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Atomic Chicanas/os: Embodied Memory and the Raza Rockabilly Scene of Los Angeles

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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by

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ABSTRACT

Atomic Chicanas/os: Embodied Memory and the Raza Rockabilly Scene of Los Angeles

By

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Since the turn of the twenty first century, the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene has been dominated by Chicana/os and Latina/os; a very unlikely and untraditional community of producers and consumers. Through their claiming of space, style, and music, Chicana/o and Latina/o working class youth of greater Los Angeles have embraced and refashioned the cultural sensibilities of Rockabilly, a form of 1950s rock & roll, into what I term "Raza Rockabilly," or simply "Razabilly."

My research project analyzes how Chicana/os and Latina/os have appropriated and re-imagined the Rockabilly scene resulting in a racialization of the social spaces and practices associated with it. I investigate this process by conducting ethnography of the Chicana/o Latina/o Rockabilly scene in the greater Los Angeles area. My methods largely rely upon participant-observation at local sites in Los Angeles and the annual Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly Weekender, as well as life history interviews with current and past members of the scene. I discovered that as Raza youth are denied access to their own communities' histories through culturally insensitive and irrelevant school curriculum, and as historic barrios themselves are being threatened by gentrification, Chicanas/os and Latinas/os

have taken it upon themselves to reclaim their history and assert their claims to space and community through the cultural innovations of "Razabilly."

In Chapter I, I provide a cultural history of the international Rockabilly scene since its revival in Great Britain. As a hybrid cultural text, the genre of music known as Rockabilly music combined elements of Black rhythm & blues and white country music in the 1950s. By the 1970s Rockabilly enthusiasts in the United Kingdom developed a scene based on a re-imagined vision of 1950s America. Introduced to the United States in the 1980s, and again in the late 1990s, the Rockabilly scene gained a strong foothold in the Los Angeles area, where Chicana/os and Latina/os now dominate.

Chapter II explores the sites crucial to the Raza Rockabilly scene in greater Los Angeles.
Rudolpho's, a Mexican restaurant, and Razabilly, an internet forum, were instrumental in providing young working class Chicana/o and Latina/o Rockabilly fans of the early 2000s with the space necessary to transform the sights and sounds of rockabilly to meet their own desires. This chapter also explores how the great recession has impacted contemporary sites of leisure, The Rumble Bar and Rhythm and Booze.

In Chapter III, I examine Rockabilly style, a conspicuous sigh known for its working class 1950s aesthetics. Unique to Raza Rockabilly is the self-conscious attempt to invoke a sense of historical or cultural memory tied to the atomic era, a memory that is embodied by a participant in the Rockabilly scene and subject to diverse readings by the spectator. As personal and intimate as self-fashioning one's own body can be, it relies largely on employing broader networks and commercial interest that are integral components in the

production and consumption of the Rockabilly scene. Through their business Tarantula Clothing Company, David Contreras and Esther Vasquez engage in multiple codes of dress to design, produce, and sell garments reflecting the sensibilities of Raza Rockabilly.

Chapter IV examines the Rockabilly musical canon, as performed, expanded, and contracted within the Los Angeles Raza Rockabilly scene allow musicians, deejays, dancers, and enthusiasts in the scene to "show their roots" by embodying these genealogies. As embodied forms of memory, music does not so much anchor one to a historical past, rather it creates a present filled with significance and fulfillment often not met elsewhere, especially not at work. By sharing these moments, the scene itself becomes an intentional community made up of Chicanas/os and Latinas/os from across greater Los Angeles temporarily convened to engage in leisure together. Through music, cultural producers and consumers a like stake claims to a dignity and history often unrecognized and dishonored in the institutional historical record.

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Introduction

"Haunted by voices and images that violated us, bearing the pains of the past, we are slowly acquiring the tools to change the disabling images and memories to replace them with self affirming ones, to recreate our past and alter them- for the past can be as malleable as the future."

-Gloria Anzaldúa

My research project analyzed how contemporary Chicana/os and Latina/os have appropriated and re-imagined the Rockabilly scene of post-industrial Los Angeles resulting in a racialization of the social spaces and practices associated with it. Since the turn of the century, Los Angeles' working class Chicana/o and Latina/o fans of rockabilly music have become the driving force behind the consumption and production of the scene dedicated to its survival nearly sixty years past its prime. On any given Friday or Saturday night, a Latina/o promoter is hosting a show where a near exclusively Chicana/o and Latina/o crowd gathers to hear 1950s rock & roll and rhythm & blues played live by Chicana/o and Latina/o musicians, or selected by a Chicana/o or Latina/o disc jockey. While racialized spaces and cultural practices are hardly rare, the extraordinary claiming of the scene by Los Angeles Chicana/os and Latina/os is worthy of distinction given the reactionary and even racist meanings ascribed to Rockabilly at large. To put it plainly, Rockabilly, as a genre of music, a distinct style/fashion, a type of space such as a bar or shop, or as an attitude or stance, is imagined as a white person's fixation everywhere else but Los Angeles.

My own interactions with Los Angeles Rockabilly began in 2004. As a teen in the 1990s I grew up in Lompoc on California's central coast. On the margins of both the neo-

swing and lowrider scene, I had an awareness of Rockabilly, but I never felt a connection to the music, aesthetics, or lifestyle it offered. For me, it was too white, too rural, and too "late" (i.e. too close to the present). I was intrigued by depression era and wartime pachuquismo; gabardine zoot suits and Chevy fleetlines; '45s of Cab Calloway and Louis Jordan and swing dancing. Rockabilly lacked the urbane sophistication of big band swing or the "soul" of post war r&b; it was music for whites by whites trying to sound Black. For those in the Lowrider community, Rockabilly was Hot Rodder's music. The aesthetics of side burns and cuffed Levi's, of Bettie Page bangs and pedal pushers was *theirs,* thing not ours.

While at UC Santa Barbara, neo-swing venues started drying up just as soon as I was old enough to frequent them. My '46 Plymouth languished unattended hours away in front of my mother's house. Caught up in the statewide battle over programs and resources to recruit and retain underrepresented students, my interests shifted as my leisure time became devoted to student organizing. My evenings were occupied by lengthy meetings on-campus, while my weekends were consumed by grueling road trips across the state working with the California Student Affirmative Action Coalition. It wasn't until after college that I started to reflect on my earlier cultural interests. A full time organizer working for a national student organization in Washington DC, I found myself with a steady income and a job that afforded me leisure time. There had to be someplace where people dressed in vintage clothing, danced to vintage recordings and appreciated vintage aesthetics. I just had to find it.

What I found was "Razabilly." Developed by Ruth Hernandez and Erick Sánchez from Southern California, "Razabilly" was a MSN hosted user-based forum and website where Chicanas/os and Latinas/os could share their love for Rockabilly music and style.

Infused with a campy tongue-in-cheek spirit, "Razabilly" allowed its users to post upcoming events, discussion topics, and pictures. I was shocked by what I discovered in the picture galleries; night after night of packed venues filled with Latinas and Latinos, all wearing period clothing. The scene that I had dismissed as too rural and too white was now dominated by Raza who were evoking looks more appropriate for a night on Central Avenue than an afternoon drag race. What I was attracted to the most in neo-swing was alive and well in Rockabilly.

Through Razabilly I became connected with Los Angeles based Chicanas/os and Latinas/os including the website's founders. Most were young adults like myself. Excluding the few surviving performers from the 1950s, all had been born years if not decades after the heyday of rockabilly music in the mid 1950s. Nevertheless, every weekend they were dressed to the nines and sharing their passion for relics from an age scarred by stark hatred for women, people of color, and the left. As the epigram suggests, these Chicana/os and Latina/os remade the 1950s in their own image and affirmed their rightful place in history at the same time that measures such as H.R. 4437 sought to rob them of their humanity.[1] After returning to California, these connections combined with my own predilection for 1940s styled clothing versus the rockin' '50s allowed me to carve out my own identity in a scene that was completely new to me. My consumption and participation in Rockabilly was just as

[1] Known as the "Sensenbrenner Bill," House Resolution 4437 "The Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005" passed on December 16th, 2006 and bundled a series of anti-immigrant measures targeted at undocumented immigrants. The passage of the bill re-ignited the immigrant rights movement in the United States. 109th Congress (2005-2006), "H.R.4437 -- Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (Referred in Senate - RFS)" Accessed June 17, 2014. http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c109:H.R.4437.RFS:.

much about maintaining Chicana/o cultural traditions that I believed were on the verge of vanishing as it was about leisure. My own quest for legitimacy and cultural capital within the scene pushed me to really dig and research the history, culture, and politics of the era. As years passed I found myself transition into a producer in the scene, promoting my own shows and dealing vintage wares.

The inspiration for this project stemmed from two courses I completed in the fall of 2008, namely Chicana/o Cultural Texts with Professor Dolores Inés Casillas and Ethnographic methods & rural farmworking communities with Professor Juan Vicente Palerm. What began as self-reflexive musings on the incredulous attraction to rural white Rockabilly music from the 1950's by urban Latina/os in 21st century Los Angeles evolved into a full-fledged ethnographic research project informed by Chicana/o cultural studies, political economy, and (post)-subcultural studies. As an ethnographer, I transformed sites that I previously utilized as my primary source of leisure into sites of academic labor. While I conducted my primary field research from 2008 to 2012, new discoveries made through follow-up site visits, interviews, and clarifications were incorporated into this dissertation well into 2014.

A Scene for Rockabilly

For this study I conceptualized the international community and network of rockabilly music fans and its local manifestations as a scene. While other theoretical frameworks such as subculture, club culture, alter-native culture and others would have surely fit, "scene" seemed the most apposite largely due to the preference for that term by the Chicana/o and Latina/o Rockabilly enthusiasts that I interviewed and interacted with

throughout the course of the study.[2] As a theoretical concept, scene allows me to frame the mobile and malleable nature of the international community of people in Rockabilly, the cultural practices that they engaged in and the spaces that they occupied.

I discovered scene theory while examining canonical texts in the field of subcultural and post-subcultural studies. While scholars had used the term since the 1950s, John Irwin envisioned scene as an alternative way to look at interest based communities. Irwin argued that the subcultural model of the Chicago school relied too heavily on commitment, determinism and membership stability on behalf of the participants, themes not echoed at all in his own lived interactions with the hippies and surfers he researched.[3] In the appropriately tiled *Scenes*, Irwin offers scene as an alternate theoretical framework.

Irwin argued that a popular level, the term scene served as a metaphor for people to think of life styles as a thing or object. He argued that "make the scene," and another phrase, "that's not my scene," revealed that far from underground and hidden, scenes had to be well known and identifiable by both insiders and outsiders. "Make the scene" referred to a recognition that scenes occurs in definite locations, yet are transitory. "That's not my scene"

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[2] Dick Hebdige pioneered subcultural theory in his work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. As alternatives looks at similar community formations, Sarah Thornton coined the term club cultures to describe the dance-based circles she studied, while Alicia Gaspar de Alba offered alter-native culture to theorize popular cultural practices in the Chicana/o community. See Dick Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. *(*London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1979), Sarah Thornton *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital*. *(*Middleton CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1996) and Alicia Gaspar de Alba, "The Alter-Native Grain: Theorizing Chicano/a Popular Culture," *Cultures and Differences: Critical Perspectives on the Bicultural Experience in the United States*. , ed. Antonia Darder (Westport Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 1995), 101-123.

[3] Irwin critiques the Chicago school's conceptualization of subculture in John Irwin. "Notes on the Status of the Concept Subculture." *Subcultures*. Ed. David O. Arnold. (New York: The Glendessary Press, 1970).

reveals an understanding of the existence of a plurality of scenes. Irwin argued that both phrases share the following assumptions:

1. The style of life is recognized as explicit and shared category. In other words particular scene is well known among some relatively large segment. It must be to be a scene since the term connotes popularity.
2. There are various styles of life available to a particular person, since there is always more than one scene.
3. Finally one's commitment to a particular scene is potentially tentative and variable.[4]

Conceiving of the international Rockabilly community and its local manifestations as a scene provided this project with a mechanism by which to examine the shifting racial make-up of the scene in Los Angeles. Scene theory also anchored my work in lived geographic communities and the leisure spaces of bars and dancehalls occupied by the scene as well as the shifting cultural texts that are produced and consumed therein. Lastly, it also allowed me to focus on the activity systems of the Rockabilly scene as forms of leisure that created a lens by which to observe contemporary Chicanas/os and Latinas/os in postindustrial Los Angeles.

Research Questions

This project started with a simple question; why are Chicana/os and Latina/os attracted to Rockabilly? While responses to this question were certainly interesting, it quickly proved troublesome. At its core, the question was a jab at Chicana/o Latina/o agency as it assumes that Chicana/os and Latina/os should and could only appreciate "naturally" Chicana/o or Latina/o cultural productions, and any choices outside of that "natural" selection were inherently strange, aberrant, or problematic. Additionally, the simplicity of the question also proved to be deceptive, as the more people I spoke to, the more I received

[4] John Irwin. "Notes on the Status of the Concept Subculture." *Subcultures*. Ed. David O. Arnold. (New York: The Glendessary Press, 1970), 74.

differing and often contradictory responses. Ultimately, the "why" question also proved defeating and self-serving: I was testing to see if Rockabilly was meeting the same needs for others that it had met for me. I wanted to prove that my attraction was not strange, aberrant or problematic. While certainly interesting, I determined such musing did little to explore broader implications Raza Rockabilly had for the community at large, and the historical moment I was examining.

As I drifted away from focusing on questions of "why," questions of "how" became a stronger driving force in this work. Exploring how Chicana/os and Latina/os claimed space to craft their own cultural productions led to the development of broader reaching narratives that situated Raza and Rockabilly in Los Angeles within both global and local geographies, an approach that provided the backbone for this study. Asking "how" also allowed me to not only explore my initial question of "why Chicanos and Latinos in Los Angeles?" but more importantly it allowed to consider "why *not* any where else?" These initial research questions seemed a bit like quaint reflection on marginal leisure spaces and far removed from greater socio-political issues faced by communities in struggle. Why should anyone care about a local collection of rockabilly fans obsessed with an era of Jim Crow segregation? Nevertheless, broader issues of urban shifts and urban forms of survival for working class and communities of color can be observed firsthand through the lens of Razabilly.

To focus that lens, I synthesized three primary research questions to drive my work. These three questions evolved slightly over the years I spent conducting field research as my observations called for more nuanced ways to situate my analysis. The questions are as follow:

1. What are the material conditions present in de/post-industrial Los Angeles that allow for these cultural practices to gain an exceeding popularity among Chicana/os and Latina/os?
2. What strategies and negotiations are employed by Raza Rockabilly to claim, transform, and ultimately racialize the Rockabilly scene in the greater Los Angeles area?
3. What does it mean politically to collectively and aesthetically embody communal memories of the post war-atomic era?

