial outlets to

more than 500 commercial outlets programming the format. The aforementioned punk

bands that left independent labels for major labels (Green Day, Blink-182, etc.) benefited

tremendously from the increase in the number of commercial radio stations programming

the Alternative format. Punk bands still connected with independent punk labels,

however, did not benefit from the increase in the availability of the format nationwide.

As noted above, in recent years there has been a steady decline in the number of hours

that all listeners listen to radio. Of particular interest to this study was the decline in

listening to commercial radio by younger listeners. According to Mann (2005) "the

commercial radio audience of 18-to-24-year-olds, a demographic particularly beloved by

advertisers, had fallen nearly 22% since 1999" (p. 106; see also Tucker, 2006, p. 9). This

steep decline in time spent listening to commercial radio was felt the hardest at stations'

programming rock formats. Farhi (2005) showed that from mid-1999 to 2005, rock

stations lost an average of 13% of its audience (p. C1). This progressive decline led many

radio conglomerates to drop the format from numerous markets nationwide. Anderson (2006) found "in 2005, an average of one rock radio station went out of business *each week* [italics in original]" (p. 35). For instance, in 2005 Alternative Rock-formatted commercial radio stations in Philadelphia (Y100), Washington, D.C. (WHFS), and New York City (WXRK) flipped formats to Urban, Spanish and FM Talk respectively. As of early 2007, of the 13,837 radio stations in the United States fewer than 400 commercial stations were formatted as Alternative (Tucker, 2007, p. 52). This also meant that fewer punk specialty shows were on the airwaves.

Overall, only punk bands attached to a major label (minus the Offspring) had major success by garnering commercial radio airplay on the Alternative format, but many other independent punk bands did not. Instead of commercial radio, punk bands and independent punk labels relied on alternative methodologies to promote its music. Haring (1996) asserted four central methods were utilized by independent punk bands and labels: college radio, independent record stores, independent-oriented magazines and fanzines and venues (p. 184; see also Azerrad, 2001, p. 103).

4.3. Punk and Non-commercial Radio
As noted above, independent punk labels marketing budgets were much smaller than major labels. Therefore, "many independent punk labels only released records by a handful of acts; therefore, artists could be prioritized and developed" (Felder, 1993, p. 10). Epitaph Records president Andy Kaulkin, said:

> We could not compete with majors labels in terms of budgets, in terms of clout. What we do was work things on a grassroots level. Working things on a grassroots level meant being focused on an audience, and knowing that audience and being a part of that audience, really understanding it and really relating to it. (Quoted in Morris, 2002, p. 26)

One of the grassroots promotional methods employed by punk labels was airplay on non-commercial radio.

The importance of college radio as a promotion and marketing outlet for punk music blossomed in the latter part of the 1970's. Barol (1984) concluded that "when the record business hit a steep decline in the 1970's, and commercial radio reacted by confining its playlists to the most popular music, larger audiences began to sample the freer-spirited campus outlets" (p. 29; see also Greene, 1989, p. A28). College radio offered content that was different from the popular, but tightly controlled AOR (Album-Oriented Rock) commercial radio format. Lopes (1992) concluded that in the late 1970's and early 1980's "college radio stations played an important role in presenting young new artists who often record with obscure small independent labels" (p. 67; see also Arnold, 1993, p. 24; Kruse, 2003, p. 71; Ward et al., 1986, p. 559). Many of these obscure small independent punk labels bands received significant airplay on college radio stations across the United States. Jovanovic (2004) suggested that as "the 1980's progressed, college stations across the country took on more prominence for a range of post-punk bands in terms of promotion, airplay, and the staging of shows" (p. 41; see also Arnold, 1993, p. 23; Kruse, 2003, p. 21). College radio was a great source for punk music because many of the staff members participated in the punk subculture (i.e. as club promoters, disc jockeys, fans who attended shows, etc). In addition, few college radio stations had pre-programmed playlists (they were free-form radio) which meant that the on-air disc jockey would make all programming decisions for their show. This type of programming format had the potential to offer punk bands greater likelihood of radio airplay.

As a promotional and marketing tool, however, college radio had several limitations. According to Kruse (2003), "college radio is an inherently a local medium" (p. 79; see also Blush, 2001, pp. 154-155). Signal strength limited college radio's promotional potential: Most college radio stations' signals covered only twenty to twenty-five miles from its studio location, whereas commercial stations signal usually offered double the amount of coverage. A recurring limitation of college radio was the annual turnover of staff members, which made it difficult for record promoters to build long-term relationships with programmers. Moreover, few college radio stations were programmed as free-form radio stations. Kruse (2003) suggested "college radio had never been as free-form as college radio mythologists would have us to believe: many college radio stations were formatted from the beginning" (p. 73). Many college stations follow format structures designed for commercial radio (AOR, CHR, Urban, etc.) which meant that they also excluded punk rock music from its airwaves.

A major limitation of college radio as a promotional tool for independent punk labels was the corruption of college radio by the major labels in the mid-to-late 1980's. In the mid-1980s, major labels were increasingly involved in numerous joint ventures that led to an escalation in the number of recording acts that required promotion and marketing. Major labels slowly recognized that college radio was a potential cheap promotional entity for new music and bands that did not fit commercial radio. Kruse (2003) suggested:

> In the early 1980's, major labels in general paid little attention to what college stations played: in fact, college stations tended to be poorly serviced by the majors, often having to pay for the major label releases sent to them. However, when college radio began to be noticed for its role in breaking eventual multi-platinum-selling acts like REM and U2, major labels started actively trying to influence playlists at college stations. Major labels perceived the college student market to be populated with music

- loving individuals eager to spend money on tapes and CDs - and college radio was the most obvious way to access this market. (p. 75; see also Gilmore, 1998, p. 185; Greene, 1989, pp. A27-A28)

By the late 1980's, major labels implemented college radio promotion divisions whose main objective was to obtain airplay at college radio. Once the band received significant airplay from college radio, the artist was usually transferred to the commercial radio promotion division at the major record label. As noted above, many bands went onto to mainstream success through the utilization of this model. That success inspired "major labels to plow even more money into college radio promotion, and the collegiate airwaves accordingly became more formatted, competitive and compromised" (Azerrad, 2001, p. 494). This intrusion by the major labels influenced the music heard on college radio. Punk, while still a staple of college radio stations programming, now had to compete with releases of the major labels for airplay. This meant hardcore punk (as well as other genres of punk) was often delegated to late night specialty shows on college radio stations (Blush, 2001, p. 169). While commercial and non-commercial radio airplay was difficult to obtain, many punk bands still sought airplay.

4.4. Fanzines

Thompson (2004) suggested that the history of fanzines stretched back as far as the early science fiction fans fanzines of the 1930's, underground newspapers, and surrealist prose. From these models in "the 1970's, this zine stream was joined by punk rockers" (p. 428). The first punk fanzines were self-produced by highly motivated punk subculture members in both the United States (*Punk*) and Britain (*Sniffin' Glue*). Triggs (2006) suggested punk "fanzines adopted the DIY, independent approach that punk musicians had espoused" (p. 70). Punk fanzines relied on 'cut and paste' layouts that featured hand-written and/or co-opted typeface 'borrowed' from traditional magazines. This type of

DIY production method suggested that production of fanzines was labor intensive, which in turn limited the number of fanzines produced. According to Blake (2006), because Mark Perry's fanzine, *Sniffin' Glue*, was produced in his bedroom, the initial pressing yielded only 20 copies (p. 61). Circulation of punk fanzines was (and remains) significantly lower than the circulation of mainstream rock magazines (i.e. *Creem*, *Rolling Stone*, etc.) in the 1970's (and today).

However, because these fanzines could be produced in your bedroom, the first wave of punk saw an explosion of punk fanzines in both Britain and the United States. Some of the more enduring punk fanzines included: *Sniffin' Glue* and *Punk* from the first wave of punk; hardcore fanzines *Flipside*, *Slash*, and *Maximumrocknroll*; and later post-punk fanzines *Lookout!*, *Punk Planet*, and *Sub Pop*. The key component of both these early fanzines and subsequent generations was that they were local publications. Al Flipside, editor of the fanzine *Flipside*, said: "It was originally called *Los Angeles Flipside*, intended to be a real local endeavor. Our intention was to carefully cover the Los Angeles scene, but we didn't have any hard set rules" (Blush, 2001, pp. 17-18). Each of the first, second, and post-punk waves of punk had its own localized fanzine to cover the emerging scene.

Triggs (2006) suggested "punk fanzines became vehicles of subcultural communication" for participating members of the punk subculture. Fanzines featured news about new releases, tour information, and gossip within the local punk subculture. Lentini (2003) suggested that local fanzines "nurture and energize" punk subculture's (particularly the

first wave of punk) by "chronicling the subculture's development from its own

participants' perspectives" (p. 165). Savage (2001) observed:

> At the end of 1976, the mainstream media were closed to punk. Fanzines used the freedom they gained from this exclusion: the people who put them together could say whatever was on their mind, without worrying about censorship, editorial lines, subbing, deadlines - except the deadline of pushing your product into an arena that was still being defined. The result was a new language. The most interesting fanzines were verbal and visual rants about whatever took their collator's fancy. (p. 279; see also Anderson & Jenkins, 2003, p. 38; Felder, 1993, p. 14; Shank, 1994, p. 95)

Localized DIY punk fanzines situated outside of the mainstream press, offered fanzine

producers a venue to communicate directly with other punk fans.

Fanzines were an integral communication outlet for the punk subculture on account of the

limited (and often negative) coverage of punk within traditional music publications,

including *Rolling Stone*, *Creem*, and *Kerrang!*. For instance, the first appearance of punk

on the cover of *Rolling Stone* in October 20, 1977 featured the headline: "Rock is Sick

and Living in London." The cover photo featured two pictures of Sex Pistols lead singer,

Johnny Rotten, one with a sneer and the other with a dazed and confused look. The cover

story by Charles M. Young contextualizes the band in negative perspective within his

opening paragraph, "It is Malcolm McLaren, manager of the Sex Pistols, the world's most

notorious punk band who I have flown from New York to meet and see perform"

(Young, 1977, p. 68). Later, Young highlights the violent and sensationalistic aspects of

the punk show:

> The dense crowd inside consists of a few curiosity seekers and 400 to 500 cadaverous teenagers dressed in black or gray…. Everyone is fair game for a push. The dance floor is phenomenally stuffed with sweating humans, and getting more stuffed with each new song. Roadies onstage and a few fans hurl beer glasses at each other…. The Slits draw an encore and invite their opening act, Prefix, a male group who shave their

marble white bodies in emulation of Iggy Pop, to jam on 'Louie Louie.' The audience
likes it so much that several of them storm the stage and nearly succeed in toppling the
eight-foot stacks of PA speakers before the security men beat them into submission.
(Young, 1977, p. 68)

This negative (and often limited coverage) of punk by traditional magazines was

spearheaded by mainstream misinterpretation of the social norms within the punk

subculture. Young (1977) highlights an encounter he had with a member of the punk

subculture at the aforementioned live punk show:

The crowd loves it, dancing with even greater abandon -- with the exception of one
pogo stick who stops in midhop at the sight of my notebook and demands to know
what paper I'm from. I say I'm American, not one of the wanking English press. 'Well,
maybe you're all right,' he snorts in a barely understandable brogue. 'At least you're
not takin' fuckin' pictures. The newspapers all sensationalize it. We aren't fightin'.
We're 'avin' fun.' (p. 69)

Economics also limited coverage of punk within traditional rock magazines. The

financial inability and/or unwillingness of independent punk labels to purchase

advertising space within traditional rock magazines meant that editors had little interest in

covering the subculture. An examination of *Rolling Stone* from January 1976 to January

1979 (through the *Rolling Stone* Cover to Cover software) found that not a single punk

advertisement appeared in the magazine. Instead, hundreds of advertisements appeared

for major label artists, particularly issues where an artist or band was featured

prominently on the cover (i.e. Elton John, Linda Ronstadt, and Fleetwood Mac).

In contrast, fanzines offered subculture members access to all types of punk information.

According to Andersen and Jenkins (2003) and Triggs (2006), fanzines regularly covered

local shows, news and gossip, rants, photos, advertisements from local and national

independent record labels, and new album releases. Fanzines served an important role in

the promotion and marketing of punk music. Sinker (2001a) noted that first and second

wave of "punk relied on underground press to sell records, promote tours, and get into

record stores" (p. 11; see also Ennis, 1992, pp. 367-368). Punk bands and labels

embraced fanzines as an inexpensive tool for marketing and promoting new releases.

Arnold (1993) and Blush (2001) suggested that it was common for a fanzine to be

accompanied, at least at first, by a compilation cassette and later CD. Finally, and perhaps

most importantly, fanzines offered participants within the punk subculture a central

gathering space for bands to promote local shows and upcoming tours. John Doe,

founding member of the Los Angeles punk band X, said:

> If it wasn't for *Slash* and other zines, the scene would never have become what it
> became. More people eventually came to the shows so you could get paid better, play
> bigger places. Gradually it created a local music scene because it was being
> publicized. (Quoted in Spitz and Mullen, 2001, p. 83; see also Azerrad, 2001, p. 132)

Few punk fanzines still exist in print form. Most of the punk press in traditional print

form has moved onto commercial magazines such as *Alternative Press*, *Skratch*, or

Wonkavision. The traditional fanzine model has moved online in the form of blogs and

forums situated on band and label Websites and/or its social networking profiles. In

addition, online punk aggregators including Absolute Punk.net, PunkNews.org, and

PunkRock.org provide online forums and blogs for subculture members to gather and

discuss topics concerning the punk subculture. These online blogs and forums differ from

traditional punk fanzines because they allow any subculture member who enters a blog or

forum, the opportunity to voice their opinion about the punk subculture to other

subculture members worldwide. A more extensive discussion of the impact of online

blogs and forums on the punk subculture will be discussed in chapter six.

4.5. Videos

The development of MTV presented major labels with a new method for marketing

music to consumers. Before MTV, radio airplay was the most important method for

music promotion. Miles Copeland, manager of the Police and co-founder of the

independent I.R.S. Records, said: "Prior to MTV, the game was all about radio. And

television was actually something you did not do" (Quoted in Spitz and Mullen, 2001, p.

276). The introduction of MTV altered the major labels' thinking. From MTV's inception

and throughout the 1980's (the golden years of new wave), MTV was a goldmine for

major labels seeking to market unknown new wave bands. There was a worldwide

audience of 249 million households in forty-one countries' by the late 1980's (Gaar, 2002,

p. 259). The potential audience of MTV dwarfed any commercial radio station. "MTV

offered what would be the nearest thing to a nationwide radio station that then existed in

the United States" (Reynolds, 2005, p. 337). The reach of MTV allowed new wave bands

to obtain massive exposure via the channel to the youth of America. Similar to

commercial radio stations in the 1950's and 1960's, "MTV tapped the un-sated demand of

the youth market by providing exposure to a new style of music, new wave" (Lopes,

1992, p. 68).

From its launch, MTV relied heavily on major label videos for content and major labels

responded by delivering most of the new wave videos seen on MTV. Mark

Mothersbaugh, co-founder of the new wave band Devo, said: "We thought Music

Television, MTV was gonna change music for the good. Like artists were going to be

back in control and there'd be a renaissance period. Instead, MTV helped turn pop culture

into some big marketing device" (Quoted in Spitz and Mullen, 2001, p. 275). Major

labels assumed control of MTV due to the high-costs associated with the production of superior-quality videos that MTV wanted for airplay. Most independent labels were not able to meet these cost demands. Reynolds (2005) found "even the most basic video, comprised of concert footage, cost $15,000. Anything more creative ran anywhere from $40,000 to $200,000, way beyond the means of the independent labels" (pp. 346-347). This meant that major labels had backed most of the videos seen on MTV financially.

While other genres of music such as new wave, rap, pop, and heavy metal gained heavy rotation on MTV during all dayparts, punk videos were mainly aired in light rotation on late night video specialty shows, such as *120 Minutes*. In March of 1986, MTV developed a new video show called *120 Minutes* solely dedicated to new and alternative music videos not aired during regular programming hours. The show in its first incarnation aired every Sunday night on MTV until its final episode in the summer of 2000. Kruse (2003) concluded:

> In the 1990's, *120 Minutes*, and later its half-hour late weeknight counterpart, *Alternative Nation*, became the only MTV slots realistically open to most alternative pop/rock videos. *Alternative Nation* generally programmed according to the *CMJ* and *Gavin* Top Ten College Album Charts, which at the time were dominated by major labels, so *120 Minutes* became the place where videos by independent label acts were most likely to appear. But over the years the number of indie acts on the weekly show steadily declined. (p. 93)

Examining the playlist available at **http://www.altmusictv.com/120/index.html** suggests that few punk bands' videos actually ever appeared on *120 Minutes*. From 1986 to 2000, only three punk videos aired on the show (TSOL, Descendents, and Husker Du - all hardcore punk bands). Most of the videos featured on *120 Minutes* were from college alternative rock bands (R.E.M., U2, Depeche Mode, etc.) or new wave bands (Simple

Minds, XTC, Devo, etc.) that were all associated with major labels. Clearly, punk music

videos were not a staple of *120 Minutes* programming during this period. While some

punk bands made videos, few received airplay on MTV or on other video shows (USA

Networks video show *Night Flight* or *Friday Night Videos* on NBC).

4.6. Touring
As noted previously, touring was central to both the first and second waves of punk. The

tour of England by the Ramones inspired the Sex Pistols, whose last tour of America

inspired the hardcore punk movement. In that second wave of hardcore punk, bands

including Black Flag and the Dead Kennedys found it difficult to play in venues in

Southern California, so they toured across America extensively. These tours established

the underground network of punk clubs, fanzines, non-commercial radio stations that

spawned new regional punk and alternative music scenes across the United States.

Touring was central to the promotion and marketing of punk subculture artifacts (music,

fanzines, merchandise, etc.) across the United States and the rest of the world.

Touring was also a key promotion and marketing tool for almost every genre of popular

music. Independent and major labels try to coordinate all other methods of promotion to

coincide with nationwide tours by its bands. For example, Chapple and Garofalo (1978)

asserted,

> At the start of a tour, record companies made sure that local stores were sent the
> group's album, radio spots were timed to the group's appearance in town, print ad's
> were taken that advertise the band's album or single as well as the concert. (p. 181; see
> also Copeland, 1995, p. 233; Frith, 2001, p. 45; Stapleford, 2005b, p. 63)

Coordination of these promotional opportunities was an attempt by record companies to

make an "event out of new releases, which helped to launch them into the commercial

arena. Live concerts became the best way to maintain audience interest in a successful act

and a key factor in breaking a new one" (Eliot, 1989, p. 169).

Touring also allows bands to earn money and expand its fan base. Since "touring pays the bills for most artists" (Black, Fox, & Kochanowski, 2007, p. 155), touring was central to everyday existence for punk bands. Mike Watt, singer and bassist for the hardcore punk band the Minutemen, said:

> The idea was to get people to the gig. We had divided the whole world into two categories: there was flyers and there was the gig. You're either doing the gig, which is like one hour of your life, or everything else to get people to the gig. Interviews were flyers, videos, were flyers, even records were flyers. (Quoted in Azerrad, 2001, p. 84; see also Arnold, 1993, p. 101; Blush, 2001, p. 278; Kelly, 2002, p. 31)

Promotion of the live punk show was accomplished in two ways: fliers and fanzine advertisements. In his (2004) memoir of life on the road with Black Flag "*Get in the Van*," Henry Rollins noted repeatedly the hundreds of hours the band spent hanging fliers to promote its shows. For example, Rollins recalled a 1981 show in Devonshire Downs, California: "For the show we put up fliers for days on end. Start in the morning and come back at sundown. We would pick a main street and put up fliers for miles. We went to UCLA, the Valley, everywhere. This was just for one gig" (p. 21; see also Blush, 2001, p. 154). Fliers were attached to telephone poles, walls, billboards, record store windows, and phone booths. Occasionally, fliers would be made into stickers and placed on signposts and bus stop benches. Most fliers featured an outrageous image, and listed participating bands, venue location, and time and date of the show. Fliers distributed for the show would also appear in local punk fanzines.

The ultimate goal of blanketing the market was to attract as many people as possible to

the show. By getting people to attend shows punk bands would directly sell its recordings and merchandise directly to attendees. Bands not only sold its own recordings, but also frequently offered recordings from bands associated with the same independent label. Ian MacKaye of Dischord Records, said: "We sold tons of records at our shows. On tour, Minor Threat sold Teen Idles singles" (Quoted in Blush, 2001, p. 281). At the shows, punk bands also collected information from attendees for the purpose of later mailing them catalogs and information. Parris Mitchell Mayhew, guitarist for the hardcore punk band Cro-Mags, described the typical technique for collecting fan information at a punk show. Mayhew said: "There'd be ten bands a night for three bucks. There'd be a sheet of loose-leaf paper with the band names. You'd knock on the door and enter this little world where there was 70 or 100 kids" (Quoted in Blush, 2001, p. 177). At the conclusion of the tour, bands would send catalogs to all names collected. Finally, touring also allowed punk bands to distribute their recordings to local college radio stations for airplay and independent record stores on consignment.

Touring was (and remains) the main source of revenue for punk bands (and many other genres of music – pop, rock, rap) because few ever receive royalties from record sales. Joe Levy, a deputy managing editor at *Rolling Stone* magazine said, "The artists learn the hard way that money comes from concert tickets and T-shirts, not selling records. That's the lesson - you build a brand over time, and you can sell the brand even if you can't sell the albums" (Leland, 2005, p. WK7; see also Kafka, 2003, p. 78). Touring revenue could fund future recordings and tours. However, the consequence of this situation was that punk bands must tour constantly. Greenwald (2003) found "punk bands make their

money and their bones the old-fashioned way: through nonstop, backbreaking touring"
(p. 42; see also Blush, 2001, p. 53; Grow, 2004, p. 5; Hiatt, 2006, p. 9). Recently, punk
rock touring evolved from a single band traveling across the United States to multiple
bands touring together in a festival type setting (Lollapalooza and the Warped Tour).

The first nationwide traveling music festival to impact the punk subculture was the
Lollapalooza tour in 1991. The first Lollapalooza featured a wide-spectrum of musical
genres including punk, industrial, goth, hard rock, and alternative music. The show also
featured separate areas for sponsors to ply its wares, charities to raise awareness about
local issues, and an area for extreme sports and sideshow performances. Lollapalooza
toured every summer nationwide until its demise in 1997. The show reappeared as a
three-day event in 2003, given the success of a new traveling music festival, The Vans
Warped Tour.

Inspired by the Lollapalooza music festival, in 1995 Kevin Lyman gathered together the
first traveling punk music and extreme sports festival, 'The Vans Warped Tour.' During
the 1990's, the Vans Warped Tour played a vital role in spreading of both the punk
subculture and its music across the United States. According to Waddell (2006b), "since
its inception, the Warped Tour has continuously pumped new blood - fans and bands -
into the punk rock scene, contributing significantly to the genre's vitality" (p. 24; see also
Howe, 2005, p. 200). The 2007 version of the traveling tour made stops at over forty-five
venues and sold over 600,000 tickets where fans saw 70-75 acts per show (Waddell,
2007a).

Most of the bands featured on the tour were signed to either a major or an independent

punk label. However, a significant portion of the bands on secondary stages were punk

bands not affiliated with any type of recording label. This secondary stage offered

unknown punk bands the opportunity to reach a much wider audience. Sculley (2004)

suggested "nearly all of the bands are club levels acts, and Warped gives them the rare

chance to play in front of crowds of 10,000 or more at each stop on the tour" (p. D3).

This type of exposure on the Vans Warped Tour resulted in some punk bands signing

with major labels (Blink-182 to Geffen Records in 1996) and independent punk labels

(Bouncing Souls to Epitaph Records in 1997). Creative Artists Agency agent, Darryl

Eaton, said:

> The tour has consistently been the launch pad for the next round of new superstar
> bands. The 2005 Warped Tour alone saw bands like My Chemical Romance, Avenged
> Sevenfold and Fall Out Boy, to name a few, rise to the top. I think the tour really
> provides a platform for fans to go out and discover their new favorite artists. (Quoted
> in Waddell, 2006b, p. 25)

The ability to hear songs from every possible sub-genre of punk in one setting allowed

hundreds of thousands of kids' exposure to new punk music. Tolkoff (2004) suggested

the Vans Warped Tour was an environment where kids attended the show to see their

favorite radio bands (major label punk bands- Green Day, Blink 182, etc.) and came out

appreciating Pennywise (not on the radio and signed to an independent punk label). The

tour assisted in spreading the punk subculture and its music to hundreds of thousands of

punk fans.

Since 1995, the Vans Warped tour has dedicated a section of each venue for corporate

sponsors of the tour to sell products to attendees of the show. A section of this area was

also dedicated to bands and independent record labels to sell and market music to the tour's audience (Correia, 2002, p. 28). This area was the central promotional and marketing tool for unsigned and independent punk bands on the tour. For example, in 2006 the punk band Sunstreak released its self-titled (and distributed) debut album and joined the Warped Tour. Halfway through the tour, the band's debut hit number 30 on *Billboard's HeatSeekers* chart (the *HeatSeekers* chart ranks the top sellers among artists who have never cracked the top half of *The Billboard 200*) and number 33 on *Billboard's Top Independent Albums* chart. Both positions on the charts were phenomenal, particularly given that the band was self-distributing the new release. How was this possible? According to the band's manager William Merman-Smith, "We were literally walking around the Warped Tour selling CDs" (Quoted in Christman, 2006b, p. 10). This was a common occurrence at the Warped Tour. Kevin Lyman, founder of the Warped Tour, said: "Fans come with some money, they buy T-shirts and records, and music was cheap out there. They're ready to take music home with them" (Quoted in Waddell, 2006b, p. 25). Another benefit of the tour was the potential for a band to gain exposure in front of hundreds of thousand punk fans. This type of exposure was beneficial particularly for unsigned or new punk bands, because the exposure would assist them in filling clubs when they toured alone after the Warped Tour. Kevin Lyman said: "All the bands could come back in the fall and do their own tours. If you liked a band at our show, you know you're going to see more of that band the next time they play on their own" (Quoted in Tolkoff, 2004, p. 70; see also Waddell, 2006a, p. 8).

The success of the Vans Warped Tour led to the creation of other festival-type punk tours

such as Bamboozle East and West and Saints & Sinners tours. Each tour had a similar

set-up as Warped Tour, but they did not travel nationwide. This festival-type punk tour

may become the norm for all music genres. During the next ten years, the "performance

side of the music industry is likely to flourish" and "more young people are expected to

attend outdoor concerts where multiple bands perform on several stages" (Francese,

2002, p. 48). In 2007, a wide variety of music festivals were planned (Coachella in Indio,

CA; Pitchfork and Lollapalooza in Chicago, IL.; Sasquatch in George, WA; Bumbershoot

in Seattle, WA; Bonnaroo in Manchester, TN; South by Southwest Festival in Austin,

TX; and Virgin America in Baltimore, MD). Festivals were (and remain) particularly

beneficial in exposing audiences to a wide-spectrum of different genres and sub-genres of

music. Danny Buch, Red Music VP of promotion and artist development, said,

> People may be hunkering down in terms of their personal and/or business budgets, but
> they still want to get together and these festivals are where they want to do it all in an
> effort to discover and share new music. (Quoted in Boyle, 2006, p. 75)

In conclusion, touring, which had always served as an important promotion method for

punk, will continue to serve an important role spreading punk music worldwide. The ease

with which punk fans could find information about tours online and the overall impact of

the Internet on the music industry is the next area of interest.

Chapter 5: The Impact of the Internet on Music

The development of the Internet and subsequent worldwide usage of the technology

ultimately had significant implications for the recording industry. Kurlantzick (1998)

concluded:

> For the creators, distributors, and users of musical compositions and recorded performances, the most important and most challenging contemporary technological development is the interconnected set of computer networks known as the Internet…. The Internet enables a single keystroke to broadcast information around the world without regard to its copyright status: and individuals can easily make high quality duplicates of works. In fact, a computer can copy audio content with speed and digital accuracy not previously available in any other appliance. In addition, computers create significant redistribution opportunities as demonstrated by the proliferation of Web sites and bulletin boards maintained by organizations and individuals. (p. 188)

This chapter examines the impact of the Internet on the distribution of recorded music,

with particular focus on its effect on punk music. The next chapter discusses how

recording labels (both major and independent) use the Internet to promote and market

new recordings, as well as the effect of the Internet on the promotion and marketing of

punk music.

Central to understanding the impact of the Internet on the recording industry is that, by

design, the Internet cannot be controlled. The Internet's design allows interconnected

computer networks (instead of one central computer) to link with one another and

transfer data and information worldwide. Although access to the Internet can be and

sometimes is controlled, Goldsmith Media Group (2000) suggested its decentralized

design makes it "technically impossible to control the content and information available

on the Internet because the Internet had no center from which to exercise control" (p. 50;

see also Patelis, 2000, p. 88). Control of the Internet is also impossible due to the

immense volume of information and content from multiple sources available online.

Aufderheide (1997) added that such massive volumes of content and information have appeared online because anyone with access to the Internet can potentially now become a "media producers". The ability of individuals with Internet access to produce online content has within the last ten years provoked concern within mass media conglomerates that the Internet will "subvert the current power structure by transforming citizens across the globe from orthodox media-couch-potatoes to active producers of on-line information" (Patelis, 2000, p. 91; see also Lessig, 2004, p. 9). In 2007, the number of Internet users worldwide passed the one billion mark; in North America, 233 million people now regularly use the Internet (http://Internetworldstats.com). In the United States, a joint 2006 study by Arbitron Ratings and Edison Media Research found that 81% of Americans 12 and older were online, up from 56% in 2000 (Visakowitz, 2007, p. 12).

The rapid acceptance and usage of the Internet was propelled by several technological advancements including MP3 and broadband Internet connections that assisted in the distribution of media content (music and video) online. The introduction of MP3 technology enhanced the online experience for many users by increasing the type and size of data available on the Internet. MP3 technology also allowed Internet users to become active producers of online content, as well as distributors of copyrighted content.

5.1. MP3 and Broadband Internet Connections

The German research scientist Karl Brandenburg designed the MP3 (Moving Picture Experts group audio layer three) software at the Frauenhofer Institute in 1991 to compress large audio analog files into smaller digital files (Harari, 1999). This made it easier to distribute audio content online. During the developmental stages of the

technology, Brandenburg offered online free access to several different versions of the

original MP3 source code. This simple act transformed the software and the recording

industry forever. Mann (2002) described what happened:

> The software's 'source code'- its underlying instructions - was stored on an easily
> accessible computer at the University of Erlangen, from which it was downloaded
> by one SoloH, a hacker in the Netherlands. SoloH revamped the source code to
> produce software that converted CD tracks into music files of acceptable quality.
> (The conversion is known as 'ripping' a CD). This single unexpected act undid
> the music industry. Other hackers joined in, and, the work passed from hand to
> hand in an ad-hoc electronic swap meet, each coder tinkering with the software
> and passing on the resulting improvements to the rest. Within two years an active
> digital-music subculture was shoehorning MP3 sites into obscure corners of the
> Net, all chockablock with songs - copyrighted songs - that had previously been
> imprisoned on compact discs. (p. 281)

Technologically, MP3's ability to distribute perfect sound quality files of recorded music

online was a major breakthrough. Prior to MP3 technology, the copying and distributing

of analog-recorded music (tape-to-tape) meant that for each subsequent copy, the sound

quality would diminish. The breakthrough of the MP3 technology was that "unlike

analog information, the clarity of the message wasn't lost from copy to copy or over long

stretches of travel" (Shapiro, 1999, p.16; see also Philips, 2002, p. 303).

MP3 technology allowed for copies of recorded music to be streamed from one computer

to another computer in real time with no loss of fidelity (a point I will return to later).

According to Lam and Tan (2001) advancements in broadband technology also

significantly influenced the increased usage of MP3 technology. The ease of transfer of

MP3 files from computer-to-computer relied heavily on bandwidth size and modem

speed. The faster the modem speed combined with larger bandwidth, the easier it was to

transfer MP3 files. Bandwidth is the amount of digital space available on a phone line, a

cable or other pipeline to move information back and forth. "More was better" (Connolly, 2003, p. 10; see also Patelis, 2000, p. 94). Standard dial-up connection for most early Internet users was through conventional modem attached to a telephone line and this set-up offered only a small amount of bandwidth for file transferring. Standard dial-up connections were "slow, vulnerable to interruption, and limited in file capacity" (Murdock & Golding, 2004, p. 248; see also Mann, 2002, p. 280). Standard dial-up data transfers would take anywhere from a few minutes to several hours, depending on the size of the files, modem speed, and available bandwidth.

By 2001, the increased availability of broadband links (ISDN) over a dedicated cable network or adapted (ADSL) telephone modem connections in the home made the transferring of data significantly easier and faster. The aforementioned broadband connections were always connected to the Web, could download Web pages almost instantaneously, and could easily handle video and other large files (Ayres & Williams, 2004; Murdock & Golding, 2004). Broadband became the preferred Internet connection for many Americans. In 2006, 42% of Americans accessed the Internet via a broadband connection, up from 29% in 2005 (Madden, 2006, p. 3). Several scholars concluded that technological advancements including MP3 software, broadband connections, and bandwidth size allowed for the Internet to become a major distribution channel of music in digital form (Ayres and Williams, 2004; Lam & Tan, 2001; Patelis, 2000). A significant portion of the music distributed online was copyright-protected music controlled by major recording labels. This illegal distribution of content obviously raised concerns among the major labels that the Internet had the potential to increasingly allow

for the widespread piracy and copyright infringement online of its music (Aldermann, 2001; Gomery, 2000b; Kusek & Leonhard, 2005; Leyshon, Matless, & Revill, 2005). In addition to the aforementioned concerns, major labels were also concerned about the impact of MP3 technology on its control of the overall distribution of recorded music.

Although history had repeatedly shown that new technologies inevitably bring opportunities and create new markets, the recording industry's attitude towards new technology remained hostile (Coleman, 2003; Frith, 1987; Gomery, 1989; Kretschmer, Klimis, & Wallis, 2001; Kusek & Leonhard, 2005; Philips, 2002; Sylva, 2000). Within the recording industry, this hostility was aimed particularly at new technologies that altered the control of the distribution of copyrighted-protected recordings. Previous negative responses by the recording industry to new technologies included opposition to analog tape cassettes and digital audio tape players. In these previous cases, the major recording labels responded to the threat of the new technologies by lobbying government representatives for stronger copyright protection for recorded music.

5.2. Copyrights

Copyright laws have a long history in the United States, starting with the first Copyright Act of 1790. Since this first Act of 1790, copyright laws have been revised several times in 1831, 1870, 1909 and 1976. Central to each revision of copyright law was the understanding that an author with a copyrighted work enjoyed the exclusive rights to reproduce, adapt and distribute copies of their work (Connolly & Krueger, 2005; Sylva, 2000). "The goal of this exclusive right was to give creative people a financial incentive to produce art, further science, and expand the boundaries of human knowledge"

(Shapiro, 1999, p. 78; see also Kusek & Leonhard, 2005, p. 48; Mann, 2002, p. 300;

McChesney, 2004, p. 232).

Understanding who controls copyrights within the recording industry was (and remains)

an important concept for any study of the recording industry. Frith (2000) suggested "the

recording industry was not a manufacturing industry, it was a rights industry; it was

organized around the management and exploitation of talent" (p. 388). To fully exploit

talent, record companies controlled the master recordings and copyrights to most of the

music produced by artists through contracts that identified artists as contract workers

under a 'work for hire.' This clause, a standard in major label and some independent

labels contracts enabled the label to control the copyright on all songs recorded by the

artist while under contract. Control of copyright gave record companies its economic

value. Steinberg (1998c) observed:

> It was important to understand that the value of any record company was in the form
> of the master recordings it owned, and the contracts which it held. That's why
> contracts written between the artist and record company required the artist's
> exclusivity, and except for extremely rare instances, the masters when delivered to the
> record company were solely the property of the record company. Without these
> masters, record companies had far less value. (p. 37; see also Aldermann, 2001, p.
> 126; Avalon, 2002, p. 64; Hesmondalgh, 1998, p. 260; Love, 2002, p. 332)

The aforementioned recent technological changes led the recording industry to lobby the

United States Congress for greater copyright protection for recorded music. This

lobbying led to several successive changes in copyright law. First, the Digital Home

Recording Act required copy management systems in digital audio recorders and

imposed royalties on sale of digital audio recording devices and media (CD-RW's). The

Act also clarified legality of home taping of analog and digital sound recordings for

private noncommercial use (http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1a.html). The 1996

Performance Right in Sound Recording Act "required Internet Websites playing music to

get a performance license from the copyright owner and pay the appropriate royalties"

(Schwartz, 2002, p. 263). Third, the No Electronic Theft Act defined "financial gain" in

relation to copyright infringement and set penalties for willfully infringing a copyright

either for purposes of commercial advantage or private financial gain or by reproducing

or distributing, including by electronic means phonorecords of a certain value (The

UCLA Online Institute 2001, http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1a.html). In 1998, the

signing of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) made it illegal to circumvent

anti-piracy measures built into most commercial software; required that "Webcasters"

pay licensing fees to record companies; and outlawed the manufacture, sale, or

distribution of code-cracking devices to illegally copy software (The UCLA Online

Institute 2001, http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/iclp/dmca1.htm). The final amendment to

copyright law also occurred in 1998 with the signing of the Sonny Bono Copyright Act.

This Act extended to 95 years total for corporate-held copyrights and to the lifetime of

the author *plus* 70 years for individual authors [italics in original]" (McChesney, 2004, p.

233; see also Sylva, 2000, p. 4). The strengthening of copyright law through government

intervention was just one of several initiatives by the recording industry in its efforts to

deal with the impact of MP3s and the Internet on its business model.