Question 1 allowed me to develop a local political economy of the Rockabilly scene in Los Angeles. Through this political economy, I explored how the cultural practices of Raza Rockabilly not only provided an affective and cultural impact on Chicana/os and Latina/os through leisure activities, but also served as a site where strategies of economic survival are enacted among working class communities. Question 2 enabled me to explore the questions of place, race, and gender in relation to claims to cultural practices. This question allowed me to consider how Chicanas/os and Latinas/os, who held a seemingly marginal presence in the scene, came to claim Rockabilly social spaces and cultural practices exclusively for themselves in Los Angeles. Complicating these claims was my interest in understanding how women and Queer Chicana/os and Latina/o groups considered out-groups in both hegemonic White and Raza communities- also negotiated these spaces.

Last, Question 3 interrogated memory and perceptions of the past within Raza communities. This question provided me the opportunity to contextualize the increased popularity of 1950s music, style, and cultural practices among Chicana/os and Latina/os by exploring key political moments in the 2000s. It also allowed me to explore how cultural memory was enacted in the Raza Rockabilly scene and embodied through on stage through performance, and on the street through style. Far from discovering an all encompassing answer to explain why Chicana/os and Latina/os are drawn to Rockabilly, I explore the

varied and nuanced ways in which this scene and its cultural practices provides avenues of economic, cultural, and psychological survival and growth to its diverse membership. Ultimately, as the population of Latinas/os continues to grow in the United States, an examination of how the Raza Rockabilly community has transformed a previously white European and Euroamerican dominated scene provides insights. Practice of appropriation and re-signification of cultures will surely be repeated within other white dominated scenes, each with their own unique transformation of space and practices to meet the needs of Chicana/o and Latina/o enthusiasts.

Literature Review

My study of Los Angeles-based Chicana/os and Latina/os in the Rockabilly scene drew upon the efforts and interventions made by Chicana/o Studies scholars in the fields of ethnography and cultural studies. In doing so, my work is framed within a larger conversation regarding the study and representation of so-called non-normative groups in academia. Just as many performers in the contemporary Rockabilly scene reveal their complicated and seemingly inconceivable genealogical roots on stage, this literature review traces and "shows" the equally thorny genealogical roots of my research methods and analysis.

Since the 1960s, Chicana/o Studies scholars have employed participant observation to represent their community on their own terms and challenge the colonial assumptions often associated with traditional ethnography. Through an intense interrogation of the epistemology of ethnographies, these scholars revealed the ways in which the researchers' race, gender, and class positionality shaped their depictions of subject-communities.

Furthermore, Chicana/o cultural studies scholars have changed the shape of both Chicana/o Latina/o studies and cultural studies proper. Shaped by Chicanas/os subject position in the borderlands, Chicana/o studies scholars have crafted new dimensions to the groundwork laid by Birmingham's cultural studies pioneers.

Ethnography

Ethnography has a rich and complicated history both as a method and a field of study. Considered the father of 20th century ethnography, Bronislaw Malinowski codified the method as a case study approach that involved in-depth observations and analyses of a foreign community's people and culture.[5] Malinowski's study of Pacific Islanders in 1922's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* involved an intense form of participant observation. In his field research, Bronislaw immersed himself in a culture completely foreign to himself. Through an understanding of the "tribe's" organization, lifestyle, and worldview, Malinowski argued that a scholar could paint a true picture of tribal life; thereby rendering what once was strange familiar.

A contemporary of Malinowski, Franz Boas professionalized the field of anthropology in the United States with ethnographic field research as its primary method. In Boas' 1920's article, "The Methods of Ethnology," he challenged notions of evolutionary and diffusionist approaches to cultural development. Boas argued that each culture should be studied and understood on its own terms. Thus, Boas argued, a historical context had to be

[5] Bronislaw Malinowski. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. (Prospects Height, Waveland Press, 1984 [1922])

established in order to understand the social structures present in a site of study.[6] Decades later, Boas' sociocultural approach to research would provide a methodological template for Chicana/o ethnographers.

Published in 1925, *The City: Suggestions for the Study of Human Nature in the Urban Environment* by Robert. E. Park, R. D. McKenzie and Ernest Burgess was one of the first texts to apply ethnographic methods to study contemporary urban life.[7] In *The City*, Park, McKenzie and Burgess describe the material conditions that organize human capital, provide for housing and transportation, and the social groups or *milieus,* that are formed based on this organization. The application of methods reserved for the study of so called "primitive" groups upon western cities certainly made sense when one considers the continued "othered" status of poor people and people of color in big cities.

Believing that ethnographers could prove useful in the war effort, George Peter Murdoch served in the United States Navy during World War II, producing ethnographic reports on the cultures of communities and nations in the South Pacific. Murdoch is acknowledged for pioneering methods of cross-cultural ethnography, unquestionably understood at that time as white scholars studying communities of color. Murdoch published the *Outline of Cultural Materials* in 1938, which provided a comprehensive index system that categorized nearly every aspect of material culture. *Outline of Cultural Materials* was

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[6] Franz Boas, "The Method of Ethnology," *American Anthropologist*, 4, no. 22 (1920)

[7] Robert E. Park, with R. D. McKenzie & Ernest Burgess. *The City: Suggestions for the Study of Human Nature in the Urban Environment*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925)

developed in conjunction with The Cross Cultural Survey at Yale, a project that sought to develop a universal theory of human behavior.[8]

William Madsen's ethnography *Mexican-Americans of South Texas* is often regarded as an influential text in prompting the Chicana/o Studies intervention in ethnography.[9] The publishing of the 1964 text coincided with the rise of the Chicano Movement, as Chicana/o students and scholars began to question representations of their community in the academy. The work itself examines social stratification amongst people of Mexican descent and Anglo-Americans in the southeastern Texas county of Hidalgo. Capturing the reaction of first generation Chicana/o college students to Madsen's work, folklorist Americo Paredes writes, "it is not so much a sense of outrage, that would betray wounded egos, as a feeling of puzzlement, that *this* is given as a picture of the communities they have grown up in."[10] To this day, Madsen's work is often cited as a foundational text in the field of Chicana/o Studies given its role in inspiring so many Chicana/o scholars to engage in research that countered its depictions of Chicana/o communities.

These criticisms were a part of a larger wave of third and fourth world subjects "talking back" to researchers. In *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, Vine Deloria, Jr. turns the scholarly gaze back at the anthropologist, writing

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[8] Ward H. Goodenough. "George Peter Murdoch. 1897-1985. A Biographical Memoir." (Washington DC: National Academy of Sciences, 1994)

[9] Ironically, Madsen remained a popular professor at UC Santa Barbara, one of the first universities to create a Chicana/o Studies Program in 1971. William Madsen. *Mexican-Americans of South Texas. (New York:* Harcourt School), 1962.

[10] Americo Paredes & Richard Bauman. *Folklore and Culture on the Texas-Mexican Border*. *(*Austin: University of Texas Press. 1995), 74.

> The fundamental thesis of the anthropologist is that people are object for observation… The mass production of useless knowledge by anthropologists attempting to capture real Indians in a network of theories has contributed substantially to the invisibility of Indian people today.[11]

In his work he proposes measures to negotiate the power imbalance between researchers and research subjects, calling on scholars to stand up for native rights and contribute to the tribal budget in amounts equal to the researchers proposed study budget. In this way, a fair exchange is made between communities in struggle and the researchers who build their careers documenting them.

An undergraduate student in the 1970s, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith published *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* in 1999.[12] While Tuwahi Smith does not single out anthropological ethnographers, she does critique western academic disciplines across the board for the antagonistic and dehumanizing role played by the act and products of research in indigenous communities. Tuwahi Smith calls on Indigenous scholars to adopt research models that incorporate healing, decolonization, transformation and mobilization. The work of James Clifford also called into question many of the colonial assumptions of cultural anthropology in his work *Person and Myth: Maurice Leenhardt in the Melanesian World* that situated missionary anthropologist Maurice Leenhardt within the

[11] Vine Deloria, Jr. "Custer Died for Your Sins" in Weaver Thomas *To See Ourselves Anthropology and Modern Social Issues, (*Glenview IL: Scott Foresman and Co., 1973), 130-137

[12] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1999)

broader colonial history of European involvement in Melanesia.[13] Both scholars made considerable waves amongst scholars of color, including those in Chicana/o studies.

Renato Rosaldo's *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* published in 1984 was one of the earliest texts by a Chicano scholar to call on a need for what he terms "critical anthropology." Rosaldo writes, "Attempts to blur the boundaries of ethnography creates space for historically subordinated perspectives otherwise excluded or marginalized from official discourse."[14] Rosaldo's work spoke to his experience as an ethnographer in the Philippines and what he felt at the time were inadequate approaches writing about culture in anthropology.

In 1990, Angie Chabram-Dernersesian saw the potential in Chicana/o studies to serve as a site for "oppositional ethnographies," that allowed for researchers to examine their own experiences and positionality in the field *and* in the academy.[15] In a similar vein, Sofia Villenas' "The Colonizer/Colonized Chicana Ethnographer: Identity, Marginalization, and Co-optation" details how her ethnographic research in North Carolina was co-opted by the dominant English speaking community to reinforce discourses that depicted the Latina/o community as deficient.[16] As Judith Stacey states in "Can There Be a Feminist

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[13] James Clifford. *Person and Myth: Maurice Leenhardt in the Melanesian World* (University of California Press, 1982)

[14] Renato Rosaldo. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis. (*Boston*:* Beacon Press*,* 1993), xviii.

[15] Angie Chabram-Dernersesian. "Chicana/o Studies as Oppositional Ethnography," *Cultural Studies* (1990), 221.

[16] Sofia Villenas. "The Colonizer/Colonized Chicana Ethnographer: Identity, Marginalization, and Co-option," *Harvard Educational Review* (1996), 711-731.

Ethnography?" The call for increasingly self-reflexive and critical ethnography spoke to the broader point that "ethnographic writing is not cultural reportage, but cultural construction, and always a construction of self as well as of the other."[17] Thus, a healthy interrogation of the epistemology of ethnography reveal the ways in which the researchers' race, gender, and class positionality influence and shape their depiction of a subject-community.

Prompted by problematic studies such as *Mexican-Americans in South Texas* and attempts to speak back to ethnographic research, Chicana/o and Latina/o studies scholars have made critical interventions as ethnographers. Examining the same geographical area as Madsen, folklorist José E. Limón's *Dancing with The Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican American South Texas* takes a socio-culutral approach to south Texan folk culture.[18] Examining another kind of folk practice in "La Quienceañera: Making Gender and Ethnic Identity" Karen Mary Davalos explores the construction of gender and ethnic identity through the coming of age ritual of la quienceañera.[19] Taking a sociolinguistic approach, Norma Mendoza Denton studied cultural practices of gang affiliated Latinas in *Homegirls: Language and Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs.*[20] These three studies represent more than the work of Chicana/o scholars producing ethnographies. Rather, Limon's,

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[17] Judith Stacy. "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" *Women's Studies International Forum* Vol. 11, 1 (1988), 21.

[18] José E. Limón. *Dancing with The Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican American South Texas. (*Madison: University of Wisconsin Press,1994).

[19] Karen Mary Davalos, "La Quienceañera: Making Gender and Ethnic Identity" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 16 (1996), 101.

[20] Norma Mendoza Denton. *Homegirls: Language and Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs.* (Hoboken, NJ*:* Wiley Blackwell, 2008)

Davalos, and Mendoza Denton's work reflect a critical intervention made by the field of Chicana/o Studies in the way that knowledge is created through ethnography. The self reflexivity of the researcher, the refusal to demonize subject communities, the political concern for subaltern peoples, the acknowledgement of intersecting hierarchies of power, the eschewing of universal claims and the focus on situated knowledges are all hallmarks of a Chicana/o Studies methodology, and are all present in these works.

Cultural Studies

My work also intervenes in the study of so-called "subcultures:" groups of people who are either represented, or represent themselves as non-normative due to their interest, practices, and self-identification. While the term "subculture" did not appear until the early 1940s, academic interest in non-normative groups predate that era by decades. In his work *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Social Practices,* Ken Gelder traces the origins of what will eventually be known as subcultural studies. Gelder points to 19th century studies of British vagabonds and Karl Marx's analysis of the *lumpenproletariat* as prototypical examples of subcultural studies.[21]

The sociology department of the University of Chicago is identified as one of the early architects to set the stage for the study of "divergent" and "deviant" groups in the United States. Writing of groups deemed deviant, in *The City,* Park, McKenzie and Burgess offer an early conceptualization of a subculture:

> Fifty years ago every village had one or two eccentric characters who... were regarded meanwhile as impractical and queer. These exceptional individuals lived an isolated existence, cut off by their very eccentricities... In the city many of the divergent types

[21] Ken Gelder. *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Social Practices*. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 12.

> now find a milieu in which, for good or for ill, their disposition and talents parturiate and bear fruit.[22]

Following Park's lead, other sociologists applied ethnography to examine deviant groups such as Frederick M. Thrasher's 1927 study of gangs, Paul G. Cressey's 1932 study of taxi dancers, or Thomas Minehan's look at boy and girl tramps from 1934.[23]

The term "sub-culture" itself became popularized by Milton Gordon's 1947 article "The Concept of the Sub-culture and Its Application."[24] Building off the urban ethnographic approach developed by the Chicago school, Gordon saw sub-cultures as an accurate way to categorize milieus, be they deviant or not, in a way that avoids broad categorization, but allows for the identification of cohesive social groups that can lie at the cross section of race, residence, and class. It was Gordon's hope that the application of the sub-cultural concept would allow scholars to explore, among other things, a social group's access to socio-economic advancement and the indices of participation in the subculture such as lingo or clothing.

While Gordon offered a broad conceptualization for the application of sub-cultures, due to the lingering impact of the Chicago schools, the concept of sub-cultures, which by the

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[22] Robert E. Park, with R. D. McKenzie & Ernest Burgess. *The City: Suggestions for the Study of Human Nature in the Urban Environment*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925).

[23] Paul G. Cressey. *Taxi Dance Hall, A Sociological Study in Commercialized Recreation and City Life. (*New York: Greenwood Press, 1932) Minehan, Thomas. *Boy and Girl Tramps of America. (*New York: Grosset, 1934) Thrasher, Frederick M. *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927).

[24] Milton Gordon. "The Concept of the Sub-culture and Its Application." *Social Forces* No. 26, (October 1947).

1950s became subcultures, was used almost exclusively when studying marginal or deviant groups. Inheriting many of the colonial attitudes of early ethnographers, scholars examining marginal groups did so in a manner that often "othered" them and focused on their pathologies. Later attempts in the early 1970s to revive Gordon's argument for the application of subcultures to examine American pluralism would only be eclipsed by the application of subcultures and the work being done by British cultural Marxists from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University in England.

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) was founded at Birmingham University in 1964 under the directorship of Richard Hoggart. Turing away from the urban sociology criminology, and ethnographic work that typified the Chicago schools approach, CCCS instead focused on the analysis of cultural texts, such as popular media, music, and literature, thereby establishing the base of British cultural studies. Writing from an explicitly leftist position, culture, as viewed by CCCS scholars was a battlefield where class conflict was waged. Thus, youth subcultures represented a stand taken by working class youth against capitalist command. Instead of the delinquents and deviants portrayed by the Chicago school, CCCS saw a revolutionary potential in the subcultures of mods, rockers, and skinheads of 1960's Great Britain.

Perhaps the earliest CCCS scholar to examine subcultures was Phil Cohen whose work examines the gentrification and displacement of families from London's East End. In "Subcultural Conflict and Working Class Community" Cohen positions subcultures as distinct from their parent's working class culture due to generational conflict and as consumers responding to the consumerism imposed by capital. However, it is through the

subculture that a "sense of community and solidarity" is preserved while the working class community of the East End itself is eliminated.[25]

In 1975, CCCS produced *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain,* by Tony Jefferson and Stuart Hall. Influenced by Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser and Roland Barthes, CCCS employed semiotics to pay attention to subculture's symbolic challenges to hegemony. While the subculture's challenge may be ideological, Jefferson and Hall argued that it was abysmal material conditions faced by the working class that inspired this challenge in the first place. They write:

> Through dress, activity, leisure pursuits and life-style, they may project a different cultural response or 'solution' to the problems posed for them by their material and social class positions and experience…They experience and respond to the *same basic problematic* as other members of their class who are not so differentiated and distinctive in a 'subcultural' sense. Especially in relation to the *dominant* culture, their subculture remains like other elements in their class culture-subordinate and subordinated.

Hall and Jefferson identify in subcultures "attempt at solutions" facing working class youth, yet ultimately offer only symbolically displaced resolutions.[26] Despite this ideological element, subcultures are anything but ideological constructs. They are composed of real youth who occupy and claim actual space and territory in real time. Yet it is subculture's claiming of leisure time and space that limits its power to resolve working class problems. For the subcultural youth, the site of resistance is not the shop floor, but the local pub or nightclub.

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[25] Phil Cohen. "Subcultural Conflict and Working Class Community" *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, No. 2 (1972).

[26] Tony Jefferson and Stuart Hall. "Introduction," *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*. No 7/8 (1975).

Perhaps the most influential work to examine subcultures to emerge from CCCS is Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style.* In this work, Hebdige positioned subcultures as authentic expressions of marginalized youth waging "semiotic guerilla warfare" against hegemony through their style.[27] Cut off from established channels to create change, working class youth symbolically threatened the status quo, disrupting hegemonies of sight and sound. To counter this symbolic threat (and the potential *real* threat behind it) capital responded accordingly.

As Hebdige theorized, the first step was to render the folk devil of the punk rocker or the Teddy boy harmless through the conversion of their subcultural signs and markers (style of dress, music) into commodities available for consumption by the masses. Subcultures thus served as the silver mines of the mainstream fashion and music industries. The second approach was to either transform the subculturalist into "meaningless exotica" or to simply deny the existence of an otherness to begin with. This approach was achieved ideologically through popular depictions in the mainstream media. Thus the Teddy Girl can be rendered a vacuous trend follower, while the punk rocker can be depicted as the perfect family man. Accordingly, subcultures are locked into a perpetual cycle of invention and commoditization; rendered harmless just as soon as they can be developed. Conspicuously absent from the work of CCCS is the use of ethnographies or participant observation; its scholars instead opting for textual analyses. The exception is the work at Paul Willis' whose *Learning to*

[27] Dick Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1979).

Labour studied working class youth (the lads) locked into reproducing their parent's class position.[28]

Typically, Chicana and Chicano Studies scholars have avoided subcultural frameworks in their analysis of Chicano cultural productions. Faced with the legacy of the Chicago school insistence on "othering" Chicana/o community, Chicana/o scholars sought to represent their community on their own terms. Upon enrolling in a course in Theories of Popular Culture in the early 1990s, Chicana scholar Alicia Gaspar de Alba was dismayed to discover that the course defined people of color cultures solely by their opposition to the cultural expressions of middle class whites. Therefore, if white bourgeoisie culture is what was meant by "popular" culture, than any cultural expression outside of that had to be a "sub"-cultures. Thus, the designation of Chicana/o cultural expressions, as well as those of other communities of color as subcultures could only serve to advance the notion of non-whites as "the other" and incapable of full cultural, social, and political incorporation into the "American" experience. Gaspar de Alba writes:

> Like the demeaning and degrading connotations of the word *alien*, the notion of "subculture" only reinforces the idea that what is produced by or representative of Mexican Americans is inferior (the literal meaning of the prefix *sub* means below) to that of the dominant culture….Chicano/a culture may draw from mainstream culture, may be influenced and even changed by mainstream culture, but it does not derive from nor is it subordinate to mainstream.[29]

Following such a scathing indictment, there is little wonder as to why Chicana/o Studies scholars have avoided the use of subcultural theory. Disillusioned with the theoretical tools

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[28] Paul E Willis. *Learning to Labor.* (Farmborough: Saxon House, 1977).

[29] Alicia Gaspar de Alba, "Introduction," in *Velvet Barrios*, ed. Alicia Gaspar De Alba. (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2002), xxi.

and framework offered by American popular culture studies, Gaspar de Alba envisioned her own approach.

In place of "subculture," Gaspar de Alba offers "alter-native culture." As she offers, alter-native reminds us that Chicana/o culture is "not immigrant, but native, not foreign, but colonized, not alien, but different from the overarching white hegemony."[30] For Gaspar de Alba, positioning Chicana/o cultures as alter-native allowed for better understanding of this communities' relationship, culturally to the mainstream.

As Gaspar de Alba has noted, since the mid 1990's an explosion of works by Chicana and Chicano studies exploring cultural texts has occurred. Studies such Renato Rosaldo's 1994 examination of the disciplinary claims to cultural studies, Rosa Linda Fregoso's 1993 study of Chicana/o film culture, Marco Sánchez-Tranquilino's 1995 study of barrio murals and graffiti, and Yolanda Broyles Gonzales text on El Teatro Campesino from 1994 have contributed to developing Chicana/o approaches to cultural studies.[31] Angie Chabram-Dernersesian's compilation of works from this era, *The Chicana/o Cultural Studies* stands as a testament to the work done this decade. Chabram-Dernersesian writes that Chicana/o

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[30] Alicia Gaspar de Alba. "Introduction," in *Velvet Barrios*, ed. Alicia Gaspar De Alba. (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2002), xxv.

[31] Yolanda Broyles-Gonzales. *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement*. *(*Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994) Fregoso, Rosa Linda. *The Bronze Screen. Chicana and Chicano Film Culture*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) Renato Rosaldo. "Whose Cultural Studies?" *American Anthropologist*. 96/3, (September 1994), 524-529. Marcos Sánchez-Tranquilino. "Space, Power, and Youth Culture: Mexican American Graffiti and Chicano Murals in East Los Angeles" in *Looking High and Low: Art and Cultural Identity,* eds. Brenda Jo Bright and Liza Blackwell. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 55-88

Cultural studies scholars not only challenged white authoritative discourses, but also challenged outdated notions of culture within Chicana/o studies itself.[32]

These scholars argued that studies around Chicana/o cultural productions could no longer rely on essentialist/nationalist notions of homogeneity within in the community. She argues that what is identified by as "Chicano" could no longer be grounded in fixed notions of cultural, racial, or linguistic categories; rather scholars had to look culture (and cultural identity) as a "relationally constituted phenomenon, activated and produced through constant social negotiations."[33] In addition to examining Chicana/o cultural texts, these scholars also examined hegemonic cultural practices through critical analysis of cultural commoditization, immigration, notions of whiteness, and "contested cultures of social and economic systems that regulate policy and form social responsibility."[34] This new emphasis pushed scholars to explore social and cultural practices in relation to their immediate context, be it in the home, the work site, in the courts, or in print.

Following Gaspar de Alba's lead, few if any, of these scholars have actively employed subcultural studies. Yet, most, if not all have engaged theoretical frameworks from cultural studies of which subcultural studies is woven into. Borrowing tools from British cultural studies, works such as Brenda Jo Bright's examination of "alternate" cultural spaces built by lowriding male youth or George Lipsitz's look at quebradita clubs in Los

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[32] Angie Chabram-Dernersesian,. "Introduction," in *The Chicana/o Cultural Studies 2nd Revised Edition*, ed. Angie Chabram-Dernersesian. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4

[33] ibid, 8

[34] Ibid, 6

Angeles, examine the use of cultural practices to shape identity and placemaking.[35] While these scholars may not be engaging subcultural studies per se, both Chicana/o Cultural studies and subcultural studies scholars are speaking the same language.

In many ways the shifting approaches that took place in Chicana/o cultural studies have also taken place in the field of subcultural studies. In their introduction to *The Post Subcultural Studies Reader*, David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl highlight the direction taken by scholars studying marginal groups after Birmingham. According to these scholars, post-subcultural studies has arisen in part due to the shifting social terrain inhabited by youth cultures, as well as the limitations seen in CCCS's approach.[36]

Like Chicana/o Cultural Studies, the trajectory of post-subcultural studies picked up steam in the 1990s. One of the primary contentions was with what has been termed as the "heroics" of subcultural members. CCCS had romanticized the mods, the rockers, and the punks as working class heroes, valiantly resisting in the class war being waged against them. Post-subcultural scholars posit that CCCS saw far too great a potential for radical change in a form of resistance (style) that was largely symbolic. Even if such was the case, the plurality and amorphous nature of current global youth cultures in the postmodern age made this model unfeasible.

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[35] See Brenda Jo Bright. "Re-mappings: Los Angeles Low Riders." In *Looking High and Low: Art and Cultural Identity*, eds. Brenda Jo Bright and Liza Blackwell, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 89-123. George Lipsitz, "Home is Where the Hatred Is: Work Music and the Transnational Economy," *The Chicana/o Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Angie Chabram-Dernersesian (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 299-313.

[36] David Muggleton, and Rupert Weinzierl. "What is 'Post-subcultural Studies' Anyway?" in *The Post-subcultural Studies Reader*. (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 3.

Additionally the linear narrative of a subculture's rise as a form of resistance to its inevitable fall as a consumable product failed to provide a way to show the complexity of the relationships between a variety of cultures, hegemonic, subcultural, or otherwise. Nor can the CCCS model explain the persistence of subcultural resilience in spite of commoditization (punk rock, west coast gang culture, to name just two). Last, criticism has arisen regarding CCCS's monolithic view of both of subcultures and mainstream culture; that both are "coherent and homogenous formations that be clearly demarcated."[37] As heroic resisters, subculturalists who contributed to capital either as entrepreneurs or promoters were "class traitors" who identified with the mainstream. However, the economic processes embodied within subcultures warrant a more nuanced look. Close to the heart of many subcultures are "entrepreneurial engines" providing commodities for the subculture itself.[38] Without these material economic institutions these subcultures would not exist to begin with.

As previously mentioned, John Irwin's scene theory provides the theoretical scaffolding for this study. While a small handful of secondary works on post-subcultural studies depict scene theory as a fruitless branch in the field's family tree, it is still a common tool in the field of musicology. While journalists as far back as the 1940s popularly used the term scene, it entered the academic world through the work of David Riesman who used it to challenge notions that characterized consumers of recorded music as docile listeners.[39]

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[37] David Muggleton, and Rupert Weinzierl. "What is 'Post-subcultural Studies' Anyway?" in *The Post-subcultural Studies Reader*. (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 37

[38] David Muggleton, and Rupert Weinzierl. "What is 'Post-subcultural Studies' Anyway?" in *The Post-subcultural Studies Reader*. (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 8

[39] David Riesman, ""Listening to Popular Music."," *American Quarterly*, 2, no. 4 (1950), 359-71.

According to Adam Krims, the architects of cultural studies in Birmingham adopted Riesman's assumption that music consumers were agents in dialogic relationship with the culture they consumed.[40] Currently, scene theory is applied to studies focusing on locally based communities of music producers and consumers. In most cases, scene theory is applied to sites and musical genres dominated by white people, such as the anarco-punk scene and indie rock.[41] Sara Cohen provided a critical intervention in her examination of gendered practices in the Liverpool's live rock scene in 1991's *Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the Making*.[42] Nevertheless, scene theory is rarely employed outside the field of musicology and popular music studies.

As this literature review attests, my project, like many Chicana/o studies projects, occupies an intersectional space between several academic trajectories, each burdened and blessed by their respective histories. As a Chicana/o Studies scholar, tracing these historical narratives provided me with a painful reminder of just how easy it is to represent a community in ways that are not only dehumanizing and insulting, but that also can be materially detrimental to the lives and livelihoods of people already struggling to get by. Ultimately, these histories played a profound role in shaping and tailoring how I conduct my research into a methodology that was rigorous both academically and ethically.

Methodology

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[40] Adam Krims, "Reception and Scenes," *The Ashgate Music Companion to Popular Musicology*, ed. Derek B. Scott (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

[41] See Sasha Frere Jones. "A Paler Shade of White: How Indie Rock Lost Its Soul." *The New Yorker*, (October 22, 2007).

[42] Sara Cohen, *Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the Making*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Participant Observation

This study relied on the ethnographic methods of participant observation and interviews to collect data from past and preset members of the Raza Rockabilly scene. As limited secondary material had been published on this subject, I turned to primary sources including the 'zines *Continental Restyling* and *Blue Suede News* to piece together a historical narrative of the Rockabilly scene and prepare for my field research. I began my work in the field in late 2008 with a series of visits to bars and Rockabilly musical festivals as both a participant and observer. These primary observations with limited participant interaction focused largely on the interplay of production within Rockabilly leisure spaces; for instance venue advertising and aesthetic preparation with consumption practices such as drinking and dancing. In choosing leisure spaces such as nightclubs, websites and festivals, this project observed the cultural practices of Raza Rockabilly in accessible, public social spaces.

For each site, I developed an inventory based on the following questions:

- What are the material needs of this promotion, such as the venue, staff, advertising, equipment, musicians, and so forth?
- How are these needs met and sustained?
- What were the cultural products being and produced and consumed?
- What meanings do participants attach to these products?
- Does the scene rely on or value a handful of steady regulars or a large base of casual patrons?
- How are the activities or interactions within the site, informed by race, class, or gender?
- How does this influence a participant's relationship or patronage of certain venues over others?

These types of questions provided a basic inventory of the site and offer a way of identifying participants for follow up interviews. More so, these questions allowed me to consider how a

specific site's community and its practices shifted over time. This basic inventory also provided me crucial information to develop into a sound political economy.

Between March and August of 2009, I began conducting field research at two popular and long running Southern Californian Rockabilly venues; "The Rumble Bar," hosted by Black Cat Entertainment and held at CC's Roadhouse in Paramount and "Rhythm and Booze" hosted by promoter Brando Von Badsville and held at Spike's Billiards in Rosemead. Complimenting these two venues, were field research conducted at the Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly Weekender, a yearly international Rockabilly music festival held in Las Vegas Nevada, and the Latino Rockabilly Festival held at Claremont. In addition to these physical spaces, I also "observed" the virtual rockabilly world of the social networking site, Myspace, which at that time was still a bustling social network.