5.3. Security Digital Music Initiative

Simultaneously to the lobbying for greater copyright protection, the major recording

labels, computer software companies, and electronic manufacturers also formed the

Security Digital Music Initiative (SDMI). The intended goal of SDMI was to develop

technology that could control the recording and playing of MP3 files online by

standardizing control initiatives among the recording labels. According to Bickers (2000) SDMI was a standard file format agreed by the major music labels and electronics makers. Sound files were encrypted with a digital "watermark" that could control how the music was copied (the number of copies allowed) and the playback of that material on various devices. Kusek and Leonhard (2005) and Mann (2002) suggested that, in theory, watermarking would allow the recording industry to use a simple scan procedure, which would allow them to find out where a copy of any given song originated, and therefore potentially identify anyone responsible for its illegal or unauthorized dissemination. The SDMI initiative was meant to control the illegal downloading of MP3s online. The technology, however, had several deficiencies.

First, most watermarks were quickly made ineffective by simply covering the outer edge of the CD with magic marker. It was also impossible to watermark retroactively on older released CDs, or the thousands of new CD releases being introduced every month by the record industry (Kusek & Leonhard, 2005, p. 153). The industry could not add the technology to older CDs, nor could it afford the extra costs of inserting the technology on every new CD. According to Grebb (1999) "labels must pay [a third-party company] for digital watermarking, compression, mastering, encoding, bandwidth, server space, clearinghouse costs, technology licensing costs, technical support, and customer service" (p. 77).

The SDMI initiative and its subsequent technology watermarking were so ineffective that the entire project was shut down in 2001. The failure of the initiative to protect copyright

holders from infringement meant that the recording industry for a short time relied solely

on copyright law as the only method to deal with the impact of MP3s and the Internet on

its business model. But, copyright law alone, "no matter how stringent, and how carefully

drafted, would not solve nor entirely prevent illicit Internet copying" (Sylva, 2000, p. 3).

In response, with the assistance of technology companies (Apple, Microsoft, etc.), major

labels developed Digital Rights Management (DRM) systems and tools to prevent the

unauthorized copying and distribution of online music content (Burkhart & McCourt,

2004). DRM systems were designed to track and gather data on the movement of major

label musical recordings, as well as restrict the usage of those recordings online. While

major labels embraced DRM protection for its recordings, independent labels did not (I

will return to discuss this difference in chapter six). The major drawback of DRM was

that each record label implemented a proprietary DRM protection model, therefore the

major labels' legal online music distribution outlets could not prosper (a point I will

return to later). However, the necessity of DRM protection systems for recordings online

was provoked by the significant upsurge of illegal online copying of copyrighted

recorded music enabled by the newly designed Peer-to-Peer networks (P2P) and Napster.

5.4. Peer to Peer Networks

Peer-to-peer networks (P2P) used in conjunction with MP3 technology enabled online

users to make content available to an unlimited number of other online users. The first

P2P network for the distribution of recorded music to garner widespread usage was

Napster. The Napster program, released in 1999, was the first in a series of peer-to-peer

network programs (KaZaa, Limewire, Morpheus, etc.) that allowed users to trade MP3

files by remotely accessing each other's hard drives. Napster's central server served as the

connection point for users to find songs through its online directory. According to

Oberholzer and Strumpf (2004):

> The server serves much like an Internet search engine in that it keeps a real-time index of all files being shared and handles all search requests from clients (the server does not store files, but only maintains their characteristics and host client). The server returns to a client a set of potential matches for its search, after which the client may initiate a transfer directly from the host client (the server plays no role in the transfer. (p. 6)

Proponents of Napster and later P2P networks argued that the networks offered numerous

benefits to users and the recording industry. Shapiro (1999) noted that P2P networks

offered "the unprecedented opportunities to share all sorts of creative expression" (p. 42).

Proponents argued that a significant portion of the material swapped through the P2P

networks were songs that were not readily available at retail or radio. Tapper (2002)

described P2P networks as "a swap meet where even the most obscure and out-of-print

music could be found" (p. 13; see also Lessig, 2004, p. 71; McChesney, 2000, p. 7).

Along with access to obscure out-of-print recordings, MP3s also offered consumers the

ability to obtain access to single recordings instead of only full-length albums. In the

early 1980's, record companies phased out production of vinyl 45 records and cassette

singles and replaced them with CD singles. By the mid-1990s, the single in any format

disappeared from retail. Major record labels concluded that CD singles "cannibalized

sales of more expensive albums by allowing consumers to pick and choose songs instead

of purchasing the entire package" (Haring, 1996, p. 44). By essentially phasing out the

single, major labels forced customers to buy CDs with many songs in order to get the one

song that they really wanted (Kusek & Leonhard, 2005, p. 123; see also Keightley, 2004,

p. 387; Philips, 2002. p. 313). MP3 and P2P network technologies "allowed consumers

greater control over their media usage" because they could download single songs or full-

length recordings (Peterson, 2005, p. 16).

The introduction and widespread usage of CD burners was also important to consumers'

ability to have greater control over their media usage (particularly music). The P2P

networks allowed consumers access to downloadable single song MP3 music files that

they could transfer to their personal computers and burn collections of songs on a CD for

portability. In the late 1980's, Philips Electronics developed the first recordable CD and

CD-RW player with the capabilities of recording digital sound. Initially, high costs

associated with the technology kept computer manufacturers from installing them in

personal computers (PC). Robert DeMoulin, marketing manger at Value Added products

for Sony Electronics Computer Components and peripherals group, said,

> On a large scale, we're not seeing a lot of PC companies offering CD recorders as a
> standard or even an option because CD-R drives are at a price level more than twice,
> or even three times, what they (PC companies) pay for a CD-Rom drive (a standard
> playback-only component of early personal computers). (Quoted in Partyka, 1998, p.
> 42)

In the mid-1990's, as CD-R costs fell, most personal computers manufacturers equipped

new personal computers with CD-R drives. CD burners allowed for an unlimited number

of duplications of a favorite CD or MP3 file and offered consumers the ability to program

their musical experiences. Use of CD-R and CD burners skyrocketed. Recent research on

CD burning showed that consumers acquired 30% of their music in 2005 through ripping

and burning of CDs (Garrity, 2005, p. 12). The addition of CD-R drives with burning

capabilities, combined with Internet access to P2P networks, would have a significant

impact on both recording labels and traditional music retail outlets. While proponents of

Napster and P2P networks mentioned several benefits of the services, opponents offered a litany of complaints.

5.5. Opponents of Napster and P2P Networks
The main opponent of the P2P networks was the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). The RIAA blamed file-sharing associated with the P2P networks for the free fall of record sales. The RIAA suggested that MP3s available on the P2P networks "threatened the whole economic base of the music industry through a new form of 'piracy' of intellectual property rights" (Dane & Laing, 1998, p. 21; see also Gomery, 2000a, pp. 345-346; Greenwald, 2003, p. 215). According to Leyshon et al. (2005), the major labels argued "illegal copying and transferring of music over the Internet was increasingly acting as a substitute for sales" (p. 179). Early evidence supported these claims. The RIAA's 2000 Consumer Profile research found steady declines in the music purchasing of youth. The total market share of overall music sales by youth (15 – 19 years old) and young adults (20-24 years old) fell from a high of 17.9 % in 1991 to 12.5% by 2000 (http://riaa.org., 2000).

Millions of people worldwide utilized P2P programs and begun to download, without paying, copyrighted music from the major and independent recording labels. Between September 1999 and July 2001, "Napster service attracted approximately 70 million users and 70% of their exchanges involved copyrighted material" (Taylor, Demnt-Heinrich, Broadfoot, Dodge, & Jian., 2002, p. 610). This free exchange of copyrighted material among Internet users was regarded "as a form of theft by the recording industry and the RIAA quickly brought legal proceedings against Napster" (Theberge, 2001, p. 21; see also Fox, 2004, p. 203; Starr & Waterman, 2003, p. 458; Taylor et al., 2002, p. 613).

In court proceedings, the recording industry argued that Napster violated the industry's exclusive control of its copyrighted music. Courts ruled that Napster had indeed violated copyright law and the site was shut down. Unfortunately, for the recording industry the end of Napster did not end the P2P threat. Taylor et al. (2002) noted,

> Even with the demise of Napster, the software spawned second generation imitators and variants of the original and most consumers migrated to alternate networks such as (FastTrack and Gnutella), and programs (e.g. Morpheus and Grokster), where they were joined by record numbers of other users. (p. 611; see also Kusek & Leonhard, 2005, p. 5; Starr & Waterman, 2003, p. 458)

Many of the second generation P2P networks were also sued, found guilty, and subsequently shut down. Nonetheless, the various court proceedings and anti-piracy measures bought about by the RIAA and the recording industry have had little impact on users' utilization of P2P networks to obtain free music. Big Champagne, the online media measurement company, estimated that more than 250 million tracks were downloaded worldwide each week from file-swapping services (Freedom Du Lac, 2006, p. A1; see also Crawford, 2005, p. 1). Two significant causes were identifiable for the continued presence and usage of P2P by Internet users. First, while court rulings influenced corporate financing for supporting functioning P2P networks, the rulings could never eliminate the availability of the programs online. Kusek and Leonhard (2005) estimated that hundreds of millions of copies of these free software applications had already been downloaded and that millions of people were online trading music files every minute of every day around the world. In addition, as previously highlighted, the control of the Internet was (and remains) impossible because of the "decentralized nature and informally maintained architecture of the Internet" (Taylor et al., 2002, p. 624). The

decentralized nature of the Internet meant that enforcement of individual state and

country laws and regulations regarding copyright was impossible. Connell and Gibson

(2003) noted:

> Copyrights are products of the legal systems unique to each country, whereas Internet
> technologies, the new means of distribution for music, operate on a transnational basis
> largely beyond the operation of intellectual property structures. This variability of
> legal systems from country to country is one reason why global integration of music
> industries has been uneven. The absence of legal protection for copyright has
> produced 'geographies of piracy', which have long characterized bootleg cassette and
> CD production, and, more recently, the illegal digital transmission of copyright
> material. (p. 263)

Laws that attempt to control usage by citizens of the United States would have no effect

on the rest of the world. In addition, most of the surviving P2P networks operations were

based outside of United States jurisdiction. Any lawsuits filed against them in the United

States could easily be ignored. Finally, the behaviors of millions of online users with

years of exposure and usage of free music on P2P networks might be impossible to

reverse.

5.6. Pros of Peer-to-Peer Networks on Independent Music

As noted in chapter two, the major labels consistently controlled the distribution of

recorded music. This control gave major labels tremendous power over independent

labels and consumers. The convergence of the Internet, MP3s, and P2P networks might

eliminate the need for the intermediaries (disintermediation) such as the major recording

labels. According to Shapiro (1999) disintermediation was the "somewhat ungainly word

that was used to describe this circumventing of middlemen. Generally, it was associated

with the ability to engage in commerce directly without brokers, retailers, and

distributors" (p. 55; see also Compaine, 2000, p. 575; Dane & Laing, 1998, p. 22; Daniel

& Klimis, 1999, p. 319; Phillips, 2002, p. 308). In the traditional distribution model,

record companies and retailers served as the conduit between the artist and the consumer. This old major label distribution system of manufacturing and distribution of physical products (vinyl records, cassette tapes, and/or compact discs) could now be replaced by "the proliferation of container-less music" in the MP3 format, produced by independent labels and artists (Spinello, 2004, p. 269; see also McCourt, 2005, p. 251; Patelis, 2000, p. 87). This idea of 'container-less' music could be particularly beneficial to independent labels and artists.

As noted earlier, many independent artists and labels were essentially required to contract with major labels for distribution of recordings. The primary reason was that the major label distribution system offered reliable and worldwide distribution unavailable from other sources. Distribution through the Internet via MP3s and P2P networks eliminated this requirement. Online distribution provided increasing possibilities for copyright holders to disseminate media both instantaneously and inexpensively to the worldwide marketplace (Sparks, 2004; Sylva, 2000). Internet distribution enabled new "entrepreneurs to access distribution channels previously unavailable due to financial constraints" (Sylva, 2000, pp. 1-2; see also McChesney, 2004, p. 137). The lower costs associated with delivery of MP3s meant that record producers might be able to reach profitability much quicker than traditional record distribution models. Associated with the potential for a larger portion of the profits from selling of recordings was the ability of artists to control the creative process and release schedule of new recordings. As noted earlier, with the major label distribution system, independent artists and labels recordings

often faced distribution delays. For prolific artists, "the Internet provided a mode of distribution that could keep up with their own pace of creativity" (Phillips, 2002, p. 311). Distribution through MP3s and P2P networks would allow independent bands and labels to release product at its discretion. Independent bands and labels could release product online for free to consumers and follow up the release with tours, where they could profit from the sale of tickets and merchandise. This model of distribution also offered artist the choice of whether they would record a single song or an entire album. Singles (over albums) could benefit punk bands and labels because, as noted earlier, it was common for punk bands to record the less expensive singles and/or EP over the more expensive album production. The ability to control product flow also meant that independent artists and labels could also bypass the collapsing record retail system.

As noted earlier, independent record stores served an important role in the promotion, marketing, and distribution of early punk recordings. This importance continued into the 1990's. Geoff Travis, founder of the punk label Rough Trade, said:

> I was lucky enough to release records in the early '90s when there was a phenomenally strong underground in America with a hugely important independent retail, underground press and college radio community. Now you don't have that kind of strength. (Quoted in Hart, 2003, p. 26)

However, by the late 1990's and continuing to the present, independent and chain record retail stores were in crisis due to the increased usage of MP3s and P2P networks. The American Association of Independent Music concluded that starting in the 1990's, "the availability of independent record retail outlets nationwide began a steady freefall from a high of 7000 stores in 1991 to roughly 2000 in 2007" (Garrity, 2007, p. 30). The marketing research company, the Almighty Institute of Music Retail, found that 650

independent record stores and nearly 1200 chain outlets have gone out of business since

2005 (Martens & Christman, 2006, p. 24; see also Martens & Garrity, 2006, p. 10).

Record retail chains such as Tower Records and Musicland went out of business, while

Sam Goody, FYE and Coconuts consolidated under the stewardship of Transworld

Entertainment.

Independent record and chain retail outlets that remained opened transformed from

record stores to lifestyle stores. Almost all of "the existing record retail outlets begun to

sell DVDs, CD and MP3 players, headphones, books, posters, clothing, merchandise, and

other products to supplement constantly declining CD sales" (Kusek & Leonhard, 2005,

p. 88). This change meant that all recordings now faced increasingly stiffer competition

for shelf space from lifestyle products in independent retail outlets. McDonald (1999)

noted that "music in a digital form meant that product no longer needed to be displayed in

a conventional record store with limited shelf space and high-priced rents" (p. 98).

Toomey, Bracy, McDonough, and Thomson (2002) noted that "in the physical world,

record store and warehouse shelf-space was finite and valuable, but the virtual

marketplace did not have the same physical limitations" (p. 327). This was particularly

beneficial to niche genres of music such as punk, which for the most part, had

traditionally been seen by major and big box retailers as "not cost-effective given the

limited retail space available in many conventional stores" (McDonald, 1999, p. 98).

Finally, by not signing a contract with a major label, bands could retain control of its

copyrights. Highlighted earlier, a standard major label contract gave control of copyrights

to recording labels, and this meant they dictated the terms of production and distribution

(and were the main beneficiary on record sales).The potential to take control of its

copyrights allowed bands to benefit financially from sales of its current and future

recordings online.

5.7. Cons of Online Distribution for Independent Music
First, the costs associated with converting back catalogue analog recordings and new

digital releases for online sale were extensive for any independent label. Most

independents were still wrestling with the high costs and the complex processes needed

to build the systems that would drive their digital efforts (Christman, 2006a, p. 23; see

also Connolly, 2006, p. 20). Associated with the high cost of the transformation was the

increasingly time-consuming process of prep for online distribution. Christman (2006a)

noted:

> First, contracts need to be read to determine what rights are included. Even if one has
> all the master and publishing rights in perpetuity to issue an album in all physical
> formats, digital publishing licenses may still be needed…. Also, the original source
> masters need to be located and cleaned up…. Finally a huge amount of metadata -
> including the usual information found on album sleeves as well as items like UPC and
> ISRC codes, the genre, cover artwork and one-sheet - needs to be gathered to
> encapsulate with every album and every track. (p. 23; see also Martens, 2006b, p. 14)

Independent bands and labels currently under contract with major label distributors also

faced continual pressure from them to relinquish rights to digital distribution. Jeff Price,

owner of the independent alternative rock label Spin Art, said:

> Physical distributors are requiring on many occasions for (independent) labels to give
> up their digital rights or they will discontinue doing the label's physical distribution. If
> a label signs with a distributor for three years and the digital market continues to
> grow, a label will have lost a good chunk of change for a service many believe can be
> done in-house. (Quoted in Martens, 2006b, p. 14)

In an attempt to convince independent bands and labels to relinquish these rights, major

label distributors were offering better financial terms for traditional distribution. Martens

(2006b) noted that fake independent distributors (ADA, Fontana, etc.) were offering

independent bands and labels "significantly better terms on their physical distribution if

digital rights were included" (p. 14). Major label distributors were pressuring

independent bands and labels to sign complete distribution deals (traditional retail and

digital) by arguing that only they could guarantee priority placement and promotion of its

recordings within the various online and offline distribution services.

5.8. Major Labels Usage of Online Distribution
Major labels responded to online users' widespread usage of MP3 and P2P with its own

online distribution channels. These online distribution channels were slow to materialize

due to the high costs and time involved in transferring data, as well as lengthy

negotiations concerning which DRM system would be utilized online. Major labels were

also unsure which Internet distribution model they should use. Strauss Zelnick, the

former CEO of BMG, said, "It's absolutely clear that digital distribution into the home is

going to be a huge business, but we have yet to figure out what the consumer business

model is that will make it happen" (Quoted in Benz, 2002, p. 1). The two proposed online

distribution models were "the single-based model in which a small fee was charged for

each individual song downloads or the subscription-based model in which consumers

typically will pay a monthly fee to access a library of music" (Fox, 2004, pp. 208-209;

see also Sylva, 2000, p. 12).

Major label record companies favored the subscription-based model because it offered

the labels the greatest profit potential. Leyshon et al. (2005) asserted "the advantages of

the subscription model over the price-per-unit model were that it provided a steady cash

flow and the possibility of developing ever more detailed customer databases" (p. 193;

see also Phillips, 2002, p. 315). The two main subscription services available to online

users were PressPlay, a joint venture between Universal Music Group and Sony Corp;

and MusicNet sponsored by Warner Brothers, EMI, and BMG. Phillips (2002) concluded

that "subscription services would go a long way towards fulfilling the industry's desires

for a 'secure' mode of online distribution, although questions remained regarding just

how appealing consumers would find them" (p. 315). Consumers found the subscription-

based model very unappealing.

In 2006, an article in *PC World* rated PressPlay and MusicNet as the number nine worst

computer technology product of all-time. Tynan (2006) noted:

> PressPlay charged $15 per month for the right to listen to 500 low-quality audio
> streams, download 50 audio tracks, and burn ten tracks to CD. It didn't sound like an
> awful deal, until you found out that not every song could be downloaded, and that you
> couldn't burn more than two tracks from the same artist. MusicNet cost $10 per month
> for 100 streamed songs and 100 downloads, but each downloaded audio file expired
> after only 30 days, and every time you renewed the song it counted against your
> allotment. (http://www.pcworld.com)

Limited choice and high monthly costs doomed the major label online distribution

initiative. Another limitation of the subscription-based model from the major labels was

the inability to download music in the MP3 format. Each subscription service relied on

individual specific digital rights management formats (Windows-based or Apple-based);

each format was incompatible with the other service. The inability to purchase songs

from multiple sources and play them severely hurt the subscription-based model. Due to

these restrictive practices, the legal subscription-based model was a colossal failure.

According to the Recording Industry Association of America, at the end of "2005 just 1.3

million consumers were paying for monthly access to digital music" (Garrity, 2006a, p.

29).

At the same time major labels were developing and failing to provide legal downloading services, its lobbying group, the RIAA was also beginning to file lawsuits against individual downloaders of illegal music on P2P networks. These lawsuits eventually included college students who were using their universities bandwidth-enhanced networks in their quest for illegally download music. In 2002, the RIAA began to file lawsuits against college students and served subpoenas to universities requesting "the identity of egregious infringers" on its campus computer networks (Holland, 2003, p. 8). These early lawsuits were filed against 'John and Jane Doe' because the RIAA only had access to Internet-protocol numbers for the infringers. Once the lawsuits were filed in court, the RIAA forwarded to the student's university a copy of the lawsuit and requested that the university provide names matching the (ISP) numbers (Read, 2007, p. A31). Some universities provided the RIAA with the requested information, while others refused. However, the lawsuits did force universities to examine students' widespread access to P2P networks occurred from its online servers. Many universities also added P2P policies, and warned freshman during orientation programs (Holland, 2003) and/or began relationships with new legal digital music distributors (Read, 2005). For instance, Pennsylvania State University signed a deal with the new Napster service that was supported by major labels that let students download legal music free or for a small monthly fee. Other legal digital services specifically for college students were developed (e.g. Cdigix.com, Ruckus.com, etc.). The major disadvantage of these legal online services was that each had a different deal with individual recording labels (mainly major labels, but few independent labels). This limited what music was available on each of the services. Limited selection meant that none of the legal services offered on college

campuses could compete with the wide selection of choice on P2P networks. Hence, most

college students continued to utilize P2P networks for online music (despite the threat of

lawsuits from the RIAA).

In responses to the failure of the university initiatives, the RIAA has continued to file

lawsuits against college students. According to Roach (2007), in the fall of 2007, the

RIAA sent 403 pre-litigation settlement letters to 22 universities. Steven Marks, RIAA

executive vice president and general counsel, said:

> Those who choose to ignore great legal services and the law by acquiring music the
> wrong way, risk a federal lawsuit that could include thousands of dollars in penalties.
> With so many simple, easy and inexpensive ways to enjoy music legally these days,
> there's no excuse. (Quoted in Roach, 2007, p. 42)

It is expected that the RIAA will continue its letter writing campaign to academic

institution in 2008.

The failure of the major labels' subscription-based model to attract consumers led all of

the major labels to sign deals with many different legal download services to its

recordings (i.e. AOL, Yahoo, Microsoft, Music Match, Real Networks, Wal-Mart,

Amazon, and Apple). All of the services offered consumers single downloads for less

than one dollar and an entire album for ten dollars. Most services allowed consumers to

make a limited number of CD copies and to transfer the song to a portable MP3 player.

However, each of the services still relied on exclusive proprietary digital rights

management technology that denied consumers the ability to distribute the downloaded

song online. As noted earlier, independent bands and labels favored online distribution of

its music without digital rights management technologies. Horst Weidenmueller, CEO of

the Germany-based dance label Studio!K7, said, "Even as far back as 2003, independent labels could see DRM was doomed to fail right from its conception. In fact, many of us protested it by adopting the 'Copy Protection Free -Respect the Music' campaign logo on our CDs" (Weidenmueller, 2008, p. 4). While major labels required DRM protection on all of its recordings online, independent artists and labels were interested more in building their fan base, than concerned with piracy and loss of record sales (a point I will return to in the next chapter). While numerous music online distributors now exist, two actively play an important role in the distribution of independent bands and record labels (as well as major labels) online: Apple iTunes Music Store and eMusic.com.

In 2001, Apple introduced the first successful portable MP3 player, the iPod. After several years of negotiations, Apple launched the iTunes Music Store in 2003. The iTunes stores gave iPod users' access to over three-million recordings, priced at 99 cents, from all of the major labels as well as several of the larger independent record labels. "Apple did not expect the music store to generate much profit, but instead serve as a 'Trojan horse' whose real function was to help sell more iPods" (Walker, 2003). The success of the iPod and iTunes Music Store enabled Apple to garner more than 70% of the digital audio player market and 80% of all legal online music sales (Burrows, 2007a; Siklos, 2007; Yorke, 2007).

Most of the music sold on the iTunes Store were recordings from major label record companies' catalogs. This accounts for 50% to 70% of all digital sales. The huge and indispensable back-catalogs of copyrighted music controlled by the major labels will

continue to provide them a considerable competitive advantage over independent labels

in the realm of legal online distribution (Anderson, 2006; Kretschmer et al., 2001).

Martin Mills, chairman of the independent label conglomerate Beggars Groups, wrote

that access to a substantial back catalogue meant that major labels "had more clout in

dealing with the big names like Microsoft and iTunes" (Quoted in Cendrowicz, 2007, p.

21). Limited back catalogues controlled by independent labels meant they did not have

the same type of advantage when negotiating payments with online distributors.

Therefore, the major labels' catalog received significantly higher return on the sales of

recordings online than independent record labels. "Apple paid the major labels about

60% of the revenue from the sales of tracks, while independent labels get closer to 50%"

(Arango, 2004, p. 37).

5.9. Online Distributors

In response to the lower payouts offered by Apple, independent labels developed

relationships with hundreds of smaller online distribution aggregators. As companies or

services that collect a huge variety of goods and make them available and easy to find,

digital aggregators offer distribution to several hundred different independent recording

labels from one central online location (Anderson, 2006). Many smaller online

distributors came online in the last decade due to the low start-up costs associated with

the industry. Anderson (2006) concluded:

> Pure digital aggregators store their inventory on hard drives and deliver it via
> broadband pipes. The marginal cost of manufacturing, shelving, and distribution was
> close to zero, and royalties were paid only when the goods were sold. It's the ultimate
> on-demand market: because the goods were digital, they could be cloned and
> delivered as many times as needed, from zero to billions. (p. 96)

The low costs associated with online distribution meant that independent bands and labels

had a wide variety of online distributors with which to choose from to distribute

recordings. The largest online aggregator for independent music was (and remains) eMusic.com.

With over two million tracks available from 13,000 independent labels, eMusic.com is the largest online aggregator of legal independent recorded music. eMusic.com differs from most online distribution service because eMusic.com offers recordings in MP3 format only. The use of the MP3 format by eMusic.com meant that users could copy downloads as many times as they wished and share songs with whomever. eMusic.com was widely adapted by independent labels because "savvy independent labels saw the service as a valuable extension of the word-of-mouth marketing they had always championed" (Serpick, 2006, p. 32). eMusic.com offers users access to 185 different independent punk labels (Epitaph, Vagrant, Dischord, Fearless, etc.). The service also supplies independent bands and labels promotional and marketing support.

A major problem for independent bands and labels using eMusic.com to distribute and market their product is the overwhelming amount of content that online aggregators release each week. Jeff Price, president of the independent label Spin Art, said, "Aggregators release as many as 3,000 albums per month. How in the world does one actively market and promote 3,000 albums in a month?" (Quoted in Garrity, 2007, p. 31) In fact, the number of albums released in digital format has skyrocketed in the past few years. Release of independent record labels of digital-only music exploded in 2006, with 21,763 titles issued, versus the 13,645 issued in 2005 (Christman, 2007, p. 12). With so many albums released, the promotion and marketing of online content played an

important role in the potential success of new recordings. Yet, "the connection of the personal computer to the Internet also brings potential for connection to a wide variety of music, broadening the scope of listening possibilities, but also potentially overwhelming the listener with choice" (Jones, 2000, p. 218; see also Gooch, 2006, p. 4; Lam & Tan, 2001, p. 65). Digital distribution by itself does not necessarily guarantee a band's success. In such an online environment "access and distribution will no longer be the issue, but selection and discovery will be" (Kusek & Leonhard, 2005, p. 164). The importance of selection and discovery means that in this type of online environment "the role of promotion will become even more critical in differentiating individual artists and driving sales" (Fox, 2004, p. 205; see also Payne, 2000, p. 41). The next chapter examines the role of the Internet in promoting and marketing of music.

Chapter 6: The Internet and Promotions

The low initial costs associated with the development and implementation of a Website

led many independent bands and labels to embrace the Internet as a tool to promote and

market its recordings. Websites were an important promotional tool for independent

artists and labels because the technology offered "a means of reaching the public without

being dependent upon either the mass media or a record company's publicity department"

(Phillips, 2002, p. 308). Instead of spending advertising and marketing dollars on

traditional promotional media outlets (commercial radio airplay, magazine coverage,

etc.), independent bands and labels could now promote recordings on the Internet largely

for free (minus the cost of a computer and access to the Internet). Voth (2007) suggested:

> There are sites all over the Internet designed to help unsigned artists promote their
> music and to allow music enthusiasts the opportunity to discover new, lesser known
> bands. Almost all of these sites are free to submit your artist profile, at least one MP3
> upload and some of the more extensive ones offer greater social networking
> capabilities. (**http://www.associatedcontent.com**.)

Technologies associated with Websites (e-mail, message boards, etc.) offered

independent bands and labels the chance to collect pertinent demographic and

psychographic information from their fan base for later marketing campaigns (similar to

the notepad list at a club entrance). Lam and Tan (2001) concluded: "Consumer behavior

(browsing and purchasing patterns) at the Web sites could be captured in cookies and

stored in databases. Consumer profiles could be created. This knowledge could be

translated into increased sales through focused marketing efforts" (p. 63; see also Bhatia,

Gay, & Honey, 2003, p. 77).

Major and independent labels also used to collect information that could be used to

market new product to fan clubs. This offered recording labels, particularly punk, a list of

potential customers that they could send e-mail blasts and e-cards to regarding new

releases. According to Schrage (2000):

> Before the Internet, you couldn't play with direct response database, because it cost too much. Let's say 20 years ago I had your name on a database because you signed up for a fan club. The problem was, while I had your name and knew you liked the Rolling Stones and I had a new act out called Lit and I thought you might like it, if I had wanted to put together a postcard with a little sample it would have cost me $1 or $1.50 to market to you. If I got a 2% response rate, it cost me between $50 and $75 to grab you as a customer, and as a customer you bought something that I sold at $10 wholesale. I had a problem. Now we can send it in e-mail, it's targeted to a certain demographic, it's stratified with a sample built in, with a hypertext link to a genre-base Web site and we can do it for six cents or less per e-mail. And you can probably expect not a 2% conversion rate, but, because you're so targeted, maybe you can expect a 3% response rate. Suddenly, now you're looking at $1.80 to grab the customer (who will) spend $10 bucks. This is a nice piece of change. (p. 27; see also Aldermann, 2001, p. 2; Gautschi, 2000, p. 11; Schwartz, 1998, p. 266)

This ability to direct market recordings to specific music subcultures (who have already

expressed interest by joining fan clubs) meant potential overall reductions in costs

associated with promotion and marketing of new punk recordings and tours. For example,

in 2001 I signed up as a member of the Bad Religion fan club label's Website

(http://www. Epitaph.com). Founded in 1981 by Bad Religion's guitarist Brett Gurewitz,

Epitaph has released albums from heritage punk bands including Bad Religion, Rancid,

and the Offspring, as well as newer punk bands such as Bouncing Souls, Pennywise and

Tiger Army. Once a week I receive at least one e-mail blast newsletter from Epitaph

Records. The design of these e-mail blast newsletters never changed, it always follows a

similar format; a short note on page one, followed by news concerning new recordings,

and tour information (with clickable links to the information). For example, Sue Lucarelli

(executive assistant) wrote in her December 18, 2007 newsletter (newsletter@epitaph-

info.com):

I'm mix tape obsessed and I found a book that basically is about what I'm about (does that make any sense?) It's called "*Love Is A Mix Tape: Life and Loss One Song At A Time*" by Rob Sheffield. It's a super easy, quick read and it's about how one man falls in love with this girl and they use mix tapes to express themselves. They make mixes for washing dishes, going on car rides, walks, anything you can think of. She then dies after a 7-year relationship and the only thing he has left are the mixes they've made together. He used these mixes to show the deep connection that music makes between people.

It's a cool read, I always believe that music plays a powerful role in our lives, there is a song that can be used for everything. I listen to some songs today and they remind me of places I've been, people I used to know, funny moments in my life, it's crazy...there are mix tapes for breaking up, making love, telling that certain person you dig them. It's sweet, get it. Tell me if I'm crazy.

NEW YEARS RESOLUTION: Take more photos.
Happy Holidays!

- SUE

Page 2 of the newsletter featured clickable link access to information concerning 25 different acts on Epitaph, including a link for a contest in which the winner would win a Gibson guitar autographed by Motor City Soundtrack; Parkway Drive's tour itinerary; and release date information for a new Our Last Night recording. The cost to Epitaph to get this marketing and promotional material to fans who signed up for the service was functionally zero (beyond the cost of the assistant, computers, network connections, and Web designer – all traditional business costs). The missive reached an audience member interested in its content (as I signed up for the service).

Central to independent bands' and labels' use of new technologies (e-mail blasts and e-cards) was the need to develop and implement Websites that offered them a "worldwide presence" to promote and market its recordings (Phillips, 2002, p. 308; see also Mann, 2002, p. 292; Payne, 2000, p. 41). Emo-punk label co-owner Tim Owens of Jade Tree, said:

> Lots of new people from around the world can access information about what's going on here and learn about bands and, as far as the record label goes, I think that's a good thing. Before, European fans might have been lucky to learn about some bands if they made it over to Europe or maybe in a fanzine, but now they get on their computer and search for any band name or label and find some kind of information. So I think, obviously, it's positive. It's only helped our visibility and our growth, and it's brought in a lot of new people that we would have never met before. (Quoted in Thomson, 1999, p. 2)

Websites worldwide exposure offered independent bands and labels the ability to present online extensive amount of information. For example, in 1995 the Chicago-based punk label Victory Records came online with http://www.victory.com. According to Ferrari (2005) Victory.com featured "full length music videos available for download, links to MP3 song samples and free downloads, as well as extensive merchandising and tour dates listed - this is in addition to hyperlinks to bands own Websites" (p. 8). Most independent bands and labels Websites were similar to the Victory site with a few additions: access to lyrics and music notations; interview segments; news; and contact information. One of the central benefits of the Internet as a promotional tool is the ability of fans of particular bands or labels to assist in the marketing and promotion online.

6.1. Word-of Mouth

Independent bands and labels have long relied heavily on word-of-mouth marketing and promotion. Greenwald (2003) asserted: "Independent bands have always relied on word-of-mouth to attract attention and fans; the rise of the Internet as the primary communication tool of teenagers hasn't removed its importance. What it has done, is tweaked it in a subtle fashion" (p. 58; see also Miller, 2003, p. 6). This subtle tweak replaced word-of-mouth with "'word-of-mouse' via instant messaging, chat rooms, and e-mail which have created amazing communication opportunities" for any independent band or label (Kusek & Leonhard, 2005, p. 105; see also Azerrad, 2001, p. 500). Word-

of-mouth among a small group of subculture participants in a particular locale changed

into word-of-mouse among subculture members that could extend worldwide. One of the

key methodologies of word-of-mouse was the availability of free MP3 files for online

fans to sample, download, and transfer around the Web.

Sampling is a promotional form unique to the digital age (Gautschi, 2000, p. 10). In an

attempt to promote upcoming full-length releases and/or to build fan bases, independent

bands and labels (particularly punk) often release free to online users MP3 (DRM-free)

downloads from its Websites (Anderson, 2006; Kusek & Leonhard, 2005; Mann, 2002;

Payne, 2000; Phillips, 2002). For example, Vagrant Records "maintained a fresh crop of

free MP3's and videos on their site, and advertised on like-minded teen-oriented cyber

hangouts" (Greenwald, 2003, p. 84; see also Thomson, 1999, p. 2). These MP3 files had

the potential to be traded online among friends, e-mailed by bands and labels to fans, or

posted on message boards, where they could spread via word-of-mouse to other users.

For example, the punk/emo band Dashboard Confessional posted MP3 samples of music

from its debut album *Swiss Army* online. Greenwald (2003) observed:

> Links to MP3's of *Swiss Army* songs began popping up on the message board of like-
> minded bands - New Found Glory, Jimmy Eat World, Saves The Day. And in the
> summer of 2000, the Napster file-trading service was at its peak, allowing Carrabba's
> (Dashboard Confessional leader) songs to crisscross the country like good luck chains,
> spreading his legend and lyrics to places he'd never even visited, let alone performed
> in. (pp. 203-204)

Word-of-mouse replaced the old style of word-of-mouth that normally would take

months or even a year to spread information nationwide. John Janick, co-founder of

Fueled by Ramen, the independent label based in Tampa, Florida, said:

> Fans are dictating. It's not as easy to shove something down people's throats anymore and make them buy it. It's not even that they are smarter; they just have everything at their fingertips (Internet). They can go find something that's cool and different. They go tell people about it and it just starts spreading. (Quoted in Leeds, 2005, p. E1; see also Kusek & Leonhard, 2005, p. 100; Peters, 2006, p. 20)

MP3's, Napster, and later P2P networks allowed consumers for the first time the chance to sample music extensively online. The availability of MP3 samples online allowed consumers the opportunity to 'taste' - to listen to unfamiliar music free. This exposes consumers to substantial amounts of previously unknown music; music they might now learn to appreciate (Anderson, 2006; Goldberg, 2003; Oberholzer & Strumpf, 2004; Phillips, 2002).

Sampling offered independent bands and labels a new method to promote new music other than traditional commercial radio and MTV videos. Bemis (2004) asserted "for a band with buzz or good ideas but no access to typical gatekeepers-commercial radio, distribution through Wal-Mart - there was now a radically streamlined infrastructure for getting heard" (p. 4; see also Taylor et al., 2002, p. 618). Online MP3 samples offered independent bands and labels a venue where its material might gain some level of recognition that might translate into ticket sales for live shows. For independent bands that usually relied on touring as its main income source, giving away their music online is a form of cheap advertising. "The more free copies that were passed around, the more tickets they sold" (Kelly, 2002, p. 31; see also Phillips, 2002, p. 317). This was a common practice within the punk subculture; using recorded music to promote tours. Mike Watt, bassist for the punk band Minutemen, said, "We didn't tour to promote

records, we made records to promote the tours, because the gig was where you could

make the money" (Quoted in Azerrad, 2001, p. 84).

6.2. Touring
Word-of-mouse significantly lowers the cost of promotion and marketing of tours

(Francese, 2002, p. 48). Bands and independent labels can promote upcoming and current

tours by conveying messages through various online methods to fan bases. Tour

announcements could be sent via e-mails to fans; listing the show on a chat room; labels'

and bands' Websites; social networking profiles; and concert venue Websites. Some

bands and labels even developed relationships in which venue Websites could sell tickets

directly to fans, bypassing labels and traditional ticket service industries (e.g.

Ticketmaster) (Kusek & Leonhard, 2005). Bands can pre-release tickets online for fans to

purchase directly from the band and/or label Websites. Online ticket distribution also

allowed bands and labels to develop contests where labels could collect information

about fan bases for later marketing purposes. Bands could also sell merchandise online

associated with the tour (t-shirts, hats, posters, etc.) as well as offer to fans MP3 copies of

the live shows that they attended. These files can be purchased directly from the bands or

labels' Website. Finally, almost every label Website offers a blog or message board where

fans could recount and review the live show.

The aforementioned Epitaph newsletter (December 18, 2007) was a good example of a

punk label engaged in online promotion of a tour. As mentioned previously, the

newsletter contained clickable links to 25 different bands, including Parkway Drive's tour

itinerary. By clicking on this link, users were immediately connected to tour information

for the band including: show dates; links that connected users to venues for ticket

purchasing; and a link that allowed users to forward word-of-mouse concert information to their friends.

6.3. Video

Independent bands and labels also utilized video samples as an online tool to promote and market new recordings. Advancements in video technologies and cost reductions in production allowed independent punk bands and labels to produce and distribute videos online worldwide. As noted earlier, while MTV and other video outlets rarely aired punk videos, new online capabilities offered those same videos (and new punk videos) worldwide exposure. The Web "has provided new opportunities for exposing indie videos. Sites from Yahoo Music and MySpace to PureVolume.com have given indie videos an audience" (Martens, 2006d, p. 10). Fans of a particular band can send video clips to other users. Online video viewing of music content is on the rise. An Internet research company found more than 70% of Internet users streamed video online in 2007 (Korkki, 2007, p. 2). Many of those online viewers viewed music videos.

By early 2006, YouTube (now owned by Google) became one of the most popular online sites for video viewing, including music videos. YouTube offered consumers access to music videos from both signed and unsigned bands. Martens (2007a) said: "YouTube had become absolutely vital to the independent community. There was no other site with YouTube's traffic numbers that allowed hundreds of thousands of people to view, archive, and discuss videos" (p. 24). Dean Hudson, new media head at Sub Pop Records, said: "YouTube has leveled the playing field for us. Our videos are actually seen by the general populace" (Quoted in Martens, 2007a, p. 24).

While YouTube offered independent punk bands and labels a venue to attract viewers to its videos, the disadvantage of YouTube is the overwhelming amount of content available on the site. On June 1, 2007, I logged onto http://www.youtube.com and typed in the search term "punk music videos." The search yielded 36,600 punk music videos posted on YouTube. Combined with videos available on MySpace and other video sites, it is difficult for independent punk bands and labels to gain any real exposure with significant audiences (e.g. video on MTV's 'Total Request Live').

6.4. Interaction between Bands and Fans on the Internet

Online communications offered fans, independent bands, and occasionally label personnel a venue where they might forge closer relationships. As noted earlier, within the punk subculture from the hardcore movement forward, it was often common for punk bands and fans to interact closely with one another. These interactions occurred on many different levels: band members crashed on fans' couches after a show; fans might have a beer with the band before or after the show; stage diving and crashing; and the occasional letter exchange between band members and fans. The Internet offered independent punk bands and punk fans the ability to increase the frequency of these interactions through direct contact via e-mail, message boards, and social networking sites. For example, John Nolan, guitarist for emo-pop-punk band Taking Back Sunday, said:

> We get tons of e-mails, and when we're home I spend a lot of time responding to it all. The kids are totally shocked that we do that. Really, it's never been easier for a band to communicate. Writing an e-mail isn't that difficult, and the kids are so appreciative of it. (Quoted in Greenwald, 2003, p. 169; see also Sumption, 2001, p. 14; Thompson, 2007, p. 44)

While e-mail is commonly utilized by punk fans and bands to interact with one another, bands' and labels' Websites are also an ideal place "to establish direct connections between artists and fans" (Kusek & Leonhard, 2005, p. 68).

Some independent punk labels set up chat rooms for individual artists on its Websites.
For example, in 2004 Victory Records set up a dedicated Website,
http://www.thisiswhoweare.org as a marketing tool for the new album by the punk band,
Hawthorne Heights. These fans could invite other fans to join and post profiles and
photos, as well as see Hawthorne Heights videos (Martens, 2006a). At the dedicated site,
band members and fans had the opportunity to interact with one another.

The goal of building this close relationship among fans and bands is to increase overall
sales of new recordings. For example, use of 'word-of-mouse' via the dedicated chat
room and the development of a single MySpace page (I will discuss the ramifications of
MySpace in-depth later) resulted in sales of 558,000 copies of the Hawthorne Heights'
album *The Silence in Black and White.* The significance of half-million copies sold was
that along with touring, the aforementioned was the only marketing campaign initiated by
the band or its label (Hiatt & Serpick, 2006; Martens, 2006f). The bands' follow-up
release, *If Only You Were Lonely*, utilized a similar marketing campaign that led to
750,000 copies sold.

The Internet also fostered connections among subculture participants at both the local and
worldwide level. For example, on the local level message boards such as NJScene.com
enable participants various music subcultures in New Jersey to communicate with one
another about the state's music scene or upcoming tours or new releases. Numerous punk
bands that started in New Jersey went onto greater success nationwide, by utilizing
NJScene.com. Punk bands such as Saves the Day, My Chemical Romance, Thursday, and

Senses Fail all utilized NJScene.com to promote early shows and recordings (Jordan, 2006).

6.5. Online Promotion Aggregators & MySpace
As noted earlier, some independent bands and many independent labels still relied on major label distributors to distribute both its physical and digital recordings. In addition, the same groups recently developed relationships with several online distribution aggregators to distribute its recordings online. In the same manner, many independent bands and labels (with no major label connections) were also making deals with several of the hundreds online intermediaries to promote and market its recordings online. While well-known groups can reach a significant market directly, unknown groups need more than just their own Websites (Frith, 2001, p. 34).

While a majority of online promotion and marketing aggregators offer their services to all music genres, a smaller minority feature one specific genre of music. Punk has several online promotion and marketing aggregators: AbsolutePunk.net, PunkOnline.net, SmartPunk.com, PunkBands.com, Punkmusic.com, and PunkNews.org. Each of these punk sites offers subculture members access to information, music, and an online venue to communicate with one another (message boards, chat rooms, etc.). These sites are apparently very popular with punk fans. Major sites such as AbsolutePunk.net draw six million hits daily (Gundersen, 2005, p. 1D). With this many daily hits, all of the above online aggregators are important promotional venues for new punk releases by both independent and major labels.

Social networking sites (MySpace.com, FaceBook.com, Lastfm.com, Makeoutclub.com, Livejournal.com, etc.) are fast becoming the central online locale for teens and young adults. Some 96% of online tweens and teens connected to a social network at least once a week, according to a marketing company (Klaassen, 2007, p. 1). Social networking sites allow users to create individual profiles that feature personal information, as well as entertainment content likes and dislikes. Other users can view individual profiles and comment on the different content on the profile. Users can interact with one another by adding each other to their profiles.

The largest of the social networking site is MySpace.com. Launched in 2003 by Tom Anderson and Chris DeWolfe, MySpace.com was "created as an online site where musicians could post their music and fans could chat about it" (Hempel, 2005, p. 92). Chris DeWolfe, CEO of MySpace.com, said:

> What we did see was a lot of bands coming on to our site and creating their own profiles. They started using to manage their fan lists and to let their people know about their shows and things like that. We had a lot of unsigned and indie-label type of bands at first, and as that grew and grew and grew, we thought it was time to create more features for them. We wanted to make it easier for artists to get their music uploaded and to allow other fans to find them, so we created an area on our site where millions of fans could discover new music. Specifically, MySpace created a separate 'Music' tab in its navigation, allowing users to search artist-profile pages based on genre. (Quoted in Stapleford, 2005, p. 62)

MySpace.com became the primary music online social networking site of choice for many online users and for bands not associated with major labels. MySpace.com can help musicians with supply-side promotion and distribution, and help consumers discover new artists by checking out who was linked to their favorite artist's 'friend space' section (Brynjolfsson, Hu, & Smith, 2006, p. 71). MySpace.com allows fans, bands, and labels to

interact with one another via blogs and messages left on profiles. Bands' and labels'

profiles can feature commentary; contact information; band photos; information about

releases; tour itinerary; and allow access to four MP3 music samples and streaming

videos. At first, most of the MySpace music profiles were for independent bands and

labels, only later did major labels set-up profiles for their artists. Chris DeWolfe, CEO of

MySpace.com, said:

> A band might have their own Website, but they're not going to have all these
> community features. And there isn't a lot of natural traffic for them, either. That's why
> many bands have chosen to have MySpace as their de facto homepage. It's much
> easier to communicate with their existing fans - and to reach new fans through us. I
> think we're democratizing the marketing of music. Fewer bands are being signed and
> marketing dollars are shrinking, so MySpace has become a very fertile ground for
> independent and major labels to reach very rabid, active fans. (Quoted in Stapleford,
> 2005b, p. 64)

As of April 2007, MySpace.com had 185-million registered users that visited between

thirty-nine to forty-five billion pages per month.

(http://scottelkin.com/archive/2007/05/11/Myspace-Statistics. aspx). The huge success of

MySpace.com "has put social networking front and center as the preferred marketing

channel to reach today's Internet-savvy youth" (Bruno, 2005, p. 14).

MySpace offered numerous potential marketing opportunities for independent bands and

labels. Brynjolfson et al. (2006) asserted MySpace.com allowed bands to connect directly

with fans and "distribute promotional copies of their songs - bypassing radio stations, and

brick-and-mortar retailers that previously would have served as gatekeepers to

promotional and distribution channels" (p. 69). The importance of promotion and

marketing of content on MySpace.com was that once content was available on the site,

word-of-mouse phenomenon by users would spread recording labels' content for free. "MySpace aggregated both content (millions of free songs) and the people who listen to it and, in turn, generated more content about those bands in the form of reviews, news, and other fan ephemera" (Anderson, 2006, p. 89; see also Bruno, 2007d, p. 5). Independent artists and labels found that MySpace.com was an important central online marketing site for music genres that fell outside of the traditional mainstream music industry. Chris Carrabba, singer for the punk/ emo band Dashboard Confessional, said: "It's the first place people go now. If they heard a Dashboard song they wouldn't go to my site to check it out, they'd go to MySpace. It's the world's most powerful marketing tool at the moment" (Quoted in Serpick, 2005, p. 24).

Similar to the close relationship forged between fans and artists through e-mail, social networking sites such as MySpace.com also offered a close bond between artists and fans. This potential bond between bands and fans could serve an important promotional and marketing tool for new bands. For example, punk band Hawthorne Heights singer, JT Woodruff said, "When we were trying to get everything going, all of us would spend at least four hours every day just adding MySpace friends" (Quoted in Martens, 2006b, p. 33; see also Knopper, 2006, p. 16). The band credited its intense relationship with fans online to the success of its second album, *If Only You Were Lonely*, which sold over 100,000 copies the first week and eventually 500,000 overall.

In 2005, the media conglomerate News Corporation purchased MySpace.com for $580 million, explicitly intending to aggressively monetize the MySpace.com brand (Bruno,

2006, p. 28). One of the first moves by News Corporation was to develop and implement

a MySpace Record label in conjunction with the major label, Interscope Records. The

first release from the new label, *MySpace Records Volume One* featured major label punk

and alternative artists AFI, Fall Out Boy, Weezer and All-American Rejects, as well as

independent punk label bands Plain White T's, Copeland, and Socratic and a few

unsigned artists. Independent labels that utilized MySpace.com to promote and market

recordings faced increasing competition from the major labels, which also promoted new

recordings on the social networking site. Tony Smith, VP of promotion at Hollywood

Records, said:

> A band like the Plain White T's (Pop-punk band) that we are promoting across
> multiple formats-the MySpace activity, along with MTV, radio action, iTunes and
> SoundScan sales. This band can play a market that has had no radio play and the fans
> come out and know the songs. They found the band through the Internet and word-of-
> mouth. (Quoted in Taylor, 2006, p. 23)

Several deals in 2008 between MySpace and the major labels may further increase the

amount of major label traffic on MySpace.com. The potential impact of the newly formed

relationships between MySpace and the major labels will be discussed in-depth in chapter

nine.

6.6. Major Label Online Promotion

From its inception, conglomerates established Websites so that as more and more users

came online they had already established a presence online (McChesney, 2000). Major

labels have also embraced the Internet as a supplemental tool to assist the label in

promoting new releases to traditional marketing outlets. For instance, major labels first

build online buzz by promoting new recordings on various online venues (blogs, chat

rooms, album review sites, etc.). Once significant online buzz is established, major labels

expand the marketing campaign to traditional marketing outlets (commercial radio, press,

and MTV). Most of these pre-release online campaigns featured major labels in

partnerships with one of the large Internet service providers such as AOL. For example,

Courtney Holt, new media guru for Interscope Records, said:

> The campaign that I feel most proud of so far is Snow Patrol. We started with AOL by basically giving them the exclusive chance to work with the record in November of 2003. We gave them a music video and a song and were able to generate a couple million impressions on a group that no one heard of. (Quoted in Stapleford, 2004, p. 59; see also Elkin, 2003, p. 16; White, 1999, p. B1)

The pre-release online campaign built buzz that helped the radio promotion department

convince commercial radio to play a new band. Robbie Lloyd, alternative radio

promotion director for Interscope Records, said:

> The Internet is opening up a lot of creative and quick ways for us to build a record. This helps us, and it helps radio too. Before we bring things to radio, we build a foundation so that there's a fan base already there. We're now able to show programmers that people in their markets are knowledgeable about our bands, and radio people are smart enough to recognize what's going on. (Quoted in Stapleford, 2004, p. 59; see also Ferguson, 2006, p. 19; Kerr, 2002, p. 72)

For major labels, the Internet serves a supplementary role in the promotion and marketing

of new releases and keeps independent labels from receiving the same mass exposure.

Therefore, many punk bands have left their independent labels for a major. For example,

in 2002 My Chemical Romance released its debut album, *I Brought You My Bullets, You*

Brought Me Your Love on the New Jersey-based independent punk label, Eyeball

Records. The label marketed the recording via online message boards, e-mail, MP3

samples on its Website and non-commercial radio airplay. The album sold about 50,000

copies. In 2003, the band left Eyeball Records and signed with the major label, Reprise

Records. In 2004, Reprise Records released My Chemical Romance's second album,

Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge. Anderson (2006) noted:

Five months prior to the release date, Reprise Records offered free MP3 samples online; plastered the song on every punk Website that they could; allowed tracks to be offered on social networking sites PureVolume.com and MySpace.com; and prominently featured the band songs and videos on their Website. Once the record was available at retail and the band went on tour, Reprise extended the promotions to Yahoo! Music and AOL, including audio, video, and a heavily promoted live performance from Yahoo!'s studios. (p. 104)

Reprise Records' heavily promoted singles 'I'm Not Okay- I Promise,' and 'Helena' to commercial radio and produced videos for both songs that received airplay on MTV. The result of this extensive marketing campaign resulted in sales of over two million copies. Other recent examples of punk bands that started with an independent punk label, built a following online, and then left for a major label able to offer greater financial online support and success included: Against Me!, Anti-Flag, Fall Out Boy, Good Charlotte, and Taking Back Sunday.

The move to a major label was prompted by the bands' perceived needs to separate themselves from the hundreds of thousands of other punk bands promoting and marketing music online. The minimal promotional costs associated with promotion on the Internet led to millions of independent artists and labels utilizing the technology as a primary tool for distribution, promotion, and marketing. For example, figures released by the RIAA note that in the United States, 75,774 album titles were released in 2006, 15,000 more than were released in 2005 (Paoletta, 2007, p. 16). Of those 75,774 titles, 65,544 were releases by independent bands or labels (Christman, 2007, p. 13). As the number of new recordings by independent bands and labels rose significantly each year, competition for consumers also increased exponentially. Several thousand CDs are in any store "but the Internet offered even less chance of discovery - as probably hundreds of thousands of

downloadable tracks and certainly millions of CDs were for sale" (Norris, 2000, p. 21).

Critics argued independent bands and labels faced several roadblocks when using the

Internet as a primary promotional tool.

6.7. Potential Problems of the Internet as a Promotional Tool
The key to success in a cluttered online world for a band or recording label is to drive

consumers to its Website. Not all content on the Internet has the same chance to be

noticed by online users (Aufderheide, 1997; Compaine, 2000; Connell & Gibson, 2003;

Patelis, 2000). With so many potential destinations for online users, the ability of major

labels to utilize conglomerate connections offers a distinct advantage over those of

independent bands or labels. Conglomerates had the ability "to generate an audience, they

could and do promote their Websites incessantly on their traditional media holdings; thus

bringing their audiences to their sites on the Web" (McChesney, 2000, p. 26). Major label

recordings often cross-promote Websites through several different areas of its

conglomerate owner. For example, a featured song was added to a film or television

soundtrack, and the credits offered Website information for the artist. Independent artists

and labels without access to these types of opportunities are effectively shut out of these

cross-marketing opportunities.

According to critics, for a record to stand out in such a cluttered Internet environment

also requires traditional mass marketing and promotional techniques. Critics argued that

"although successful self-promotion was certainly possible, without the promotional

power of an established record company behind them, artists were almost certainly faced

with difficulty in being heard against their competition" (Taylor et al., 2002, p. 619; see

also Bettig & Hall, 2004, p. 66; Francese, 2002, p. 49; Lam & Tan, 2001, p. 65;

Maredsich, 1999, p. 101). Independent artists and labels that forego relationships with

major labels will find it difficult to obtain hits to its Websites in a particularly cluttered

Internet environment. Danny Goldberg, a former head of Warner Music and now

president of the independent label Artemis Records, said:

> The truth is the Internet has had a limited effect in breaking new artists. It has had
> more of an effect on trying to find a fan base of an artist, because it is a place where
> fans can be identified. It's not been a great tool so far; it's been a good secondary tool,
> but it doesn't compare with touring, or radio, or television, or even press. It seems like
> the Internet is more a place people go to after they are already fans of the artist, rather
> than a place to find out about new stuff. (Quoted in Boyce, 2003, p. 11; see also Dane
> & Laing, 1998, p. 22; Fox, 2004, p. 205; Kusek & Leonhard, 2005, p. 77)

Critics argued that in order to gain true worldwide attention, promotion would still

require access to significant funding for both online and traditional promotional and

marketing methods. McDonald (1999) concluded very early that major record labels were

likely to retain dominance over independent artists and labels because of access to capital

to invest in high profile advertising and promotion campaigns. Goldberg (2002) asserted

while independent labels "had reaped positive public relations by offering 'artist-friendly'

contracts and 'new business models,' they had yet to mint a single real-life success story.

100% of nothing was still nothing" (p. 83). Evidence supporting Goldberg's claim is that

not a single band has sold a million copies relying solely on online promotion for a new

record.

Within the last few years, much had been made of the so-called Internet success of Clap

Your Hands Say Yeah and OK GO. Both turned "Internet-only blog success" (Fine,

2006, p. 26) into retail success with sales in the "hundreds of thousands" range (McBride,

2006, p. 4). Further investigations of these claims found that while both albums topped

the 100,000 sales mark, neither record approached the 250,000 range. As of April 2007, the self-titled debut from Clap Your Hands Say Yeah sold 125,000 copies with distribution and promotion assistances from the major label distributor, ADA (Bruno, 2007a). OK GO, the Chicago-based band that became an online success story through its single quirky online video, sold 200,000 copies of its debut major label release (Capitol Records). Steve Yegwel, senior VP of A&R at Columbia Records said, "Strong online popularity doesn't necessarily translate to real sales" (Quoted in Bruno, 2007a, p. 33). Neither band was truly independent, as both relied on major labels for distribution and promotion assistance.

The costs associated with the promotion and marketing of recordings online as well as offline will continue to escalate. According to Danny Goldberg, in the future, the Internet will therefore increase, instead of lowering, the costs of promotion and marketing of an artist. Goldberg (2002) said:

> There is no evidence that marketing costs, a major expense for labels, will decline. In a complex Internet environment, it will still take serious dollars to expose new music to potential fans, and top marketing and promotion staffs will never come cheap. (p. 84)

Others argue that in fact the Internet will be a boost for independent bands and labels and in fact level the field of competition within the recording industry.

6.8. Prior Research on the Internet and Popular Music

The debate regarding the impact of the Internet on the recording industry as shown above is quite extensive and contradictory. Of interest to this dissertation is the possible impact of the Internet on punk's particular musical subculture. At issue are the potential benefits and drawbacks for the punk subculture - the music, the independent labels, and fans. Will

the Internet allow punk music from around the globe to be easily disseminated from

country to country, punk fan to punk fan, independent punk label to fan and/or punk band

to fan? Alternatively, because anyone can place product on the Internet, will punk get lost

in the trillions of Websites? The negative and positive ramifications of the Internet on

punk music have yet to be fully investigated, given that researchers are now just

beginning to examine the relationship between the Internet and music. To date, only a

few studies have examined the impact of the Internet on the recording industry and

popular music due to the newness of the phenomenon.

According to Jones and Lenhart (2004), "remarkably little has been published to date

about popular music and media use, and even less has been published about popular

music and the Internet" (p. 185). Newspapers and magazines have extensively examined

the issue; for example, Kelly's (2002) 'Where Music Will Be Coming From.' Among the

few published academic studies on the subject are Jones (2000) and Lam and Tan (2001);

both examined various impacts of the Internet on music production, consumption, and

distribution. Most of the coverage concerning the Internet and popular music has focused

on the impact of Napster and P2P networks on the distribution of recorded material

(Alexander, 2002; Ayres & Williams, 2004; Bishop, 2004; Daniel & Klimis, 1999; Fox,

2004; Mardesichi, 1999; Oberholzer & Strumpf, 2004). Several studies specifically

examined the impact of the Internet, Napster, and P2P networks on the control of music

recordings copyrights (Boynton, 2004; Lessig, 2004; Levy, 2000). Kretschmer, Klimis, &

Wallis (2001) was the only study that specifically examined the potential ramifications of

the Internet on the marketing of popular music; it examined a wide-spectrum of recording

labels (i.e. not a single genre of music). My research examines the impact of the Internet on the relationships between punk fans, bands, and independent labels that distribute and market punk music. Specific research questions are:

6.9. Research Questions:
1) Does the Internet enhance or detract from the relationship between punk music fans, punk independent labels and punk bands?

2) Specifically, how do independent punk labels use the Internet to reach out to punk music fans?

3) How do independent punk labels use the Internet, particularly their Websites and e-mail function, to market and promote their bands?

4) How do punk music fans use the Internet in their quest for punk music?

Chapter 7: Research Methods
A case study of the punk subculture in New Jersey makes sense for several significant

reasons. In the last five years, New Jersey has become a breeding ground for emo punk.

Tammy La Gorce wrote in an August 14, 2005 *New York Times* article that New Jersey

was home to break-out groups like Thursday, My Chemical Romance and Senses Fail.

She added that "in the eyes of several national rock labels, the Garden State had become

a hot bed" for emo punk (La Gorce, 2005, p. NJ1). While national rock labels recently

developed an interest in the thriving punk scene in New Jersey, numerous punk labels

had existed prior to emo's emergence. Over the last couple of decades, New Jersey's

music scene "had given rise to a score of small non-corporate record labels better known

as indies that have since signed bands from all around the globe and, sometimes, in their

owners' backyards" (Bruder, 2005, p. NJ12). New Jersey's music scene features

numerous independent punk labels including, Chunksaah Records, Ferret Records, Manic

Kat Records, Danimal Records, and Facedown Records. New Jersey is significant for its

well-established network of live punk venues. Within New Jersey, several famous

traditional music venues continue to offer punk music on a weekly basis, including: The

Stone Pony and The Saint (both Asbury Park venues host weekend matinees for all-ages

of punk fans); Brighton Bar (this Long Branch venue regularly hosts punk shows); and

Starland Ballroom (in Sayreville, the largest venue that features regional and national

punk acts). New Jersey also has non-traditional performance spaces including a bowling

alley turned into a performance space (Asbury Lanes in Asbury Park); various VFW halls

throughout the state that allow weekly matinee shows and the hundreds of illegal

basement shows (particularly in New Brunswick, the home city of Rutgers University, at

27 Huntington Street and 52 Wyckoff) (Kauffman, 2007).

Three qualitative methods were utilized to examine the ramifications of the Internet on

the punk subculture in New Jersey. Case study research involves research "in which the

researcher had direct contact with the participants and the participants were the primary

source of data" (Sudweeks & Simonoff, 1999, p. 35). I first did a content analysis of two

punk Websites (Epitaph and Peephole Records) randomly selected from the online record

label database, http://www.rlabels.com. The purpose of this preliminary content analysis

was to assist in developing questions for the interviews and focus groups (see Appendix

A). Second, I conducted three focus groups featuring twenty-four active members of the

New Jersey punk subculture, (they are active in that they currently attend shows, spend

time online looking for punk, and/or play in a punk band.) Finally, I interviewed four

punk band members (three from two unsigned bands and one member from a signed punk

band) and five employees of four different New Jersey-based independent punk labels.

Lindlof (1995) suggested "separate informants should be socially positioned such that

each can say something meaningful about the phenomenon in question" (p. 239). The

central rationale for triangulation was to garner a deep understanding of the impact of the

Internet on the punk subculture in New Jersey. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) concluded

"the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure in-depth

understanding of the phenomenon in question" (p. 5).

7.1. Content Analysis of Websites
On March 3, 2006 the record label database http://www.rlabels.com was accessed and a

search for 'independent punk labels' returned 312 online sites. The first two pages of this

search were printed out on paper and each individual label's Website was cut into its own

separate sheet. These slips of paper were then put into a hat and two were chosen at

random to be analyzed as the basis for the content analysis. The two Websites chosen

were: Epitaph Records and Peephole Records. The purpose of the content analysis was to

provide a current snapshot of what was taking place online with independent punk labels.

The findings of the content analysis were not intended to make generalizations about the

punk subculture presence online, but to inform the researcher of the pertinent questions to

ask during the focus group and individual interviews (see Appendix A). Examples from

these two Websites also informed the analysis of how labels use the internet, discussed in

chapter six.

7.2. Focus Groups

Full understanding of the role of the Internet within the New Jersey punk subculture

required conversations with active members of the subculture. While several methods

were considered (individual interviews and surveys), the focus group was chosen because

it offered the best method to gather information from members of a punk-type subculture.

Lunt and Livingstone (1996) asserted "focus groups are particularly useful when

researchers seek to discover participants' meanings and ways of understanding" (p. 79).

The goal of this study was to examine what if any impact the Internet has had on the New

Jersey–based punk subculture by talking to active members of the subculture. Focus

groups "provide a well-accepted and effective means of exploring a target population's

thoughts, attitudes, feelings and behaviors in an in-depth fashion" (Lederman, 1990, p.

126).

A snowball sample was utilized to gather potential focus group members. Lederman

(1990) found focus groups "involves the use of in-depth, group interviews in which

participants are selected because they are a purposive, although not necessarily

representative, sampling of a specific population" (p. 117). The snowball sampling

technique involved finding members of the punk subculture who were willing to

participate in the focus group and then asking them to identify other potential subculture

member participants. In the spring of 2006, I attended several punk shows at the Asbury

Lanes in Asbury Park, New Jersey. At each show, I approached several different

individuals, briefly described the focus group and asked if they might be interested in

participation later. If they said yes, I collected e-mail and cell phone information and

indicated to them that I would contact them the following day. The next day, I made

contact with each prospective focus group participant and asked if they were still

interested in participating in the study. If they said yes, I then asked if they knew of any

other active members of the punk subculture who might be interested in participating in

the study. If the participant suggested a name, I obtained the relevant information and

contacted them. Through this procedure I was able to gather contact information for thirty

potential participants. I contacted all thirty potential participants and mentioned four

different possible dates and times for the focus groups. Ultimately, 24 participants agreed

to participate in one of three separate focus groups. Krueger (1994) asserted "multiple

groups with similar participants are needed to detect patterns and trends across groups"

(p. 17).

Three focus groups took place on April 24, 2006, April 25, 2006, and May 1, 2006 in the

WMCX interview room located at Monmouth University. The WMCX interview room

featured comfortable seating for ten participants plus the moderator in a soundproof

environment. Quality of data from focus groups depends on the size of the focus group

"with a consensus that six-to-ten participants worked best" (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996, p.

81). The first focus group had seven participants; focus group two had ten participants; and focus group three had seven participants. Of the twenty-four participants, fifteen were male, nine were female, and all were between 18 to 24 years old. In preliminary discussions before the focus groups, participants were asked to indicate the number of years that they had been actively involved in the punk subculture in New Jersey. The mean average (in years) of participation within the New Jersey punk subculture was six and half years. Seven of the participants mentioned that they were current members of punk bands and one participant was a member of a punk metal core band. Seven of the focus group participants had promoted punk shows at VFW halls, small clubs, and basement shows. Finally, all of the participants were currently active participants within the New Jersey punk subculture (attending shows, purchasing punk recordings, searching online for punk recordings and information, etc.). At the conclusion of the third focus group, I had reached theoretical saturation and decided that no more focus groups were needed. Krueger (1994) suggested:

> In focus group interviews typically, the first two groups with a particular audience segment provide a considerable amount of new information, but by the third or fourth session a fair amount has already been covered. If this occurs, there is limited value in continuing with additional group discussions with that particular audience segment. (p. 88; see also Lunt & Livingstone, 1996, p. 81)

Lederman (1990) suggested focus group facilitators "are able to encourage group members to recount their inner experiences in relation to the object of focus in the interview" (p. 119). In an attempt to keep the group focused on the task at hand, as well as increase reliability and validity of the findings, a master list of focus group and interview questions were used by the moderator (see Appendix A). However, occasionally during the focus groups and interviews, the participants raised new

questions that the moderator had not anticipated, but decided to ask. Every attempt was made to pose the same questions of every focus group and interviewee.

A few problems occurred in the focus groups. First, the three focus groups were not evenly divided among males and females: focus group number one was close to evenly split (four females and three males); focus group two was all male; and focus group three had more females than males. The all-male group two and female-skewed three caused some problems within the focus groups. Morgan (2001) "emphasized the need to keep the discussion on topic while encouraging the group to interact freely" (p. 146). The male-dominated focus group was sometimes difficult to keep on topic. Several participants of this group occasionally veered the conversation off on tangents (one participant went so far as to discuss a recent Aerosmith concert). Throughout this focus group I was required several times to guide the discussion back to the topic at hand. In focus group three, one female participant rarely interacted with the group. Lindlof (1995) asserted "ensuring all persons speak, and that all topics are addressed, constitute the major challenges in focus group interviewing" (p. 174). I tried several times to engage this participant in the discussion, with inadequate results. Lederman (1990) concluded "that as in all groups, some people will talk more than others" (p. 124). Finally, in focus group one I failed to ask an important set of questions concerning the Vans Warped Tour. This failure to ask group one this set of questions limits my finding in this section of the study.

Focus Groups Procedures:
Each focus group started the same, with a description of the purpose and rationale of the study and confirmation of their interest in participation. Upon acceptance of participation, I then explained in detail the informed consent form, asked if there were any questions

and had each participant sign the form. After completing an informed consent,

participants were encouraged to answer the focus group questions conversationally and to

share with the group their experiences in the punk subculture. Each focus group was

recorded on a mini disc player and I took written notes. The focus groups lasted

approximately one hour per group. At the conclusion, participants got free pizza and soda

as compensation. The next day, the tapes were transcribed verbatim.

7.3. Interviews

In-person and phone interviews were chosen as the best method to examine the impact of

the Internet on punk band members and independent labels based in New Jersey. Berg

(1998) suggested "that usually an interview is defined simply as a conversation with a

purpose. Specifically, the central purpose is to gather information" (p. 57). The goal of

interviewing punk band members and employees of New Jersey-based independent punk

labels was to gather information on the impact of the Internet on their band, independent

record labels based in New Jersey, and ultimately the punk subculture. By interviewing

punk band members and employees of New Jersey-based independent punk labels, I

hoped to get information that would help me "understand a social actor's own perspective

[italics in original]" (Lindlof, 1995, p. 167). As noted below, each of the interviewees had

extensive experience either playing in punk bands or working within the independent

label side of the punk subculture. Warren (2001) suggested: "Researchers often choose

qualitative interviews over ethnographic methods when their topics of interest do not

center on particular settings but their concern is with establishing common patterns or

themes between particular types of respondents" (p. 85). The goal was to triangulate the

findings of the interviews with those of the focus groups and content analyses.

A judgmental sampling technique was used for finding punk band members to interview. Krathwohl (1998) suggests "the researcher selects individuals presumed to be typical of segments of the population who as a group will provide a representative panorama of the population" (p. 172). In early summer 2006, while attending several different punk shows in Asbury Park (Asbury Lanes) and Long Branch (Brighton Bar), I approached several different local unsigned punk bands about participating in an interview concerning the punk subculture. From these shows, I was able to procure interviews with three members from two local unsigned punk bands (Dan Dubrow and Jeff Peck from 9 Reasons to Die and Evan O'Gibney from From Downtown). On July 6, 2006, I interviewed Dan and Jeff for 48 minutes and Evan for 45 minutes in the production studios of WMCX at Monmouth University.

Securing an interview with a member of punk band signed to an independent punk label was a significantly more difficult task. Numerous attempts were made to set-up interviews with punk bands that were signed to the punk labels interviewed. Even with assistance from the label personnel (particularly at No Milk Records), setting up interviews with touring punk bands was very difficult. Several times interviews were scheduled, then quickly canceled and rescheduled. This occurred countless times. When the re-scheduled date approached, again, interviews were canceled at the last moment or the band failed to call. This scenario continued for almost nine months. I did try several times to procure an interview with a signed punk band by attending several punk shows, but was thwarted each time by security or lack of interest by the performing band. After over a year of trying to get a signed punk band to speak with me, I finally secured an

interview with a member of a signed punk band through the assistance of one of my

students at Monmouth University. Diana Mickolas, an undergraduate student at

Monmouth University, interned at Trustkill Records during the fall 2007 semester. As

part of her internship, Diana was given the task of promoting and overseeing many day-

to-day aspects of several bands on Trustkill Records. Through this daily interaction,

Diana was able to schedule on my behalf a phone interview with Ely Dye, singer for the

emo-core punk band, City Sleeps. Ely Dye initially joined the Atlanta-based punk band,

Smugface in February of 2000. After several line-up changes, in 2004 the band changed

its name to City Sleeps and signed with Trustkill Records in 2007.

Independent Punk Label Interviews:
Similar to the focus groups, a snowball sample technique was also utilized for the

independent punk label interviews. In the spring of 2006, I sent an e-mail to the

independent punk label No Milk Records stating my interest in interviewing an employee

of the label about punk subculture. In reply, a co-owner of No Milk Records, Kyle

Kraszewski, indicated interest in participation in the study. Several e-mail exchanges

later it was decided that I would interview Kyle and the label's other co-owner Greg

Edgerton at their office in Red Bank, New Jersey. At the completion of the interview, I

asked Kyle and Greg if they knew of any other individuals from New Jersey-based

independent punk labels who might be interested in talking to me about my research.

Kyle and Greg provided the names of four people whom I later contacted via e-mail. Of

those four, three responded that they would be interested in participating in my research

project.

The first interview took place at the offices of No Milk Records in Red Bank, New Jersey. On June 6, 2006, I interviewed for one hour and fifteen minutes the founder and director of promotions and marketing of No Milk Records, Kyle Kraszewki, and the creative director and co-director of promotions and marketing, Greg Edgerton. The remaining three interviews were completed via telephone. While the preferred method was an in-person interview, interviewees said that an interview by phone was more manageable for them because of their busy work schedule. On June 8, 2006, I interviewed by phone the director of new media marketing for Eyeball Records, Eric Peltier. On June 13, 2006, I interviewed by phone the general manger of the Trustkill Records, Rob Dippold. On June 29, 2006, I interviewed by phone the founder of Blackout Records, Bill Wilson.

Problems with Phone Interviews:
Lindlof (1995) asserted the "'avoidance of interruptions' was one of the major considerations in the interviewing methodology" (p. 180). As noted above, the interview with Kyle and Greg of No Milk Records took place in the Platform Group offices. Several times during the interview the conversation was interrupted by phone calls or staff questions. After each interruption, I had to re-ask the question or remind the interviewees of what had transpired prior to the interruption. The telephone interviews with Blackout Records, Eyeball Records and Trustkill Records were not interrupted.

The scheduling of and the limited amount of time that participants had available to talk to the researcher were two of the central problems with telephone interviews. The interview with Bill from Blackout Records was the only interview that took place at its scheduled date and time. The interview dates and times with Eric of Eyeball Records and Rob at

Trustkill Records were changed several times due to work conflicts. As noted above, every attempt was made to do the interviews at their office or another site convenient to the interviewees. Both respondents declined this option. Hence, the telephone interview method was utilized. More importantly, the overall length of the phone interviews was limited by their work schedules and was shorter than the in-person interview. Frey and Oishi (1995) suggested in-person interviews offered researchers longer interview time so "interviewers can probe in greater depth, go further into establishing rapport, and thus be in a better position to ask sensitive questions" (p. 37). Every effort was made to conduct the interviews after working hours but none of the participants agreed to this suggestion. Therefore, each interview took place during regular working hours. As a result, the interviews ran 37 minutes with Blackout Records; 42 minutes for Trustkill Records; and Eyeball Records was 47 minutes. The sometimes rushed feeling of these interviews led to the elimination of superfluous questions. Lindlof (1995) observed that "typically questions were asked of all respondents in the same order, in the hope of maximizing the reliability and credibility of the findings and the ability to generalize to a population" (p.185). While every attempt was made to meet this requirement, it was difficult because these participants refused any other type of interview setting. The phone interview with Ely of City Sleeps was also shorter than the in-person local punk band interviews. The phone interview with Ely on November 27, 2007, lasted only 22 minutes (the conversation took place between a sound check break). Knowing I had a short time to speak with Ely, I eliminated all superfluous questions, so that I could focus the interview on the major questions.