As a participant observer, I made the trek down to the venue from Santa Barbara, usually showing up shortly after doors opened and leaving shortly after last call. As a *participant*, I chatted with friends, drank beer, danced and enjoyed live or recorded music. As an *observer*, I made notes of my findings related to my research questions, and engaged in short interviews with informants or scheduled longer interviews for a later time. My initial observations solely focused on (re)familiarizing myself with the landscape of Los Angeles Rockabilly. What boundaries define the Rockabilly scene? Who are the cultural producers and consumers and what institutions have been built to support venue promoters and attract patrons? Each subsequent visit to the field shaped and fine-tuned these questions; necessitating adequate time for preparation and debriefing before and after each venue. My initial plans to focus solely on The Rumble Bar and Rhythm and Booze were quickly

scrapped following the onset of the great recession. As two reliably scheduled venues with similar formats, both sites seemed perfectly suited for my study. Yet, with the onset of the economic downturn, the Rumble Bar's promoter pulled the plug, and Rhythm and Booze's attendance plummeted. I soon found myself visiting a variety of sites across the greater Los Angeles area. What seemed like a setback ultimately provided my study with crucial insight into the scene's mobility as well as the intimate ties between the leisure industries and the economy. An exhausting list of field sites, of which there are many, was included in an appendix at the end of the dissertation.

In addition to these geographic sites, I was also a participant observer in the public on-line forums dedicated to Rockabilly found on the social networking site Myspace. These sites proved fruitful as they provided venues for ongoing public dialogue regarding issues of authenticity, taste, gender roles, and history, with conversation threads often lasting months at a time. I generally eschewed participating in these discussions as they often became quite heated and confrontational. Instead, I used the discussion board to recruit potential interviewees. With the wide-scale abandonment of Myspace, Facebook became an equivalent public online research site.

Throughout the duration of the project I maintained a project diary as well as built a small archive for the project. As a research tool, I employed my project diary to review and interact with my research, both identifying gaps in my study and uncovering new insights and directions for my field research. Social anthropologist Juan Vicente Palerm introduced me to the use of a project diary as a method, a practice that dates back to the work of

Malinowski.[43] The diary provided me with an ongoing dialogue with my research as entries were typed up and placed on the left side of a notebook, providing the right side with a blank canvass that I could scribble notes, draw maps, and write observations each time I revisited my data. Archive materials for this project consists of flyers, event programs, 'zines, catalogs, clothing tags, and CD's plus my own photographic documentation. Materials were obtained from venues as well as specialty shops.

Short Interviews

As my familiarity with the scene improved, I began incorporating short interviews with scene participants. While my approach to short interviews were shaped by those employed by Juan Vicente Palerm, I found the qualitative interview guidelines as developed by Michael Quinn Paton useful in developing my questions.[44] In addition to demographic questions involving age and race, short interviews with select participants were guided by the following queries:

Latinos and Rockabilly

1. What components make up a "Rockabilly scene?"
2. When were you first introduced to the Rockabilly scene?
3. What attracted you to the Rockabilly scene?
4. What has sustained your interest in the Rockabilly scene?
5. How has the Rockabilly scene changed since you first got involved?
6. Do you believe Latinos are attracted to the scene? Why or why not?

Cultural Memory

7. Are you interested in the history of the atomic era?
8. Would you consider yourself knowledgeable about the atomic era?

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[43] Bronislaw Malinowski's field diaries were posthumously published in 1967. Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1989).

[44] Michael Quinn Patton. *How to Use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation.* (London: Sage Publications, 1987).

9. Would you consider yourself knowledgeable about the atomic era history of your community?
10. From where or whom did you learn the most from?

Far from a structured survey, variations of these 10 initial questions were woven into flexible short interviews taken with the informants' permission. These questions enabled me to engage different participants to provide some information to test my claims such as whether or not the Rockabilly scene in Los Angeles could genuinely be considered a working class and Latina/o space. Additionally, questions 1 through 6 provided me with information to build a narrative detailing the development of the Raza Rockabilly scene.

Questions 7 to 10 allowed me to consider the use of Raza Rockabilly as a space to claim and build memory. In many ways the Raza Rockabilly scene is a repository, conductor, and transmitter of cultural memory, offering narratives about the postwar period that have gone ignored by institutions of power.[45] If geography, as Dolores Hayden suggest, can transmit memories of significance, so too can bodies.[46] It's participants enact their own "art in the flesh," cueing that communal history by embodying it through aesthetic and sonic

[45] My application of cultural memory is shaped by the work George Lipsitz, Lydia R. Otero, Deborah Paredes, and Monica Perales. See Lipsitz, George. *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture. (*Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), Lydia R. Otero, *La Calle: Spatial Conflicts and Urban Renewal in a Southwest City.* Tucson University of Arizona Press, 2010) Deborah Paredes. *Selenidad: Selena, Latinos, and the Performance of Memory*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009) Monica Perales. *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[46] Dolores Hayden. *The Power of Place* :*Urban Landscapes as Public History.*(MIT Press, 1997).

style.[47] Paul Connerton's work on embodied memory examines how shared rituals, ceremonies, and everyday bodily practices shape social and cultural memory of a community as the body develops automatic habits.[48] I took a different approach with embodied memory in this work. Far from automatic, the embodied transformations made by Raza Rockabilly are quite deliberate. Yet, as my interviews revealed, the memories most significant to them were not historical, rather they were deeply felt moments of joy with loved ones crafted inside and outside the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene.

For my informants I recruited participants who I either knew casually, or, not at all. Each informant was notified of the scope of the project -- to identify why Rockabilly is attractive to Latinos -- and engaged in casual interviews often lasting no longer than 5-6 minutes. Between March and August of 2009 I interviewed approximately 12 Raza Rockabilly participants using the short interview format. My notes from the short interviews were transcribed into my research journal along with my initial reactions and ideas regarding follow up.

In-Depth Interviews

As my research progressed, short interviews proved insufficient in providing a context for the participants' leisure activities in the Rockabilly scene. Through a handful of preliminary in depth interviews, I discovered how these participants' day-to-day struggles played out through the lens of race, class, and gender. These narrators shared common

[47] I draw upon Cherrie Moraga's equation of theatre performance as art in the flesh. I concur that contemporary Raza Rockabilly enthusiasts are like artists in their own right, using their bodies as canvas. Cherrie Moraga, "Art in America Con Acento" from *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol 12, No. 3, 1992.
[48] Paul Connerton. *How Societies Remember.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

accounts of youth poverty, ambivalence toward education, and working class anxieties. I looked beyond the leisure space of these participants in order to better understand their lived material realities in post-industrial Los Angeles.

Of the participants that consented to in-depth interviews, I followed up with four potential narrators who allowed me to record longer interviews lasting between 30 minutes to an hour. The sessions were held one-on-one at a time that was convenient for the narrator. Employing the in depth methods detailed in Valerie Raleigh Yow's *Recording Oral History*, the interview followed the narration of the informant's own life history; guided in part by my own interest in their raced, classed, and gendered experiences.[49] In preparation for the interview, I developed a flexible interview guide specifically designed for the narrator. The interview guide included flexible questions based on those used in the short interviews to guide the conversation. After the recorded interview, a CD was provided to the narrator.

The in-depth interview provided me with a multi-faceted research tool that allowed me to look at the shifting cultural practices and interests of a Raza Rockabilly participant over time. Additionally, participants shared accounts of home and work life, a topic rarely elaborated in during the short interviews. When examined through the lens of race, class, gender and sexuality, the in-depth interview allowed me to contextualize a narrator's cultural practices against the backdrop of a broader political moment.

Theoretical Approaches: The Altered Native

As my research progressed, I maintained site visits to the previously mentioned sites, but I relied heavily on the short interviews and life histories. Epistemologically, my project

.[49] Valerie Raleigh Yow. *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*. (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2005).

employed participant observation and interview collection to craft an ethnography that was self-reflexive and adherent to the political/intellectual project of Chicana and Chicano Studies. Highlighting the voices of working class Chicana/os and Latina/os injected a critical lens often missing from other studies utilizing scene theory. Furthermore, the transformation of my own sites of leisure into sites of research posed unique challenges as I was called upon to not only challenge my own assumptions regarding the scene, but to also represent a community of peers in ways that neither pathologized nor romanticized their daily struggles or even their tastes.

In this regard, I found Gina A. Ulysses's conceptualization of her research as stemming from an *alter(ed)native* perspective, spoke to my own experience researching and representing a community that I felt a profound connection and love for, but I was ultimately not "from."[50] As a Chicano member of the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene, I felt an affinity and connection to a community that I sought to represent. LA, after all, was *my* scene. Yet, as a Santa Barbaran, someone who commuted to these sites of leisure, I was removed from the lived experiences of Los Angeles Latina/os, and as researcher who chose to represent this community to a removed realm of academia, my perspectives were altered and shaped by these and other aspects of my identity.

This is not to ignore the multiplicity of perspectives brought to the scene by individual members, but rather to situate my role and my perspective in specific spaces where it is not always readily visible. While my circle of friends were aware of my project,

[50] Gina A. Ulysses, *Downtown Ladies Informal Commercial Importers, A Haitian Anthropologist, and Self-Making in Jamaica*. (London and Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 2007).

and my role as researcher; few of the other participants were. In an era of constant social media documentation, even in a scene as discursively represented as "underground" the presence of recording equipment such as camcorders, SLR cameras, audio recorders, and signed releases were far from abnormal in these spaces. While I may not have appeared 'out of place' whilst engaging in research, I certainly felt out of place saddled with the responsibility of representing a community of peers in a way that spoke to often ugly realities, yet refused to objectify a community striving to keep their heads above water during successive moments of intense racial hatred, gendered violence and class warfare waged on the poor. Ultimately, I wrestled with how to explore the lived struggle and negotiation of Angeleno Raza Rockabilly enthusiasts, yet was clear and reflexive on the very production of that knowledge.

Los Angeles Historical Landscapes

My study explored the experiences of Los Angeles based Chicana/o and Latina/os during a historical period of recent memory, namely the mid 2000s characterized by the presidential administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama. As such, the scope of this largely qualitative study purposely prohibited generalizations about Chicana/os and Latina/os at large. While the cultural productions of this community strongly reverberated internationally, I focused on the landscape of post-industrial Los Angeles. Over the course of my study, I discovered that similar negotiations were taking place in the rockabilly scenes of cities such as El Paso, Chicago, and New York. In Mexico, bands such as Nicotyna and Calavera were stirring interest in Rockabilly, with over sixteen thousand people attending the fourth annual "Rockalavera" rockabilly festival in Mexico City in 2014. While these sites

warranted study, I chosen Los Angeles due to it significance as well as its' proximity and ease of access.

Additionally, my own situated role as both a researcher and scene member opened some doors and closed others. While friends had been open in sharing their thoughts on the scene, other participants were understandably reluctant to share their thoughts on race, class, and gender, in a space dedicated to leisure. My interactions with scene participants were also influenced by sexuality, race and especially gender. As my research questions insist on highlighting the voices of women and Queer people within the scene I strove to avoid tokenizing those very voices. Last, I carefully considered how I approached respondents given that my research sites are in nightlife leisure where people go expecting to navigate un/wanted advances.

It is estimated that within Los Angeles County, Latina/os account for 47.7% of the total population.[51] While this figure is somewhat comparable to the percentage for the city of Rosemead where Spikes' Billiards in the San Gabriel Valley is located, in Paramount, the home of CC's Roadhouse, located in the Gateway Cities region, the percentage is significantly higher at 72.3% (see figure 1.)[52] The majority of informants that I spoke

[51] U.S. Census Bureau, "State and County Facts: Los Angeles County." Accessed April 4, 2008. http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06037.html.

[52] According to City-data, "Hispanics" in Rosemead account for 41.3%. Like it's neighbor Alhambra, Rosemead has a large enclave of Asian and Pacific Islanders who account for roughly 48% of that cities population. White "non Hispanics, on the other hand, account for just 8% of that cities population, and just 9% in Paramount. City-Data. "Rosemead." Accessed April 4, 2008. http://www.city-data.com/city/Rosemead-California.html, http://www.city-data.com/city/Paramount-California.html

encountered resided an areas where communities of color, if not Latina/os alone, were the vast majority, mostly located east of the Los Angeles River. As evidenced by shifting

Figure 1. Greater Los Angeles.

demographics formerly white dominated cities east of the river such as South Gate has transformed into majority Latina/o areas within the past 20 years.[53] Despite high representation, the outlook for Latina/os in the immediate greater Los Angeles area is dismal. Within Los Angeles city itself, Latina/os accounted for the highest percentage of total residents living in poverty in 2007.[54] Of the total population of Latina/os in Los Angeles city, over 20% are poor. Beyond the Chicana/o Latina/o community, poverty in both Paramount and Rosemead are significantly higher than the state average. In Paramount, 21.9% of the total population lived below the poverty line, compared to 14.2% for the California state average. In Rosemead that figure is 22.8%. Even for those living above the poverty line, the estimated median household for both Rosemead and Paramount is well below the state average at roughly $45,944 and $46,665 respectively. The California state average is $59,948.[55] The most common employment for men and women in both Rosemead and Paramount are largely working class and low wage jobs employing women. In Paramount, the most common industries for men are construction and metal products. For women it is healthcare. In Rosemead, the most common industry for men is in accommodations and food services, while the apparel industry is the most common for women.

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[53] Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[54] City-Data. "Los Angeles County Poverty." Accessed April 4, 2008. http://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Los-Angeles-California.html

[55] Rosemead." Accessed April 4, 2008. http://www.city-data.com/city/Rosemead-California.html

Sadly, for the sons and daughters of working class Latina/o families in the immediate greater Los Angeles area, socioeconomic mobility is far from a reality. According to a study released by Tomas Rivera Institute following the last census, Latina/os make up 60% of all k-12 students in Los Angeles county. Yet, they face a 40% drop out rate in high school. This is compared to "non-Hispanic" whites with an 18% drop out rate. Even for those that complete high school, only 26% of Latina/o students will have the taken the courses necessary to be eligible for admission to a California State University or the University of California. Meanwhile, 44% of "non-Hispanic" white students do have the requisite courses available.[56] Through course tracking, Latina/os are directed away from classes that would allow them to gain a higher education, and subsequently socio-economic mobility. Thus, it can be argued that working class families Latina/os are being set up to reproduce a new pool labor through their children.[57]

Chapter Overview

Chapter one, entitled "From London to East Los' A Cultural History the Chicana/o Latina/o Rockabilly Scene" provides a chronological cultural history of the international Rockabilly scene since its revival in Great Britain. As a hybrid cultural text, the genre of music known as Rockabilly music combined elements of Black rhythm & blues and white country music in the 1950s. By the 1970s Rockabilly enthusiasts in the United Kingdom

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[56] The American Way of Greater Los Angeles, "Latino Scorecard: Grading the American Dream 2003" Last modified October 2003. Accessed June 18, 2014. http://trpi.org/wp-content/uploads/archives/scorecard_summary.pdf.