The In-person Interview Procedures:
The in-person interview began with my arrival at No Milk Records, where Kyle directed

me to a conference room for our interview. After some small talk, Greg soon joined us. I

informed both Kyle Kraszweski and Greg Edgerton about my project and asked if they

were still interested in participation. When both said yes, I explained the informed

consent form. With their permission, the interview was recorded. Each interview started

with basic informational questions before the transition into the important questions of

the interview. The interview was transcribed the next day.

Phone Interview Procedures:
The phone interviews involved more preparation than the in-person interview. Before

each interview, I e-mailed or faxed a copy of the informed consent form to the

participant. I then followed up this e-mail or fax with a phone call to see if there were any

questions pertaining to the informed consent form. Once I received back the informed

consent (via fax or mail), I then e-mailed the participants to set-up a time for the phone

interview. A half-hour before the interview, I prepared the telephone recorder in the

production lab of WMCX. There was very little pre-interview small talk. Instead, each

telephone interview started immediately with pertinent questions. These three interviews

were transcribed within a few days of the interview. Similar procedures were also utilized

for the Ely's phone interview.

7.4. Breakdown of Independent Punk Bands and Labels
The following section gives short biographies of both the punk bands and independent

labels interviewed. Lindlof (1995) argued "first and foremost, the interview prospect

should have *appropriate experience in the cultural scene* [italics in the original]" (p.

178).

Punk Bands:
City Sleeps
The Atlanta-based pop-emo-core punk band formed in 2005, recorded a three-song EP,

and hit the road touring. In late 2005, the EP drew interest from John Feldmann, a former

member of the pop-punk band Goldfinger and current producer and writer for several

different punk acts (Atreyu, The Used, Story of the Year, etc.) and former A&R

executive at Maverick Records (Warner Music Group). In late 2005, the band signed with

Maverick; Feldmann produced the band's debut full-length album, '*I'm No Angel*.' The

album's initial release date was delayed several times and ultimately Maverick dropped

the band in early 2007. In mid-2007, Trustkill Records signed the band and released

previously recorded full-length album in October of 2007. The band members are: Ely

Dye – Vocals, Adriel Garcia – Guitars, Milo – Guitars, London – Drums, and Brady

Allen – Bass. The band's MySpace profile is available at:

http://www.myspace.com/citysleeps and at **http://www.trustkillrecords.com**

From Downtown
The Long Branch-based pop-punk band has been performing in the New Jersey and New

York punk scene since 2004. The four-piece punk band (Evan O'Gibney – Vocalist, Steve

Silverman – Bassist, Bob Guerci – Guitarist, Greg Aronne – Guitarist, and Steve Svenda

– Drummer) cite its main musical influences as Bouncing Souls, Bad Religion, Dropkick

Murphys and the Ataris. The band was featured in a *New York Times* December 2004

article "Out of the basement, sparked by a scream and a dream" (Day-Macleod, 2004)

and has continually played weekly gigs in clubs, basements, and VFW halls throughout

New Jersey and New York. In late 2006, the band split because two members left for

college and de-activated the Website (fdrock.com). The band's MySpace profile is still

active: http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm? fuseaction=user.

viewprofile&friendID=2196584.

9 Reasons to Die
The West Long Branch-based five-piece emo-core punk band formed in 2004. The band

featuring Chris Peck on vocals, Dan Dubrow on vocals and guitar, Jeff Cooperstein on

guitar and vocals, Dave Ku on bass, and Joe Heggie on drums, has consistently played

live shows throughout the state of New Jersey. The band cites many different musical

influences including, Funeral for a Friend, the Deftones, Story of the Year and Finch. The

band is currently unsigned to any label. The band's MySpace profile is available at:

http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm? fuseaction=user. viewprofile&friendid=16592969.

Independent Punk Labels:
Blackout Records:
The Hoboken-based punk record label Blackout Records was the oldest established punk

rock label interviewed. Blackout Records was started in 1988 by hardcore punk fans Bill

Wilson and Jim Gibson. Blackout Record's first record was a compilation of the

downtown New York hardcore punk scene that sold 15,000 copies through self-

distribution at punk shows and on consignment at independent record stores. In the early

1990's, Jim Gibson left Blackout Records to form Noiseville Records. Throughout the

1990's, Blackout continued to record and release hardcore punk records and expanded its

repertoire by signing several alternative rock acts. Since 1988, the label has released

recordings from 37 different bands. The label had seven full-time employees and an

active roster of six bands. The label was also in partnership with Creep Records, which

adds another nine bands to the combined labels' roster. My contact at Blackout Records,

founder Bill Wilson, had over 20 years of music industry experience: staffer for several

music-marketing firms; Artist & Repertoire at MCA Records; and as a product manager

for Relativity Records. Blackout Records' Web address is:

http://www.blackoutrecords.com

Eyeball Records:
In 1995, Alex Saavedra started Eyeball Records in Kearny, New Jersey. The label

quickly signed several New Jersey-based bands, including Thursday and My Chemical

Romance. The success of these debut albums led to both bands signing with a major label

(respectively Island Def Jam and Reprise Records). Eyeball Records was also involved in

a joint-partnership with Astro Magnetic Records, which was co-owned by Saavedra; the

lead singer of Thursday, Geoff Rickly; and Thursday's manager, Mark Debiak. Eyeball

and Astro Magnetic Records had six employees and its roster featured 20 bands. The

representative of Eyeball Records to whom I spoke was Eric Peltier, director of new

media marketing at Eyeball Records. Peltier had just started working for Eyeball Records

in May of 2006. Peltier had over eight years of music industry experience prior to his

current position at Eyeball, including the national director of the rock department at The

Music Syndicate, a music marketing firm based in Weehawken, New Jersey; and artist

development and marketing assistant for the independent label, We Put Out Records.

Eyeball Records' Web address is: **http://www.eyeballrecords.com**

No Milk Records:
Kyle Kraszweski started no Milk Records in December 1999 and the label's first release

was a compilation featuring 23 unsigned local and international punk acts. This first

compilation sold an amazing 700 copies in one month through self-distribution at punk

shows and consignment at independent record stores throughout New Jersey. In 2001,

while attending college in Philadelphia, Kraszweski met Greg Edgerton in a Web design

class and asked him if he would like to upgrade the No Milk Records Website. Edgerton

did so, and became the second full-time employee of the record company (The remaining

members of the current staff are interns). The label produced several more compilations

before signing its first band Halifax in 2004. The band released its first EP in 2004 and

sold enough copies to garner interest in both the band (which would later sign with the

larger independent label, Drive-Thru Records) and the label from both major and larger

independent labels. No Milk Records signed a joint venture deal with the Red Bank-

based Platform Group in 2005. No Milk Records had eight bands signed to its label at the

time of the interview. No Milk Records' Web address is:

http://www.nomilkrecords.com

Trustkill Records:
The founder of Trustkill Records, Josh Grabelle, started the label while attending

Syracuse University in 1994. After graduating, Grabelle returned to his parents' home in

Tinton Falls, New Jersey and continued to run the label from his parents' basement

(where the label is still located today). The first release from the label was a tribute album

to the emo punk band, Embrace. The sales success of this release inspired Grabelle to

continue the label fulltime. The early years of the label focused solely on punk rock. By

the later 1990s, while the focus remained punk, Trustkill also signed alternative rock,

metal and metal core bands to the label. Since 2006, the label has had several releases

enter into the *Billboard* charts. According to the Trustkill.com Website, "In 2006

Trustkill had five albums debut on the *Billboard* charts, three of which landed in the '*Top*

200.'" At the time of the interview, Trustkill Records had seven fulltime employees and

21 active bands on its roster. The representative of Trustkill Records whom I interviewed

was general manager Robert Dippold. Dippold had over fifteen years experience working

within the music industry. Prior to working at Trustkill, Dippold was the general manager

of Ruffhouse Records and as a marketing executive for WEA Distribution. The Trustkill

Records' Web address is: **http://www.trustkillrecords.com**

Chapter 8: Findings and Discussion

Three of the four labels in this study have distribution deals with major labels: Universal

Music Groups Fontana Distribution distributes both No Milk Records and Trustkill

Records and Eyeball Record's distributor is ADA. Each of these major label deals

provides distribution deals to traditional record stores and "Big Box" retailers. Fontana

and ADA are two of the most successful music distributors in the world. According to

Billboard's year-end sales charts for 2007, Universal Music Group is the number one *Top*

Tastemaker Distributor (Fontana Distribution) and Warner Music's ADA Distribution

was number two. *Top Tastemaker Distributor* signifies that the distributor is one of the

best at distributing new recordings from bands not contracted with a major label.

Combined the two distributors had 141 records chart in the *Billboard's Top 200*

(Universal Fontana had 77 and ADA had 64), more than double the amount of the

combined remaining two distributors (EMI and Sony BMG independent distributors).

Blackout Record's distributor is the independent Lumberjack Mordam Music Group:

> Lumberjack Distribution was founded in State College, Pennsylvania in 1995, and
> moved to Toledo, Ohio in 1997. Since its earliest days Lumberjack has distributed
> some of the finest independent labels in the U.S. and Europe, with a primary focus on
> indie rock, hardcore, and punk. Mordam Records was founded in 1982 in San
> Francisco, California, and moved to Sacramento, California in 2000. For more than 20
> years Mordam has been one of the most significant independent distributors of punk,
> hardcore, garage rock, and indie rock labels
> (http://www.lumberjackmordam.com/about).

In 2005, Lumberjack purchased Mordam and formed the Lumberjack Mordam Music

Group that currently distributes 116 independent labels, with a primary focus on hardcore

punk, punk and indie rock.

Major label distribution deals imply that sales at traditional retail are still an important

revenue source for some of the labels. Trustkill Records expressed the strongest language

about the importance of retail sales. Dippold at Trustkill Records said:

> Our biggest thing is how do we sell more CD's? Today, kids are more and more not buying CD's. So, we always try to give them an added incentive to buy our CDs. All of the artwork is very detailed; there are probably 16 page booklets. Ten page booklets are the minimum that we do in all of our records. We try to give kids an extra coupon for a free-t-shirt. We recently vacuumed packed a t-shirt to this new Crash Romeo album, which was quite an ordeal to do, and it cost a lot of money to do as well. We take pride in giving the kids something of added value. It's not just about the CD, but the added value that comes with it.

 Later in the interview:

> In fact today, we just did a retail mailing to all the mom and pop stores of all of our promotional copies, in-store listening copies, posters and sometimes autographed merchandise for the retailers. We also do that for FYE and Tower. Some of the stores like FYE or Hot Topic [record and clothing stores located in malls] they do [major labels]. We definitely do a retail mailing for all of our releases and that is a big part of it as well. For Best Buy alone we spent $60,000 just for an end cap for a new release we did in January.

A similar conversation also took place during my in-person interview with Kyle and Greg

at No Milk Records. During our interview, Adam, a marketing executive with the

Platform Group, entered the office and the following exchange took place:

Adam (Platform Group): Bank Robbers are available to do FYE between June 26 and
July 6?
Kyle (No Milk): Yes, yes, yes!
Greg (No Milk): Yes!
Adam: Would you like to book some appearances?
Greg and Kyle: Yes!
Kyle: FYE tour? That should be interesting.
Adam: What towns would you like the most for FYE?
Kyle: Short Hills. [Upscale mall located in an affluent Essex County, New Jersey]
Adam: What about region?
Kyle: Long Island, Philly, Boston, Connecticut.

The FYE tour will be a co-op deal with the Platform Group and Universal/Fontana. This

is one of many different co-op deals between No Milk Records and its distributor,

Fontana. These co-op deals would be impossible for the label to undertake without the financial support of the Platform Group and Universal/Fontana.

Kyle: They will come to us with co-op opportunities. The largest thing that they have done for us recently is that they hooked up the Bank Robbers with a really sweet show at the Oxford Valley Mall in Langhorne, Pennsylvania. It's one of only six shows that Journeys, the shoe store does around the country. It's a free show in the parking lot of the mall.

The distribution deals with the major labels assist No Milk and Trustkill Records both financially and in the promotion and marketing of its bands at various retail outlets. Neither, Blackout and Eyeball Records indicated similar relationships with its distributors. I suspect that the failure to develop such working partnerships means that traditional retail sales are not as important to these labels.

Responses of interviewees reveal that each of the four independent labels made deals with various online distributors to distribute old and new recordings on the Internet:

Independent Punk Label	Online Distributor
Blackout Records	Apple iTunes and eMusic
Eyeball Records	Apple iTunes and eMusic
No Milk Records	Apple, Rhapsody, iRiver and Napster
Trustkill Records	Apple iTunes and eMusic

No Milk Records and Eyeball Records both noted association with a major label has made the transition to digital distribution very easy.

Kyle (No Milk): If you wanted to get your music on through iTunes it use to take four months, but now because were with Universal it's there as soon as you release it.

Eric (Eyeball): Our entire catalog is being re-digitized so that we can distribute through our distributor which is ADA part of the Warner Music Group. Right now we sell everything that we could get put onto eMusic and iTunes and places like that on our own. So now we are actually going to have a distributor help us market it to those kinds of places so that we have even greater coverage.

Blackout Records likewise said its association with Lumberjack Mordam made it easier

for the label's recordings to appear on online digital distributors.

Bill: My stuff is up on iTunes. My stuff is up on eMusic and I have seen my iTunes and my digital distribution, which increased probably 500% in the last three years. I have had my stuff on iTunes for like 2 ½ years. Lumberjack actually got me on there. They were one of the first indie distributors to actually be up on iTunes.

Trustkill Records did not indicate receiving any assistance from its major label distributor

in online distribution endeavors.

Does the Internet enhance or detract from the relationship between punk music fans, punk independent labels and punk bands?
The most significant impact of the Internet on the relationship between punk music fans,

bands, and independent labels is the level of contact among the different participants. The

Internet forges a much closer relationship among the aforementioned groups. Punk fans,

bands, and labels can contact one another on a consistent, fast, and convenient basis

through a variety of Internet functions: e-mails, message boards, MySpace profiles, and

Websites.

The findings below will show that focus group participants say that punk fans can and do

talk among one another about several different aspects of the punk subculture online one-

to-one (E-mail, text messaging, IM's) or one-to-many (Websites, message boards and

MySpace.com profiles). Fans exchange news about bands and labels, offer criticism and

praise of bands and independent labels, or post reviews of recent punk shows that they

attended. In fact, the number of potential topics for discussion online regarding punk is

unlimited. Punk labels and bands similarly utilize online technology to interact with punk

fans. Label personnel say that their central methods for communicating directly with

punk fans online are e-mails, e-cards, banner ads, and e-mail blasts to communicate

directly with punk fans. Label personnel said they actively use these online communication techniques, mainly to inform punk fans of new releases and upcoming live shows. This ability to interact and discuss online the punk subculture on a consistent and up-to-the-minute context is significantly different from older methods of communication among punk participants.

Until the widespread consumer usage of the Internet (in the mid-1990's thanks to Internet service providers like AOL and Prodigy) and the introduction of e-mail, blogs, and Websites, the main method of dissemination of punk information was through the hundreds of different locally produced punk fanzines. However, fanzines as a tool for the dissemination of information concerning punk had several limitations. Production and distribution issues meant that fanzines were only sporadically available for punk fans. Second, most fanzines offered the chance for only a few voices to express their opinions. Third, it might take months for those opinions to be disseminated to other punk subculture members; this meant that by the time punk fans received the fanzine, the material inside was already old news. Face-to-face communication, required punk fans, bands, and labels to congregate together in one central location at the same time in order to disseminate material among subculture participants (e.g., live performances). The Internet removes the delay in the transmission of punk material and online word-of-mouse replaced the old style of face-to-face communication to communicate material concerning the punk subculture. Moreover, there are no paper, printing, or postage costs.

A key approach for spreading punk material online is word-of-mouse. Label personnel post material online, punk fans come across the posting and forward the information via e-mail or instant messages to other friends. This e-mail chain can continue endlessly. This phenomenon of word-of-mouse is one of the central dissemination methods in use by punk fans online. This method of spreading punk information is far quicker and has greater reach than the traditional punk methods of fanzines and one-to-one communication.

Label personnel add that their bands also utilize MySpace profile to reach out to punk fans. This communication between bands and fans online takes many forms, but the main goal of the communication is to promote the band. An examination of the postings on City Sleeps, From Downtown and 9 Reasons to Die reveal that punk fans often send short notes (mainly professing affirmative reactions to the bands' MP3 samples and live shows). However, online communication between an individual band member and one fan rarely occur. Instead, communication between band members and fans is mainly in the form of one-to-many instead of one-to-one. Ely from City Sleeps (Trustkill Records) said:

> We absolutely communicate with fans through MySpace. All of us take care of our MySpace page. The last year (2006) I ran it personally. This year [2007] our tour manager is like the bitch-boy and we just tell him to what to do and he will do it. We do let it go and just kind of like, let it flow. We definitely communicate with certain people who have questions that we feel like are important enough to answer. However, most of the time it is just some one who writes that "We are bad-ass or whatever." And we are like, cool. But if someone has a sincere question that is worth taking the time, you know, we'll do it [answer the question]. We will reach out just as far as they reach out.

Ely's response supports my observations of the MySpace profiles of each band. That is, most of the messages from fans are not really questions or communication that needs immediate attention by the band. Ely suggests that if a fan asks a question that band members deem important enough to answer, a band member will respond to the question.

Band members did not indicate the exact number of 'real questions' they answered from fans; however, focus group findings suggest that one-one communication between punk fans and punk band members rarely occur. This point will be discussed in-depth in my findings concerning research question four.

Chris and Dan (9 Reasons to Die) both mentioned talking directly with fans, other bands and promoters. Evan (From Downtown) did not mention specific interaction between the band and fans. In fact, Evan's response suggests that, at least for From Downtown, MySpace communication is not a common method the band relied on to promote itself.

Chris (9 Reasons to Die): We talk to the fans and lots of promoters on MySpace.
Dan (9 Reasons to Die): People who want to help us out. I mean even helping us out designing the Website and all that stuff like that. And people always come out to the shows.

Evan (From Downtown): Compared to what most bands are doing today with the Internet, we use the Internet sparingly. We wanted make ourselves known on there, but we didn't want to be one of those bands that just goes online every day on MySpace and adds 200 random kids that I never even heard of. I would deny all those kids. I mean if you are in a band, go out and there play a show and then maybe I'll listen to you. We utilize it [MySpace profile] as best as possible, but without making it the main focus point of our band. Let's make sure we got music and then we can get some decent shows and then people will come out. Then we'll worry about how many MySpace hits we've gotten.

Evan suggested that while MySpace has become an important promotional technique, it is not important for his band. Ely of City Sleeps (Trustkill Records) agrees with Evan,

that while MySpace is an important component for marketing and promoting his band,

City Sleeps also relies on several other techniques.

Ely: We really fucked up when it came to the Internet. We never really went out for it. We spent more time focusing on writing our songs, being a band and I think we left the Internet up to lots of different groups of people (their label). It did have a big impact, you know, MySpace and stuff like that. But we were never like, you know, opened up any kind of treasure chest because of it…. We never have had a huge motivation to blowout on the Internet. MySpace is a double-edged sword. MySpace is a great tool and I understand its appeal, I understand its utility. However, I think along with iTunes and stuff like that can be a detractor for a band as well. It is something that I do feel strongly about, but I don't know which way I exactly feel, because there is good and there is bad [to MySpace]. I mean we have a MySpace page and we communicate with our fans and they communicate with us. People find out about us through MySpace. It's miraculous on one end and really shitty on another. Because, you know, they don't have to go buy the record, they can just go and sit and listen to it on MySpace.

Both bands suggest that focusing on music was more important for the band than

spending time adding fans to MySpace. This finding seems to contradict what the

literature mentioned, that the Internet would increase the occurrence of online one-to-one

communication among punk bands and fans. In reality, most of the communication

between punk bands and fans is in the mode of one-to-many communication (a point I

will return to later). Finally, Ely's comments suggest that while he appreciates MySpace's

benefits, he is concerned that the site makes it too easy for punk fans to obtain free music.

Each band wants music to be the band's main selling point, particularly the music in its

live form, not a recorded MP3.

Focus group participants and label personnel said that another significant impact of the

Internet on the relationship between punk music fans, bands, and independent labels is

how fast and easy it is to obtain new punk music online. Punk bands and labels use MP3

sampling because MP3's serve a dual function: as a promotional tool for a new recording

and as a tool for building the fan base. MP3 samples allow punk fans to have

instantaneous access to new punk music the moment of its release online.

Kyle (No Milk): I don't think it really hurts us because we are a smaller label. I can see how for major labels it would hurt a lot more. But for us, file sharing is a great way for fans to find out about new artist; and if they like the artist, maybe they will come out to a show and pick up a t-shirt. I mean you can't pirate t-shirts yet, but maybe soon…. It's really good exposure for new artist; it may hurt us a little bit.
Greg (No Milk): The way we kind of look at it, is that the people that want to download it are going to download it and they are going to make a copy of it. The people who don't want to pay for the CD aren't going to pay for the CD and you are not really going to convince those people to pay for it.

Eric (Eyeball): Kids are going to find them anyhow, so you might as well give them something to keep them occupied for free and let the word spread very organically.
I think most kids do want to go out and buy the record. They understand that is how they are supporting the scene, especially kids who are into a scene: the punk kids, the indie rock kids, the metal kids.

Both of the unsigned punk bands agree with the logic of personnel at No Milk and

Eyeball Records, therefore, each offered punk fans access to MP3 downloads of its

music.

Evan (From Downtown): We put all of our songs on the original Website and MySpace page for people to download…. It was never one of those, "Well, you can listen to this download here, but you've got to give us a ton of hits to hear other tracks." We were not like that. If you like it, download it. I get mad when bands don't put songs for downloading. I don't want to have sign on to some Website every five minutes to listen to some song.

9 Reasons to Die also gives away free CD-R's of its recordings at live shows.

Dan (9 Reasons to Die): That is why we make 100 CD's that we recorded right now and just give them out all over the place. So, that is the best way to do it…. They [fans] get free CDs with seven or eight songs on them and they are like, "Alright, that's cool." They have never gotten a free CD with eight songs on it from a band. They actually listen to it, like it, and then come out to a show. I have actually had a couple people come and tell me that they came to a show because of the music they heard from the CD. So, that's a good thing.

Thus the band gave out free MP3's and CD's to spread its music to as many punk fans as

potential. Dan explained that the fans who came to the shows after hearing the CD, heard

the CD from other friends who had attended previous 9 Reasons to Die performances.

Dan suspected that many of the punk fans who attend the band's shows pass the free CD

on to other punk fans (both online and offline). Punk fans in the focus groups reported

that they often pass around recordable CD's to other punk fans and acquaintances. Each

band definitely favored allowing fans to download and pass along its music to as many

punk fans as possible.

Dan (9 Reasons to Die): Let them share it. Let the local band get the recognition. If it's a big band like My Chemical Romance and they are doing file-sharing, they [My Chemical Romance] shouldn't even care, because they are making enough money anyway. If it's a local band and people want to hear your music, because they want to file share or whatever, then just let them do it. It's a good way to promote your music. That is another person that gets to hear what you are doing. So, let them do it. If people just wanted to give our music out around the country, I wouldn't even care, as long as they hear our music.

Ely from City Sleeps (Trustkill) was less sure of how he felt about the ability of fans to

download MP3's from online sites. Ely said:

> I think at this point it is a little ridiculous and in my opinion, if you are a really big band or band that is well-known, the Internet is just going to propel you further. If you are a smaller band, it's almost like plain robbery. People who are interested in your band can steal your shit. Basically, they support you, but you know, but probably not the way they really should. Then the other half of me thinks that it's great because there is a lot of discovery involved in the Internet…. And that is how a lot people found out about our band, through the Internet. So, I don't really know how to feel about it…. I don't want to come out and say something as strong that I'm against MP3's or anything like that, but the kids have got to understand that if they are not buying the band's records, there is going to be no money from the music industry in any facet to make the music. It costs money to make music.

Ely suggests that while MP3s can benefit a band by giving the band greater exposure to a

larger audience, undermines the band's profit and then its survival. Ely fears that not

paying for music might have profound ramifications for the future of the recording

industry. Ely said:

So, if you are not buying it, just like any other industry, it is going to go out of business. And it is going to end up being, you 100% north, south, east, or west: There's going to be Britney Spears and there is going to be the unsigned bands. There is going to be no in the middle and without in the middle you don't get your next Nirvana. There is no support for the artist-development for the next really great band.

The downside, then, of allowing music for free is that the revenue traditionally generated from album sales (which are on the decline) means that labels of all types have less money to assist support future recordings and artists' development (tour support, record promotion to radio support, etc.). This might be a lesser concern for punk bands, given the subculture ethos about 'selling out' and 'DIY,' which, if followed, means that punk bands are not interested in crossing over to the mainstream. However, as noted in the literature review, punk bands and labels have historically left behind the punk subculture ethos and signed with major labels in an attempt to reach a larger audience. Ely's comments seem to suggest that the rapid changes caused by the Internet, MySpace.com and Apple's iPod may lead to a decline in this type of punk crossover because major labels will increasingly only sign sure bets (i.e., radio-friendly, video-friendly, television-friendly and film soundtrack-friendly music). In the past major labels might have taken a chance with an upcoming punk band with a significant regional following by signing them and recording radio-friendly music (e.g. Green Day, Good Charlotte, Blink-182, etc.). Finally, while Ely was ambivalent about MP3's, the band does offer MP3's on a wide variety of sites (MySpace profile, Trustkill.com, and numerous punk online aggregators).

Punk bands and labels post MP3 song samples in countless online locations months or weeks in advance of the official release date to build a buzz for new recordings. In a

similar manner to the transmission of punk information through the word-of-mouse phenomenon, MP3 files can and are often sent from one punk fan to another online. Typically, one punk fan finds the MP3 file on an online message board, online punk aggregator, or MySpace.com. profile, and downloads the track to his or her computer. People often send the MP3 file to other online friends and those friends send the file onto other friends. This phenomenon may occur millions of times for a single MP3 sample. Word-of-mouse disseminates new punk music at a much faster rate than traditional marketing and distribution methods of new material by punk bands and labels.

Traditional punk methods of distribution for new songs included: punk fans attend live shows where they purchase the new recording; join a mailing list and wait for the recording in the mail; visit a local independent record store; and/or copy the song after its release from other punk fans' mixed tape. Each of these techniques had major limitations for the punk subculture. Within the first method, the central problem was depending on where you lived determined how quickly you gained access to the new punk recording. For instance, a new recording by a Southern California-based punk band without label representation or distribution might take months to travel across the country to the East Coast; punk fans on the West Coast would obtain the recording weeks or months before punk fans on the East Coast. This meant that numerous factors including where the punk band was from, as well as the itinerary and length of a tour would adversely impact the speed in which subculture members obtained new punk music. This was particular true for punk fans in small towns off the beaten track, or far from big cities, who found it difficult to attend punk concerts. Another factor in this method was often bands would

run out of recordings to sell to fans, particularly as the tour neared its conclusion. The

second method also relied on tour itinerary and the speed in which the band or label sent

the requested material to punk fans. The third method relied solely on the distributors of

the recordings. As noted in the literature review, distribution of punk recordings by both

independent and major label distributors was burdened by numerous problems that often

led to independent record stores inability to stock punk recordings. Finally, a cassette

copy required that the punk fan gained access to a copy of the recording, which as noted

above, was often difficult. Overall, the traditional method of distribution was slow and

not conducive to spreading punk music as quickly and easily as the online methods.

Disadvantages of MySpace:
One of the major disadvantages of the online environment mentioned by all of the

participants is the overwhelming amount of punk content online, particularly on

MySpace.com.

Focus group 1
Dave: Once you put it out there, it's out there for good. Kids are putting out crap.
Alex: Shit Yeah. You get massive amounts of these joke bands.
Rachel [said sarcastically]: You mean there is more crap on MySpace than real good stuff? You mean it?
Dave [said sarcastically]: I bet there is 95% of the people on MySpace are the fake people or fake bands.
Alex: I mean you get e-mails from bands all of the time and it's like "oh I see you like this band, we kind a sound like them but not really and you should check us out. You'll like us."
Dave: From my experience on MySpace, 85% of the crap that I get is horrible.
Rachel: I know.
Dan: I can understand that. I know that some of the music on there is really bad.
Colleen: There are so many of them.
Alex: You have to filter it out.
Linda: Yeah.
Rachel: So many people think just because they can do it, they should.

Focus group 2
Lando: There is so much junk on there (MySpace)
Rob: It's saturated with junk.

Jason: Yeah.
Jordan: But like in that kind of culture, you hear everything. I'm so sick of just thousands of terrible bands.
Andrew (B): Yeah.
KT: Yeah.
Rob: Yeah.
Jordan: Say like ten years ago when all you had was a compilation from your friend, you heard about this one band; the best bands rose to the top. Like you've got the cream of the crop and you didn't have to sift through two hundred shitty bands that are 14 [age of the bands members] and in their basement and like just learning how to play guitar.

According to focus group participants, label personnel, and some punk band members,

the downside to the Internet, particularly MySpace.com, is that too many bad punk bands

gain exposure. The unfortunate result of so much material available online and at

MySpace, according to focus group participants, is keeping up with what might be good

and available online is more difficult.

Focus group 2
Andrew (B): Well it's almost like you feel disappointed because you know there is so much out there that you have access to and you know that you are not going to find it all. But like sometimes you get pissed off – when you find out about like a band - you are like aw where were these guy's two years ago? I mean, you, like, miss out on stuff.

Focus group 1
Rachel: It is just so hard. There is just so much out there. Even if it's good, 'Oh like I'm going to download every single band name that I ever heard of on MySpace?' It's so time-consuming and most of it does suck, just by odds.

The ability for anyone to post and send material on the Internet makes it difficult for punk

fans, bands, and labels to weed their way through the massive amount of punk content

online, making it difficult for good punk music to find an audience. The negative of all of

this content (which will only increase) is that it is becoming increasingly difficult for

punk fans, bands, and independent labels to connect and interact with one another on

social networking sites such as MySpace.com.

Rob (Trustkill): But MySpace, everybody has a site, everybody goes on there.

Kyle (No Milk): MySpace is so saturated with bands.
Greg (No Milk): And it is such a fake connection.
Kyle: Yeah. 'Oh, I'm friends with so and so.' I get twenty band requests every day on like my personal MySpace and I don't let anyone on to my personal MySpace unless I know them in real life.

Bill (Blackout): MySpace causes too much product. The barriers to entry were lowered to the business.... You had to know how to do traditional graphic design on paper, layout, and make sure that it looked good. You had to understand all of the jargon of printing; you had to understand the studio; and you had to be able to pay the money to get stuff manufactured; you had to be able to negotiate through this arcane process. You just couldn't go on the Web and type out I want to find a record distributor and record distributors popped up in a handy list on Google. Nobody knew which distributors were good, which distributors were bad. You had to do like a little work basically all of this stuff led to the barriers of entry to becoming a label to become very easy in the late '90's or early millennium. So that has changed the amount of product in the marketplace. The supply shot up to the point where there were 5000 independent releases when I first started the label versus 50,000 in 2001.

Eric (Eyeball): By the same token, there are what 80,000 new users a day. They have a membership of almost one million artists and something like six to eight million other corporate entities floating around on there. These numbers are ridiculous. So because of that, being able to find your way through that mess, as anybody trying to get a word out-it is incredibly difficult. You're just talking about the sheer amount of traffic that is there and making yourself stand out from everybody else is still a challenge…. Because although it is still a great way to communicate with people it's getting so overburdened because of the amount spam that is out there. It's sometime tough to have a label or even a band e-mail stand out amongst the thirty or forty other messages you might be getting in your e-mail box.

During its initial introduction, the Internet and MySpace.com were relatively open. Open in the sense that only early-adopters (mainly independent bands and labels) initially grasped the potential that the Internet and MySpace.com offered bands to promote new recordings. This initial stage of the technology allowed for early adopters to communicate relatively easy with one another. However, the increasingly overwhelming amount of content on MySpace now makes it difficult for punk bands and labels to connect with punk fans. In addition, as Eric from Eyeball Records mentions, MySpace profile in-boxes are increasingly overwhelmed with numerous messages from a wide

variety of advertisers. Findings from a few of the focus group participants seem to

support Eric's complaints.

Focus group 3
Andrea (A): You know there are too many bands, to like, fill up my mailbox with everything they send.
Dani: I get stuff in my inbox from bands I don't even like, like Queens of the Stone Age and like Taking Back Sunday [both alternative punk bands signed to major labels] and stuff and I'm like, I never even signed up for this and I don't know how it is coming to me.
Mitch: It's because it's on a label for a band that you signed on to.
Tina: Yeah, like the label sends stuff.
Dani: Yeah, I get promotions and free stuff.

A few participants in focus group three mention the occasional unsolicited new recording

advertisement from a major label in their MySpace mailboxes. The members hint that

they did not remember requesting to receive these types of messages from major labels.

However, it is common for users' MySpace profiles to receive these types of messages

from both major and independent labels.

A second issue of the Internet and MySpace raised by Andrew (A) is the potential loss of

personal relationships as a central component of the punk subculture experience. Andrew

(A) said:

> Back to the MySpace things for a second. This is going to sound hypocritical because I spend a lot of time on MySpace. I think MySpace is terrible for music. I was booking shows three years ago and MySpace did not exist yet, or at least I wasn't aware of it and I was checking out band Websites and I was still using the Internet, but I made some phone calls. But, man, if I could go back, just like ten years ago or I guess fifteen years now, before the Internet and I can make phone calls and make these real personal relationships with all different dudes and girls and these different bands all across the country, I think that would be amazing. I would much rather do that. I just think it would be way better.

Remaining members of the focus group responded to Andrew's comment:

Rob: Well, can't you just, like, message them and say, 'Yeah give me a call or something like that?' And get like the personal relationship going that way?

Andrew (A): I just like the idea that it is just so much more personal and special when it's like 'Oh My god, I found this band and know one else knows about them cause they don't even have a record out.' I mean like that small. Where, as in MySpace at any one time a million people could be listening to that same band.

Andrew (B): Yeah, but that is like being anti-progression. The Internet…

Andrew (A): Exactly!

Andrew (B): But it's a fact now. You kind of have to deal with it.

Rob: But you can still find local bands that aren't on MySpace.

Andrew (A): That's why shows and fliers are way more important. I'm all about fliers!

Andrew (B): But that's just being a purist!

Rob: Or just go to rehearsal studios, [and find] bands who are just playing and haven't recorded and just go to shows or rehearsal studios of bands…

Andrew (A): Yeah.

KT: But at this point in where were living, fliers aren't doing it anymore.

Andrew (B): Right!

KT: The technology is the Internet and that's unfortunately where we are now.

Andrew (B): Yeah, you can't deny it.

These fans, then agree that Andrew A's desire for the punk subculture to return to an era, when punk participants mainly communicated one-to-one is impossible. However, several participants offered potential solutions to Andrew's (A) quandary – including by attending punk shows and visiting recording studios in order to bypass the Internet and build closer interpersonal relationships (through face-to-face communication) among punk subculture participants.

However, Dan of 9 Reasons to Die disagreed with Andrew (A's) assessment of the impact of MySpace on the punk subculture.

Dan (9 Reasons to Die): It [MySpace] makes you realize how much of a music scene there really is.... Even if the bands are horrible, it makes you realize that there are bands out there trying and this is the one way that they can get recognized, than just playing crappy shows with other crappy bands that they are playing with across their state. It really makes it so that bands get recognized…. It willingly helps more locally unsigned bands than it does for larger bands because they don't really need it.... When local bands get comments like, "I really like your stuff," it's a really good thing. MySpace is a good thing.

Dan suggests that MySpace actually assists the punk subculture by highlighting how widespread and important the music is to a worldwide audience. However, Evan, of From Downtown, agreed with Andrew (A) that MySpace was overwhelmed with too many bad bands:

> Absolutely. In fact, there are too many bands in general on MySpace. On MySpace, I could sit there with like a tape recorder and fart into it for a while and tap the recorder on the table at the same time and say, "This is like the new wave in music".… The Internet is so redundant. You've got to go make yourself first (live show). I mean I'm not going to check out something that I never heard of before. But, if I like go to a show and these guys are awesome, I'll go and check them out on the Internet.

A majority of the focus group members agreed that the most important venue for finding new punk music is at a live show. If the band's live performance is good, most of the focus groups members say that they will also seek out more information about the band online. Finally, Ely of City Angels suggests that success comes from good songwriting and great live performances:

> The most important marketing tool for our band is our songs. Regardless of how a tour is going or the Internet is going. If you continue to write good songs and find a way to get them out there to people, you can stay alive. The touring is very important. I mean at this state, if you are a band that is not touring, then you're fucked.

Ely suggests that having quality songs to perform live (and in the studio) is perhaps the most important marketing component for his (and any) band. If the songs are good, people will come to see your show and then can go and find out more information about your band online.

Two members of focus group three said that a drawback of the Internet on the punk subculture is that the Internet allows for quicker worldwide dispersal of the punk subculture. According to these two participants, the ease and accessibility to all aspects of

the punk subculture online increases the crossover rate of new punk music movements

from a subculture to mainstream consumption.