[57] This theory of labor reproduction was explored in Paul Willis's "Learning to Labor" who conducted an ethnography among working class youth British youth. Willis, Paul E. *Learning to Labor. (*Farmborough: Saxon House, 1977).

developed a scene based on a re-imagined vision of 1950s America. Introduced to the United States in the 1980s, and again in the late 1990s, the Rockabilly scene gained a strong foothold in the Los Angeles area, where Chicana/os and Latina/os now dominate. Drawing upon a rich archive of material produced by the international Rockabilly from the revival to the present, this chapter examines established narratives detailing the Rockabilly scene's sustained popularity, including seemingly contradictory claims regarding the role of familia drawing Los Angeles Chicanas/os and Latinas/os to Rockabilly.

In chapter two, "Hey Bartender! Sites of Leisure in the Raza Rockabilly Scene" I focus on data gathered through ethnographic methods. This chapter lays out a political economy of the scene's performers, promoters, merchants, and consumers. By exploring the material institutions that support the scene, I analyze how participation within the scene is a response to the lived conditions of working class Chicana/o and Latina/o youth and young adults in the greater Los Angeles area.

Chapter three examines the use of style as a form of embodied memory. The chapter highlights David Contreras and Esther Vasquez as cultural producers in the Rockabilly scene of Los Angeles whose Tarantula Clothing Company has been turned to for providing faithful reproductions of vintage garments that are becoming increasingly scarce. Vintage fashion is an important element in the self-construction of the "Rockabilly" body, a walking anachronism that challenges hegemony in the public sphere. Tarantula's reliance on camp goes further than an aesthetic choice; it truly reflects a "form of survival" for Chicana/os living on the margins of both the dominant society and their own community

Chapter four explores the use of music to draw genealogical ties to history and community. This chapter looks at the careers of Robert Williams, Luis Arriaga, and Vicky Tafoya, prominent performers in the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene. Through music, performers and enthusiast alike stake claims to a dignity and history often unrecognized and dishonored in the institutional historical record.

Viewed as an entire project, this dissertation provides an account not of why Latina/os are attracted to rockabilly, but of *how* Latina/os transformed the Rockabilly scene to reflect their own desires. While chapters two and three draw an ethnographic portrait of the contemporary Rockabilly scene, the cultural histories present in chapters one and four are essential to document and record key moments and players.

Wellll…

It seemed fitting to conclude this introduction with one of rockabilly music's most familiar tropes: a long drawn out utterance of the word "well" by the lead singer just before the band sends the audience on an intense 3 minute ride powered by a creaking wooden bass, a franticly strumming rhythm guitar, and piercing lead guitar solos. Both a warning and a promise, the protracted "well" prepared an audience for an all-out sensory assault, but also reassured them that for the next forty-five minutes, they could focus on something other than what was troubling them the other twenty-three hours and fifteen minutes day. As a form of leisure, the Rockabilly scene in Los Angeles may provide its enthusiasts a respite or escape, but it would be a mischaracterization to paint Raza Rockabilly as escapists. Many of the people I encountered were quite astute to the politics and economics of their cultural moment, in tune with the shared experiences as working class Chicana/os and Latina/os in

the urban metropolis of Los Angeles. For sure there were a handful that, if given the chance, would gleefully walk into a time machine and emerge back in 1956. Yet, the majority of enthusiasts I encountered, and nearly all of the respondents I interviewed for this project were well aware of the contradictions apparent in their participation as producers and consumers in the Rockabilly scene, both locally and internationally.

While, I am hardly the first altere(d)native to represent their community in the academy, this dissertation is one of the first studies to examine contemporary leisure practices as a lens to consider how everyday Chicana/os and Latina/os get by in an urban metropolis that looks at them as service industry fodder. To be sure, this is a study about Rockabilly as much as recent that recent works by Michelle Habell-Pallán examines punk, Pancho McFarland explores Chicana/o hip-hop, and Deborah Paredez frames Selena fans.[58] Surely my work adds to the growing interest in contemporary rockabilly, including films such as "Rebel Beat" and "Los Wild Ones," photography books such as Jennifer Greenburg's *The Rockabillies* and Andrew Shaylor's *Rockin'* as well as Kimberly Kattari's forthcoming manuscript, *Psychobilly: Imagining and Realizing a "Culture of Survival" Through Mutant Rockabilly*.[59] Yet, this study has provided me with rare opportunity to engage with and share

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[58] Michlle, Habell-Pallán. "'Soy Punkera, y Qué?:' Sexuality, Translocality, and Punk in Los Angeles and Beyond" In *Beyond the Frame: Women of Color and Visual Representation* Neferti X. M. Tadiar and Angela Davis, eds. (New York: Palgrave, 2005): 219-241, Pancho McFarland, *Chicana@ Hip Hop Nation: Politics of a New Millennial Mestizaje* , (East Lansing: MSU Press, 2013), and Deborah Paredes. *Selenidad: Selena, Latinos, and the Performance of Memory*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009)

[59] See Elizabeth Blozan. "Rebel Beat: The Story of L.A. Rockabilly." Betty Vision 2007. DVD, Elise Salomon. "Los Wild Ones." 2013, Jennifer Greenburg. *The Rockabillies*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2010), Andrew Shaylor. *Rockin' The Rockabilly Scene.* (London and New York: Merrell, 2011) and Kimberly Kattari, 2011. *Psychobilly:*

the voices of resilient, talented people living everyday lives in contemporary Los Angeles.

While I have crafted my methods and honed my analysis to provide a rigorous study that neither romanticizes nor pathologizes their choices and experiences, it is ultimately their accounts that drove this work. Their narratives allowed me to look beyond sites of leisure and see how their love and passion for music, style, and other trappings of a historical era long since passed, provided them with the resilience, animo, and often financial assistance to strive for a good life in a time and place that still renders Chicana/os and Latina/os disempowered politically and economically.

Imagining and Realizing a "Culture of Survival" Through Mutant Rockabilly.. [PhD.] dissertation, University of Texas.

Terms and Definitions

Chicana/o and Latina/o participants in the Rockabilly scene are the primary subjects of my study. As a result, certain terminology employed by this community will be used extensively in my work alongside theoretical concepts. Confusingly, many of these terms hold multiple meanings that are largely context driven.

"Rockabilly" is first and foremost a genre of music. During the mid 1950's Southern White musicians such as Elvis Presley and Carl Perkins developed a style music that featured Black "rocking" rhythm and blues songs performed in the White "hillbilly" or country-western style. The resulting mix of rock and hillbilly musical styles was the unique sound of rockabilly music that emphasized vocals enhanced by an echo effect, blues and country inspired guitar riffs, and an upright 'slap' bass.[60] As a genre, rockabilly faded by the late 1950s with the rise of rock and roll music. It would completely vanish from popular music by the 1960s with the arrival of the Beatles and the British Invasion. However, the term Rockabilly also refers to a distinct scene. While a homegrown scene for rockabilly fans existed in the United States prior to the arrival of a European scene in the 1980s and 1990s, the European version of the scene has all but completely consumed the latter in Los Angeles. In my work, I use *rockabilly* (with a lower case "r") to refer to a specific genre of music, while *Rockabilly* (with a capital "R") refers to the international Rockabilly scene and its local manifestations.

Additionally, I use "Raza" and "Latina/o" interchangeably as umbrella terms to describe people of so-called "Latin American" descent, including Mexico, Central and South

[60] Morrison, 2.

American, the Caribbean and Mexican states ceded to the United States. "Chicana/o" refers to those that self identify with this politicized identity. While my use of "Latina/o" includes Chicana/os, I will typically pair both identities due to the unique positioning that the Chicana/o experience has in Los Angeles. While I chose not to capitalize brown or white, I purposefully capitalized Black in full recognition of the liberatory political connotations of doing so.[61]

Lastly, I describe the location of my research as the immediate greater Los Angeles area, consisting of Los Angeles County, parts of Orange County, and parts of the Inland Empire. While my research sites are based in southeast Los Angeles, scene participants from outside this area often make the drive to enjoy these leisure spaces. Since conceptualization of 'greater Los Angeles' often include Ventura and San Bernardino County, I found that describing my region of interest as the immediate-greater Los Angeles area to be more fitting.

[61] Robert S. Wachal writes "The failure to capitalize *Black* when it is synonymous with African American is a matter of unintended racism, to put the best possible face on it." Robert S. Wachal, "The Capitalization of Black and Native American," *American Speech*, 75, no. 4 (2000), 364.

I. From London To East Los: A Cultural History of The International Rockabilly Scene

At first glance, one can find little in common between the experiences of poor rural southern white musicians of the 1950s and working class Chicana/o and Latina/o immigrant youth in the urban metropolis of 21st century Los Angeles. Nevertheless, La Raza has come to dominate the Rockabilly scene in greater Los Angeles area. Since the turn of the century, venues with names such as The Rumble Bar, Rhythm and Booze, or Travesuras have provided leisure spaces where Rockabilly enthusiasts can listen and dance to 1950s rock & roll and rhythm & blues, wear 1950s style clothing, show off their restored hot rods, drink and socialize. Traditionally thought of as an exclusively Anglo subculture comprised of aging Elvis fanatics and Betty Page wanna-bes, Chicana/os and Latina/os have negotiated their own space and identity within the international Rockabilly scene. I term this community and the culture that they produce and consume as "Raza Rockabilly" or simply "Razabilly."

Both mainstream and urban Latino-based media have begun to pay attention to the seemingly novel elements of Raza Rockabilly, yet despite its fascinating implications of racialized space and shifting transnational cultural practices, few scholars has examined this topic. This chapter constructs a cultural history of the Rockabilly scene and its activity systems through the lens of race, a perspective that has largely been overlooked. In doing so, I examine the roots of rockabilly and rock & roll music as a cultural text in 1950s North America, as well as the migration of the UK-born activity systems that characterize the international Rockabilly scene. Lastly, I explore the material and historical context that facilitated the inroads made by Chicana/os and Latina/os resulting in the unique cultural practices associated with Razabilly.

This chapter draws upon extensive primary research, namely a collection and analysis of a rich archive of printed and digital material created by, for, and about the international Rockabilly scene. I scoured independent music stores and eBay for surviving fan made 'zines, retro-interest magazines, and featured interviews with Rockabilly artists from the 1980s and 1990s. I also delved into the liner notes of tapes, records, and compact discs of artists popular in the post-revival scene. I collected and archived flyers and handbills left for patrons at my field sites. The internet provided a wealth of digital materials, including fan sites, Myspace and Facebook pages, archived listserv discussion, artist produced promotional materials, interviews, bulletins and digital flyers. YouTube provided another rich source, featuring an ever-growing slew of both amateur and professionally produced videos. Additionally, the international Rockabilly scene has developed it's own informal archival networks, posting decades old photographs and flyers to share in social media outlets. A rigorous review of secondary research and primary interviews compliment my look at material forms of culture.

Far from an all-encompassing look at the history of the international Rockabilly scene, this chapter seeks to examine the ways in which greater Los Angeles area Latinas and Latinos have claimed and transformed the migratory cultural practices unique to the post-revival Rockabilly scene. Those cultural practices are examined as activity systems, or as John Irwin defines it: "the set of special meanings, rules, symbols, and subsidiary activities which have emerged out of the interaction of the participants."[1] Activity systems are permeable and malleable, meeting the needs of whoever lays claim to the scene at the time. As such, activity systems, and the meanings ascribed to them can serve as a contested terrain

[1] John Irwin, *Scenes*, (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1977), 27.

where questions of race, class, gender, and other forms of structural hierarchy may play out. In this way, greater Los Angeles Latinas' and Latinos' adoption, transformation, and jettison of certain activities systems in the Rockabilly scene speaks to broader issues of where young Raza see themselves in terms of race, place, and history given their own historical context of the George W. Bush years.

The Birth of Rockabilly and Rock & Roll

As a genre of music, rockabilly is one of the earliest forms of rock & roll. Emerging from the American South during the 1950s, rockabilly is a hybrid musical form that combines elements of white country music with black rhythm & blues. The term "rockabilly" itself is a combination of "rock & roll" and "hillbilly," and of one of a handful of terms invented to describe the musical form. As ethnomusicologist Craig Morrison notes in his work *Go Cat Go! Rockabilly Music and Its Makers*, the term "rockabilly" as it surfaced in the mid-1950s was initially used derisively to slam musicians whose inspirations came from regional forms with little popularity outside the regional and racial confines from which they emerged.[2] Other terms that emerged were "hillbilly bop" and "country rhythm & blues," both of which refer to the hybridity of white and black traditions. Some artists embraced the term rockabilly, while others were adamant about describing their music as rock & roll.

Emotionally charged and played at moderate to fast tempos, rockabilly music is characterized by a line-up of an upright bass, lead guitar, rhythm guitar, vocalist, and

[2] Morrison quotes Sun Records producer Sam Phillips, stating "Where [the term] rockabilly came, I think it was a slam at country music and at rock 'n' roll and I still don't like it . . . [the critics said] 'well I'll insult the hillbillies.'" Morrison, Craig. *Go Cat Go! Rockabilly Music and Its Makers,* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 4.

sometimes drums.[3] Like most American born genres of music, rockabilly music carries a history that speaks to the complex ways hierarchical orders of race, class, and gender drive culture. White male musicians made up the initial cohorts of musicians saddled with the label of rockabilly. While original artists such as Elvis Presley, and Carl Perkins, can be dismissed as white musicians attempting and failing to sound black, fans of rockabilly music argue to the contrary, as many find and identify hybridity within the genre as these artists and other like them blended elements of rhythm & blues and country music. Despite having a rich poly-racial history and origin, country music, then termed as "hillbilly" was racialized as music for poor whites.[4] The blues, in its postwar incarnation as jump blues or rhythm & blues was sold as "race" music, by and for black performers.[5] This hybridity was hardly

[3] The criteria mentioned tend to be the most consistent elements found in Rockabilly music. However, as Morrison notes "The definition of the style is a very individual thing. People use their personal taste to weigh the factors when determining whether a song is rockabilly." Morrison, Craig. *Go Cat Go! Rockabilly Music and Its Makers,* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 2.