Focus group 3
Andrea (A): I like technology and all, but somehow I think it has kinda hurt us a lot. I think it has just taken a lot of the fun out of all of the music and figuring it out and learning it. Just like experiencing stuff.
Mitch: Well you can't like let certain genres or sub-genres kinda grow on its own, because like, you know in less than five years or less, it's a national thing. You know, like other genres, even country or jazz they had like a long fertile period, where they could kinda of adjust themselves and then they were ready for mainstream stuff. That is kinda of true for punk rock stuff also, I mean in the eighties or whatever, you know you had the local scenes or whatever, and if you were in an area where you were looking to form a band or whatever, you kinda of gravitate towards that type of sound perhaps. But you know now, since you can get it from anywhere, you know if you are from New York, you might go for Florida or whatever - any kind of sound.

Both participants say that the ease in which anyone can access material (MP3's, news,

tour information, etc.) concerning the punk subculture online has potential detrimental

ramifications on the subculture. Online access to this material makes it difficult for the

punk subculture to remain underground long enough to establish a well-defined and

substantial catalog of recordings that allows the punk subculture to separate itself from

the mainstream. In fact, it can easily be argued that the last movement in punk to have a

long gestation period was emo; it began in the mid-1980s and did not cross over to the

mainstream until the late 1990's-early 2000's.

The emo sub-genre of punk began with the 1985 self-titled debut album of the

Washington, DC-based punk band, Rites of Spring (Dischord Records). Identified as

'Revolution Summer,' emo punk music featured dynamic loud and soft music patterns,

interspersed with heartfelt, smart, and personal lyrics (Andersen & Jenkins, 2003). Emo

kept the aggressiveness of hardcore and added in lyrics that dealt with relationships, love,

and heartache. From its onset in the summer of 1985 through the mid-1990s, hundreds of

emo punk bands recorded multiple albums, EPs, and toured across the United States. The

following chart cites the most influential bands of the first and second wave of emo.

First Wave of Emo: 1985-1994	Second Wave of Emo 1994-2000
Band & Recording Label	*Band & Recording Label*
Rites of Spring (Dischord)	Sunny Day Real Estate (Sub Pop)
Embrace (Dischord)	Rye Coalition (Gern Blandsten)
Nation of Ulysses (Dischord)	The Get Up Kids (Vagrant)
Shudder to Think (Sammich Records)	Texas is the Reason (Revelation)
Dag Nasty (Dischord)	Jimmy Eat World (Self-released)
Indian Summer (Gravity)	Saves the Day (Equal Vision)
Quicksand (Revelation)	Taking Back Sunday (Victory)
Drive Like Jehu (Gravity)	Rainer Maria (Polyvinyl)

Only near the tail end of the emo movement did this punk sub-genre finally begin to

crossover into the mainstream. In the late 1990s, emo bands that abandoned independent

punk labels for major label contracts included: Jimmy Eat World signed with Capitol

Records; Saves the Day signed with DreamWorks Records; and Taking Back Sunday

signed with Warner Brothers Records. Prior to this crossover, the emo punk movement

had established an extensive catalog of non-mainstream recordings that future

generations of punk participants could return to, to influence their take on punk music.

This catalog of independent recorded punk material was especially important to the punk

subculture because punk lacked any influence of the major labels (recorded by producers

with express intent of making the recording accessible to mainstream audiences).

Interestingly, the next sub-genre of punk influenced by emo, Screamo, had a much

shorter gestation period. Screamo has the same basic music components as emo, but also

added "rampaging, pile driver rhythms and deep, throaty vocals (there's the screaming

part)" (Derogatis, 2002). Screamo replaced major label's financial support of rap-rock

music, a mixture of rap vocals with rock music by bands including, Limp Bizkit

(Interscope Records), Korn (Epic Records), and Linkin Park (Warner Brothers). Bands

including Thursday (Island Records-Universal), Thrice (Island Records-Universal), The

Used (Reprise Records- Warner Music Group), and Poison the Well (Atlantic Records-

Warner Music) all quickly signed to major labels before they could build significant

catalog of non-mainstream sounding punk music. Daniel Sinker, editor of the long-

running and well-respected fanzine *Punk Planet*, said, "I guess ' Screamo' is a way of

marketing a known commodity (emo which had crossed over earlier) – you always know

that something with a metal tinge will sell to some people…"(Quoted in DeRogatis,

2002). As noted in the literature review, when punk musical movements gather a

significant subculture audience, the music was co-opted by the major labels and then

promoted and marketed by the majors' for mainstream consumption. The goal of the

major labels foray into screamo was to gain early control of an emerging sub-genre of the

punk subculture. Sinker continued:

> To me, in the 'emo' or 'screamo' or 'whatever the majors are digging up' scene, it's
> really starting to feel like 1996 again with punk in the wake of Green Day as far as,
> 'Who are these bands? Where did they come from?' The majors aren't really picking
> from the cream of the crop in the underground anymore. They decided that this
> strategy didn't work, so now they're going to start picking bands that are younger and
> earlier in their career so that they can be a little more aggressive in the marketing and
> not have to deal with a lot of preconceived notions of what these bands are. (Quoted in
> DeRogatis, 2002)

As mentioned in literature review, the impact of Nirvana led to the signing of new punk

bands (All, L7, etc.) and established punk bands (Bad Religion, Jaw Box, etc.) to major

labels. Few, if any, had real success and the signings caused a backlash within the punk

subculture against established punk bands 'selling out' to the mainstream. Today, the

rapid co-option of punk sub-genres by the mainstream does not bode well for the future

of the punk subculture. While the Internet offers punk bands easier and faster connections

with fans and labels, it also potentially exposes punk bands to larger mainstream audiences.

While the major labels have had a long history of such a behavior (heavy metal in the 1980's – rap rock in the late 1990's) the rapid nature in which the co-option takes places may have significant detriments to punk music and the punk subculture. As shown in the figure above, emo music went through several different waves before it ultimately reached the mainstream. Screamo, a sub-genre of emo, did not. Future generations of punk music participants might find it increasingly more difficult to obtain punk music not tainted by the major label system. Each successive co-option of punk by the mainstream may lead to the possibility that punk could lose its subculture identification permanently (because it has become so ordinary and non-threatening).

In addition, as major labels' co-option of punk bands occurs much earlier than before, the less chance that radical strands of punk music have to build a substantial catalog of independent recorded recordings. This has important ramifications for independent punk labels that rely financially on record sales to fund other label activities. The greater number of albums recorded by a band while signed exclusively to an independent label, the larger the potential financial return after the band crosses over to the mainstream (through a distribution deal between the independent label and a major label or through a contract buy-out of the band by a major label). As an independent band crosses over to a wider mainstream audience, new fans often seek out the band's earlier recordings (recordings recorded on independent labels). Not only do independent labels rely on

catalog recording sales for revenue (traditional retail and digital distribution); the income

from catalog sales also helps to fund the recording and promotion of future punk

recordings.[3]

Specifically, how do independent punk labels use the Internet to reach out to punk music fans?
E-mail blasts allow labels to target marketing material to punk fans online. To join the

free service, punk fans must visit the label's main Website and sign up. Each of the labels

said that these e-mail blasts usually contain information about upcoming new shows and

releases, news, MP3 music and video samples, and merchandise offers. Trustkill

indicates that 30,000 users regularly receive contact from the label, while Eyeball

Records has 20,000 registered users. The other two label personnel did not indicate the

number of users on their e-mail blast services. Three of the four labels actively engage in

e-mail blasts in an attempt to reach out to its fan bases.

Eric (Eyeball): Absolutely e-mail blasts. We run the mailing list ourselves, which is some 20,000 odd something active subscribers. Most of our bands also run their own e-mail blasts, in addition to doing the e-mail, direct-to-consumer stuff, we use a RSS feeds so that anybody who has an RSS reader can automatically get updated on everything that is happening with all of our bands through their RSS reader. [A RSS reader is an application that allows for the aggregation of specific content online such as news, MP3s, and photos sent to users].

No Milk Records also utilizes e-mail blasts, but exclusively through its MySpace profile.

Kyle: The best thing on the Web right now is MySpace. It's awesome. The e-mail blasts are very important for promotions.

Trustkill Records utilizes e-mail blast from both its MySpace profile and from its online

database.

Rob: As far as consumer advertising, we do a lot of e-mail blasts from our MySpace account, from our Trustkill database to get the word out. Every time a new album is being

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[3] These potential issues not only impact the punk subculture, but in fact, any subculture of music (heavy metal, reggae, etc.) available on the Internet that is outside of the mainstream culture.

released, we send a mass e-mail to all of our databases, which is currently 30,000 people. We'll let kids know about a new tour happening, a new album is being released.

No Milk Records uses e-cards to reach out to its fan base. An e-card is an electronic greeting card that allows a sender to send a digital message to a large group of receivers. E-cards can feature images, messages, MP3 music and short video clips. The cost for an e-card can range from nothing to thousands of dollars, depending on the number of receivers. The service does not originate from No Milk's Website, but instead from Absolutepunk.net e-card, a third party Website, using No Milk Records' online mailing list.

Greg: Before we launched the e-card on AbsolutePunk.net, the Bank Robbers.com was receiving less than a 100 hits per day. We ran the e-card for ten days and in those ten days we had over 100,000 hits and we were averaging over 20,000 hits per day for a ten-day period. We knew it was working because we were looking at the actual Web stats of how many people were actually coming there and then you could see that trailed off into other sites. The No Milk Records.com site was going up significantly, like an extra 1000 per day when the e-card was running and that was like you know a second tier kind of a link.
Kyle: It also helps to include that these sites are continually getting hits now.
Greg: Yeah, that's true.
Kyle: It didn't trail off to a hundred hits a day. We are still getting 2000 to 3000 hits a day.
Greg: Yeah, it started off at 100 and then it went up to 20,000 in a day and then the last day it was 15,000. The day after that when it didn't run, it was still 7000 and then it dropped to 2000 consecutively [on the following days].

Kyle and Greg agreed that this particular e-card promotion worked very well in enticing potential fans to visit No Milk Records Website. However, this is not true for every e-card they send. No Milk Records is the only label that uses e-cards as an online promotional tool.

Beyond e-mail blasts and e-cards, these four independent punk labels spend very little

time, effort, or money reaching out directly to punk fans. Actually, Bill said Blackout

Records never reaches out directly to its fan base. The findings suggest that independent

punk labels do very little in the way of using the Internet to reach out to punk fans,

nonetheless the independent punk labels must promote the label's recordings and news to

as many punk-related online sites as possible. The intent of this method is to put punk

content in enough locations that fans may come across it while surfing online.

How do independent punk labels use the Internet, particularly their Websites and e-mail function, to market and promote their bands?
Comments by label employees suggest commercial radio airplay is not an important part

of the promotional campaigns for new releases.

Rob (Trustkill): For our particular label, we never really attacked commercial radio.

Bill (Blackout): I have never done radio ever.

Eric (Eyeball): Non-commercial on almost everything. Commercial specialty shows those hour-to-six-hour long block shows, that the disc jockey still gets to pick their own music and usually they don't fall into the regular format of the station itself. Yes, absolutely. I don't know that sells a ton of records, but it definitely is a ton of exposure. You are never going to have an exposure level that is as cost effective as radio is. So, we definitely do the college and specialty end of radio. We haven't really had anything break big enough where we could afford to invest the money to do an actual commercial radio regular rotation campaign, because it is just ultra-expensive.

Blackout Records is the one label that does not try to obtain radio airplay on non-

commercial and commercial radio specialty shows in order to promote its new

recordings. The others agree on the importance of specialty radio, especially college

radio.

Greg (No Milk): Yeah, specialty radio. We do address radio, but for right now, it's more of like what can we do with radio? We know that we are not going to get spins all across the country, so we can do college radio. We can service it to them.

Kyle (No Milk): We use Pirate promotions for college radio. We actually are gonna start the campaign for The Bank Robbers with them for the fall semester. It's not beneficial to run a college radio campaign in the summer.

Rob (Trustkill): All of our artists are underground college radio type artists or some specialty channels. We do hire a promotional company to promote an x number of weeks before an album impact date.

Eric (Eyeball): For non-commercial, we don't have a big enough staff in-house to build those kinds of relationships and the indies that work in the non-com world aren't like the indies like people think about when they know what Clear Channel has to deal with …. The dudes are doing the non-commercial indie promotions are passionate music fans that are getting paid nickels and dimes to spend hours trying to convince college kids that this record is good enough for them to play on their station. Yeah, so for us, we don't just have the time to build a relationship with the station over and again, when their staff is changing as much as it is - from semester to semester. Yeah, we do work with the indies.

As noted earlier, obtaining commercial radio airplay is too expensive for most independent labels; meanwhile commercial radio has never really embraced punk as a viable programming choice. Therefore, it is not surprising that these particular independent punk labels do not focus its promotion and marketing energies on this type of airplay. On the other hand, except for Blackout, all of the labels still pursue airplay on both college radio and commercial radio specialty shows. First and second wave punk labels were known for pursuing a similar strategy. The central difference is that the importance of securing airplay at non-commercial and commercial radio specialty shows is shown by each label's willingness to hire outside radio promoters. This decision is not made lightly, as independent promoters can charge significant sums for its services. The larger problem for independent labels is that the services often yield only adequate results for the label (in record sales). No wonder that focus group participants say that they rarely listen to commercial radio, specialty shows, or non-commercial radio when seeking out punk music.

No Milk and Trustkill Records note that they often send MP3 files and other pertinent

material to Internet radio stations for airplay. No Milk Records also makes individual

band podcasts (interviews and songs) available for download and streaming on its

Website. No Milk said, "We try to utilize Internet radio and podcasting as much as we

can because it's free radio." Trustkill's Dippold said: "Online and satellite radio has

grown considerably and that is a whole other element. You upload songs to them,

digitally sending our music out that way. It's cheap."

Both labels indicate that Internet radio (and satellite for Trustkill) is part of its marketing

plans for new releases because it is easy and cheap for the label. Trustkill is the only label

that sends MP3 files directly to both XM and Sirius punk and metal programming

departments. The goal here is to put the songs in as many on-air places as possible.

Again, the promotional and sales impact of satellite radio airplay is unknown to not only

Trustkill, but also satellite companies themselves as neither entity has a true

understanding of how people use the technology. Internet radio faces the same issues, but

because it cost very little to the companies, labels might as well utilize the service.

Asked to identify specific Internet radio stations that labels normally pursued,

interviewees revealed that Internet radio was an evolving medium that featured continual

growth and contraction in terms of the number of online stations that format punk music.

In addition, the type of musical project (hardcore vs. pop punk) would also dictate

sending songs to very different Internet radio stations. All of this made it difficult for

interviewees to pinpoint which Internet stations they would pursue. Eyeball Records also

occasionally utilizes Internet radio as an online promotional tool, although Eric was leery

about the technology.

Eric: For Internet radio, not as much and primarily because it never really had traction
with listeners. Most Internet stations can't give good enough numbers to justify what they
want in return. There are just too many of them out there and most of them won't accept
no for an answer. When you are like, "Yeah, I can give you a record.' Yeah, but I want a
box for giveaways too." I can't give you thirty copies of the CD to giveaway you don't
have that many listeners, trust me. When you don't have unique user stats, when you
don't have any kind of verifiable information, it's really hard to sit there as someone with
a limited budget and say that's where I want to put my money.

For Eyeball Records the potentially very small limited audience of these sites did not

seem to be cost-effective for marketing and promoting artists. Focus group participants

offered similar responses, saying they rarely utilize Internet radio stations when seeking

new punk music.

Fanzines:
Eyeball Records is the only label that still sends promotional and marketing material to

traditional fanzines and punk magazines on a regular basis.

Eric: We do use a publicist for every record Again it's a matter of that we don't have the
manpower staff-wise to do all of our publicity in-house; so we hire outside publicist.
They handle all of the Internet stuff and all the traditional zines. Everything from like the
Alternative Press level all way down to fanzines ran out of kids' garages.

No Milk and Blackout Records do not utilize traditional fanzines for promoting any of its

recordings or tours, primarily, because fanzines are not published regularly, or only last

one or two issues. Furthermore, the target audiences that labels are pursuing rarely

encounter this type of media.

Bill (Blackout): It's also the age demo of the people that I am selling records to. Because
I am selling records to primarily people under 25, then why am I going to put in media
that they don't bother ever fuckin' touching. They are all computer-based or if 90% of
them are computer-based, why am I going to go after traditional print. Stupid!

Label personnel are apparently correct. Focus group participants reported very little usage

of traditional fanzines to gather punk information. All of the labels report that they still

advertise in various mass circulation punk magazines (*Alternative Press*, *Skratch*,

Revolver, etc.). These magazines might still be a valid promotional method for the labels

because focus group participants indicate that they occasionally encounter this type of

print media. Label personnel, however, suggest that the recent high costs of print

advertising may lead the labels to seek other cheaper online venues to promote and

market its recordings and tours.

Kyle (No Milk): So we are definitely going to run an *Alternative Press* ad. We will definitely run an ad in *Skratch* magazine, which is a large West Coast punk magazine. Greg (No Milk): It depends if it is a full United States tour and it's a bigger tour, running advertising in print magazines can be effective. But it has to be a big tour just to cover the costs of the ad…. You have to know that the tour has to be full United States tour…. Or you have to be smart about where you are running your magazine ads.

Similar to Bill's response to non-usage of print advertising or marketing, Trustkill

Records is also gradually discontinuing its usage of print media and moving toward

solely using online advertising and marketing.

Rob: But as far as the Internet, I'm finding more and more money is being spent on online advertising rather than print media these days. I mean print media is so expensive. A page in *Revolver* is $3000. Where we can buy a banner ad on PRP.com or Lambgoat.com and reach probably more of our audience for $150 bucks a month for a nice banner ad.

Street Teams:
Three of the four labels (Eyeball, No Milk and Trustkill Records) encourage punk fans to

sign up online for its street teams. No Milk and Trustkill Records communicate with its

street team members via e-mail.

Kyle (No Milk): Yeah, we basically have our own street team and it's just kids that sign up because they are fans. We have a No Milk Army and we send them a sheet with a mission. We'll basically tell them or give them ideas of what they can do. We'll send

them a bunch of stickers and will say 'Go put these stickers up where a bunch of people hang out like pizza parlors, bars, roller skating rinks, malls.'

Greg (No Milk): We try to give guidance with street teams, suggested placement, anything like that. We want to kick it up to another level and develop the street team and really break into specific branches, put kind of theme it in a way. Like we are playing off of the idea of an army, a No Milk Army; We want to give people specific jobs, so what we are going to do is make big stencils that say like either No Milk Records or Bank Robbers and give those to people and then call those people the Special Ops group and they are like undercover.

Rob (Trustkill): We have our own Trustkill street team which we have sign ups for on our Website. We actually call them…the Trustkill Secret Service…. We have our own sign up, every time we have a record out our Web guy will send out an e-mail to all of our kids. We are looking for kids to promote this record in these regions. We'll get a sign up sheet and once we get that, we will then send them posters, CDs, samplers, and postcards to distribute.

Instead of traditional street team methods (the handing out posters, shirts, and hats at concerts), Eyeball Records asks street team members to focus their activities online to promote the label and bands.

Eric: What we did start was an E-team, a street team for online which is a lot easier to manage because it is not city-based; it's more content based. We encourage the kids to sign up for it. If you are a fan of the label and like all of the bands and then go out there and help us spread the word on local and regional message boards and forums where we don't have that kind of reach as a company. These are fans that are already on the Internet anyhow and they know how to work those boards better than anyone else does. They can go in there and re-post news or put up new information about bands and help expand our reach, so we have tapped the Internet community in that sense rather than depending on the traditional street team as a label.

Eyeball Record's street team provides free online promotion for its artists. This type of online street team promotion relies on the word-of-mouse phenomenon. Eyeball initiates the process by sending the street team the information and/or content for online street team promotion. The label then relies on street team members to send the material to their friends with the express expectation that those friends will send it onto others. The cost to the label is minimal and has the potential to be very effective in promoting new recordings. The disadvantage is that the label relies on third parties to continue the word-

of-mouse phenomenon online. While the label can be certain that the street team member

will word-of-mouse the information, what is unknown is if the receiver will continue the

chain.

Blackout Records did not utilize street teams, given Bill's past negative experience with

this strategy. He had worked for a street team company in several different capacities.

Bill: I was a consultant for a company called High Frequency, which was a Street
Teaming company. And I know for a fact that street teaming for the most part is bullshit.
You get a bunch of people to handout a bunch of stuff and that's cool, but the people
don't know anything about your product. They do it for their resume, they don't do it for
love and I think it's the most important way to get street teams is to get people who are
passionate about what they are doing. I mean if you are going to do a street team, it has to
be made up of kids who are true fans of your band.

Perhaps the future method of street team marketing for independent punk labels is the

Eyeball Records method. The label gathers online 'true' fans of the bands and relies on

their efforts via word-of-mouse online to market new recordings from the label for free.

Focus group participants indicated frequent online usage; they also commonly already

engage in several different types of word-of-mouse viral online marketing.

Live Show:
All of the labels stress the importance of live shows and touring as promotional and

marketing tools for its artists.

Kyle (No Milk): Touring is the most important thing.
Greg (No Milk): Besides writing good music, in our eyes the band only has to do two or
three things: write good music and go out and play it for people and then obviously talk
to people.
Kyle: Yeah, even if you wrote the best CD ever and you were across the country kids'
favorite band, they're not going to like your band for that long if you don't come and see
them. They will forget about you.
Greg: The Internet is a tool for bands. You can't solely exist on the Internet. You are
always going to need that real in-person event and you need to back up what you say and
what you do on the Internet. That's the thing the Internet is not solid proof. A live show
is. But you got to be able to back up what you say on the Internet.

Eric (Eyeball): Touring is how you break bands in the rock world and if you are not out on the road, you are never going to be able to attract your fanbase…. So we put a lot of staff and hours into making sure that our bands have the right tours.

Rob (Trustkill): That is the number one method of selling our records is live touring. Commercial radio is not going to play our music. College will, but how impactful is college radio? It's really not for our sales. Touring is our number one source for promotion of our records.

Bill (Blackout): Touring, shows, live touring, word-of-mouth are probably the things that matter the most.

All of the labels state that traditional touring is the single most important marketing tool

(also supported by the bands interviewed and most of the focus group participants). All of

the interviewees say they use a variety offline and online methods to promote individual

band tours. Eric, of Eyeball Records, said: "All the tour dates, the minute we get them, all

go up on our site, on the band's MySpace page, on the Pure Volume, and the Lastfm

pages." Eyeball also utilizes traditional mainstream touring and punk news Websites to

publicize tours.

Eric: Pollstar which is a clearinghouse for tour dates and making sure that they have all the relevant information. We send them out to all of the big online news sources whether it be something very genre specific like AbsolutePunk.net or PunkNews.net. People like that.

For No Milk Records and Blackout Records, banner ads are a central way to promote

tours.

Kyle: And then we will go to IndieClick to do a banner ad campaign. So we will go, okay we are going to do a $2500 campaign and will give them a list of ten sites that we want to hit and they will come back and tell us which of the sites we can hit. We always do this, unless the band has an objection to it.

While No Milk uses banner ads to promote tours, Blackout Records uses the service

every month to promote new releases and upcoming tours.

Bill: We do 1.5 million impressions between every month and every other month depending on our release schedule as far as ads through Indie click. Basically they are an

ad network that services a lot of the Websites that I want to advertise on instead of having to go and negotiate; they sort of represent. Basically if you want to advertise on 50 punk rock Websites, you go there, instead of having to go to the 50 sites. They are basically an ad network - an Internet ad network.

Eyeball Records also puts tour information on its Website and provides a direct link to

venues and/or Ticketmaster.

Eric: Getting as many of the dates setup through online ticket purchasing, so that if you want to get your tickets in advance we can help do that. So any of the tours going through something like Ticketmaster; making sure that we have all the correct links so that every time you would click on to a tour date, it would also give you the option to buy tickets for the show. Basically any creative ways that we can to help them really bridge that gap; make that connection. You hear the song, you see the band when they come through town and you fall in love.

The goal of setting up these links is to make it as easy and convenient for punk fans to

have access to ticket purchasing without searching for the Website themselves. The goal

is to give people easy access to the live concert experience. The other three labels

apparently have not done this.

Trustkill Records relies on its own Website as the central method for promoting the

label's shows. The label also developed an additional Website, Trustkillshows.com that

promotes both Trustkill and other labels shows for a fee.

Rob: We have our own touring Website that is not just for Trustkill bands. It's for any kind of underground independent band and any unsigned band. It's called Trustkillshows.com and that's an industry wide. It's almost like a Pollstar. Pollstar is the biggest touring Website that there is, that agents and the industry uses to announce tours, see how tours are going. Unsigned bands cannot get on it and Pollstar will not put a lot of underground metal bands or independent music. So we came up with Trustkillshows.com which everybody seems to be using these days. We sell online banner ads to third parties to put on our Internet site - like a Hollywood Records will promote on the site. That's kind of our touring site.

Trustkillshows.com allows the label to post its own tour promotion and information, as

well other participating labels in one location. In addition, because the site is open to

unsigned bands, it may also serve as a place where the label can scout for new talent.

While Trustkill relies on Trustkillshows.com Website as the central hub for tour

information, focus groups participants said they often avoid label Websites and instead

look to other online locations (punk aggregators, venue Websites, and band's MySpace

profiles) for tour news.

The Internet fosters wider coverage of new tour information that is easy and quick for

punk fans to obtain, particularly in comparison to traditional methods of fliers, mailers,

and advertisements in fanzines. What is clear is that all labels spend a great deal of time

and effort online promoting live shows, using online tools to offer as much information in

as many online venues as possible. By blanketing the Internet with its material,

independent punk labels hope that punk fans surfing online will come across tour

information.

Two interviewees said that festivals such as Bamboozle, Lollapalooza, and Warped Tour

are significant promotional outlets for artists.

Kyle (No Milk): For us personally, it's probably Warped Tour for the age group factor…
And it keeps on just getting bigger every year and they just keep on adding stages and the
vending charges keeping on going up, but kids still keep on going to it…. We were just at
Bamboozle and it was good. There were 30,000 people and Halifax played in front of the
largest crowd that they have ever played in. Seventeen thousand people watched them
and the pictures are ridiculous.

Bill (Blackout): Subsequently, yeah they [H2O] did Warped/Bamboozle tours. But
originally their first major tour was with Sick of it All and Rancid back in 1996, so we're
talking pre-Internet time. Starting in 1997-1998 was when H2O signed to Epitaph and
that's when they started doing the Warped Tour.

Participation with these tours led to increased recording sales for each band.

Greg (No Milk): Halifax was selling so much stuff online and that's another example of a band that toured a ridiculous amount and every kid knew them… It showed in our sales and our online sales were astronomical. Kids were buying Halifax CDs left and right.

Bill (Blackout): H2O built themselves on touring. There is no question that touring is what sold that band. They didn't get any fabulous press. They had a video that we did that got on MTV maybe twice on 120 Minutes, but it was never anything particularly impressive to really do anything. There was no typical mass. It was basically these guys were touring and they were touring with Rancid, they were touring with the Bouncing Souls. They were on tour with this band. They were on tour with that band.

In contrast, Eyeball and Trustkill Records employees said that the individual tours are more important than large festival type shows. While they do not discourage its acts from participating in festival tours, they do not actively seek adding bands to these types of tours. Moreover, according to focus groups, these festival-type tours are not important avenues that fans utilize to find punk music. In fact, the responses of the focus group participants are quite negative, saying in particular that the Vans Warped Tour was not a particularly important way to find new punk music.

While focus group participants found festival tours unimportant venue to find new punk music, according to recording industry personnel, festivals do play an important role within the punk subculture. Waddell (2006b) suggested that festival shows such as the Vans Warped Tour "continuously pumped new blood - fans and bands - into the punk rock scene, contributing significantly to the genre's vitality" (p. 24). Punk festivals including the Vans Warped Tour, Bamboozle, and Saints and Sinners plays an important role in the "genre's vitality" by "breaking bands and sustaining others" within the punk music scene (Waddell, 2007b, p.56). These festivals provide one central location where community members of the punk subculture can come together and interact with one

another, hear new and old punk music, and engage in face-to-face communication with

their favorite punk bands.

Punk bands:
Ely from City Sleeps mentioned that the band does as many interviews with punk

magazines (*Alternative Press* and *Kerrang* were mentioned); and local newspaper

reporters and college newspaper reporters in towns that they perform. Ely did not

mention speaking with any fanzine writers in the last year. Ely was not enamored with

the current state of commercial radio. Ely said:

> Commercial radio? I mean, I don't think too many people listen to the radio anymore. And I know for a fact that it's been cut straight down the middle, like, 50/50 or something of the people don't listen to the radio anymore because it is all commercial and stuff like that. Radio is not individually owned like it use to be, you know, it's owned by one big company [Clear Channel] and they play the same fucking thing. They don't take any chances. Some do, and I think more and more are beginning to say, "Okay, we need to try to stop playing the Smashing Pumpkins album or the Nirvana album or the Pearl Jam album from the 1990's. We need to get that off the radio and get some new bands. Let's actually try to have a generation here." If you listen to the radio, you hear the shit from the generation before mine. It sucks. Radio sucks. I hope it starts to not suck.

While Ely was less than enamored with commercial radio, the band's label (Trustkill

Records) is actively pursuing airplay for the band across the country on both commercial

and non-commercial radio stations. The first message on City Sleeps MySpace profile

(http://www.myspace.com/citysleeps) is the following:

Request City Sleeps on Radio!

Wanna help support the City Sleeps radio campaign? Here are just a few request lines for radio stations playing our single "Prototype". Call them until they play it, and call them every time they do. Thanks!

The message then lists call numbers, phone numbers, for 22 stations in 17 cities,

including Atlanta, Boston, and Denver.

While Ely is less than happy about the current state of commercial radio, he and his label realize that commercial radio airplay is still important for the band to reach the largest potential audience. The placement of this message (with phone numbers provided) suggests that commercial radio airplay is an important component of the promotion and marketing campaign for both the band and Trustkill Records. Unbeknownst to the band, Trustkill also put the band's first video ('Not An Angel') in rotation at American Eagle stores across the United States.

Ely: Trustkill is doing everything they can for the new album. I walk into American Eagle [clothing store for youth] in the mall and find out that they are playing our video in the stores all over the country…. It was kind of frightening because American Eagle is not necessarily where we want people to discover us.

The band just finished a tour of the United States with label mates Bedlight for Blue Eyes and in 2008 began a European tour with Funeral For a Friend (Atlantic Records).

The two unsigned bands do not seek or receive coverage from any type of punk magazine or fanzine. Both bands sought and received airplay on college radio stations throughout the New Jersey, but did not garner any airplay at commercial radio stations. Evan (From Downtown), said, "We had some airplay at Rutgers…. We did not actually ever send any of the material to actual radio stations; mainly just college stations. We are more concerned about the live show."

Instead, both unsigned bands relied on its live show, Websites, and MySpace profiles to promote its music to punk fans. Evan (From Downtown), said, "We tried to do as many shows as possible." Dan (9 Reasons to Die), said: "Shows, shows, shows, and more shows…. Play as much as possible, even if it's in front of one person, you've got to do it.

That is the only way to market it…. It's all about our live show." At live shows, Chris (9 Reasons to Die) stressed the importance of using the live show to drive potential new fans to the band's Website, saying: "We promote the Website at shows. We are constantly plugging the site during the performance."

On-stage promotion at the show is not for a dot.com Website, but instead the band's MySpace profile.

Dan (9 Reasons to Die): Internet page, MySpace page… Nobody even goes to dot.com anymore, it's just all MySpace because it's easier and music plays right when you come up. So, you put it on that and try to promote it off the Internet…. People don't even ask: "What is your Website?" They ask, "What is your MySpace."

The band From Downtown originally set-up a dot.com Website prior to their MySpace profile. Evan said: "When we first got Internet savvy, MySpace was just starting to get a music thing going, like PureVolume was still biggest thing at the time. We had our own Website, www.fdrock.com... It was sad, because it was pretty good Website, but it didn't get half the number of hits that our MySpace page gets."

Because the site did not receive much traffic, the band switched its main online site to MySpace profile. Chris and Dan of 9 Reasons to Die best describe typical content on a MySpace profile:

Chris: We have a couple of tracks. Lots of pictures…
Dan: Live music. Show dates….
Chris: Show dates. Who's in the band? What they do.
Dan: What we are trying to accomplish with the band.
Chris: Up-to-date news about the band…

For punk bands, sites such as MySpace and other Websites (PureVolume, Lastfm, etc.) offers bands a venue to communicate among one another about upcoming touring opportunities.

Dan (9 Reasons to Die): The majority of the shows that we get that are not local are off of MySpace, in fact all of them. We place a bulletin that we need a show and someone gets back to us because they like our music (from the MP3 samples available on their MySpace page). "Hey, we got a show in Somerset." "Hey, we got a show in Easton…." We are down to play wherever anyone wants us. For shows MySpace is incredible. For us anyway, it helps us out a lot.

Chris (9 Reasons to Die): It [MySpace] definitely connects bands from all over the place. It gets everyone in contact with one another.

Dan: We get e-mails all the time from other bands, "Yeah, we're going on tour. Help us out with a date in Jersey." And I can't necessarily help you out unless I was doing a hall show. But I can only do so many hall shows. So, I give them the names and numbers of promoters around the area…. And that is way for them to get hooked-up with other bands…. It's a good way for local bands trying to keep in-touch with one another and help each other out.

The Web allows punk bands to communicate one-to-one and that assists punk bands in finding shows and venues to play at outside of its local area. This, in turn, makes it easier for the punk subculture (particularly the live show) to thrive. Bands can very easily find shows outside of its area to perform and therefore spread its music to an even wider audience of people.

Online sites including MySpace allow punk bands to communicate with one another, as well as with fans. MySpace band profiles are often full of online fliers designed by different bands to promote upcoming shows. For instance, a band will develop a flier for an upcoming show, send it to other punk bands and request that the bands post it on its MySpace profile. This common live show promotion technique assists bands in disseminating information about its upcoming show to as many punk recipients as possible.

Evan (From Downtown): We do a lot of punknews.com and tons of other Websites where we always make fliers for. I always take time out of the day to make fliers or something like that and just put it up and sent it to a few people…. So, we do make pretty good use of the Internet.

Findings from Evan and my own personal observation of MySpace seem to suggest that punk bands often design and send online fliers for upcoming shows to as many people as possible. This tactic relies on fans to accept the flier and post it on their MySpace profile or Website, where then another round of users may find the flier and send it on to others (i.e. word-of-mouse phenomenon). This is an inexpensive and easy way to promote and market an upcoming show to the greatest number of potential punk fans.

Focus group members mentioned that attending punk shows are an important part of the punk subculture experience. For instance, Jordan from focus group two described the emerging Providence, Rhode Island punk scene, famous for live performances that removed the barrier between audience members and bands. Jordan said:

> There is a lot of cool stuff happening in Providence bands like Lightning Bolt who just completely changed the sound and the whole aspect of the community. They will refuse to play out on stage. They'll set up right in the middle of the place on the floor and bring their own PA. Everyone is just like jumping all over equipment…. It's just, like, completely new stuff.

The continual renewal of the punk performance is an important component of the overall punk subculture experience. Since its beginning, a central element of the punk live show experience was to eliminate the man made barrier between the audience and the performer. Simon (1997) and Tsitsos (1999) investigated historical differences in the type of dance belonging to the first and second wave of punk (first wave – Pogo and second wave – slam dancing and moshing). Both asserted that participation in the different dance techniques at live concerts gave punk participants a "sense of belonging or communitas" (Simon, 1997, p. 155). Tsitsos (1999) takes this argument a step further: "punks want to create their own environment separate from the mainstream in which they are free from

all controlling forces and rules, even if that results in chaos" (p. 399). While members

chaotically and sometimes violently dance with one another at punk shows, they are also

using the site to contact and meet new members of the punk subculture.

Internet:
Key to understanding these findings is a statement by Eric from Eyeball Records, said, "I

think right now, because the Internet is that big open space and anybody can play with it,

there is not really one way that works well at any given time." Label personnel's

responses concerning recording labels utilization of the Internet to promote bands are

quite varied. Each label mentioned many different approaches to promotion on the Web.

In this next section, I will highlight several other key methods for using the Internet.

Label Websites:
Each of the label's Websites feature the following content: news; artist information; MP3

and video downloads; a merchandise portal; tour information; links to join fan clubs; and

contact and label information. Instead of hiring professional Web masters, each label has

a paid employee, with the assistance of interns, to oversee all aspects of the Website

(update new material and MP3 samples, change backgrounds, news, etc.). The design of

Websites is intended to make them practical for employees of the label, as well as offer

users access to diverse amount of content. No Milk Records (http://www.nomilkrecords)

Website is a good example of the aforementioned.

Greg (No Milk): We were trying to make it more components-based and since we had
like all of these store items and all of these special downloads, so we tried to make on the
left side of the site there is a "top downloads" column.
Kyle (No Milk): Featured item.
Greg: Yeah and we geared it so that like if you are on an audio page and you are looking
for a Bank Robber's song, you will only be shown Bank Robber merchandise. Where, if
you are on the homepage, you are going to be shown the newest merchandise [for all the
bands on the label]…

The central goal at every online site is to spotlight No Milk Records new releases in prominent locations on the Website. The goal of such a placement is to highlight the new material, while making it relatively easy for visitors to navigate. Once the visitor clicks on the Website link, the secondary pages feature content, information, and sales opportunities for the recording.

Micro Sites:
While all of the labels' Websites provide information about individual bands, only No Milk Records regularly make use of micro-sites to promote and market a specific new release. These micro-sites are very similar to the podcasts of No Milk Records.