[4] See Peter La Chapelle's *Proud to Be An Okie: Cultural Politics, Country Music and Migration to Southern California* for an exploration on the role played by both African American and Mexican American musical traditional on Country Western musicians. La Chapelle, Peter. *Proud to Be An Okie: Cultural Politics, Country Music and Migration to Southern California*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. Speaking on the popularity of country music during the early age of commercial recording, Bill C. Malone writes "Although insufficiently understood or recognized at the time, the fusion of African American and Anglo American elements also made the music distinctive and intriguing." Bill C. Malone, *Don't Get Above Your Raisin': Country Music and the Southern Working Class*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 16. Speaking to the blues role as both mirror and conduit for African American visions of political, and social dreams and desires see Clyde Woods's *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* and Angela Y. Davis's *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism.* Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2000). Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

[5] As Morrison notes, neither country nor rhythm & blues were marketed as popular music, but were instead seen as appealing to minority markets. He writes "Concurrent with country

unique to rockabilly; as both rhythm & blues and country artists freely borrowed elements and from each other's camp for years.[6]

When looked at solely from the perspective of race, an imbalance exists between white rockabilly artists such as Elvis Presley's astronomical success (financial or otherwise) and the relative obscurity rendered to black rhythm & blues performers such as Roy Brown or Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup, who Presley emulated. By the late 1950's, rock & roll became a marketable genre of music by major record labels.[7] While exceptions such as Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, and Little Richard exist, white rock & rollers largely outsold and eclipsed their black counterparts. While rockabilly and rock & roll music *itself* may be a hybrid form, for black rhythm & blues and rock & roll performers who never saw a share of the profit or the acclaim, white performers who incorporated black sounds were no better than thieves. This was made no more apparent at the time than by Langston Hughes' scathing critique, equating white appropriation of black music to highway robbery. Hughes wrote "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, so the saying goes. What the Negro artists are saying is 'It's nice

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music's increased popularity was a rise in other minority and ethnic styles and their presentation on the radio." Morrison, Craig. *Go Cat Go! Rockabilly Music and Its Makers,* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 29.

[6] See R&B artist Cootie Williams' 1951 cover of Tennessee Ernie Ford's "The Shotgun Boogie," or Moon Mullican's 1956 cover of Big Joe Turner's "Seven Nights to Rock."

[7] Elvis Presley and other rock & rollers dominated Billboard's year-end charts from 1956-1958. Presley, signed to RCA, held the number one spot in 1956 with "Heartbreak Hotel," and in 1957 with "All Shook Up." Other rockabilly and rock and roll artists, such as Fats Domino signed to Imperial, and Gene Vincent signed to Capitol, joined Presley. Billboard maintains a digital archive of their "Hot 100" charts on their website. Billboard Magazine, "Billboard Hot 100." Accessed March 12, 2014. http://www.billboard.com/charts/hot-100.

to have white performers imitate us-but cut us in on the jobs and the dough, too.'"[8] Hughes sentiments rang true with many black performers of the time, and still shapes the cultural memory of the rock & roll age for many in communities of colors. Intervening in the study of race and rock & roll, George Lipsitz's 1990 text *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* provided a classed analysis that speaks to the cross-racial dialogue and hybridity of the genre.

In this work, Lipsitz argues that industrial labor created the landscape that would lead to the "sudden" national popularity of a music that was largely regional and marginal. The defense production needed for World War II drew a mass migration of rural blacks and whites to industrial centers throughout the US. In these migrations and resettlements, transplanted cultures mixed with local expressions in ways that were previously restricted. Lipsitz argues that it was shared spaces such as shop floors, taverns, and wherever a radio was made available to poly-racial workforces that introduced new audiences.[9] Far from career musicians, rock & roll musicians of various racial backgrounds started as laborers recording for small recording labels, singing songs that glorified play and leisure for people just like themselves that toiled away in industrial factories.

Scholars such as Anthony Macias, David Reyes and Tom Waldman have also focused

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[8] Langston Hughes, ""Highway Robbery Across The Color Line in Rhythm and Blues." Chicago Defender. July, 1955," *The Pop Rock and Soul Reader*, ed. David Brackett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 105.

[9] Lipsitz argues that encoded protest found within rock & roll songs resonated with working class listeners of all colors. He writes "From its tradition of social criticism to its sense of time, from its cultivation of community to its elevation of emotion, rock-and-roll music embodies a dialogic process of active remembering. It derives its comedic and dramatic tension from working-class vernacular traditions, and it carries on a prejudice in favor of community, collectivity, and creativity in its very forms and constructs." Lipsitz, George. *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture. (*Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 116.

on the role played by Chicana/os and Latina/os in the development of rock & roll. David Reyes and Tom Waldman's 1998 text, *Land of a Thousand Dances: Chicano Rock 'n' Roll from Southern California*, explored the development of Chicana/o rhythm & blues and rock & roll in Los Angeles from the late 1940s to the 1970s. Reyes and Waldman relied on oral history interviews to construct a chronology of the musical and style trends developed during those years. In this work, Chicana/os are positioned as a community that demanded stylistic diversity from their musicians, but also was open to the development of uniquely Chicano takes on rock & roll and rhythm & blues.[10] While black and white rockabilly and rock & roll musicians experimented with each other's sounds in the segregated south; groups like The Silhouettes (Ritchie Valens' original band) and the Rhythm Rockers were racially mixed, reflecting the multiracial make-up of the urban areas that they descended from.

In 2008's *Mexican American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance and Urban Culture in Los Angeles, 1935-1968*, Anthony Macias argued that a "multicultural urban civility" was developed among black and brown communities in response to the rupturing of these communities into distinct geographic and employment segments.[11] He positioned rock & roll as a counter culture operating against hegemonic racial segregation and discrimination. By

[10] Reyes and Waldman write ". . . early Chicano R&B singles (1956-1963), which are distinctive in large part because they are not obviously derived from the black groups who inspired them. . . In fact, the harmonies in boleros, a traditional form of Mexican music, were as essential to the sound of Chicano R&B as Robert and Johnny, Don and Dewey, or other contemporary R&B duo." Reyes, David and Tom Waldman. *Land of a Thousand Dances, Chicano Rock 'n' Roll from Southern California*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998*),* xvii.

[11] Macias writes "Yet Mexican Americans did not just consume black music, they assimilated elements of African American expressive culture into their own, for inspiration and modification, and they also engaged in personal, professional, and educational relationships with black Angelenos. Macias, Anthony. *Mexican American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance, and Urban Culture in Los Angeles, 1935-1968*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), 149.

doing so, Macias stands against the notion that the shared cultural expressions of communities of color in the greater Los Angeles area were novelties or anomalies. Instead, these expressions were to be expected due to shared neighborhoods, schools, and social spaces.

Looking beyond rock & roll, music and musicianship serves as a rich field of study for Chicana and Chicano studies scholars. Yolanda Broyles Gonzales explores the life legacy of 12 string guitarist Lydia Mendoza in 2001's *Lydia Mendoza's Life in Music/La Historia de Lydia Mendoza.*[12] Luis Alvarez examined the impact of the poly-racial fanbase of WWII era swing in his work *Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance During World War II*[13]. Exploring the postwar era, Gaye T. Johnson's *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles* examines how Black and Brown youth resisted the demarcations of race and class imposed upon them.[14] Ethnomusicologist Manuel Peña explored the social and economic implications of music in his work *Musica Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation*.[15] An ethnographic study, *Banda: Mexican Musical Life Across Borders* by Helena Simonett

[12] Yolanda Broyles-González, *Lydia Mendoza's Life in Music/La Historia de Lydia Mendoza*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[13] Alvarez, Luis. *The Power Of The Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance During World War II*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[14] Johnson, Gaye Theresa. *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

[15] Peña, Manuel. *Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation*, (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M Press, 1999).

provides a critical insight into the banda's popularity.[16] Deborah R. Vargas details the disruption of heteromasculinst production of nation and homeland in her *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music: The Limits of La Onda*.[17] Pancho McFarland's *The Chican@ Hip Hop Nation : Politics of a New Millennial Mestizaje* details ways in which contemporary young Chicana/os and Latina/os express their identity through hip hop.[18] Music also serves as a key element in Michelle Habell-Pallán's examination of Chicana/o culture in *Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture*.[19] Additionally, Ruben Molina presents an exhaustive account of postwar Chicana/o music in his works *Chicano Soul Recordings & History of an American Culture* and *The Old Barrio Guide To Low Rider Music, 1950-1975*.[20]

While male artists dominated rockabilly and rock & roll, the contributions of women artists have largely been overlooked. David Sanjek's 1997 article, "Can a Fujiyama Mama Be The Female Elvis? The Wild, Wild, Women of Rockabilly" explored the careers of a handful of women Rockabilly artists, focusing on Janis Martin, Barbara Pittman, Wanda Jackson, and Laurie Collins. Sanjek began his article by reflecting on the work of previous

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[16] Simonett, Helena. *Banda: Mexican Musical Life Across Borders*, (Middletown, Ct: Wesleyan University Press, 2001).

[17] Vargas, Deborah R. *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music: The Limits of La Onda*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

[18] Pancho McFarland. *The Chican@ Hip Hop Nation : Politics of a New Millennial Mestizaje*, (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2013).

[19] Michelle Habell-Pallán. *Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture,* (New York: NYU Press, 2005).

[20] Ruben Molina. The Old Barrio Guide To Low Rider Music, 1950 1975, (La Puente: Mictlan Publishing, 2002). And Ruben Molina. *Chicano Soul: Recordings & History of an American Culture* (La Puente: Mictlan Publishing, 2007).

rock historians who have encoded rockabilly as exclusively masculine. This rockabilly masculinity, as embodied by Elvis Presley, is characteristically southern, white, sexually desirable, dangerous, and deviant. As described, these performers represented lone beacons of wild abandon in the gray flannel world of 1950s America by traversing taboos, both sexual and racial. The raw energy and bravado of rockabilly was depicted as strictly a man's game.[21]

The efforts to portray rockabilly as exclusively masculine served to erase the contribution of some of the genre's brightest stars. Sanjek argued that the historical erasure of women rockabilly performers has as much to do with the modern inaccessibility to vintage recordings of these women as it does to the abrupt end of their rock & roll careers by the recording industry of the 1950's. While tunes by Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, or Fats Domino can be found in regular rotation on mainstream oldies stations, one would be hard pressed to catch Wanda Jackson's "Fujiyama Mama" or Janis' Martin's "Bang Bang." These two artists, as well as their country fore bearer, Rose Maddox, performed with the same sexually aggressive, sneering energy as their male counterparts. As rockabilly and rock & roll became increasingly commercial and squeaky-clean by the late 1950s, these women artists were either released from their contracts, or were pushed into careers as country artists; their 'counter irritants' to hegemonic patriarchy essentially silenced. Rock & roll's

[21] Sanjek writes "The milieu of the predominantly Caucasian male performer inhabited routinely rejected the presence of women other than as the objects of sexual appetite. It should, therefore, come as little surprise how the public record of 1950s American popular music selectively acknowledges that . . .many young women wanted not simply to fuck Elvis, but, instead, to assimilate a portion of his authority and cultural power and assert that they too were ready, ready, ready, to rock and roll, rip it up." David Sanjek, "Can a Fujiyama Mama Be The Female Elvis? The Wild, Wild, Women of Rockabilly," *Sexing The Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, ed. Sheila Whitely (London and New York: Routledge Press, 1997), 139.

Figure 1. Wanda Jackson

transition into pop music affected more than just women performers. The economic boom during the post war period not only created disposable incomes for working class audiences, it had also allowed endowed white middle class teens with a disposable income of their own.[22] With this target audience in mind, larger record labels began recording rockabilly and rock & roll music at an incredible rate.[23] Lyrics focusing on teenage fashions and frustration became de rigueur. As rock & roll turned pop; fewer and fewer opportunities were offered for artists who still held onto the more dissonant elements of rockabilly such as the use of

[22] With a booming post-war economy, youth from families with stable incomes were afforded allowances to make their own purchasing decisions. Youth of color and working class youth, many of who were already working as teenagers earned their own wages. Richard A. Peterson, "Why 1955? Explaining the Advent of Rock Music," *Popular Music*, 9, no. 1 (1990): 97-116.

[23] Musician and promoter Billy Poore remembers "All during the period starting in the spring of 1956, when Elvis started exploding with his wild rockabilly style of music in live shows across the U.S., on national TV, and finally on the movie screen, the major and independent record labels were snatchin' up competitors. The other five major record companies – Capitol, Decca, MGM, Columbia, and Mercury – all were looking to sign up wild, crazy, good ole boys from the South to taken on Elvis and get their hands on some of the dough RCA was rakin' in." Poore, Billy. *Rockabilly: a Forty Year Journey*, (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1998), 16.

guttural moans and whines, heavy application of vocal echo effects, and high energy screeching guitar, saxophone, or piano solos.[24] Alongside Wanda Jackson, artists such as Conway Twitty, and Roy Orbison turned to careers in mainstream country music. Others went pop, and most ceased to record altogether. By the British invasion of the mid 1960s rockabilly was considered dead in the United States.[25]

Rockabilly's British "Roots"

As an international scene, Rockabilly grew out of a revived European interest in rockabilly music during the 1970s. At this time a niche industry was developed to cater to a growing body of record collectors in the United Kingdom. Records purchased in the United States by dealers were shipped back to Great Britain to be sold in specialty shops. In the United States, both major and minor labels began releasing reissues to cater to this market. Dedicated fans also pressed bootlegs to be sold in the European market.[26] Far from an underground phenomenon, the record collectors market played a profound influence on

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[24] Lipsitz writes "Despite the urban working-class urban presence, and despite the occasional entry onto the best-seller charts of rockabilly survivors like Dorsey, Burnette or blues veteran like Lloyd Price, popular music between 1959 and 1964 became whiter, blander, and less working class each year." Lipsitz, George. *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture. (*Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 127.

[25] Morrison writes "Late 1959 saw a definite drop in commercial releases of rockabilly, and although a small number of these recordings continued to be made, generally tiny independents, within a couple of years rockabilly all but died as a recorded style." Morrison, Craig. *Go Cat Go! Rockabilly Music and Its Makers,* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 182.

[26] An excellent source on the early Rockabilly revival in Great Britain has been Janet Street Porter's 20th Century Box documentaries produced for the BBC on youth cultures. The 1981 chapter on Rockabilly states "English Record Companies like Charly. . .bought the complete catalogs of some of the smaller American labels and re-released them in this country…with little to know interest in the music in the states, the rights to many recordings could be picked up for peanuts in the 1970s."

popular music in Great Britain, resulting in *Jungle Rock*, a obscure rockabilly song from 1957, reaching number three on the British pop charts decades later in 1976.[27]

While a love for popular rock & roll from the 1950s was maintained in Great Britain amongst Rockers and the aging Teddy Boys who hung around them, rockabilly music was largely unknown. The obscure rockabilly records that were acquired by disc jockeys to be played at rocker clubs and bars offered "new" old music that had not been heard before in that scene.[28] Rejected by Teds and Rockers for not sounding enough like popular rock & roll from the 1950s, those that grew a preference for the more obscure sounds began carving their own scene, which appropriately enough was dubbed "Rockabilly." Culturally, this allowed Rockabilly the space to develop its' own identity. Initially indistinguishable from their Rocker fore bearers, Rockabilly turned away from emulating the look of the 1950s Teds and started adopting and adapting the look found on the album covers of original Rockabilly artists such as or Janis Martin or Elvis Presley (figures 2 and 3). While supportive of British Teddy Boy bands that covered 1950s rock and roll songs such as Crazy Cavan & the Rhythm Rockers, Rockabilly centered their attention on the original recordings produced in the 1950s.[29]

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[27] The success of "Jungle Rock" has earned its' singer, Hank Mizell an entry on the BBC's database of artists. http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/artists/1ac39bf1-918c-46a5-bc62-e35adba5d558

[28] Morrison wrote "the demand of a growing number of collectors led to the issuing and reissuing of thousands of 1950s rockabilly and related recordings by companies based in England, Holland, France, and Germany. . ." Morrison, Craig. *Go Cat Go! Rockabilly Music and Its Makers,* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 185.