Greg: We are really trying to expand our Internet campaign. We have now started to do specialty micro-sites for every release that we have. So the Bank Robbers CD is called "*Tomorrow Belongs to Me,*" so we made Tomorrow Belongs to TBR micro- site. That was just a real simple site that had every review for the record and everything that was going on with the record, all the tour dates, even if that information is already on the No Milk Records Website.
Kyle: It's better to have a hub for it.
Greg: The more sites the better and that is just one of the little things that we do.

No Milk Records is the only label to use micro-sites. The goal of the micro-site is to make as convenient as possible for visitors to the No Milk Records Website to link with one central site that contains all of the promotional material for a single artist. No Milk Records hopes this will lead to the purchasing of the recording directly from label's Website. Kyle said that the design and implementation of micro sites is time-consuming and requires frequent updating (new reviews, news, etc.). These circumstances significantly limit the number of micro-sites that the label can pursue at one time and may be the reason that the other small independent labels do not utilize this type of site.

Band Websites:
Interviewees mention that every band signed to the label had a link on its Website that the

label oversees. In addition, a majority of the bands also oversee Websites linked with

multiple online social networking and Internet punk aggregator sites.

Eric (Eyeball): We have all of the band sites on our Website. Every band pretty much has their own site that has a community site through MySpace and Pure Volume and Lastfm. But there are like so many ways that you can go about connecting with the fans online that there is no one right way to do it at this point. It's very much go try a whole bunch of different things and each band gets a different type of response. Some bands get really good responses with their MySpace pages and some of the bands get pretty mediocre responses, but get really good responses on something like a Lastfm or a Pure Volume. It really depends on the band.

Sampling:
All of the labels offer punk fans MP3 samples for downloading. According to Kyle, No

Milk tries to get at least one [MP3 sample] for every album: "We don't really give away

our new songs that much, but we try to give away at least one song off [each] record."

Greg adds that streaming is important: No Milk "We'll stream the whole album, but we

will try to limit it to just one or two songs for [MP3] downloading."

Eric (Eyeball): I love it. Absolutely! We won't give away whole records, typically though, if we have the ability to launch a band beforehand with some free content we definitely will. We put out for New London Fire the end of last year an EP that was only done online and was completely free. You downloaded all five songs, you downloaded the liner notes, the artwork all as one package and it was completely free. It set up the band tremendously well…. Typically, when we are doing stuff like that, it's a partnership between us and the band and they make the decision on how much they want to give up. How much do they want to put out there and how are we going to position it in terms of reaching the consumer, reaching the fan. So, for anyone that we are not doing those types of things, because not every band is going to want to dump five songs on the Internet like that, will do one or two songs at a time and have them available to be downloaded as MP3's.

Bill (Blackout): It's fabulous. Doing Web stuff is probably the future of the way things are going to be…. It's very difficult to put this whole concept into words, but I definitely think that basically the taking of this micro-chunk content sort of like individual songs or pieces of video like you do on YouTube or MySpace and being able to actually generate revenue from those, to take advantage of that whole long tail situation.

Rob (Trustkill): We have a label policy. I think it is important to put a few songs out there to download just to spread the word. Let the kids download the music and give it to their friends. You know maybe one or two songs. We cut it off after that. At our Trustkill site, we don't even have any downloading just so that we can get ingrained in kids' heads to buy the record. We have song sniffing sampling on our Trustkill site (musical clips of songs). But on other sites like the PRP or the LambGoat [music aggregators] I'll give them a free download exclusively that they can post on their site. You know, on a lot of consumer sites, now labels compete. It's all about exclusive content, from releasing CDs, to promoting people's Websites they just want to attract kids to their sites. We will give them a free album stream the first week, or a free download before any other site like Alternativepress.com or MySpace or Pure Volume, we will give certain free downloads to spread the word and get free advertising off of them as well.

MP3 samples are very similar to the cassette EPs, cassette compilations and 7" singles that earlier generations of punk bands and labels relied on to market and promote its recordings (cheap, quick to produce, easy to distribute and sound quality was unimportant). While all of the labels offer MP3 samples for punk fans each has unique policies towards sampling. No Milk and Trustkill Records are the most tentative, only allowing one or two MP3 samples per album. Both labels prefer streaming songs instead of allowing fans access to free MP3 downloads. Only Trustkill can identify specific sites that the label releases MP3 and streams to for each album; Trustkill emphasizes competition for placement of MP3 downloads and streams among labels. The remaining labels did not specifically mention routine sites in use for offering its MP3 samples and streaming. Apparently this depends on the project and the target audience. Therefore, placement of streams and MP3 samples as a promotional tool is a continually evolving task for labels.

It is not surprising that Blackout Records, which forsakes most traditional promotion techniques (radio, fanzines, and magazines), is the most open to the MP3 sampling process. Bill mentioned that his label profits from the sale of merchandise and catalog

material. Several focus group participants claim that MP3 samples often led to a purchase

of other products of the band (the legitimate recording, concert tickets, merchandise,

etc.).

Focus group 2
Steve: That way I get like a nice big piece of cover art and sometimes there is like a little bit of extras, like liners and stuff that you can't usually get.
Jordan: I'll buy cassette or vinyl, and if like I'm at a show and I see a band and they pressed their record on vinyl and they're touring and I see that they need gas to get to the next town, I'll buy the record, I'll buy the shirt.

Focus group 3
Andrea (A): But, I always, always, try to buy a CD if it something that I really want or the artwork is amazing or I want to know something or pictures…
Andrea (B): You know and the artwork on there [CD packaging] or even hidden tracks that they put on records.

Focus group 1
Dan: See, I like downloading because I have from downloading like from the whole Ruckus thing. I have over 1100 songs that I have downloaded specifically for the reason that I don't have that much money to buy like every single CD.
Linda: Yeah, it's ridiculous….
Dave: Yeah, but you will spend money on the show?
Dan: I'll go to the show if they come around and I really like them - but if I really like the album, I will go out and buy it.

The focus group members say that MP3 samples will lead some fans to spend cash on the

legal product produced by the record label and/or band. What is unknown is how often

the focus group participants (or fans) actually engage in this behavior.

Sampling is a key component for some releases at Eyeball Records. Eyeball Records is

the only label to indicate that the label and the band jointly decide the number of MP3

samples made available for downloading. Finally, Eyeball and No Milk Records are the

only labels to utilize online video samples as a promotional tool.

Eric (Eyeball): So it may be one song six weeks in advance and then maybe the week that the record comes out we will put a second song out there and maybe [we] will put a video out depending on when the video gets done. So then, you can download the video and the song and then you have a nice audiovisual piece to work with rather than just the pure audio. We found that it is a big help. It's huge in setting up a record to have something out there that kids can now relate to.

Greg (No Milk): Yeah and for like television, we have videos and all. As we move forward, all of the bands are going to get a pretty big video. We do all of the video stuff in-house and then again, it's what other small video things can we do? We can make a little online commercial.

Free Websites:
Only No Milk Records utilizes free online punk aggregator sites for every new release

from the label. These online punk aggregators allow No Milk to upload content (MP3's,

press articles, photos, etc.) free to the site. Greg and Kyle indicate that No Milk has had a

long and fruitful relationship with the free online punk aggregators.

Greg: And they have done stuff in the past, so…
Kyle: Yeah, so we go to them first.
Kyle: Some of those Websites are Acclaimedpunk.com, UpBeatMusic.com, eMusic.com blast and just a bunch of other smaller ones.
Greg: Skyline Press prices are good.
Kyle: Skylinepress.net and Rankmusic.com they might not be the biggest sites. But when you have five or six small sites giving you exposure, then you can pay for the bigger ones through sales of product.

No Milk desires to obtain as much free exposure for its records as possible. The goal of

placing content at online punk aggregators is to entice consumers to purchase the band's

new product (and perhaps other recordings from the label). Any revenue obtained

through sales on free online sites serves to offset the costs of promotion and marketing of

its recordings on promotional outlets that require payment. Online promotional outlets

that require payment for placing banner advertisements, MP3's, and/or publicity include

punk aggregators (Absolutepunk.com, Truepunk.com, and Punkmusic.com) and social

networking sites including Facebook.com and MySpace.com that charge a fee for banner

ads only. No Milk Records also mentions that the usage of these online sites (free or pay)

depends on the project and the band's input on the matter.

MySpace.com:
All of the labels mention that MySpace.com is rapidly becoming the main Website for

the promotion, marketing, and distribution of its music and all types of music in general.

Bill (Blackout): It's the number one online site.

Rob (Trustkill): Today it's a central site where everybody is going to these days.

Kyle (No Milk): The best thing on the Web right now is MySpace. It's awesome. The e-mail blasts are very important for promotions.

Eric (Eyeball): For the most part MySpace is good. I think the simplicity of being able to put stuff up there relatively easy and not have to necessarily manage a page on MySpace as you would have to an entire Website is great because you can do so much more on the fly.

All of the labels agree that the key benefit of MySpace.com is the fact that the site has so

many users that it offers them the potential to reach a significant portion of the punk

audience at one online site. MySpace allows bands to have access to a larger potential fan

base than the first generation of punk because of the promotion and marketing

opportunities on the site. Labels also indicate that the site is very user friendly for punk

fans, bands, and labels. Ease is important because it allows for anyone and everyone to

use the social networking site to communicate with one another. Ease of use also allows

bands to communicate a wide variety of information to its fan bases

Two of the labels mention that MySpace is also a great site for bands to continually

update their information and manage its fan base.

Greg (No Milk): It's a good way for bands to keep their information updated. They are on all the time.
Kyle (No Milk): Yeah, it's like a kind of mini Website controlled by the band.

Eric (Eyeball): It is incredible easy for a band to manage their fan base now, because they can see everything through again using MySpace, Pure Volume and Lastfm are probably the big three, they can go there and manage their fan base on very personal level. Talk to them as individuals that was something they could never do even in a DIY outfit. And the old school punk bands use to have to run around their town and flier everybody's windshield to get their attention. You are not going to do that anymore. It opened the creative freedom for a band to do a ton of stuff.

The site offers punk bands and labels the ability to update online profiles at a moment's notice. The set-up of a MySpace profile allows bands to easily post MP3 samples, videos, information, blogs, messages, forums, and links that allows for band-to-fan and fan-to-fan communication (though as mentioned earlier, most communication among bands to fans is one-to-many, instead of one-to-one). The online site makes it very easy for these two groups the potential to interact more frequently. This is quite different from the traditional fanzine or tour interaction, which occurs between participants less frequently. MySpace.com potentially alleviates these limitations.

MySpace.com and Touring:
MySpace is also an important location for promoting and marketing of tours online.

Rob (Trustkill): As far as tour dates, MySpace for sure, we have to have those tour dates, one for each band's site, on our site, on MySpace.

Kyle (No Milk): You can post people's fliers; you can post fliers on everyone's comments. It's good for that and e-mail blasts through MySpace are very important. Our bands are all over MySpace. That's how they meet girls. MySpace is good because if you have fans …
Greg (No Milk): MySpace is a good connection.
Kyle: If you are, like, going to go to Wisconsin and you have, like, a 100 fans in Wisconsin, then you can just specifically write them a message and say "Yeah, we're going to come back here and we will be there on this day, we would love to see you and hang out and whatever" and that stuff works. Because those are people that already like you and you have already established a relationship with them.

Bill (Blackout): The only band that I have recently signed to the label is The Fire Still Burns, which is guys like Nate, who was in Ensign, and Scotty, who was in Lifetime. That is the last band that I signed and my partner signed a band out of Colorado called Grey Scale and they're pretty great. They are workaholics. They do the road thing and

they manage their MySpace very, very well. And they use their social networking skills to really, really create compelling content.

MySpace allows bands and labels to design and send out online fliers to punk fans. Bands and labels can post tour information on its profiles, or they can e-mail blast information to fans who have signed up for the service. Interestingly, MySpace allows bands to connect directly with fans to notify them personally of upcoming live shows. Online access permits labels' to release up-to-the-minute tour information online. Bands can gage how many fans they might have in a market and set up its tour itinerary based on information they gather from MySpace. This enables punk bands to eliminate tour stops where only a few fans might attend the show. In addition, MySpace word-of-mouse phenomenon allows fans of a band to forward to other fans information about upcoming tours, therefore, perhaps increase overall ticket sales.

Disadvantages of MySpace.com for Record Labels:
All of the labels suggest several issues associated with the MySpace phenomenon have also occurred within the online punk subculture. The first issue is that 'friends' on MySpace.com do not always necessarily translate into record sales for the band.

Kyle (No Milk): Kids think MySpace is the savior to promotion, but, I think it is a double-edged sword.
Greg: (No Milk): But it really isn't.
Kyle: You can have 100,000 friends on MySpace…
Greg: Give 'em the facts. Take off the gloves!
Kyle: We have a band; we had a band that had 100,000 friends on MySpace.
Greg: Over a 100,000, like 128,000.
Kyle: Yeah, like over 130,000 and they would be like 'Oh yeah we have so many friends on MySpace now' and I'm like, "That is good, but if you have over 100,000 friends on MySpace, why have you only sold a 1000 records?'
Greg: That is a good question? And exactly, you can say that they downloaded it, but even those numbers don't match up.
Kyle: Yeah.
Greg: You can have as many friends as you want on MySpace. I mean it can help, it definitely can help, but it also could mean nothing. I mean it is still good to do, you can still do it, because it's free and it's cheap, but if you think that MySpace is the end all of

the Internet and promotion and being a band…. If you think that you can make it on MySpace and that's all you need to do, I think that you are mistaken.

The above exchange shows that while bands can gather friends on its MySpace profiles, whether these friends actually support the band when the release material is unknown, and perhaps even in doubt. Having friends on MySpace does not always translate into record sales for a band. While MySpace can certainly assist the promotion of new recordings, it does not necessarily translate into impressive sales for the band or the label. For greater sales, artists and labels must still do traditional promotion and marketing and the band must tour.

The success of MySpace with online users (over a 100 million online profiles) allows the site to charge higher advertising rates to advertise.

Rob (Trustkill): It's huge. It's so expensive to advertise on there [MySpace.com]. To do a nominal banner advertising campaign we have to spend between $5000 and $6000 for a two-or-three week campaign. You can spend less money, I mean you can spend a $1000, but you are just not going to get the impressions that you need. It's just kind of a waste of money.

The increasing costs associated with advertising on MySpace.com (and other social networking sites) may eventually harm bottom-lines of independent punk labels (a point I will return to in the conclusion).

How do punk music fans use the Internet in their quest for punk music?
Commercial and Non-commercial Radio:
Focus group participants said that they only occasionally use commercial radio, non-commercial radio, and satellite or Internet radio in their quest for new punk music.

Traditional commercial radio is not an important site for punk fans to use to find punk music.

Focus group 3
Researcher: Okay, commercial radio…
Dani: Sucks!
Mitch: Sucks!
Angela: Sucks!
Tina: Yeah.
Sarah: Yeah.
Researcher: I haven't even asked the question yet, is commercial radio a good source for punk music?
Entire group: No!

Focus group 2
Jordan: I don't listen to any commercial radio
Steve: No.
Jason: Nothing.
Rob: Nothing.
KT: Yeah.
BP: Nothing.

Within each focus group, a few members indicate making use of both commercial radio

specialty shows and non-commercial college radio stations to find new punk music.

Focus group 2
Andrew (A): Specialty shows on Sunday nights. Yes.
Pete: Oh Yeah.
Andrew (A): Boston Emissions and First Contact.
Pete: Oh yeah.
Andrew (B): Yeah.
Andrew (A): They do play a lot of punk records.
Andrew (B): They play a lot of underground hip-hop and a bit of everything.
Andrew (A): Ah yeah, New England Product that show does [play punk].

The three radio shows mentioned by participants in focus group two are punk specialty

shows based in Boston and each member said that listening only occurred when they are

visiting their parents in Massachusetts. As noted in the literature review, most specialty

punk shows occur only on weekend nights when a small, albeit dedicated, audience is

listening.

Focus group 1
Alex: I only listen to 88.9 [WMCX-Monmouth University].
Dave: 88.9.

Alex: The best radio station.

Focus group 2
Lando: College radio plays like punk.
Pete: Yeah.
KT: Yeah.
Lando: Yeah, like you know Seton Hall [WSOU] and WMCX [Monmouth University].
Pete: Yeah.
KT: Yeah.
Andrew (B): Yeah.

As noted in the literature review, non-commercial college radio has a history of playing punk music going back to the first wave of punk. A few focus group participants said that they listen to local college radio stations Monmouth University's WMCX and Seton Hall's WSOU for punk music. Both stations play punk Monday through Friday and feature specialty shows on the weekend. In addition, in New Jersey, WRSU (Rutgers University) and WGLS (Rowan University) feature programs that play punk music. While a small portion of the focus group members do listen to non-commercial radio for punk, the majority of participants listen to neither non-commercial nor commercial radio stations when they are seeking new or old punk music. Listening to satellite radio is likewise rare among participants, primarily because of the cost of the service: $12.95 per month. While $12.95 a month seems rather inexpensive for access to over a 100 different channels of music, teens and young adults do not have an unlimited supply of disposable income (cell phone bills, DVD's, etc.). Only two participants note that they frequently listen to Internet radio (Pandora.com and Lastfm.com). At the time of these focus groups, the two services had just started to attract a small listening audience. Since then, both services have made several upgrades (including a social networking component). So perhaps, use of these free online services will increase in the next year or two.

Fanzines:

Focus group participants said that they rarely encounter fanzines at punk shows. Many of

the participants suggest that most fanzines have switched to online (in the form of

message boards and blogs) from the traditional print.

Focus group 1
Rachel: Blogs are fanzines.
Dan: I don't see, I mean when I think of fanzines I think of the ones that people just put together themselves; you know and I don't see that at shows anymore….
Alex: Because now it's the Internet. You get everything through the Internet….
Dan: I use to buy them all the time. But now they disappeared. If they are around, I'll read them.

Only one participant mentioned visiting a specific online fanzine.

Focus group 2
BP: There are a lot of E-fanzines too…. [T]here are online fanzines. There is the one online metal fanzine that I check out that kind of died and then came back. It's like this guy gets interviews with all sorts of like metal hardcore bands, but doesn't offer a paper product. It's only online, so it's kind of like almost a replacement of what they used to have like *Maximumrockandroll.*

A few participants note that the most common punk print material available at punk

shows is *Alternative Press*. *Alternative Press* is an independently owned monthly punk

magazine based in Cleveland, Ohio. Started in 1985, *Alternative Press* began as a punk

fanzine that transformed in the 1990's into a traditional magazine. Today, a typical

Alternative Press features a cover story; band interviews; essays concerning the on the

punk subculture; album and concert reviews; polls and lists concerning punk music; a

section on unsigned punk bands; and hundreds of advertisements for new punk

recordings from both independent and major label punk bands, as well as punk

merchandise companies (fashions, posters, shoes, etc.). The magazine is available for

purchase at retail, by subscription, and as a promotional item at punk shows. Yet,

Alternative Press is rarely something that focus group participants rely on for punk

information on account of the up-to-the-moment availability of the same information on the Internet. Why wait for the monthly magazine when the information is available online moments after the band or label releases it? The availability and ease in which punk fans can obtain information online led many to bypass traditional print fanzines for online information sites (punk aggregators, blogs and forums, etc.).

Finally, it is worth noting that in the past, two members of the focus group started their own fanzines specifically in order to get free "stuff" from punk labels and bands.

Focus group 1
Rachel: I use to have a fanzine; it lasted three issues.

Focus group 3
Sarah: I make it once a year and I just send it in to get concert tickets and back stage passes and like photo passes and that stuff…

However, neither still publishes. Most of the participants said that punk fanzines available online or in the print form are not an important source for information on new punk music or for information concerning the punk subculture.

Websites:
A majority of focus group participants frequently visit online aggregators and MySpace.com profiles. The number of different band online sites (mainly MySpace profiles) focus group participants mention they visit is extensive due to the varying individual tastes of each member of the focus groups. However, common across all of the focus groups is the fact that many participants often visit similar online punk aggregators. These aggregators are a depot online for everything punk. The most popular sites and number of participants that visit each site are as follows:

	Focus Group 1 (x people)	Focus Group 2 (x people)	Focus Group 3 (x people)
AbsolutePunk.net	6	5	3
PunkHardcore.com	1	2	0
PunkNews.com	5	4	5
PunkRock.org	6	8	3
TruePunk.com	6	6	4

Each of the aggregators offers punk fans a central location to gather a wide-spectrum of artifacts surrounding the punk subculture. At these sites, punk fans can obtain news, tour information, MP3 samples, merchandise, new releases, and participate on blogs. While similar in design and function, the sites differ in featured material available at each Website. Each Website features a different band, new recording, or tour on its main page. While each site will usually have its own unique featured band on its main page, the remainder of the available content across the sites is usually similar. Punk fans visit these aggregator sites because punk bands and labels utilize the aggregators as a primary method of promoting and marketing of its material to punk fans. Notably only a few of the participants say that they visit specific independent punk labels while online. In fact, as the findings below suggest, focus group participants almost never visit an actual independent punk label's own Website.

Message boards:
As noted above, focus group participants said that they often visit band Websites to find out information about their favorite bands. Only a few participants mention receiving e-mails or other content directly from punk bands or labels. Instead, a majority of the focus group participants said that they must actively seek out the information that wish to obtain. Many of these online searches involve participants searching for punk bands, instead of a punk label. For instance, Dani from focus group three said, "I am constantly

on AFI's (A Fire Inside) Website." Only one participant specifically mentioned regularly visiting a label's Website (Jade Tree Records) when searching for punk material. When punk fans visit punk band Websites they occasionally spend some of their online time on the band's message board. The findings seem to indicate that on some message boards fans communicate with one another and only occasionally with specific band members. When asked to elaborate on the direct interaction between a fan and a band member, participants reported that the interaction is usually not one-to-one communication, but instead a general message (one-to many communication) for all fans (tour diary, daily thoughts, set lists, etc.). The band member's message was usually aimed not at one specific individual, but instead a collection of fans. Punk band members interviewed here seem to agree that the more common online communication mode between punk bands and fans is one-to-many, instead of one-to-one communication. For example, BP, from focus group 2, said: "A lot of bands have online message boards where you can go check out and interact with them….You can post bulletins about certain things. You can talk about the shows…. Usually it's just like a community for music lovers." Andrew B., Rob, and Lando explicitly endorsed BP's account.

Focus group 1
Alex: Band Websites…
Rachel: Yeah, there are some more, like band forums.
Alex: Yeah, you can talk to other fans and sometimes the band is online.

Focus group 3
Mitch: Bands, but not labels.
Andrea (B): I go the East Village Radio (Internet-based radio station) and the Jade Tree Websites but mostly the East Village Radio Website because I worked for them and, ah, I know a couple of people who work at different record labels. So, from my connections with them I check out what they got going on that's new.
Andrea (A): I only go on bands; Websites, like, if I'm seeing if they are, like, touring near me soon or leaving messages on their message boards.

While only a few participants communicated directly with band members and the remaining participants did not suggest disappointment at not talking individually with band members online.

Several focus group members also mentioned The New Jersey Scene.com (http://www.thenjscene.com) message board as a popular online site within the punk subculture. NJScene.com is an open forum that allows anyone to register and post any comments (supportive or non-supportive), on any aspect of the punk subculture in New Jersey (as well as any other topic) or the rest of the world. While many utilize NJScene.com, most have negative impressions of the site because of the overall negative tone of the message board. An examination of posted messages on the site revealed that most posts began with a simple question, such as the following post from February 29, 2008: "Post bands you like that no one else likes?" (http://www.njscene.com.) One hundred and twenty-seven users responded to the post. For example, a post from member, NFGpunkrockgrrl, highlighted Panic at the Disco as the band that she liked, but no one else did. This response immediately drew criticisms from other members of the thread. JayInsult wrote: "Dude, my fucking BOSS has one of their records... I think (again, sadly) more people like them than any board band" (http://www.njscene.com.).Several other band responses also drew criticism from other members of the thread. Focus group members cited similar examples from their experiences on the message board.

Focus group 1
Dave: I mean having gone to Rutgers and you guys are probably very familiar with this because you live in New Jersey, thenjscene.com. The New Jersey Scene is the end all living chat room for some people in this state. It's pretty sad.
Alex: Yeah.

Dave: I find it, I'll be honest with you; I found a couple bands on it. But most of the stuff is total shit.
Rachel: Of course.
Dave: And the people on there are total shit.

Focus group 2
Andrew (A): I mean I'm sure in New Jersey there are a bunch of boards. The New Jersey scene board which is, like, the most elitist piece of shit ever! [The rest of focus group two all laughed and agreed with Andrew's statement].

Findings suggest that the experiences of focus group participants suggest that

NJScene.com is not a key venue for acquiring information concerning punk activities in

New Jersey. Only one focus group member said that a message posted on NJScene.com

led them to a new punk band. The remaining comments of participants (and my own

observations) suggest the site functions mainly as an online venue for users to comment

(mainly in negative terms) to posts from other users.

MP3's:
Focus group participants often download online MP3 samples to find new punk music.

Focus group participants point out that many of the MP3 samples downloaded eventually

end up on blank CD's. In addition, many of the focus group members indicate that they

then swap these blank CD's with friends, lovers, and acquaintances.

Focus group 1
Alex: That is how you find out about new bands.
Colleen: Yeah.
Rachel: Yeah.
Dave: I can't tell you how many people I have given CDs to and they are just like, 'Just burn me something.' Not because they necessarily want the music that I listen to – but just because they want to listen to something new.
Rachel: Yeah.

Focus group 2
Andrew (B): I love it because that's the way to get music that, like, I know I have gotten a million CDs from Andrew (A) that, like, at least thirty over the past two years. That like, I knew about bands and I heard their names, but, I never got to hear, like, a full product and some of them were so small time that, like, you could never find the whole album on the Internet, so there wasn't a way to steal it. There wasn't a way to do

anything, so I copied it off of him. I hear it and when they come out with their next album, I'll make sure that I buy it. So, like, I love to be able to copy CDs, that's, like, a huge part of spreading music now.

Lando: Or you burn mixed CDs for friends, like, if your friends, like, your taste in music, 'Oh if you like this, check this out.'

Andrew (B): Yeah.

BP: Yeah.

Lando: It's like the modern mixed tape.

Jason: I mean the equivalent of that is if you made a mix tape for five of your friends, instead you, like, share it with, like, your little secret with twenty thousand people or whoever is on the network or whatever.

Focus group 3

Andrea (A): Yeah, your friends are, like, "check this out" and they will burn you a CD and say "Listen to it" and maybe you will share it.

Peer-to-peer networks are the most common online sited visited by focus group participants to obtain MP3 samples. Once downloaded, the dissemination of MP3's continues via friends e-mailing a copy to other friends or by CD's burned on a CD-burning device. Through word-of-mouth (and mouse) and burned CDs, the tracks are quickly spread from one person to the next within the punk subculture. Again, the Internet is a much faster and easier promotion and distribution technique than the old methods of disseminating new punk music (fanzines, mixed tapes, radio, and live shows).

Illegal Downloading:

Seventeen of the 24 participants acknowledged that they downloaded music illegally. Fifteen of the 17 members of the focus groups one and two regularly illegally download music online. Only two participants in focus group three indicate that they regularly engage in illegally downloading music. More of the male participants (12) frequently illegally downloaded music than females (5). Focus group participants cite several reasons to justify their illegal downloading: the expense of new CDs (which cost $16.98 to $18.98) and replacement of lost or damaged CDs. Some participants also said that friends' suggestion to purchase a band's recording, often ended with the participants not

liking the CD, and therefore "out" at least $16.98. Several participants also indicate that

illegal downloads from the Internet offers an opportunity to sample the music before

purchasing.

Focus group 2
Jason: I won't buy anything without hearing it. I mean I think that is the big issue. I think
that is where the downloading really comes into play.
Rob: Yeah.
KT: Yeah.

Focus group 1
Colleen: I've been open up to so much from it [illegal downloading].
Rachel: Because the thing is you know as much as they say 'Oh they're stealing' if it
wasn't free I wouldn't buy it. I'm downloading because I don't friggin' feel like buying it
and then you know if I do like it, I'll go see a gig and that, will get the band more money
than buying their CD. 'Oh I made twenty cents." So what, it's Parkway money! [The
implication of this statement is that the profit potential from record sales is so minimal,
that it will only pay for tolls to and from gigs in New Jersey].
Colleen: I think downloading is good because like with me I download stuff that I really
didn't know and I got to like them and then I went to the shows –like it's a way for me to
get new music.
Dave: No. If sometimes I just don't really appreciate and don't even care about the band,
I won't buy it. I'll just download it. But if it's something that I have really been
anticipating, then I'll go on like iTunes and I'll buy it.

Several participants said that illegal downloading benefits punk bands and independent

punk labels because sampling led to sales. Similar to MP3 sampling, what is not clear is

how many of the participants actually purchase the legal CD after downloading the free

music. Some participants also indicate that illegal downloading allows participants to

gain exposure not only to new material, but also to the band's catalog. This might also

lead to revenue for the band and the label through legal sales of recordings and the

purchasing of concert tickets. Several of the participants claimed that their paid

attendance at the live shows and subsequent purchase of merchandise (t-shirts, hats,

posters, etc.) from artists would offset the loss of royalties from record sales. Also by

purchasing of concert tickets punk bands will have a higher profit from ticket sales, merchandise, and recording sales at the show.

For several reasons, just as fans argue, punk bands may earn greater profit potential from live shows. Record companies only play a peripheral role in concerts (may promote the show and offer some tour support money), but usually do not benefit financially from the live show (except for any increased record sales at retail). The costs associated with putting on a punk show are significantly lower than a typical major label artist's world tour (smaller venues and punk bands travel with minimal gear – thus punk bands can tour in vans, instead of multiple buses and semi-trucks). The lower costs associated with punk live shows suggest that the break-even point occurs faster than a major label sponsored tours and any extra revenue was profit for the band. Usually 80% to 90% of all merchandise revenue (hats, t-shirts, etc.) sold at the show reverts to the band (some venues collects a percentage of merchandise sales). While bands collect most of the merchandise revenue, the initial cost to produce the merchandise is more expensive than a blank CD, which may affect overall profits for the band. Finally, how often a band tours, popularity, economic factors, and ticket costs will all influence overall tour revenue.

As noted earlier, touring was (and remains) a central promotional tool for punk recordings. Therefore, punk bands tour more often than traditional rock bands. Because punk bands tour so often, punk fans have many opportunities to see their favorite bands. While focus group participants did not indicate an exact figure on the number of punk

rock shows that they attended each year, all did indicate active participation in the subculture. Punk fans in New Jersey have many different venues they can attend, particularly in the central part of the state (Middlesex, Monmouth and Ocean Counties). For example, Asbury Lanes located in Asbury Park hosts weekly punk shows and punk dance nights; Starland Ballroom in Sayreville offers monthly live punk performances from national punk acts; beginning in 2006 the Meadowlands Sports Complex became the annual site for the Bamboozle festival; and the Warped Tour makes yearly stops at a concert venue in New Jersey.

Touring:
A recurring theme throughout the focus groups discussions is the importance of the live show for discovering new punk music within the subculture. Sixteen of the 24 participants mention that it is the number one method. The remaining participants indicate that they rely on a combination of live shows, the Internet, and friends as their primary source for finding out about new punk music. Focus group three's participants are representative in their response to the question about their favorite method for finding out about new punk music:

Focus group 3
Mitch: Shows.
Andrea (B): Shows.
Angela: Shows.
Andrea (A): Shows.
Tina: Shows.
Sarah: Friends.
Andrea (B): Yeah, friends.
Angela: Yeah, friends are good. They are good at exposing you to new things. That is how I got into a lot of things in high school, because of friends
Rachel: Opening Bands. I've been using the Internet and going to gigs since I was like 14 or 15 to find new stuff.
Linda: That's a big one [the Internet].

Most punk shows feature several opening acts and almost half of the focus group

participants (11) said that exposure to these opening acts often inspires them to look for

more information (MP3 samples, future tour dates, merchandise, etc.) about the band

online after the show. All the participants need is the name of the band and they can find

additional content and information concerning the band online. Band members from 9

Reasons to Die mentioned that they promote the band's MySpace profile at shows with

express intent of having the aforementioned happen on their online profile. This ability to

have easier access to punk bands material online after a show allows for much quicker

transmission and spreading of punk music worldwide. Participants also said that they

visit a band's Website (or MySpace profile), instead of its record label's online site.

Focus group 1
Alex: [At a live show] I mean I'll discover a band and be like, 'oh this band opens.' I'll
go home and check out on MySpace to find the rest of their music and like, 'oh they are
playing more shows' and if I liked them, I'll go see them again.

Focus group 2
Andrew (B): And you almost like can tell how good a band is by watching them live. If
you go to a show and some band blows you away, you'll like go home and download
their songs or go to MySpace or something and listen to it.
Rob: Talk to people at shows, too, and see what they listen to when they go home.
Because if you are both there to see the same band, perhaps there is a common interest
and you go home and listen to your favorite band on the Internet. I have found a lot of
great hard to find bands on the Internet [punk bands on small European labels that do not
have distribution in the United States]. I think it is really useful.

Focus group 3
Mitch, Angela, Tina, and Andrea (A) all agreed with Sarah, who said:

> Like think of how many times you go out to like a show and you like run into
> someone and they are like you know, 'I really like this band and then you would like
> never remember it.' Unless you could go back instantly and just, like, check it out and
> like tag it somewhere.

Focus group participants' said that they visit numerous online sites for this type of

information including band Websites and MySpace.com profiles. A smaller group of

participants visits online aggregators such as Absolutepunk.net, PunkRock.org, and

PunkNews.org for this information. Only a few participants say that they also go to venue

Websites to obtain tour information (tour dates, opening acts, ticket availability dates,

etc.) and to purchase tickets directly from the venue.

Focus group 1
Glen: I was going to say that the actual venues' Websites.
All: Yeah.
Glen: You said this yourself.
Rachel: You are not going to get personal recommendations from just a list of venues.
Dave: Yeah, but you might see a band you recognize on the venue list. You might go and check the band out.
Dan: You see a band name and you might say, 'Yeah let me go check them out.'

Focus group 2
Lando: The venue's Website.
Andrew (B): Yeah, the venues are a really key, because they keep it up-to-date just because …
Lando: It's their job.
Andrew (B): Yeah it's their job; it's like they're not going to slack off because they have to make money off of it. So that's, like, usually the most reliable.

Focus group 3
Andrea (A): I'll do certain venues like Roseland Ballroom or Starland Ballroom and then just have them send me [e-mail updates are available from most venues]. I'll see if there is anything I like.
Sarah: Yeah, me, too.
Angela: Yeah, I buy tickets.

Two members of the focus group three mentioned membership in a band mailing lists

will also assist in the purchasing of tickets online for punk shows.

Dani: The good thing about the Internet is that, like, when you are on your favorite bands mailing list, sometimes you'll get pre-sale tickets.
Andrea A. (20): Yeah.
Dani: Yeah, you can get all of the good tickets online before anyone else.

Online punk aggregators and particularly Websites of venues and bands are apparently

becoming the central locale for all matters concerning punk tours. Only two participants

said that they actually visit punk label Websites for information about tours. In fact,

findings suggest that most of the participants look everywhere but the label's Website for

many aspects of the punk subculture (MP3 samples, news, tour information, etc.). With

so many online sites offering similar content, the need to visit a label's Website for

content is minimized.

MySpace.com
The focus group participants' responses suggest one of the fastest growing online sites to

gather punk information is MySpace.com. Focus group participants' reactions to

MySpace.com impact on the punk subculture are quite diverse.

Focus group 1
Colleen: I have definitely gotten a lot more information off of the MySpace.
Linda: Yeah, I get a lot of info on bands.
Glen: Yeah, MySpace is key.

Focus group 2
Jordan: MySpace.
Lando: MySpace is a revolution.
Jason: Anyone or any band can get heard.
Andrew (B): Yeah.
Jason: People know about it, whether it's just some guy with a microphone or some guy
who went to a studio.

Focus group 3
Andrea (A): MySpace is a good way to promote.
Mitch: Yeah.
Andrea (A): It's a great way to promote.
Andrea (B): I think it's a good resource though. Something that is really cool about it is
that I can go to a band's Website that you like and then oftentimes if you go there, there
are other bands that they are friends with. Then you can click on them and listen to
samples of their music, without having to download the songs. You can listen to entire
songs and then decide whether it is a band you are interested in or not. And plus it is nice
that it lists all of the shows that they are playing, right there, right in front of you.

The social networking site allows for fans, bands, and labels to communicate a wide

variety of information to one another. Participants indicate that bands design their

profiles to feature content about the band, label, photos, videos, and blogs. One of the

important aspects of MySpace.com is that similar to the 'old school' punk fliers, many

punk fans add themselves to punk bands and labels profiles, so that they might receive e-

mail blasts containing information about upcoming shows, releases, and up-to-the-minute

news.

Focus group 1
Rachel: Any band can just log in (on MySpace) and any band can let everyone know that
we have, like, a secret gig coming up. So, I'll just make a bulletin instead of bothering
you.
Dan: Yeah!
Rachel: It's an easy mailing list

Focus group 2
Andrew (B): You find out through those shows like through the Internet. I don't think
there has been a show that I have been to from a flier in like the past two years probably.
Everything is on the Internet and MySpace.

A few focus group participants indicate that MySpace.com band profiles allows punk

fans to get information about new bands unknown to them previously. Andrew (B), KT,

and Rob all agreed with Lando, of focus group two, who said:

> If you go to a band's Website, usually if you see in their top eight [Myspace.com
> allows bands to list music influences and music friends], you know like a band called
> the something, or they have a band promo picture and you go check them out. If this
> band likes them, I might like them too because I like the original band.

Focus group 3
Andrea (B): I can go to bands' Websites that you like and then oftentimes, if you go to
there friends, there are other bands they are friends with. Then you can click on them and
listen to samples of their music and you do not have to download the songs. You can
listen to entire songs and then decide from there, you know, whether it is a band you are
interested in or not.

This access allows fans to have admittance to a wider spectrum of punk music, both new

and old. MySpace.com assists the promotion and marketing of both new and old punk

recordings. Members of focus group two had the following exchange:

Rob: They put whole songs [on MySpace.com].
Andrew (B): Yeah.
Jordan: Yeah.
Lando: You can put up to four songs online.

Rob: Yeah.
Andrew (B): Which is great because some of them put on old stuff, so you may not even dig their new stuff, but at least you can hear the old stuff and buy that.

The set-up of MySpace.com allows punk bands to assist fans in gaining access to samples

of older punk recordings. MySpace.com also allows fans to download up to four MP3

samples. The benefit of this access is that it might spark fan interest in purchasing older

catalog material from a band.

Focus group 1
Researcher: MP3 samples on MySpace?
Glen: Sometimes.
Dan: Sometimes.
Alex: Sometimes. When like a new CD is coming out.

Focus group 2
Rob: They put whole songs.
Andrew (B): Yeah.
Jordan: Yeah.
Lando: You can put up to four songs online.
Rob: Yeah.
Jordan: You can download it straight off MySpace.
Jason: You can download it straight off MySpace.
Andrew (B): If the band lets you.
Rob: Yeah.

Focus group 3
Sarah: It's a great marketing tool…. If someone tells you like go check out this band and you have no other way of doing it, you can just go on to MySpace and chances are they are going to have a MySpace profile or a PureVolume or something.

MySpace.com offers punk fans inconsistent access to MP3 samples. While many punk

bands will offer usually at least four samples that users can stream from the band's

MySpace.com profile, the actual number of samples available for downloading is solely

at the band's discretion. Some punk bands offer users the ability to stream and download

all of its MySpace.com tracks, while other bands only allow streaming. In addition, the

mixture of what was available (old songs vs. new songs) for users to stream or download

on punk bands' MySpace.com profiles is also at the discretion of the band. Some bands

will evenly split what is available (two new and two old), while other bands will offer

users access to more new song than old (and vice versa).

Issues concerning MySpace.com
One focus group suggests that the downside of this move to MySpace.com is that now

most Websites are now exclusively found at the social networking site. Most participants

in focus group one agree that many punk bands and some punk labels no longer have a

Webpage, but instead have made the MySpace.com template its central online site

design.

Focus group 2
BP: The paradox now is that most band Websites are now their MySpace sites.
Andrew (B): That kinda of sucks.
BP: It's like their new jumping-off point.
Lando: Yeah.
Andrew (A): 'Cause I like having band Websites because that made it like more personal.
It's just like us wanting to buy the physical – the cover art and all that crap. Having a
band Website has all of these cool effects and songs playing and stuff. It is like another
lost art in punk music.
Andrew (B): Yeah I get pissed off every time I'm at a show and they are like – 'Yeah
check us out on MySpace slash whatever. What the hell! Why can't you have your own
Website?
Lando: Yeah.
KT: Yeah.

This finding suggests that the reason that most punk fans no longer utilize individual

punk band's Websites is because they no longer exist. Instead, a majority of band

Websites has migrated to social networking Websites such as MySpace.com. (and all of

the band interviews support this finding). Many punk independent punk labels have

simply made MySpace.com its central Website. Because many of the punk bands and

labels are available all at one site, punk fans can just search for the band's name on

MySpace.com (which they will know) and not the band's label (which they probably will

not know). While the two Andrews of focus group three opposed this move, it is

important to note, the remaining members of the focus groups seem to suggest that a

significant portion of the interaction between punk fans, bands, and independent labels

takes place on the MySpace.com, which is under the control of the corporate behemoth

News Corporation (Fox). In 2005, News Corporation purchased Intermix Media, Inc.

(MySpace's parent corporation) for $580 million dollars. The impact of this control and

other recent changes will be discussed in my conclusion chapter.

Chapter 9: Conclusion and Future Issues

Results of the focus groups and interviews seem to suggest that independent punk labels devote very little of its promotional and marketing online initiatives to targeting individual punk fans. Instead, most independent punk labels distribute content to as many online sites as possible. The goal is to try to place content on Websites that punk fans frequently visit. This type of online initiative by punk labels may actually be the best strategy, because a majority of the focus group participants says that they actively use the Internet to search for punk content and music. This blanketing of the Internet with content relies on the fact that independent punk labels have access and the ability to post information and advertisements on key online punk aggregators sites (PunkRock.org; PunkBand.com; AbsolutePunk.net; and PunkHardcore.com, etc.) and social networking sites (MySpace.com), with the latter becoming an increasingly important online promotional location.

One-to-one communication between punk band members and individual punk fans is rare online. While punk fans regularly reach out to punk bands (particularly on their MySpace profiles), punk bands rarely respond beyond adding the fan to its profile page. According to band and label personnel, the reason interaction with fans is so minimal is that most of the fan messages are questions that do not require a response from the band. Common postings included reactions to live show performances they attended; positive remarks about a recording; and/or a question whose answer is available elsewhere relatively easily by the fan (e.g. When are you guys coming to Des Moines, Iowa?). The punk bands interviewed (unsigned and signed) all indicate that they do answer legitimate fan questions, but offered no hard data on how often this occurs. The lack of one-to-one

communication among punk fans and bands is not an issue for the focus group participants. That is, punk fans do not seem to complain that their communications get no or little response from bands or labels; they do not appear to expect it.

Communication between punk bands and fans occurs mainly in the form of one-to-many (i.e., from band to lists of fans) and often involves sending out online fliers for upcoming shows, new recordings, and important news messages concerning the band (new members, release date for a new single, etc.). Most of these messages appear on online punk aggregators, posted on the band's MySpace profile page, or featured on other bands' MySpace profiles to which the band is linked. Many punk bands utilize each other's profiles by posting online fliers to assist in marketing content to as many fans as possible. Overall, in a similar fashion to its labels, punk bands seek to send messages as cheaply and to as many punk fans as possible.

From its inception, the punk subculture has been full of contradictions. On the one hand, the intent of the punk subculture was to separate participating members of the subculture from the mainstream. To do this, punk subculture members appropriated both fashion and music and re-contextualized it to make something that would be both new and threatening to mainstream society. As the punk subculture movement grew in size, companies involved in both the fashion and music industry began to try to co-opt the subculture through mass-produced punk fashion styles and signing distribution/joint venture deals with punk labels and/or simply signing individual punk bands to major label contracts. While, most of the first wave of punk was ultimately co-opted by the

mainstream society, punk as a subculture did not die. Instead, the second wave of punk, hardcore, which preached a do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos, survived outside of the mainstream longer (1979-1986) than the first wave of punk via an underground network of clubs, record stores, and independent labels, before it too was co-opted by the mainstream. This co-option by the mainstream remains the central contradiction of punk. The co-option of punk bands and labels occurred for two central reasons: band and/or independent label needed financial support to distribute and promote new recordings and/or both wish to reach a larger mainstream audience.

The Internet's impact on this central question of the punk subculture –whether to stay underground or to strive for mainstream acceptance – is quite diverse. The Internet offers the punk subculture the potential to reach a worldwide audience more easily and cheaply than the aforementioned DIY network. Punk bands and labels can use the Internet to promote and distribute records; form relationships with other punk bands and individual punk fans; book, promote, and sell tickets to shows; and form online communities based solely on a regional scene or band via social networking sites. Membership within these online communities is based on common interests among members for a specific band or regional punk scene. The Internet offers DIY punk bands that wish to remain outside of the mainstream culture the tools to retain this independence. For instance, Kyle of No Milk Records mentioned an underground punk scene based on hardcore punk bands such as LacKING nXhXc ReStraint that initially did not record (although this band recently added songs to its MySpace profile), but instead performed live at BMX trails (wooded area) within the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area. This regional underground punk scene

used the Internet extensively to promote show times and dates to subculture members. In addition, subculture members active within the Ska genre of punk started their own Pittsburgh Ska Scene page on Myspace.com. This page not only offers Ska members and bands within this scene to find out information about Pittsburgh-based Ska bands, shows, and new recordings, but also serves as a central location to form an online Ska community.

While research from this project suggests that members of the New Jersey punk subculture mainly use the Internet as a promotional tool and not as a community builder for the subculture, this is not true for other regional punk scenes. For example, both the aforementioned Pittsburgh Ska Scene and the Syracuse Ska Scene extensively utilize online technologies assist in the formation of subculture communities online. The Syracuse Ska Scene site (http://www.syracuseska.com/links.html) is a one stop online location for Syracuse Ska fans to connect and communicate with one another on message boards and blogs. And the Syracuse Ska fans do use the site in precisely this way: While the site also serves as a promotional tool for bands and labels, it serves as a central online location for Syracuse Ska fans to communicate directly with one another. The site also provides links to other Ska online communities throughout the United States. These online communities provide Ska fans a central online location that differs from the NJScene.com because the site is meant to serve one specific music community and not the entire region. For example, on the Syracuse Ska Forum (http://www.syracuseska.com/forum/), The Rocksteady Lounge moderated by LaZy has over 47,000 message board posts concerning 4,000 different topics. While some of the

posts are promotional in nature, most are questions and responses centered on discussions about punk shows, films featuring Ska music, and the tendency of Ska bands to cover other artist's songs. This type of genre specific online forum creates an outlet in which community members can forge ongoing discussion concerning Ska outside of live Ska performances. Such an online location strengthens the bond between regional Ska members by offering them a central location in which members can continually participate within the subculture.

A similar online gathering site for punk fans from New Jersey does not currently exist because of geography. Located between two major cities (Philadelphia and New York City), the punk scene in New Jersey is different from Syracuse in that punk fans have easy access to numerous shows in New York City and Philadelphia, as well as stopover shows traveling between the two cities. The potential to attend so many shows in the area perhaps indicates that online communities are not needed as much as areas where punk shows are not as common.

So, one conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that regional punk subculture scenes (as well as other regional subculture music scenes) should develop and implement one-stop online locations in which subculture members can gather and collect and/or distribute information. These online aggregators are similar to genre specific online locations (i.e. punkrock.org.), but are designed to be genre specific. These genre specific online aggregators assist punk fans in finding their preferred content by the region in which they live, therefore bypassing the clutter of the Internet, as well as connecting

online genre specific regional scenes with one another. This type of online aggregator is very similar to the underground network of clubs, labels and bands that hardcore punk bands established in the 1980s. The central difference is that an online aggregator makes it easier, faster, and cheaper for specific music subcultures to communicate with one another on a regional and worldwide basis. While touring will always play an important role in the building of community within most music subcultures, online communication at genre specific sites can also plays an important role in sustaining and building subculture communities.

Reactions among punk fans, punk band members, and employees of independent punk labels concerning the recent domination of MySpace.com of online communication about punk were mixed. A majority of the punk fans I interviewed said that MySpace profiles made it easier to get information about punk (shows, recordings, band information) because MySpace was so easy to use. However, one punk fan, Andrew (A) was less than enthusiastic about MySpace and yearned for a return to the pre-Internet punk subculture of yesteryear. Other members of Andrew A's focus group stressed that punk subculture participants can still manage to bypass the online environment, and simply attend numerous gigs and recording sessions to engage in face-to-face communication with other members. A significant portion of the punk fans from the focus groups, as well as some of the punk band members and employees of punk labels, complained that a major drawback of the Internet and MySpace.com is that these communication systems make it too easy for anyone and everyone to post recordings, messages, and information. Frere-Jones (2008) suggested: "Internet exposure seems to have become an acceptable

substitute for experience, and many artists are getting signed before they've played a live show, mastered the art of songwriting, or found their voice" (p. 84). This ease in online access has led many sites to become overwhelmed with musical content. Only a few focus groups members and interviewees took opposite position and instead argued that ease of use for artists and labels is one of the central benefits of the Internet (particularly MySpace) for any unsigned artist.

Finally, two of the punk band members I interviewed (Ely from City Sleeps and Evan from From Downtown) argued that they were both somewhat uncomfortable about allowing punk fans online access to punk music for free (MP3's). Evan (and Ely as well) felt that while the online environment is beneficial (particularly for the promotion of recordings and tours) to bands, it is still more important for their bands to write good material and perform those songs live. Ely also suggests that the availability of free material online (particularly MP3's) might ultimately harm the entire recording industry financially. Without financial revenue from record sales, the recording industry will increasingly divide into just superstar bands and artists (i.e. Britney Spears, Green Day, etc.) with full financial support of the major labels vs. everyone else. For instance, since 2005, Island Def Jam (Universal Music Group) pop-star Rihanna has released three full-length albums that have all sold in the millions, while hundreds of thousands of other artists have gone unnoticed. Without major label financial support, mid-level bands will not be able to support or build fan bases through traditional promotion and marketing techniques (commercial radio airplay, videos, television and film soundtracks, etc.). This

will make it difficult for them to stand out among the other hundreds of thousands of
bands on and offline.

The ramifications of a newly configured recording industry may be both helpful and
harmful to the punk subculture. The benefit of a newly configured recording industry for
the punk subculture is that issues of 'selling out' and the threat of major labels corrupting
'DIY' ethos might happen less often. If in the future, major labels infrequently offer
financial support to mid-level artists (i.e. punk artists signed to major labels through joint
venture deals with its independent punk label), the corruption and infiltration of the punk
subculture by major labels might occur less often. Most research has found that
monopolization of the distribution and promotion aspects of the recording industry allows
major labels to retain control of the industry (Lopes, 1992; McChesney, 2004; Peterson &
Berger, 1990; Rossides, 2003). As noted in the literature review, periodically throughout
punk's history independent punk bands and labels have made deals with major labels to
reach larger audiences and/or receive financial support for recording, distributing, and
promotion activities. However, several journalists, record executives, and scholars
suggest that major labels may no longer pursue this type of business model. Danny
Goldberg, a former major label executive at Atlantic and Warner Brothers Records; the
former co-owner of Artemis Records; former manager for Nirvana and Sonic Youth; and
current owner of the music management company, Gold Village Entertainment, said:

> The majors have to think very short-term. They need hits. It used to be that they were
> in that business (signing anyone with a hint of potential) but also in the business of
> developing long-term acts, so they could sign a Talking Heads and over a period of
> time, they would become valuable. But that secondary part of their business is simply
> a luxury that they can't afford anymore. (Quoted in Sisario, 2008, p. 22; see also
> Black et al., 2007, p. 166; Sanneh, 2008, p.28; Waddell, 2008, p. 26)

Goldberg also suggested in an op-ed article in the recording industry trade magazine,

Billboard (March 8, 2008), that major labels will now focus their attention on "licensing

their catalogs and drop all artists except those who fit current crossover radio needs or

have superstar status" (p. 4). Altering the business relationships that traditionally existed

between punk artists and labels with major labels (particularly distribution deals), may

allow the punk subculture, its music, fashion, and ethics to return to its initial goal of

"living apart" from mainstream culture (Colegrave & Sullivan, 2001). However, the

demise of distribution deals between punk labels and the major labels may be harmful to

the future of the punk subculture.

Possible harmful consequences for the punk subculture include less financial support for

bands to record, distribute, and promote new recordings to fans. If the recording industry

becomes an industry in which the major labels only sign and support superstar careers

(although finding and turning an artist into a superstar like Rihanna is inexact science) at

the expense of supporting mid-level artists, may profoundly impact the punk subculture.

Golding and Murdock (1991) suggested an important factor on the diversity of cultural

products available to consumers is the impact of access to capital funding. As noted in the

literature review, and confirmed by several interviews with independent punk labels,

many punk bands and independent labels rely on major labels for financial support

(particularly in promotion, distribution, etc.) through joint venture deals. As record sales

continue to decline (500.5 million records sold in 2007 from a high of 785 million

records in 2000), future business plans of the major labels may include only pursuing

superstar artists (i.e. mainstream radio-friendly artists) at the expense of all other genres,

including punk (Bambarger, 2008). The former business model of signing joint venture deals with up-and-coming independent punk labels to gain access to potential crossover punk bands may cease. Without these types of joint venture deals, independent punk labels may increasingly find it difficult to finance future recordings, promotion campaigns, and distribution costs associated with new and old recordings. Such a scenario would also affect other underground genres of music including reggae and heavy metal.

360-Degree Deals:

The widespread assimilation and usage of peer-to-peer networks and MP3's within the punk subculture (as well as all other genres of music) predicts that current and future generations of punk fans will assume that all genres of music are available free online. Potentially this means that punk subculture participants may purchase fewer recordings from independent punk labels. In order to deal with this perception, independent punk labels without major label support may need to sign future punk bands to new recording contracts - called 360-degree deals - to survive. According to Bruno (2007e) a 360-degree deal allow labels to "sign artists to contracts that include a cut of not only album sales, but also their merchandise, touring and other revenue that historically the labels did not get a piece of" (p.18). EMI Records introduced the 360-degree deal in 2002, when it re-signed British pop star Robbie Williams. Since this deal, rap-rock band Korn (EMI), the punk band, My Chemical Romance (Warner Brothers), and pop-punk band Paramore (Atlantic/Fueled By Ramen) have also signed 360-degree contracts. According to Leeds (2007) 360-degree deals "like many innovations, these deals were born of desperation; after experiencing the financial havoc unleashed by years of CD sales, music companies

started viewing the ancillary income from artists as a potential new source of cash" (p.

AR 34). While the terms of each deal are different, Knopper (2007) speculates that a

typical 360-degree deal may breakdown as follows:

360-degree deal example

	Touring Income	Record Sales Income	Merchandise Income
Record Label	10%	85%	10%
Artist or Band	90%	15%	90%

The fourth component of the 360-degree deal, publishing rights, commonly gives artists

nine cents a song (per album sold), with the remaining profits split between music

publishers and record companies. Bands that sign 360-degree deals surrender

merchandise and touring revenues that once returned unfettered back to the band. In

exchange for giving up a share of these revenue streams, labels offer bands more upfront

money and more comprehensive career support (Leeds, 2007). Career support for punk

bands usually involves funds to sustain tours.

An adoption of the 360-degree deal by independent punk labels may be harmful to punk

because it includes tour and merchandise revenue sharing. As noted in the literature

review, punk bands rely almost exclusively on touring and merchandise income to pay

for many different facets of being a working punk band. Punk bands particularly rely on

touring income to support future recordings, merchandise purchases, and to offset overall

touring expenses (gas, food, lodging, etc.). Butler (2008), Duhigg (2005), and Krueger

(2005) indicate most bands rely on revenues from touring (ticket and merchandise sales)

for as much as 70% to 100% of its total income. The importance of touring revenue to

overall financial health of all genres of bands becomes obvious by the sheer number of

merchandise items available for purchase at most live shows. Today, the selection of band merchandise available for purchase by fans is more extensive and diverse than just the typical concert t-shirt. For example, the pop punk band Paramore offers a wide-variety of merchandise for sale at its live shows: 32 styles of t-shirts; five styles of hoodies; fingerless gloves; three different posters; back-to-school folders; two styles of dresses; three styles of women's underwear; five styles of buttons, three styles of hats; tote bags; flip flops; and scarves. Revenue from the sale of merchandise at Paramore shows is then split three ways according to the terms of the 360-degree deal - Atlantic Records, Fueled By Ramen Records, and Paramore – with each receiving a specific percentage (see Knopper, 2007 above). The potential exists that if the 360-degree deal scenario becomes the norm for punk, income that previously supported punk bands needs, will now instead support the record labels' bottom line (to sign new bands, recording and promotion costs, etc.). While independent punk labels will more than likely funnel a share of that money back into the band (for new recordings and promotion expenses, etc.), that share may be less than previous revenue a band reached prior to the new 360-degree deals.

As noted above, punk fans do not actively use punk fanzines or radio (either commercial or non-commercial) to find new music or information concerning the punk subculture. This finding is predictable because commercial radio has always been reluctant to play punk music; non-commercial radio does play punk, but to a small audience; and traditional fanzines in print form are rarely available at shows or have converted into online blogs. Instead, punk fans in New Jersey actively search the Internet and attend punk shows for this content. For New Jersey-based independent punk labels and bands

not associated with the major labels, the Internet and touring does offer potential benefits for the promotion of new punk music.

The Internet offers punk band members the means to communicate with their fans on a more personal level. Punk band members can use the Internet to communicate directly with individual fans about recording sessions, band news or tour stories. This type of one-to-one communication online offers fans the chance to connect with punk bands on a deeper level than just fan worship from afar. This intimate online communication is important for punk bands because it may provide the band (and its label) the best and cheapest method to have their message (promotional or friendly) reach its intended audience. While this type of communication may be time-consuming and tedious work for band members, the benefits of such an endeavor for the band (and its label) is that this method offers the best chance to bypass the clutter of the internet and get their message directly to fans and to fans who will serve as strong online advocates (word-of-mouse, blogs, etc.) about the band.

Independent punk label owners should also continue to sign punk bands that can both write quality songs and maintain a dynamic stage presence. If the songs and performance are exceptional, punk fans will continually attend the band's show, as well find out more information about the band online. While strong songwriting and stage presence have always played an important role in the success of any punk band, today, a band's live performances is particularly significant. Label personnel should find and sign punk bands that are willing to tour extensively. In order to support a band's extensive tour, punk

labels personnel should try to negotiate with advertisers and sponsors to help finance

tours. Today, individual punk tours and punk festivals have received financial tour

support in exchange for promotion of their products from a diverse group of corporations

(Honda, Vans, Guitar Center, Kia Motors, AT&T, etc,). Annual strong attendance by

punk fans at corporate sponsored punk festivals and individual shows suggests that punk

fans are okay with corporate sponsorship. Corporate tour support may offset the loss of

financial assistance that at one time major labels provide to independent labels and/or

bands through joint ventures and distribution deals with major labels. This type of deal

allows punk bands to retain their original sound, ethos, and style, a fate not available to

punk bands that sign with a major label.

Impact of MySpace.com
As noted in the literature review, MySpace.com was developed as an online social

networking site for independent musicians and bands to interact with one another. Since

its inception, the site became a central location among fans, bands, and independent

recording labels to interact with one another. While major labels also utilized social

networking sites for promotion and marketing, it was mainly on a case-by-case basis. The

potential problem facing independent punk labels in its utilization of social networks for

the promotion and marketing (as well as distribution) of its recordings online was that

these sites were increasingly coming under the influence of the major labels. Schiller

(2000) concluded that the Internet "as a democratic structure for international individual

expression, it was more realistic to recognize it as only the latest technological vehicle to

be turned, sooner or later, to corporate advantage-or advertising, marketing and general

corporate aggrandizement" (pp. 117-118; see also McChesney, 2000, p. 21).

Recent deals between social networking sites and major labels, along with technological

advancements in advertising online, will make it increasingly difficult for punk fans,

bands and labels to connect online. For example, Warner Music Group and MySpace will

team up to promote tracks from James Blunt's new album '*All the Lost Souls*' on the

social networking site. The new tracks are available for downloading (DRM-free) and

streaming for all MySpace users. In addition, banner ads on MySpace will prominently

feature James Blunt's new album (Bruno, 2007c). The aforementioned MySpace

relationship with Warner Brothers is for a single artist; a new deal between MySpace and

Sony BMG grants social networking users access to the entire Sony BMG catalog of

audio and video clips to decorate their MySpace profiles. In return for this privilege,

MySpace is expected to highlight Sony BMG products and artists throughout the site, on

banner ads, as well as share a portion of any advertising revenue generated (O'Malley,

2007). Sony BMG also struck similar deals with Yahoo! that allows online users to

upload Sony BMG content (music and video) from Yahoo! to their personal computers

(Walsh, 2007). These new relationships between the major labels and social networking

sites extends the power of the major labels to both control over the avenues of

distribution and promotion in both the online and offline environments. Major labels

long-standing control over the distribution and promotion avenues of recorded music, in

addition to the new relationships formed with social networking sites may further

strengthen the control by the major labels over the recording industry.

The success of MySpace led to the creation of its main competitor, FaceBook, and

several other new social networking platforms, including YouTube's addition of a social

networking component to its popular online video service and Yahoo!'s Mash site. In addition, established conglomerates developed and launched social networking sites to compete against MySpace. Recent examples of conglomerates launching social networking sites include MTV's development of the social networking site Flux and radio conglomerate Clear Channel Communications implementation of individual social networking sites attached to radio station Websites. These new social networking sites will allow conglomerates to cross-promote content across their media holdings and entice advertisers to promote across several different media platforms. For major labels, long established relationships with MTV and Clear Channel may now expand to include the new social networking sites to distribute and promote recordings. Therefore, in a similar manner to the inundation of major label content on established social networking sites (FaceBook and MySpace), these new social networking sites might also increasingly become overwhelmed with major label content.

Major media corporations are also investing in existing social networking sites. For example, Universal Music Group purchased a stake in the ad-supported hip-hop social networking site Loud.com. In 2006, CBS Corporation purchased the online music player/ social networking site, Lastfm.com. Les Moonves, president and CEO of CBS Corporation, said, "Lastfm.com adds a terrific interactive extension to all of our properties and also is a huge step in CBS Corporation's overall strategy of expanding our reach online transition from a content company into an audience company" (Quoted in Crossan, 2007, p. 1). Simultaneously with the purchase of Lastfm.com, CBS Corporation also re-started its dormant record division, CBS Records, which is set to release its first

album in 2008. What is unusual about this deal is that prior to the purchase Lastfm.com relied mainly on independent music to build its fifteen million strong music player/ social networking site. Recently, however, with the purchase by CBS, Lastfm.com has made content deals with the major labels EMI, Sony BMG and Warner Music Group to prominently highlight and promote both old and new music and video releases from each of the labels on the site.

Other new competitors such as Imeem, Mog, and Zude are also entering the social networking online platform. All of these new social networking sites require users to create their profiles based on individual musical interests. Each of the new social networking sites offers streaming content (no downloading) and made deals with the major labels to highlight prominently its recordings on each of the sites. For instance, Imeem has already made content deals with all four major labels (EMI, Sony BMG, Universal Music Group and Warner Music Group) that grant users access to music and videos from the online site (Bruno, 2007b). Imeem and other social networking sites deals with major labels require payment for the right to offer content to online users. It is then the responsibility of the major label to distribute back to its artists their percentage of the payment based on each artist's individual contract with the label. All of the above social networking sites made initial payments to the major labels and were required to share a percentage of the overall advertising revenue generated on the site. Some independent record labels have declined adding music to the new social networking sites due to royalty rate discrepancies offered to major labels (higher) than those to the independent labels (lower) (Walsh, 2008). The extensive back catalog of recordings

controlled by the major labels gives them leverage in negotiating higher royalty rates than independent labels (have a smaller catalog of recordings). Increasingly, online advertising is playing an important role within the social networking phenomenon.

For example, the two largest social networking sites (FaceBook and MySpace) are currently beta-testing services that provide several national advertisers the ability to target specific audiences with customized ads. Social networking sites can offer this type of advertising online on account of the advancements in technology that allow the sites to better understand users through information obtained on their profiles. Bruno (2007d) says FaceBook's new service offers advertisers "almost complete access to the information and personal contacts on FaceBook members profiles, which goes far beyond simple age, gender and location data, and includes such desirable details as music preferences" (p. 26). FaceBook also is testing a new beacon system that will follow registered FaceBook users' activity on other online Websites. Bruno (2007d) concluded:

> If a FaceBook member visits the Website of a band or a label using the Beacon code, that user might find an ad for an upcoming CD release waiting for them the next time they visit their FaceBook profile. (p. 26)

MySpace's new advertising initiative, HyperTargeting, is similar to Facebook's beacon system in that it also allows advertisers to target "certain interest groups" on the social networking site (Bruno, 2007d, p.26). The aim of the technology is to offer advertisers increased effectiveness in targeting its ads to its preferred audiences online. Bruno (2007e) notes that "these new programs offer DIY bands and major-label promotional teams much needed new tools to market new releases, concerts and more" (p.26). For DIY labels (including independent punk labels) unfortunately these new improved

advertising initiatives allows social networking sites to charge advertisers a higher premium for placement of ads on both the social networking sites. Recent figures released by FaceBook found that a three-month campaign with a special page on FaceBook might cost advertisers about $150,000 with the new advertising delivery system (Vara, 2007, p. B1). These costs are significantly higher than previous advertising costs on social networking sites. During my interview at Trustkill Records in the summer of 2006, Rob complained that the cost of a banner ad at MySpace was already expensive for his label: "It's huge. It is so expensive to advertise on there. To do a nominal banner advertising campaign we have to spend between $5000 and $6000 for a two-or-three week campaign." These higher costs might limit or make it prohibitive for an independent punk label to rely on banner ads to reach its intended target audience.

The costs associated with advertising on social networking sites will continue to rise in direct proportion to social networking sites increased popularity with online audiences. In 2007, worldwide advertising spending on social networking sites rose to $1.2 billion or an increase of 155% from the previous year (Ante & Holahan, 2008). eMarketer, a research company dedicated to online trends, report that advertising spending by advertisers on social networking sites is expected to reach $2.5 billion between 2007 and 2011 in the United States (Nicole, 2007). Parallel to the rise in number of ads and costs associated with advertising on social networking sites is the increased visibility of advertisements from national advertisers and media conglomerates (Pepsi, McDonald's, NBC, Warner Brothers, etc.), instead of local advertisers and media not associated with conglomerates. Consequently, independent punk labels that can afford the increased costs

(and choose) to post banner ads on social networking sites, will find that these ads will increasingly compete with banner ads from national advertisers, as well as major labels, for the same demographic audience online (males and females under thirty). The ability of major labels to flood the social networking sites with banner ads and other online advertising gives content from major labels a distinct promotional advantage over independent label product. The concern of this advantage is its impact on "the freedom of choice enjoyed by shoppers and the denial of choice" of online cultural products accessibility to consumers (Murdock, 1995). Finally, as the number of advertisers increases, so does the clutter associated with the social networking experience. This clutter may lead users to seek other online alternatives.

Social networking sites that serve mainly as promotion and marketing sites for record labels are also increasingly becoming distribution centers for music content. A recent example by the social networking site, MySpace.com suggests the future direction of online music distribution. Through its distribution partnership with Universal Music Group's Fontana Distribution , MySpace Records initial compilation releases featured recordings from major and independent labels. The first band to sign with MySpace Records was the punk band, Pennywise (formerly of Epitaph Records). Shortly after the signing, MySpace.com announced that the label would release free online the band's ninth studio album, *Free for the People,* on MySpace Records. Beginning in December 2007, Pennywise fans who register with Textango, the mobile music distributor, and "add it as a friend, which will allow them to download the entire album for free" during the first two weeks of the record's release on March 25, 2008 (Walsh, 2007, p. 7). The DRM

free, high-quality MP3 download of the album will come with a PDF file of the album's

full artwork. Ashton-Magnuson, Henry, & Schneider (2007) noted the release of the

Pennywise album "is the first time a United States record label has provided a band with

the opportunity to offer a new album free of charge and the first time MySpace has

offered a full album download with a worldwide push" (p.1). Since the announcement,

350,000 online users signed up to participate in the free download campaign on

MySpace.com. (Henry, Ashton-Magnuson, & Schneider, 2008). Pennywise vocalist Jim

Lundberg said:

> We can also potentially expose our music and message to people around the world
> who may have never had the opportunity to hear it because either they couldn't afford
> to buy a CD or they didn't have access to music outlets or good distribution. It's a way
> for us to instantly expand our music into places it's never been before. (Quoted in
> Ashton-Magnuson, Henry, & Schneider, 2007, p.1)

On the same day as the release of the new album online, MySpace Records will also ship

to retail enhanced CDs/DVDs and vinyl albums with bonus tracks through its distributor,

Universal Music Group's Fontana Distribution. The band toured extensively in 2008,

playing festival shows including several dates in Japan and Australia; a mini-tour of the

Western and Southwestern United States; the Extreme Action Sports Festival in Las

Vegas; the Snowboarding Championships at Stratton Mountain in Vermont; and the Vans

Warped Tour. I will return to this later to discuss in-depth the continuing importance of

touring to the punk subculture.

The new distribution relationship between the MySpace Records and Universal Music

Group is one of several recent promotion and now distribution agreements between social

networking sites and major labels. As noted earlier (Warner Music and MySpace deal for

promoting the new album by James Blunt), the Pennywise deal is the first example of a

major label and social networking site distribution deal. The old method of encumbering

peer networks in court is rapidly changing into a major strategy by labels which are

embracing online social networking sites for promoting, marketing and distributing its

content. Social networking sites are fast becoming the new peer-to-peer networking sites;

as such, they are now fully supported by the major labels. Alex Zubillaga, executive vice

president for digital strategy and business development at Warner Music Group, said,

"This deal provides an opportunity to unleash the value of music on one of the world's

leading social networks by giving fans an environment where they can discover and share

new music" (Quoted in Davis, 2007, p. 1). In 2007, the four major labels separately

brokered deals with MySpace and Facebook to distribute and promote upcoming new

releases on the social networking sites (Hau, 2008b, p. 1). Independent labels and artists

have been reluctant to sign individual deals with MySpace because of revenue disparities:

advertising and royalties offered to major labels and their artists are higher than those

offered independent labels and artists (Harding, 2008).

Major labels want to make as many deals with social networking sites as possible, using

them as a central promotion and distribution tool for recordings. According to Forrester

Research media analysts, James McQuivey:

> 2008 is going to be the year of music labels (major labels) trying to put themselves in
> front of everyone, no matter what business model it takes. The labels have realized
> that you have to be everywhere on the Web, because the customer is everywhere. You
> need to put yourself in front of them when they make their entertainment decisions.
> (Quoted in Kelley, 2007, p. 2)

Major labels are rapidly embracing the online environment to promote and distribute

product. By the beginning of 2008, all of the major labels also initiated plans to relax

digital rights management (DRM) restrictions on almost all of its online recordings. The

last DRM holdout, Sony BMG, recently announced that they would begin to release

online recordings without DRM protection (Caulfield, 2008, p. 1). Major labels are also

now rapidly embracing fans' ability to help promote recordings (on their profiles, trading

files, streaming content, etc.), while simultaneously making available on social

networking sites users' ability to purchase the track directly from the online social

networking site. This will turn the social networking sites into one of the central online

venues for both the promotion and distribution for major label recordings.

The emerging willingness of major labels to embrace social networking sites and DRM-

free music may have significant ramifications for independent punk bands and labels that

rely on similar practices to reach its target audience. The increasing exploitation of these

sites by major labels may lead to even more content online that users will have to weed

through to find their preferred content. One day in 2007, MySpace showered its users

with 7.3 billion ads (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 2). At the close of 2007, MySpace.com had

over six million registered band profiles on its site (Swartz, 2007, p. 2). Focus groups and

interviews suggest that a significant portion of these groups said that MySpace already

has too much content. With major labels' increasingly embracing social networking sites

and its technological advancements in advertising online, the amount of content on social

networking sites will likely continue to increase, which might make it even more difficult

for punk fans, bands, and labels to communicate with one another online. Punk labels not

associated with a major label (that can get the label placement online to have these connections) will now have to deal with the added challenge of building a significant punk fan base for its label in this overcrowded online environment. Precisely for this reason, punk fans online may bypass independent punk labels Websites and go directly to the band's online site (MySpace.com, Facebook.com, etc.) for information.

Because of this overcrowded online environment, placement of new music product in prominent online locations (banner ads, front-page ads, etc.) may become imperative to the sales success of an online recording. In a similar vein to the importance of placement at traditional retail establishments (end caps, display racks, etc.) and commercial radio airplay, bands and labels will need to financially support prominent placement of its product on the Internet (i.e. front page ads on Websites, banner ads, etc.). Such placement of new recordings in prominent locations online will cost bands and labels significant sums of cash, money that only major labels can afford. Such costs suggest that major labels are often reluctant to distribute and/or promote recordings that are unorthodox or controversial in content (Negus, 1999). Instead, major labels produce, distribute, and/or promote only recordings that are homogeneous in sound and style (Ahlkvist & Fisher, 2000; Christianen, 1995; Fox, 2004). Homogeneous financially supported major label recordings are then distributed and promoted in mass on social networking sites, therefore extending their dominance over the online environment. Unable to afford higher online costs may push independent bands and labels recordings to the margins on social networking sites, sites that they use to dominate. Independent punk labels have been relying on a minimal amount of direct online marketing to fans (e-mail, e-mail blasts, and

e-cards) and instead depend on placement of its product in key online locations where punk fans congregate (MySpace, online punk aggregators, etc.) and an occasional banner ad (depending on the promotion budget). In the near future, online sites that independent punk labels need to market product may become too expensive and overwhelmed with major label content to be an effective promotional and distribution outlet for independent punk rock music.

Other genres of music (heavy metal, reggae, folk) that are normally denied access to traditional promotion techniques (commercial radio, video airplay, etc.) rely on similar online promotion techniques (and live shows) to promote new recordings. Online social networking profiles allow fans of these genres to communicate in a similar manner to punk fans. Online social networking sites and Websites allow fans of music outside the mainstream to produce, gather, and/or send information (new recordings, tours, etc.) through either one-to-one communication or one-to-many communication online. These genres of music also face similar issues that punk fans and punk independent labels must now also confront: too much content online and the rising costs associated with prominently placing content online.

Touring:

To build audiences, I believe, independent punk labels and bands will still depend on live shows and tours. Bennett (2006) stressed the continual importance of face-to-face gatherings through concerts and shows as a central aspect of popular music fandom. Responses by label personnel mention that sales success of a new recording relies significantly on the live performance by the band. A significant portion of the online

promotion and marketing activities of the independent labels are designed to attract punk

fans to live shows. Shows allow fans to attend a relatively inexpensive show where they

can gain exposure to different punk bands. After the show, punk fans can return to the

online environment to sample more music or make purchases from each band's online

site. Focus group participants agree that live shows are important for finding and hearing

new punk music.

Punk shows, whether they take place in a backyard, a club, or VFW Hall offer punk fans

the chance to gather as a community and participate face-to-face within the punk

subculture. Fans attending live shows can experience music with like-minded individuals.