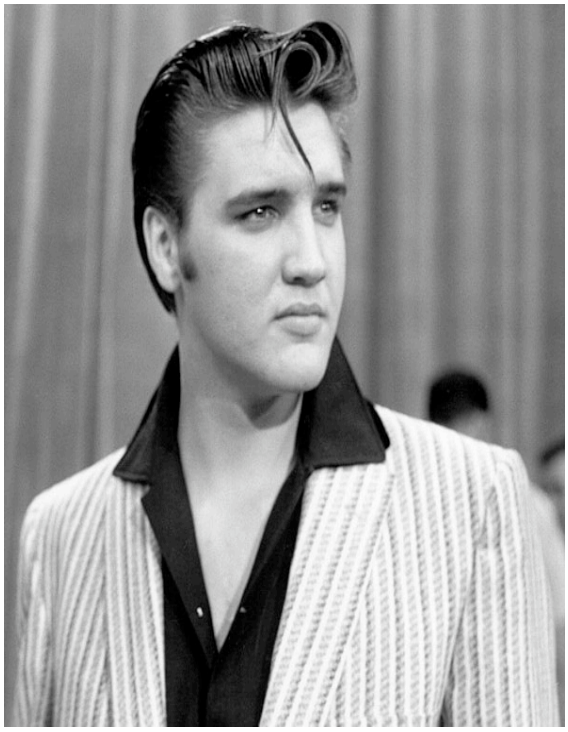
[29] A handful of veterans of the European Rockabilly scene have worked to document the early years, including Jerome Desvaux through his popular 1990s 'zine *Continental Restyling* and William Jones' *Rockabilly Underground -London 1980's*.

Figure 2 Janis Martin

Materially, this led to the establishment of institutions and networks to provide the new scene with the necessary space to manifest and grow. Nightclubs such as the Lyceum and Royalty in London would host thousands each week. In addition to the specialty record shops, other small businesses were established, including Rockacha in Kensington Market, which specialized in Rockabilly clothing. As the scene spread throughout the United Kingdom and towards the European mainland, by the late 1970s, large-scale festivals were established. Festival promoters sought out rockabilly artists from the United States, many of whom had left the recording industry. The weekend long festival dubbed "weekenders," such as The Hemsby Rock 'n' Roll Weekend, not only allowed for a congregation for Rockabilly, but also allowed for a migration of the cultural practices of the Rockabilly scene.

As Rockabilly enthusiasts returned to their home countries and provinces they took with them a solidified notion of what activity systems define a scene for Rockabilly; its style,

Figure 3. Elvis Presley



music and expectations. These solidified notions are what John Irwin would have identified as activity systems.[30] Thus, Rockabilly scenes began to develop in France, Germany, Spain, Holland, and other European nations through the recreation of those activity systems found in the British model.

Despite claims to 'authenticity,' the early British scene, now referred to as the Rockabilly Revival, fashioned their culture through their own interpretation of an *imagined* vision of 1950s America. Craig Morrison argued that these early Rockabilly proponents became "voluntary urban anachronists" who modeled their image off of an American experience that only existed in their imagination.[31] Rockabilly style was based on popular

[30] John Irwin, *Scenes*, (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1977), 27.

[31] For years, Morrison's works stood as one of the only secondary sources to examine the relationship Rockabilly as a subcultural expression. Morrison, Craig. *Go Cat Go!*

depictions of American teenagers found in movies such as Alan Freed's "Rock Rock Rock," or the studio portraits of recording artists found on album covers. These looks were updated with 1970s sensibilities. Aided by modern hair products, hairstyles for men and women reached outrageously exaggerated proportions. Even the homegrown Teddy Boy look was revived, in colors and cuts unheard of the in the 1950s. The three codified styles of dancing in Rockabilly, the jive, the stroll and the bop were passed off as "authentically" American, despite the fact that these dances, as they were performed in the scene, came from uniquely European origins. Songs that were deemed appropriate for each of these dances were arbitrarily grouped based on a set criteria that they themselves developed regardless of how those songs were performed or presented in the United States.

In their search for source material, British Rockabilly also turned to popular depictions of juvenile delinquents in the United States for inspiration. Pulp novels such as *Hot Rod Sinners, The Amboy Dukes,* and *Out For Kicks* sensationally depicted 1950s American gang life. These novels often dealt with white immigrant ethnic youth, violent rumbles between gangs, illicit drug and alcohol fueled sex, and generally hedonistic lifestyles. Designed to shock and scandalize a middle class white American readership in the 1950s, the pulp novels served as campy fodder for British Rockabilly in the 1970s looking for archetypes to draw inspiration from. The iconography found on the covers of these novels became prevalent symbols in the scene, influencing clothing styles, and appearing on flyers and album covers. In her treatment of the Rockabilly scene for Jennifer Greenberg's collection of photographs in *The Rockabillies*, Audrey Michelle Mast evoked

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Rockabilly Music and Its Makers, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 192.

the postmodern theories of Frederic James and Jean Baudrillard to make sense of Rockabilly's selective appropriation. She argued that the activity systems developed within

Figure 4. Liverpool Rockabilly Fans.[32]

the scene was a pastiche of "several decidedly non-mainstream facets of the fifties: burlesque, pin-up photography, and hot rod culture."[33] Thus, the cultural practices found in the scene formed a simulacra of the atomic era in the United States in the United Kingdom.

Despite its working class "Rocker" roots, the Rockabilly scene was not concerned with working class struggles and was vehemently apolitical at a time of intense political struggle leading up to and during the Thatcher years. As with other contemporary "subcultures," participants spent their time and money on clothing, records, and other leisure pursuits. Despite this apoliticality, rockers could be mobilized for action, as evidenced by

[32] Members of the Liverpool Rockabilly scene at Virgin Records, 1981. Photo by Francesco Mellina from the Fashion and Music of Liverpool Exhibit of National Museums of Liverpool.

[33] Mast, Audrey Michelle. "The Culture, Style and Art of The Rockabillies." *The Rockabillies*._Jennifer Greenburg, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2010), 77.

the 7,000 Teddy Boys and rockers who marched on London on May 15th, 1975 to demand that the British Broadcasting Company broadcast 1950's rock & roll and rockabilly. The marchers presented a petition purportedly signed by 50,000 people to the head of BBC Radio

Figure 5. The Stray Cats

1, resulting in the creation of "It's Rock & Roll," an all rock & roll and rockabilly program later aired on that station.[34] While this mobilization speaks to a desire for public recognition of their identity, it does so in the framework of consumption.

If anything, the Rockabilly scene provided a safe haven for right wing politics. For some participants Rockabilly allowed them to nostalgically look back to and yearn for an era of Jim Crow racism (or the British equivalent), stark gender inequality and silencing of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people. Banking on the perceived white roots of rockabilly music, the Confederate flag became a recurring symbol in the scene, appearing

[34] Remembered fondly, Jerry A. O. Desvaux recalled ". . . approximately 7,000 Teds congregated at Hyde Park and marched on Broadcasting House. The "King of the Teds" Sunglasses Ron, Stu, and police officers lined the gathering into a squad that approximated 10 abreast and stretched for over half a mile!" Desvaux, Jerome A. O. "Rockin' Through the Years -Part Three The Seventies." *Continental Restyling*, November 1997, 42.

everywhere from belt buckles to tattoos.[35] The British National Front capitalized on this association. The radical right wing and white-only political party openly recruited members from the Rockabilly scene.[36] Rockabilly was not particular in this regard, as the National Front also gained success infiltrating the British Punk scene as well.[37] Nevertheless, Rockabilly carried a perceived association with reactionary whiteness, aided in part by certain fascist elements found among second-generation Teddy Boys of the time.[38]

The Rise and Fall and Rise Again of Rockabilly in the United States

[35] DJ Tom Ingram recalled "In England the confederate flag is looked at totally different the way it is here. In England when I did a record hop I would hang a confederate flag across the front of where the DJ unit was, and all it meant was, Rebels, like rebelling against all the other types of music, Rockabilly rebels, it had nothing to do with how it is looked at here, which is why I didn't bother to bring it, I left it in England." Dutton, Emily, "Desperate Generation: The 10th Anniversary," DVD.

[36] Morrison wrote "Sadly some rockabilly fans belonged to the racist National Front and identified rockabilly with the Confederacy because of its southern origins. . . These fans expected American musicians to share their racism." Morrison, Craig. *Go Cat Go! Rockabilly Music and Its Makers,* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 192.

[37] *Rockabilly Magazine* contributor DC Larson offers "In 1970s England, the punk scene was partially hijacked by the fascists of that country's neo-Nazi National Front. . . Similar elements plagued in 1980s California punk and international rockabilly circles. To the extent that bigoted thinking may lurk in some quarters of the current rockabilly scene, it is not at all consistent with the subculture but flatly oppositional to its defining spirit of defiance and freedom." Larson, DC. "The Real Nazi's Run Your Schools; Nazi Rockers . . . Fuck Off" *Counter Punch.* Jun. 5, 2008.

[38] "Rockin' Pete," writing the for Black Cat Rockabilly website recalls "Some Teddyboys had fascist tendencies and were involved with gangs of youths that attacked the West Indians that emigrated to Britain in the mid Fifties." Rockin' Pete. Black Cat Rockabilly, "The Teddy Boy Movement." Accessed March 12, 2014. http://www.rockabilly.nl/general/teddyboys.htm. Additionally, Stormfront, an international white supremacist website and discussion forum is rife with the musings of former Teddy Boys from the 1980s and 1970s. Stormfront, "Rockabilly." Accessed March 12, 2014. http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t478397-3/.

The mainstream success of The Stray Cats on the American pop charts sparked interest in the Rockabilly scene in the United States.[39] The Stray Cats were a band from Long Island, fronted by guitarist/vocalist Brian Setzer who found success in the United Kingdom. A neo-rockabilly band who brought a radio-friendly 1980s sensibility to 1950s rockabilly, the Stray Cats became the ambassadors for the Rockabilly scene to the United States. The constant rotation of Stray Cat videos on MTV brought the European imagining of 1950s America into homes that could afford cable television across the country. Interest in Rockabilly spurred on by Stray Cat fans led to a short-lived revival in the U.S. In an almost textbook example of Dick Hebdige's model for hegemonic recuperation, the packaging of Rockabilly for mass consumption, divorced from its resistant "urban anachronist" roots served up little more than just another fad doomed to quickly pass.[40] In cities across the nation, nightclubs, roller rinks and other establishments that offered Rockabilly nights began to drop them as interest waned. The Stray Cats "moment" had passed as quickly as it arrived.

Most credit the organizers of the Denver "Rockin' Rhythm Billy Weekender" with re-introducing the British Rockabilly scene to the United States over a decade after the passing

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[39] Morrison writes "Over the next few years, rockabilly again became an influence on the mainstream, although the style was never a threat to the established artists of the 1980s like it was to the established country artists of the 1950s." Morrison, Craig. *Go Cat Go! Rockabilly Music and Its Makers,* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 224.

[40] Hebdige writes "The process of recuperation takes two characteristic forms: 1. The conversion of subcultural signs (dress, music, etc.) into mass produced objects (i.e. the commodity form); 2. the "labeling" and re-definition of deviant behavior by dominant groups – police, the media, the judiciary (i.e. the ideological form)." Hebdige, Dick. 'From Culture to Hegemony (ii) and Subculture: The Unnatural Break.' *Media and Cultural Studies, KeyWorks.* Ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, (Maiden MA : Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 155.

of the Stray Cats moment in the 1980s. Held in the summer of 1996, the European style weekender provided a template by which promoters were expected to organize their shows around. Original 1950s recording artists were booked and expected to perform their rock & roll or rockabilly material from the 1950s. New artists were only booked if they played *and* looked like vintage artists; artists who experimented with modern elements or cross genre pollenization were strictly prohibited.[41] By the 1990s, the activity systems that were in their infancy decades earlier were now firmly entrenched.

Disc jockey and the recordings she or he spun were held in as high esteem if not higher than the live performers. The musical sets that the disc jockey delivered was expected to follow the activity system developed in the United Kingdom. Songs were defined and categorized as either "boppers" "jivers" or "strollers" each of which were to be played uninterruptedly for a varying number of songs in a row.[42] Participants were expected and encouraged by promoters to wear vintage clothing from the 1950s. As opposed to the "1980s does 1950s" look of the Stray Cat moment, participants were expected to recreate picture precise American teenage style that had been thoroughly fetishized in the European scene.

If what was being offered by Denver could be distilled and embodied, than it would be manifested in the form of the Hepkat. By the 1990s, the European Rockabilly scene had

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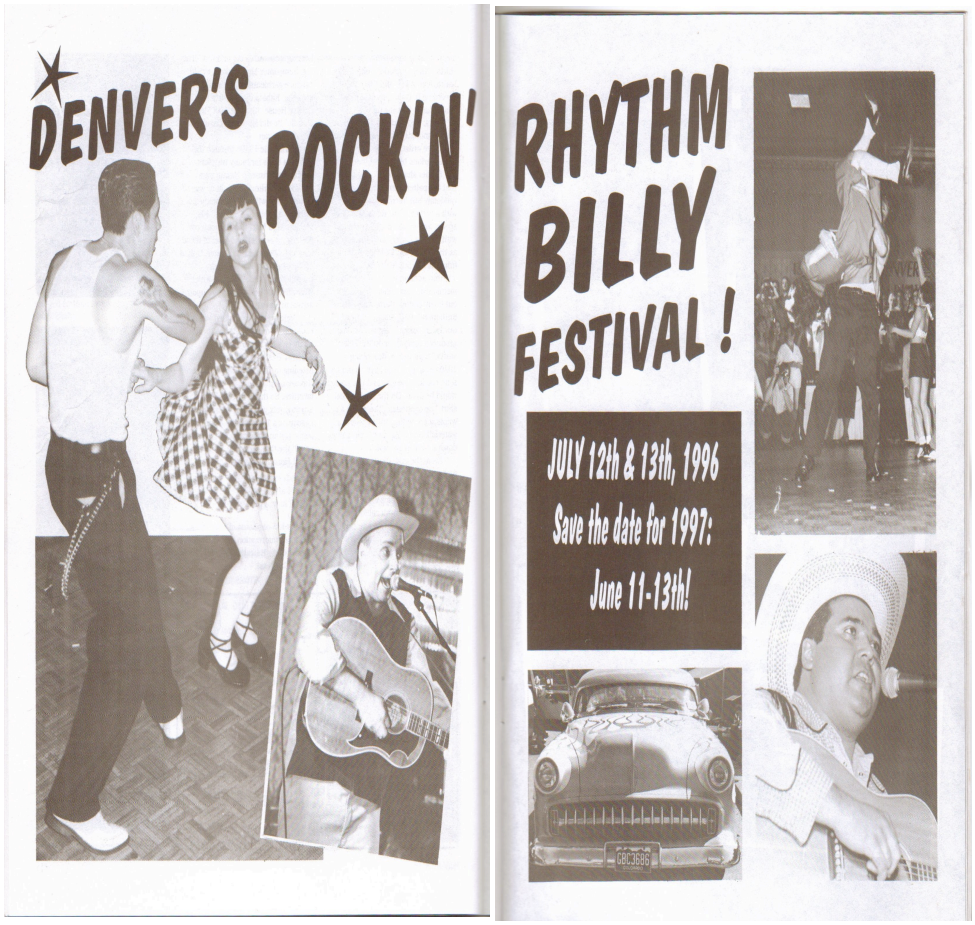
[41] Acts booked for the Festival included Hardrock Gunter, Big Sandy and his Fly-Rite Boys, High Noon, The Dave and Deke Combo, as well as Wildfire Willie and the Ramblers, bands all known for their striving for a traditional sound at the time.