"Attending concerts provides a sense of community that is not present when listening to

music alone" (Black et al., 2007, p. 153). A majority of the focus group participants felt

that listening to music alone or participating in the punk subculture solely online does not

offer the same authentic subculture experience as a live punk show. These feelings are

best represented by Lando from focus group two: "The shows are where the energy is,

where everything goes down. You know, you can listen to a band on a CD or online, but

it's not the same feeling you get when it's, like, right there and you share the band's

emotion with other fans at a show." Finally, unlike online recordings, live punk shows do

not translate well online and cannot be pirated. Bruno (2007e) noted:

> The ace up touring industry's sleeve is the cold truth that a concert can't be pirated.
> You can't steal a live show. You can't send it to millions of other users with the press
> of the button. Sure, maybe some can distribute a bootlegged recording of a live show
> or post cell phone videos on YouTube. But ticket sales, merchandise sales, concession
> sales, sponsorship dollars - these are pirate-free. (p.18; see also Pareles, 2002, p. 2)

Since the authentic subculture experience of attending a live punk show does not translate

to the online environment, live shows will continue to play an important role for all types

of music subculture communities.

For punk bands, touring is an especially important aspect of the punk subculture

experience for the band and fans. Greg Attonitoi, lead singer for the punk band Bouncing

Souls, said: "Touring for us was how we created our relationships with our audience and

all the people we've met. To be a successful punk band, yes, people have to see what you

are really like" (Quoted in Diehl, 2007, p.142). Focus group members say that live shows

are important because recording technology allows anyone and everyone to post

recordings that can sound great online and horrible live. Members of focus group three

describe such a scenario:

Andrea (A): I think your live show gives you a lot of credibility, because you can sound
fantastic on the CD, but you get up there and your singer has no charisma, or is
constantly not in pitch, you, you suck. I'm not going to watch you or you're boring or
there is just something missing.
Angela: Yes.
Andrea (B): Anyone can sound great on a CD nowadays because they, like, have
everything to fix it, so the live show is the best part.

The performance of the band allows fans to decide for themselves the authenticity of the

band to the punk ethos. Lastly, fans can unite at punk shows and share their thoughts and

knowledge with other fans about the punk subculture.

Live shows also play an important financial role in the day-to-day operations for all types

of bands. Live shows "provide a direct means for artists to try to create and maintain an

adequate fan base to support their careers" (Black et al., 2007, p.155). Live shows are an

important source of income for punk bands and labels, particularly merchandise and

record sales at the show. At a venue, "fans are easily targeted audience for the

merchandise, as well as less price sensitive knowing they have already paid a good deal

for the chance to get in the door" (Jordan, 2005, p. 7). This is particularly important for

punk bands because overall revenues from retail CD sales continue to decline, "down

another 20% from 2006," while concert revenues continue to soar (Gustin, 2008, p.1).

Gross revenues generated by all tours grew by more than 100% between 1997 and 2005

(Black et al., 2007, p. 156). In 2007, tour revenues rose another 8% from 2006, to $3.9

billion (Hau, 2008a; see also Quinn & Chang, 2008). Touring revenues assist financially

punk bands and labels quest to continue making punk music.

Two potential issues, one local and one national, may impact punk tours. Several

members of focus group two said they recently encountered 'pay-to-play' tactics by local

club owners:

BP: But you know what it is about basement shows, like along the same lines of every kid who has a guitar now, now it's like every place you have to pay or sell tickets or pay-to-play.
Rob: Yeah.
BP: You know it's, like, it has gotten so much like harder to just be able to do it. You know you have to go through so much bureaucratic bullshit, with booking and all that sort of stuff in order to just get on a show.
Andrew (B): Yeah.
BP: You know, you're an unknown band, and it's your first show, 'Here's fifty tickets sell all of these, or you can't fucking play.' That's happened to me. I've been in a band, our first show, we had like thirty tickets, and we had to sell all of them, or we couldn't play. We had to end up buying some of them just to be able to play…
Rob: And depending on how many tickets you sell, that is how you are going to be asked back to play.
BP: Exactly.
Rob: You sold fifty tickets; you are going to be asked back. Not if you are a good band, not if you do something fresh, like, it is just complete bullshit.
BP: It's bureaucratic bullshit. That's what it is.

Andrew (A): I feel like that is more in, like, New Jersey, cause when I promote up in Massachusetts, that doesn't really happen to the degree that it happens here. A lot of shows in Jersey do that.
Andrew (B): Yeah, because it is so close to New York, and I think that kind of, like, ideal kind of crossed the river and spread around here.
Rob: Yeah.
Andrew (A): I mean I have a lot of friends in Massachusetts whose bands play shows, who are still really small bands, it's like their first show, and they won't have to sell tickets, they'll just show up and play.
Andrew (B): Yeah.
Andrew (A): They might not get paid or anything, but they'll still be able to play.
Andrew (B): Even if there is like one person there.
Andrew (A): Yeah.
BP: I think it's tough to have a scene when you have to find venues to play in where you have to get booked. It's tough to create a scene out of something like that.

Within the local punk scene, the increased usage of 'pay-to-play' tactics by club owners is making it difficult for punk bands to play live shows. BP's comments suggest that 'pay-to-play' tactics make it difficult, but not impossible, for punk bands and fans to establish punk scenes in Central New Jersey. Some members of focus group two agreed with BP's comments. But members of focus group three who played in punk bands said that they had never encountered 'pay-to-play' tactics when playing at clubs.[4] On the other hand, these participants said that they rarely play in the Central New Jersey area; they mainly perform in Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey.

Recent consolidation of venues by national promoters may also impact the New Jersey punk scene. Within the last two years, the two main concert promoters in the United States, Live Nation and AEG Live, have consolidated control over many of the larger and smaller punk performance spaces throughout New Jersey. For example, AEG Live books and promotes shows at Starland Ballroom in Sayreville; Live Nation does the same for

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4 Questions regarding 'pay-to-play' were not part of the discussion in focus group one because the phenomenon was not identified to the researcher until mentioned by members of focus group two.

Asbury Lanes, The Saint and Stone Pony all located in Asbury Park; Brighton Bar, Long Branch; Raceway Park, Englishtown – annual site of the Vans Warped Tour; and co-books the Starland Ballroom with AEG Live. Change in the control over these formerly independently promoted venues may alter the booking policies of each venue. The expansion by both companies to control concert venues throughout the United States increased the amount of debt that each company must absorb. As noted in the literature review, increased debt incurred by buying out competitors often led to less risk taking in the type of product developed by the newly formed company (McChesney, 2004; Robertson, 2000; Ryan and Wentworth, 1999). In addition, Live Nation has been particularly aggressive in pursuing deals with superstar acts including Jay-Z, Madonna, and U2. These deals let the company control, for a set number of years, all aspects of the artists' performance (recording, touring, merchandise, etc.) for large upfront fees (Jay-Z received $150 million; Madonna - $120 million; and U2 - $100 million) (Adegoke, 2008, p. 1). While these superstar artists will not perform at small venues, Live Nation and AEG Live may fill the aforementioned clubs with major label punk acts with established fan bases, instead of unknown punk bands. The combination of 'pay-to-play' and recent consolidation of local clubs by concert promoters Live Nation and AEG Live may in the future play an important role in the fate of live punk music in Central New Jersey.

Political Economy theory has paid particular attention to conglomerates ability to control the production of media and the consequences of this control on access of media content to consumers (Babe, 1993; Golding & Murdock, 1991; Goodwin, 2000; Mosco, 1996; Negus, 1999). Within the recording industry, major labels power and control stemmed from its ability to dictate distribution terms and finance expensive promotion and

marketing campaigns. In order to compete with major labels, independent labels made distribution and financial support agreements with the major labels. The development of the Internet and its associated tools (MP3 software, peer-to-peer networks (P2P), social networking sites and Websites) significantly altered this relationship.

Political Economy Theory:

Political Economy theory has paid particular attention to conglomerates ability to control the production of media and the consequences of this control on access of media content to consumers (Babe, 1993; Golding & Murdock, 1991; Goodwin, 2000; Mosco, 1996; Negus, 1999). Within the recording industry, major labels power and control stemmed from its ability to dictate distribution terms and finance expensive promotion and marketing campaigns. In order to compete with major labels, independent labels made distribution and financial support agreements with the major labels. The development of the Internet and its associated tools (MP3 software, peer-to-peer networks (P2P), social networking sites and Websites) significantly altered this relationship.

First, these online tools diminished the major labels control over consumer access to music. Peer-to-peer networks and MP3 software altered this control. MP3 software in conjunction with Peer-to-peer networks (Grokster, KaZaa and Napster) granted consumers unlimited free access to millions of copyrighted songs controlled by the major labels. Proponents of the free unlimited online music argued that peer-to-peer networks and MP3 software minimized what political economy theorists theorized was the greatest strength of the major labels; the ability to dominate the distribution of recorded music (Banks, 1996; Garnham, 1995; Goodwin, 2000; Mosco, 1996; Murdock, 1982; Steeves &

Wasko, 2002). Consumers' online access to free and unlimited music significantly altered the distribution dominance of the major labels. In response, major labels and the Recording Industry Association of America filed lawsuits against several different peer-to-peer networks. While these lawsuits successfully shut down Napster and Grokster, many other peer-to-peer networks still exist. At the same time of the lawsuits, Apple introduced the iPod, the first portable MP3 player to gain mass consumer acceptance. The success of the iPod and the iTunes Music Store, led to the major labels signing a variety of distribution deals with legal online music aggregators (Amazon, Apple iTunes Music Store, Best Buy, CD Baby, SpiralFrog, and Wal*mart). While MP3 software and P2P networks forced major labels to concede their domination over the distribution of music, deals with legal online aggregators allowed the major labels to retain some control and power through prominent placement and promotion of recordings on the online music aggregators. Major label artists also receive higher royalty payments than artists signed to an independent label. Therefore, while the major labels no longer dominate the distribution of music, they have retained some semblance of power and control through the relationships formed with legal online music aggregators. While the Internet has certainly reduced the major labels dominance over the distribution of music, as political economy theory suggests, this lost in dominance in distribution has not changed the power structure of the record industry. Major labels' still retain their dominance over independent labels through the better terms that artists on major labels receive in comparison to independent label artists.

The Internet offers anyone with online access the ability to participate within the recording industry. Online technologies such as Websites, MP3 software, P2P networks and social networking sites provide the tools for any artist or band the potential to promote and distribute music to a worldwide audience. However, these same tools also caused the online environment to become cluttered with millions of musical acts. While it's easy for artists and bands to establish an online presence, the difficulty lies in making audiences aware of that online presence. Today, major label artists and bands hold a distinct online promotion advantage over independent artists. This advantage stems from major labels access to online promotional funding and the ability to cross-promote artists through offline advertising spots and via synergies across other media platforms within the same corporation. This has and continues to be a central concern of political economy theory, the economic access to online funding gives major label artists a clear advantage over independent label artists in acquiring prominent online promotion real estate (Lopes, 1992; McChesney, 2004; Peterson & Berger, 1990; Rossides, 2003). For example, major labels can pay for banner ads on social networking sites; front page promotion on online music aggregators; and pay for artists to perform live Webcasts. Access to promotional funds, in conjunction with potential synergies within divisions of the same conglomerate, still give the major labels a distinct promotional advantage over independent label artists.

Previous political economy studies have suggested that dominance by major labels over the recording industry were based on the major labels' ability to dictate the terms of distribution, as well as their control over the access to promotion outlets through economic superiority. While the major labels may never again have absolute control over

the distribution and promotion of music on account of the Internet, the findings suggests that the better terms with online music aggregators and continual access to promotional funds enjoyed by the major labels still gives major labels distinct advantages over independent artists and labels.

9.1. Future Issues

'Net Neutrality' policy may have a significant impact on numerous industries that using the Internet to promote and distribute their products. 'Net Neutrality' supporters want the Internet to remain free of all distribution pricing tiers and allow for the free flow of information online. Ann Chaitovitz, executive director of the lobbying group the Future of Music Coalition, said, "Net Neutrality gives musicians the chance to reach their fans directly, without interference from gatekeepers and middlemen" (Chaitovitz, 2008, p. 8). Cable and telephone Internet service providers oppose 'Net Neutrality' and instead call for regulations that allow these companies to charge higher distribution fees to companies that wish to have their content distributed as a priority online. Such regulations might lead to the Internet becoming a tiered pay system: The higher the user fees paid, the greater distribution priority a user's content receives from the Internet service provider. In addition, companies and individuals that utilize larger portions of the available bandwidth during uploading and downloading of content online would pay more. Such a system would push content from companies with insignificant financial backing to the margins of the Internet.

For independent punk bands and labels that cannot afford priority content delivery, this might lead to a further marginalization of its content online; content by the major labels with financial support from its parent corporations would avoid such marginalization. .

Aram Sinnreich, an analyst with Los Angeles-based Radar Research, said, "All of a sudden it (the loss of 'Net Neutrality') makes it much harder for independent musician to reach a global audience and makes a major label contract that much more valuable by comparison. It shifts the balance of power away from communities and back towards the big dogs" (Quoted in Garrity & Martens, 2007, p. 8; see also Chaitovitz, 2008, p. 8). Justin Jouvenal, communications director for the Future of Music Coalition, said:

> A tiered system would be especially problematic for the music community because the open Internet has fueled a music revolution. Small and independent musicians now have the type of access to fans that was once only open to the largest and most well financed artists (major labels). Music fans have access to a dizzying array of bands and genres of music not readily available before. If telecoms have their way, this golden age of music could come to an end. They will replace the Internet's level playing field with a system that will once again make money the driving force behind exposure. (Jouvenal, 2007, p. 1; see also Ulanoff, 2007, p. 1)

In addition, public advocacy groups including the Media Access Project, Free Press, and Consumer Federation of America, as well as legal scholars from Stanford, Yale, and Harvard have filed a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission against Comcast. The complaint accuses Comcast of "interfering with its (online) users' ability to access legal content by cutting off peer-to-peer file-sharing networks such as BitTorrent and Gnutella" (Mark, 2007a, p. 1). Comcast is accused of "sometimes slowing down or blocking traffic that uses BitTorrent peer-to-peer networking technology" (Burrows, 2007b, p. 26). This interference with the transferring of files on peer-to-peer networks may particularly harm all types of independent music due to the openness of bands and labels to allowing music fans to transfer MP3s online. Currently, the 'Net Neutrality' matter is under review by the Federal Communications Commission. Jonathan Adelstein, Federal Communications Commissioner, said, "We must preserve the open and neutral

character of the Internet. It is clear consumers don't want the Internet to be another

version of old media dominated by a number of giants" (Quoted in Davis, 2008,

http://publications.mediapost.com). Again, the Federal Communications Commission

decision may have a significant impact on all types of small or independent companies'

ability to utilize the Internet to promote and distribute content.

9.2. Future Research

At the end of the focus groups and interviews, I asked everyone specific questions about

the future of both the music industry and punk music. The following section highlights

some of those observations.

Future of the Music Industry:

The No Milk Records representatives mentioned that the recording industry, particularly

major labels, will need to focus on producing compact discs that consumers wish to

purchase.

Greg: The music industry is going to have to learn to adapt. I think that is the most important thing. We talk to many people, and they are always saying that downloads are killing us. I think those things are going to exist and the music industry has to learn to adapt to it and figure out how to win their fans back. Yeah, it's true that people are not buying has many compact discs anymore, and I do not think it is because people are unwilling to buy compact discs. They feel like they have been ripped off, and I think the music industry is going to have to learn to gain those fans back. They [major record labels] are just going to have to be more creative and really give people a reason to go out and buy the compact disc.
Kyle: There are numerous ways to do that. Enhanced compact discs are great.
Greg: Yes, enhanced compact discs are great.
Kyle: Enhanced compact discs do not cost any more money; it just takes a lot more effort with the master. You have to shoot the video, do the interviews. You cannot get that stuff when you download stuff.

However, not all of the interviewees agree with Greg and Kyle and instead suggest that

music on disc cards or installed on hard drives will replace compact discs. Rob from

Trustkill Records said:

> The Internet in the future is going to be the distribution, the biggest distribution channel in the future. The physical compact disc will probably not exist in the future. Music will all be files or hard drives. Trustkill has often contemplated releasing an album on the little disc cards you put into your computer. There is a company called San Disc and it's like mini hard drives in a sense; you can put them in your phones and your computers. We have contemplated the idea of just releasing a record on a disc like that. I think it is forward thinking, but it is going to happen sooner than later. I think that is definitely the future of the music industry - selling music on hard drives and digital files.

Bill from Blackout Records also suggests that compact disc sales will continue to decline, but also notes that the selling of music will rely on new sales relationships that will form between record labels and artists with advertisers. Bill said:

> The future is that the compact disc will continue to degrade in sales. The compact disc will still maintain certain presence for older consumers, people who are not technologically savvy and for the demographics that have not embraced technology yet. It is still going to decline. I believe that digital content will be broken up it into small pieces – i.e. micro-chunks monetized from the point where people cannot pirate it. Digital music comes out of the label with something attached to it that can make them money – sponsored content if you will. If you want to listen to the new Nelly record, you have to go to a site that has paid the label and has Pepsi all over it and Pepsi is paying the royalties so that somebody else can listen to it free. The customers expect it free – if it's on the Internet, they expect it to be free. They do not mind watching advertising, and there are still plenty of consumer products out there that need eyeballs to pay attention to their product. So, really it is using the same model as radio, except instead of radio being a programmed thing, its radio on demand.

As previously indicated, Bill's idea is very similar to the recent agreement reached between MySpace.com and the major record labels. In the future, it will be interesting to see if individual artists and bands bypass record companies completely and link up with companies outside of the recording industry (i.e. Pepsi) as the main method to promote and market digitally delivered free music for consumers. In return, the companies will pay artists fees for the rights to their music. The increased usage of songs for television advertising campaigns suggests that many artists and bands are receptive to this type of business model.

Branding may also play an increasingly important role in the marketing and promotion

campaigns for punk bands and labels. Krueger (2005) suggests the unique sound and

style of a band is an important branding component. Rob from Trustkill Records believes

that all types of recording labels will rely heavily on online branding:

> I think the future of the music industry in my opinion is that it will be back to the way
> it was in the '50s and '60s. It is all about the branded labels. It is all going to be like
> Motown, Elektra, and A&M - all of these labels started small and were niche labels.
> These niche labels will do what they do and they will be distributed by a bigger parent
> company like we are – but it is all about the brand we created in everything that we
> do. We brand Trustkill, as much as we brand the artist. The Internet will probably play
> a major part in this. It will be all about the brands, just like in the '50s, Chess Records,
> Motown. It will all be about the brands of all of the labels.

Since the 1950s, independent record labels have utilized branding identifiers as a tool to

help them compete against the major labels. Many of the branding identifiers were

associated with the 'specific sound' the label was known for and this 'specific sound'

separated the label from its competitors. For instance, Motown Records delivered the

'Motown Sound,' a style of Black Soul music influenced heavily by the pre-dominant

Top 40 music sound of the 1960s (Fitzgerald, 1995). At the same time the 'Motown

Sound' was prominently heard on the radio, Stax Records branded its new recordings

with the 'Memphis Sound.' The 'Memphis Sound' featured "a heavy back beat and

accents on both the beat and the rhythm sounds," that separated the Stax recordings from

the more radio-ready Motown recordings (Bowman, 1997, p. 60). Branding the label's

sound may allow record labels to deliver consistent and unique music to target audiences

that its competitors are also trying to reach. Park (2007) suggests "name recognition and

brand development will become increasingly important if the Internet places independent

musicians on par with major labels. However, given the present media ownership and

Internet architecture, this is extremely unlikely to occur" (p. 3).

Finally, members of focus groups two insinuate that singles instead of albums may play

an important future role in the recording industry.

Jason: I just feel like there is no way that ten years from now, I mean hopefully, the major labels won't exist anymore in the same manner. You see that they are firing people. They are putting out shit and no one wants it; and because of this, it is going to become like decentralized, I think is the word I am looking for, and it's really got to be free.
BP: I think the future is that they are just going to put out singles and not even bother with albums. They are going to put all of their [major labels] money into a single and have a collection of singles from an artist because nobody is going to pay the money for an album anymore.
Jason: I think it is going to have to become an art again [albums], because people are just going to download [singles]. If people are just downloading the single, then there is going to be no reason to purchase an album.... People are not album-oriented.
BP: It is why you see the sales of singles going up. Nobody wants to buy the rest of the shit that is around a single.

This move towards single-only record labels may actually benefit independent punk

bands and labels (and other smaller genres of music) because of the costs associated with

producing single recordings are lower than for an entire album. This phenomenon is

similar to the 1950s, when an independent label could compete against the major labels

by recording a single song and promoting it on the newly formed Top 40 radio. Today,

however, independent labels promoting a single song can no longer rely on commercial

radio to make the song a hit (particularly many forms of punk, except pop-punk). Instead

they must compete in an overly crowded media environment for consumers attention.

Future of punk music:
Interviewees and focus group members outlined several different potential scenarios for

punk music. Eric from Eyeball Records suggests that the Internet allows for the

intermingling of different punk genres; this may result in the formation of new punk

music genres. Eric said:

> Good question. If there is still an angry kid in a garage that can learn how to play three
> chords then, there is a future for punk music…. I do not know what it is going to
> become. There is a lot of argument over what traditional punk is and what a punk
> scene is. The line between punk and hardcore is pretty blurred. The line between punk
> and Emo has been pretty blurred. The line between punk and metal has been blurred
> for years just because of like the thrash scene and stuff like that. It just keeps on
> morphing itself out because of the Internet. Every generation has gotten its own
> interpretation of what punk is.

Kyle and Greg from No Milk Records agreed with Eric that music genres in punk are

blurring and that this blurring might make it difficult to define what constitutes punk

music.

Kyle: Punk is evolving into different genres. I mean everybody is like trying to mix up
genres. 'Oh, well we are a little metal. We are a little hardcore.' Everybody is a little of
whatever…. I think kids are confused about what punk rock really is.
Greg: Yeah, kids do not really know what punk rock really is anymore…. Punk rock is
obviously not going to be that mentality when it first appeared - like the spirit of the '80s
and you could even go back to the '70s – it's just now mainstream, commercialized, and
capitalized on. But, it does not mean that punk still cannot exist and that kids can still
hold true to the original spirit.

A few focus group two members suggest that rap fashion styles are starting to appear at

live punk shows, particularly hardcore.

Andrew (A): I think there has been a lot of crossover recently between the urban styles
and the hardcore culture. They are really starting to dress the same. Hardcore kids are
really embracing the pop and rap thing. I personally never saw it coming. I mean do you
guys see that?
Andrew (B), Lando, KT and BP all replied that they had also observed this phenomenon.
Andrew (A): Yeah, when you go to hardcore shows, some people have their big hats on
sideways with the stickers still on it, and it is, like, what the fuck? At shows, you hear rap
music like Jay Z.

The relationship between punk and rap music began during the first wave of punk via

Blondie's rap song 'Rapture' and Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five opening for

the Clash in New York City in 1981 and continues to the present. In 1999, rapper

Eminem appeared on the Warped Tour and in May 2008, rapper Snoop Dogg co-

headlined Bamboozle festival in New Jersey with emo-pop punk band, Jimmy Eats

World. In April 2008, the California-based Fearless Records released the compilation

album, *Punk Goes Crunk*, featuring punk bands covering recent hit songs by rap artists

(i.e. All Time Low covering Umbrella by Rihanna). When specifically asked if they knew

of any punk songs that featured rap influences, focus group two members said that they

did not. However, if rap music is playing between breaks at live punk shows, it will be

interesting to see what influence rap music may have on punk music in the future.

As noted in the literature review, fashion style has always been an important component

within the punk subculture (Cagle, 1995; Frith, 1988c; Hebdige, 1979; Stahl, 2003). The

impact of fashion on punk music, particularly pop punk, is another issue facing

participating subculture members. Participants of focus group one said:

Alex: Punk is a fad that is happening now, particularly with the pop punk. Hot Topic, Pac
Sun [all mall retail stores that sell punk gear], you know all those Mall punks. I hope it
fades out.
Dan: Punk is not about fashion. Punk is an attitude.
Alex: I think that it is an attitude. Punk is not a fashion style. It is an attitude.

Members of focus groups two and three also say that fashion issues are increasingly

playing a significant role within the punk subculture.

Lando: Punk is no longer about any ideology, it just about fashion.
Andrew (B): Well it is to some people.
Lando: Yeah, some people, to the majority. What most people know as punk, what like
the average person knows of punk without doing any research or anything of history, to
them it is a fashion style.
Andrew (A): Hold on one second, I still think it is very much an ideology. I mean I think
that ideal still exists. It still exists, but that many choose not to go with it. People go with
the stereotypes rather than the idea. I think there are people out there and certain groups

who still obey those practices started in like the '70s, or whenever they started. Those people are still like in the mindset and yes, it has become so diluted.

Andrew (B): We are just talking about the trends. There are obviously people like that still practice the original punk ideology.

Lando: Yes, the ideology is still there, and it is still underground, and it is still a counterculture movement, but like to the average people, punk is just another fashion scene. It's exploited now.

Jason: Punk is commercial now.

Focus group three members also suggest that the influence of fashion, particularly within

the pop punk genre, may continue to manipulate the future of punk music.

Angela: Punk is so mainstream.

Andrea (A): Everything is pop now. Everything is pop punk, so it is harder to find real punk music.

Dani: When pop punk burst out everyone thought they could go out and buy plaid pants and spiked dog collars…

Sarah: Hot Topic anyone?

Dani: They look stupid. They were claiming they were listening to Blink - 182, and they were punk rockers, when they had no idea what punk really meant. No one expected that to happen and all of the sudden it just crashed through.

Andrea (A): I think pop punk just like overtook it all. They are labeling that [pop punk] as punk and then everyone goes for it and all of these little gum-chewing little pains in my butts are going around trying to be punk, and they do not understand what it means to be punk.

Dani: All of those pop punk kids ruined punk, because they go around saying my favorite band is Anti-Flag and Blink-182 and people are like, what?

Andrea (A): Hardcore and pop punk do not match.

The associations between pop punk bands signed to major labels and teen fashion

companies have interesting ramifications for the punk subculture. These relationships,

according to Bill from Blackout Records, have fundamentally altered the punk

subculture. Bill said:

> What you have to do is you have to go in and own the marketplace and the fundamental difference is this. The fundamental difference is that kids in the old punk rock marketplace did not need to be sold to. The kids now in the punk rock market, they are consumers, they are just like little consumer drones. They operate exactly like their mommy and their daddy if it is not on television, it is not good. It is this perceived issue of bigness. It has to be big. If it is not big, I do not want to do it.

Something small is not cool and that is the fundamental flaws in what goes on….
Punk rock now is what hair metal was in the 80's, punk rock is now fake.

The fundamental issue is that pop punk, like the mainstream success of '80s hair metal

(financially supported by the major labels), will continue with major labels and fashion

corporations flooding the music and fashion markets with pop punk music and fashion

styles that are tailored made for mass acceptance. Evan from From Downtown, Ely from

City Sleeps and Chris and Dan from Nine Reasons to Die all suggest that this is indeed

the future of the punk music. The members of Nine Reasons to Die said:

Chris: Seems to be going in a very mainstream poppy direction.
Dan: The only good thing is that they seem to be noticing a bunch of different types of
music, like Panic at the Disco. They are not the same as every other band. They have a
different style. It's not our style, but it is different…
Chris: I disagree. Panic at the Disco is Fall Out Boy [another major label pop punk band].
Dan: Not necessarily, they are a little different.
Chris: It is Fall Out Boy with guy eyeliner. They [Panic at the Disco] like to wear
makeup. They sound the same. I am sick of hearing bands that all sound the same.

Pop punk is the most accessible genre of punk for major labels to market because the

genre features radio-friendly punk music, played by fashion-enhanced punk musicians. In

the current recording industry situation (less risk taking, more sure bet signings), I expect

that if major labels seek out relationships with punk labels and bands, they will

emphasize signing pop punk bands. Unknown is the potential impact of this emphasis on

pop punk on the overall long-term health of the punk subculture. A few members of the

focus group three suggest that it might have little impact and that the future is still bright

for punk music.

Andrea (B): I think that punk is going to do the same thing it always does, it gets big, and
then it gets small again, and right now, were in the middle of it being huge and everybody
is listening to it and all the pop-punk and whatever. But, I think as the new cool thing, I
mean look how big indie rock is becoming now…
Angela: Yeah!

Andrea (B): I mean indie rock will become the new big thing and then punk rock is going to go back underground and in that sense I think it is not going to hurt the people who have been in the scene forever. Because the people who have been in the scene forever are still going to be in the scene and their still going to go to the shows. It is the people who were doing it because it was trendy who are not going to be a part of it anymore. In addition, for those of us who care about those things, it is a good thing. So, I think punk will recycle itself and go back, and I do not think it's going to die. I mean, I do not think any music ever dies.

Andrea (A): I think with anything, everything recycles itself, like fashion, music. Whatever it is, there is going to be a high point, and then it is just going to hit a downfall. In addition, that can be a positive or a negative or it could be both. It is just a matter of when is it going to hit, and how bad is going to affect us? As you said [Andrea B], for the people who are really truehearted about it, it will probably be a good thing because all of the gum-chewing annoying 13-years-olds will go away, and I will not have to deal with them. Then something else will come along, and they will fall into that trend, so everything eventually is going to be trending in and out.

Additional research:

Three important issues require additional research. The first issue is the potential impact

of net neutrality on the ability of punk fans, bands, and recording labels to communicate

with one another online. The potential exists for Internet service providers to charge

different fees based on the delivery speed of online content and these fees may have

bearing on the ability of the punk subculture to communicate online. Second, researchers

should examine punk bands and labels social networking sites to see if the concept of

'branding' is taking place and the impact of 'branding' on the marketing and promotion of

punk subculture artifacts (recordings, tours, etc.). The potential impact of 'pay-to-play'

and the recent consolidation of the concert venues in Central New Jersey by Live Nation

and AEG Live on live punk shows should also be of interest to researchers.

<u>**Appendix A: Focus Group and Interview questions**</u>
The focus group and interview questions were developed through the information

gathered from the literature review and analyses of the content available on the Epitaph

Records and Peephole Records Websites.

Focus group questions:
Opening question:
Name? Age?

Introductory questions:
Define the term punk?
What was the first punk band you heard? (Nirvana, Offspring, Green Day)
Where did you hear them?
What bands today would you consider true punk bands?
Why are those bands punk?
What would you consider the current hot genre of punk?
What are your favorite bands?
Choosing one your favorite bands, where was the first place that you heard the band?

Transition question:
What would you say is the number one method to find out about new punk music? Why?

Key questions:
In an average week, how much time do you spend on the Internet?
When online, what are you doing? E-mail? Web search? Downloading?
In an average week, of the time spent online, how much time is spent searching for music? What type of music are you searching for?
Which music sites do you visit? What punk music sites do you visit?
What are your favorite punk music sites?
Once at the site, how would categorize your usage time? What are you doing at the site?
Does anyone download content? Check news? Tour dates? Merchandise? Links? Videos?

Does anyone ever use the Internet to search for specific bands? If yes, how did you hear about the band prior to the Internet search?
Does anyone ever download MP3's from the site? If yes, does anyone purchase the MP3 or is it free?
After hearing the MP3, has anyone ever purchased the entire record? Where did you purchase the music from?
Does anyone ever visit bands Websites? Why?
What fan sites have you visited? Why? How did you spend your time at these sites?

How important is MySpace? Why? What is found on this site? Are other sites as important as MySpace for punk music? What are they?

Have you ever heard a band in the traditional media and then searched for more info about them online? Which media and what bands?
Does anyone ever use the Internet to contact other punk fans? Describe what is discussed
Is the Internet the new word of mouth for punk music?

File sharing: Good or bad for music? Why?
Does anyone ever download punk music from P2P networks? If yes, what sites and what bands?
When you are downloading, are you downloading single songs or full-length albums?
After illegally downloading a single, have you ever legally bought the full-length album?
Do you burn CD's for friends? If yes, what is the last CD you burned for someone?

What commercial radio stations do you listen to? Why?
Has anyone ever come in contact with punk music on the radio? If yes, what stations?
Is radio a good source for new music? New punk music?
Does anyone listen to Internet radio stations? If yes, what stations and why?
Does anyone have access to satellite radio? Is it a good source for punk music?
Does anyone read fanzines? Which ones? Why? What content does the fanzine offer that other sources do not?
Does anyone visit punk fanzines and/or punk bulletin boards? If so, what happens at these sites?
Does anyone subscribe to any of the various punk fanzines (Punk Planet/ Maximum Rock n' Roll, or Punk)?

What is the importance of a live show?
Has anyone ever gone to a show, seen a band and went home and checked them out online? If yes, what bands?
Does anyone ever use the Internet to find out about upcoming tours? What sites? If yes, have you ever purchased tickets from a Website? Which site?
Do you ever pick up merchandise at a live show? If yes, what type?

Ending questions:
When has a band sold out?
What are your thoughts on the future of the music industry?
What are your thoughts on the future of punk music?

Band interview questions:
Opening questions:
Name? Age?

Introductory questions:
Define your band?
Define the term punk?
What was the first punk band you heard?
Where did you hear them?
What bands today would you consider true punk bands? Why are those bands punk?

Choosing one of the bands that you like, where was the first place that you heard the band?

How easy is for the band to produce recordings? Do you record in a professional studio or home studio?
How much time spent in the recording studio?
When you record, is the goal a full-length album or a single? Why?

Transition questions:
What would you say is the number one method to find out about new punk music? Why?

Key questions:
How do you distribute your product?
Do you sell recordings at shows? Retail? Internet?
File sharing: Good or bad? Why?
Does file sharing impact your band?
Do you have a Website? If yes, what is the purpose of the site?
How does the band use the Internet to distribute, market, and promote its music?
What is available at your Website? Pictures? Videos? News? Message board?
How do you inform your fans of the Website?
Do you offer MP3's? Are they free?
Do you sell recordings online?
Do you sell merchandise?
Do you have videos on your site? Photos?

Do you have a MySpace account? Is MySpace an important marketing tool for your band? Why? If not MySpace, what other social networking sites?
Do you interact directly with your fans on the Internet? If yes, how? E-mail? Message boards? What is the main discussion about? New releases? Tour dates? Merchandise offerings?
Have you attempted to get your music on the radio? If yes, what stations? Were you successful? Importance of college radio, Internet radio, or Satellite radio?
What about fanzines? Has your band been featured in a fanzine? If yes, which one? What type of article? What was the goal of the mention?

How important is the live show to your band? Do you sell music, merch or give out information?
Basement shows? Clubs? What's the goal of the show?

What do you feel is the best method to reach your fan base? (Radio, Internet, Touring, Fanzines?)

Ending questions:
What are your thoughts on the future of the music industry?
What are your thoughts on the future of punk music?

Label interview questions:
Introduction questions:
Name? Age? Title?
When did you start the label and why?
Did you have previous music industry experience before starting the label?
How would you describe your label? What genres of bands are signed to your label?
How many bands are signed to the label?
How many people work at the label? What are their job titles?
Would you define your label as a niche label or do you offer many styles of music?
What would you state is the overall mission of your label?
Can you describe the contract situation?
Once signed to the label, who pays for recording costs? Is there a cap on costs?
Where do the recording sessions take place? Recording studio? Home studio?

Transition question:
Once completed, who is involved in the promotion and marketing of the final product? (Bands? Staff?)

Key questions:
What methods are in use by your label to promote and market your bands?
Radio? Print? Video? Internet? Tours?
Is radio play still an important marketing tool for your artists?
Commercial radio or College radio or both? Internet & Satellite radio?
Do you use indie promoters? If yes, why and how often?
From your bands, do you want a single or an entire albums worth of material for marketing purposes?
Do you employ Street Teams? If yes, what do they do?
Importance of using fanzines as marketing tools? Is coverage important or not?
Importance of live show/touring to marketing plans? What venues are important?
How do you promote the shows?

How do you use the Internet to market and promote bands on your label?
Has it been successful? Failure?
What are the costs? Are they lower or higher compared to traditional marketing/promotion techniques?
How has the Internet impacted marketing- i.e. label covers, special products, art work- are you spending less on these areas?
Do you use e-mail lists or blasts?
Do you send mass e-mails through mailing lists? If yes, why? What is point of mass mailing?
Can you describe what that communication entails?
How do you attempt to drive consumers to your Website?
How often do you update information on the Website?
Do you license songs to eMusic.com, MP3.com or other Internet aggregators? If yes, which aggregators and why?
Do you offer free MP3's for downloading? Why? Why not?

File sharing: Good or bad? Why?
How has MP3's impacted your business plan? Burned CDs - any impact?
Has iPods & iTunes impacted your company?
Do you offer videos on your Website? If yes, why? Are they successful?
What is the impact of MySpace on your business? Do you employ MySpace in your marketing plans?
Is the Internet the new word-of-mouth?
What about your bands, do they use the Internet to communicate with fans?

Who manufactures your product?
Who is your main distributor? Why?
Are you currently involved in a joint distribution deal?
What are the methods in use to distribute your product?
Do you make product available for purchase on the Web?
Do you see the Internet as a new form or marketing channel or the new form of distribution channel? Will the Internet replace traditional distribution channels?

Ending questions:
What are your thoughts on the future of the music industry?
What are your thoughts on the future of punk music?

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Curriculum Vita

Aaron Robert Furgason

2008	Ph.D. in Communication, Information and Library Studies, Rutgers University
2004-present	Assistant Professor, Department of Communication at Monmouth University
2000-2004	Instructor, Department of Communication at Monmouth University
2000-2004	Adjunct Professor, School of Communication, Information and Library Studies, Rutgers University Rutgers University
1998	M.A. in Visual and Media Arts, Emerson College
1997-1998	Music Director Assistant, WFNX 101.7
1993-1995	Atlantic Records
1992-1993	Music Director Assistant, WNEW-FM 102.7
1993	B.A. in Communication, Monmouth University