[42] Bandleader Ricky Lee Brawn offered in 1998, "We have three dances we do: the Jive, which is the early '50s American Jive-different from what Americans do today, but just as wild (if you've ever seen *Rock Around the Clock,* that's the style they do in England). They also do something called the stroll. . . It's like line dancing, and has been going since the '40s. There is also a dance called the Bop. You do it along to rockabilly and it's really wild-very energetic." Vale, V. "The Big Six. " *Swing: The New Retro Renaissance, (*San Francisco: RE/SEARCH. 1998), 88.

developed its own archetypical representation: the Hepkat. Originally, the Hepkat was a Black jazz aficionado from the swing/beat era. Before he was the King of Rock & Roll, Elvis Presley was known as the "Hillbilly Hepkat," a nod to both musical traditions that built rockabilly. Stripping "Hepkat" of its original raced connotations, the European Rockabilly

Figure 7. Denver's Rock 'n' Rhythmbilly Festival[43]



scene appropriated the term for itself. A Hepkat was not just a Rockabilly he was *the* authentic Rockabilly. The term Hepkat became a gendered identity meant to apply to a hard partying, rock and roller, who always dressed in vintage 1950s American teenage fashions,

[43] Gabrielle, Sutton. "Denver's Rock 'n' Rhythm Billy Festival ." *Screamin'*, January 1997.

drove a hot rod, collected vintage records, and had a healthy disdain for modern aesthetics. One hepkat writing into European Rockabilly 'zine, *Continental Restyling* in 1997 wrote "Two lines to tell you that the purist side of the mag, though it annoys some people, is the only valid stand to take. Beside, for me only vinyl releases should be reviewed. CDs aren't authentic and simply aren't Rock'n'Roll."[44] Implicitly depicted through *Continental Restyling* and publications from the scene such as *Dynamite,* the body of the Hepkat was always that of a white, European and male. Women devoted to Rockabilly were marginalized as "kittens," perpetually described in accessory terms to the Hepkat. While Hepkat served as a marker of identity and pride, women did not use the accessories terms of "kitten" or "doll" self-referentially. Instead, some women claimed "Hepkat" as a modifier to describe and distinguish *their* taste for "authentic" rockabilly, but never to directly distinguish *themselves* in the same way that men claimed that term. Still, other women preferred the southern inflected term "gal."

The claim staked by the Hepkat can be seen in relation to various shifts that occurred within the scene itself. By the 1990s, the Rockabilly scene embraced a broader range of American roots music that were contemporaneous of Rockabilly, including early 1950s rockin' country, black rhythm & blues as well as doo wop. Additionally, both British and American musicians experimented with rockabilly and punk rock to create the manic paced and horror inspired genre of psychobilly. To those that identified closely with the original British imagining of the Rockabilly scene, the Hepkat represented the white male standard bearer of what they believed Rockabilly to truly be about.

[44] "Readers Letters" *Continental Restyling.* Nov. 1997. 10.

Figure 8. Nick Curran in full hepkat splendor on the cover of *Dynamite Magazine* a German rockabilly magazine.[45]

The Los Angeles Scene

The immediate greater Los Angeles area region provided fertile soil for a resurgence of Rockabilly scene in the mid 1990s. Denver marked a decided shift for the Los Angeles-based scene. Fans of rockabilly from Los Angeles left the weekender with aspirations to

[45] *Dynamite Magazine*, January 2002.

promote shows based on the European model. Shortly after Denver, Tom Ingram, a long time Rockabilly DJ and promoter of the "Hemsby Rock and Roll Weekend" left the United Kingdom for Los Angeles and became the resident DJ for a Rockabilly night held at Rudolpho's Mexican Restaurant in Silver Lake in 1997. According to Rockabilly promoter Richard Vreede, "I don't recall anybody but him (Tom Ingram), letting people know what jivers are, boppers, jivers, that was different compared to when I got in when I went to my first show in 1995. . .when I went to my first Rudolpho's show was when I noticed the whole thing about the record hops, and the dancing. . . I was blown away." Modeled after the European template, Rudolpho's was one of the first promotions in Los Angeles to fall under this model.[46]

Despite a perceived newness associated with the British Hepkat version of the scene, a devoted base of fans, musicians, and DJ's had in fact, kept interest in rockabilly music alive throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. However, the scene that they created in the greater Los Angeles area was quite different than what the hepkats were trying to re-introduce at Denver. In Los Angeles, and especially Orange County, the white dominated Hot Rod, or Kustom Kulture scene adopted rockabilly music and its greaser and Betty Page inspired aesthetics, essentially blending the two distinct scenes. In this regard, rockabilly's biggest supporters at the most, only viewed the music as auxiliary to their car-based culture. While aesthetics certainly had their role to play as symbolic markers; style was not seen with the same fervor as in Europe.

However, a lasting influence of California's Kustom Kulture upon the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene is the valorization of kinesthetic relationships in work and leisure. While

[46] Vreed, Richard, interview with the author, Paramount, CA, November 24, 2009.

aesthetically disparate, both Chicana/o Lowriding and white dominated Hotrodding developed in tandem, relying upon the skill and dedication of a car's owner to transform a second hand and often run down vehicle into a mobile form of self-expression molded by their own hands.[47] As one hot rod fan featured in the documentary *Rebel Beat* offers, "these guys wrench on these cars, but it's authentic: 'I made a table out of piece of bowling alley,' or 'I made a coffee table out of two radiators,' it doesn't matter (*that I used reclaimed materials*), it's having that kind of relationship with things, it's a tactile relationship; it's real."[48] By extending the DIY ethic of hotrodding to home furnishings fashioned in the rasquache aesthetic, the tactile relationship is valorized as something authentic and carrying meaning beyond its use value.[49]

This valorization is extended beyond expressive forms of culture, but to work as well. Speaking of musician Omar Romero's popularity, Wild Record's Reb Kennedy states "Our listeners know that Omar Romero gets out of bed every day and cuts hair for eight hours.

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[47] While much has been said of the racial divide between hot rodders and lowriders, there was significant crossover and cultural exchange between the early pioneers of car customization in the 1940s and 1950s. Biracial saxophonist Mando Dorame recalls of his father, a Chicano car customizer, stating "he lowered 'em, shaved 'em and pin-striped 'em. He knew everybody, he knew George Barris; he knew Gene Whinfield; of course he was good friends with Ed Roth, and he also knew Dean Jeffries and Eric "Von" Dutch. All those guys who were customizing in Bellflower and Lynwood and all those places, my dad was around doing all the chrome on those guy's work." Vale, V. *Swing! The New Retro Renaissance*. (San Francisco: V/Search Publications, 1998). 34.

[48] Parenthesis added by author. Elizabeth Blozan, *Rebel Beat*. DVD. Directed by Elizabeth Blozan. Los Angeles: USA, 2006.

[49] Donald Lowe speaking of the value of late capitalist commodities, "We don't buy an automobile simply or merely for the sake of transportation. An automobile is a bundle of changing characteristics. . ." Donald M. Lowe. *The Body in Late-capitalist USA*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 52.

They know that they're always going to need a job."[50] Additionally, "Joe" a car customizer also featured in *Rebel Beat* states "there are kids who are going to be doctors, and kids who are going to be lawyers, but most of them aren't. They should be directed into a trade, something hands-on, because a lot of them are good with their hands." While Romero and Joe work in vastly different fields, they both labor with their hands. Despite the fact that both barbering and automotive are fields gendered as masculine, those gendered as feminine such as hairstyling, crafts, and sewing are equally valorized and celebrated.

In her work, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, Sarah Thornton notes that many dance and music-based scenes base their claims to authenticity on their appreciation for exclusively live or exclusively recorded music. Unlike the contention between "live" and "disc" cultures in British Rockabilly, the scene in Los Angeles was clearly a "live" culture, privileging live performances by bands such as the Blasters or the Paladins.[51] While some artists such as Orange County's Big Sandy and the Fly Rite Trio strived for a vintage sound, performers embraced by the greater LA scene were not as expected to be bound by a certain "sound" or genre. As seen by the line up for "Roots Rock" festivals such as the Hootenanny in Irvine, or the bookings at the Doll Hut in Anaheim; one of the few regular venues for rockabilly and rock & roll inspired acts, vintage rock & rollers like Jerry Lee Lewis, and new bands with vintage sounds like Big Sandy's shared the stage with punk inflected groups like the Reverend Horton Heat or the then up-and-coming country artist Chris Isaak.

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[50] Pell, Nicholas. "Wild Records Keeps Rockabilly Fresh." LA Weekly. September 26, 2013. http://www.laweekly.com/westcoastsound/2013/09/26/wild-records-keeps-rockabilly-fresh. Elizabeth Blozan, *Rebel Beat*. DVD. Directed by Elizabeth Blozan. Los Angeles: USA, 2006

[51] Thornton Sarah, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital,* (Middleton CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 30.

The fact that Los Angeles even sustained a Rockabilly scene after the early 1980s is an impressive feat in itself. Certainly, the presence of both 1950s era and modern rockabilly performers in Los Angeles due to the city's relationship to the entertainment industry allowed for rockabilly music to maintain a solid stable of musicians. Perhaps the first to take advantage of locally based rockabilly artists in Los Angeles was Ron Weiser, an Italian Jewish immigrant. Obsessed with rock & roll and his own imagined vision of the United States, Weiser immigrated to Los Angeles during the late 1960s completely unprepared for the social upheaval occurring at the time.[52] He expected to find the exciting Technicolor spectacle portrayed in films and popular culture exported to Europe. Instead he found a nation amidst tumultuous social upheaval.

Weiser sought out performers such as Gene Vincent and Mac Curtis and others out of his yearning for the rock & roll of his youth, the kind of rock & roll that he believed defined America. Converting his garage into a home studio in the 1970s, Weiser began recording new tracks from old artists as well as recording new roots rockers such as the Blasters. Weiser's artists and records became mainstays in the European scene, which was the primary base of support for his independent label, Rolling Rock Records. Although Weiser relocated to Las Vegas by the 1990s, the artists that recorded with him remained in Los Angeles. While original artists could only be booked once or twice a year for European engagements, the sheer number of artists based in Los Angeles allowed for a steadier rate of performances at Los Angeles based shows.

[52] While Weiser, 'the Hebrew Hillbilly' is featured in Morrison's text, he is best witnessed at his most eccentric zaniness in Elizabeth Blozan's documentary on Los Angeles Rockabilly. Blozan, Elizabeth. "Rebel Beat: The Story of L.A. Rockabilly." Betty Vision 2007. DVD.

Perhaps the most comprehensive representation of the blended Kustom Kulture or hot rod and Rockabilly scene in the mid-1990s is Emily Dutton's "Desperate Generation," filmed throughout Los Angeles and Orange County in 1995. Dutton's black and white documentary depicts the scene just prior to the importation of the British model; splicing interviews with scene participants together with footage of Rockabilly venues and Kustom Kulture car shows and gatherings. While she highlights different aspects of the scene such as the experience of tattoo artists and musicians, her primary focus is on Kustom Kulture, dedicating five of her ten chapters to either car clubs, or the cars themselves. While Latina/os are certainly a part of the landscape, the scene as depicted in "Desperate Generation" is predominantly white and largely male driven. With few exceptions, the individuals interviewed were white men, thus privileging their perspective and authority regarding the scene.

One of the standout chapters in Dutton's work is a brief segment on the use of the confederate flag in the Rockabilly scene. In regards to confederate flag painted onto his hot rod, John "Cowboy" Ewell offers this:

> It has a couple meanings. One; I'm proud to be a white man, and this is pretty much white right here . . . and it's just nothin'; it's cowboy; it's right here (gestures towards car); it's redneck, and that's me…the colored folks don't love me for it, but I really don't care and I didn't ask . . .I'll put whatever I *want* on my car. It's fuckin' America still, isn't it?[53]

Ewell's defensive and angry tone speaks to deeper historical trends occurring at the time. Examined in context, the mid 1990s was a period of intense xenophobia and resentment against perceived unearned gains by people of color in California.[54]

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[53] Dutton, Emily, "Desperate Generation: The 10th Anniversary," DVD.

[54] Louis F. Mirón, Jonathan Xavier Inda, and JoAnn Aguirre. "Transnational Migrants,

Figure 9. Racist skinheads at the 2011 Hootenanny in Irvine, CA.[55]

The success of anti-immigrant and anti-women and people of color measures such as proposition 187 which sought to deny public services to undocumented immigrants and proposition 209 which dismantled affirmative action spoke to the degree of success that racist ideology achieved at that time, especially amongst working class whites like Ewell.[56] Much like the Rockabilly scene in the UK during the 1970s, the scene in the greater Los Angeles area may not have been explicitly racist, but it did provide an accepting environment for racists. Dutton does provide voices countering Ewell, such as Rockabilly singer James

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Cultural Citizenship, and the Politics of Language in California." *Bridging Cultures: An Introduction to Chicano Studies.* Ed. Mario Garcia. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1998), 63.

[55] Kacie Yoshida. orangecounty.com, "Hootenanny sizzles at Irvine Lake." Last modified March 27, 2013. Accessed April 2, 2014. http://www.orangecounty.com/articles/hootenanny-22796-irvine-lake.html

[56] "The campaign for Yes on Proposition 209, the largest of many pro-209 organizations, raised $5,239,287 and spent $4,396,572, according to the office of the California Secretary of State." Corkorinos, Lee. *The Assault on Diversity: An Organized Challenge to Racial and Gender Justice.* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 2003), 35.

Intveld's distaste for the symbol, or scene enthusiast Jennifer Allyn's dismissal of its racist connotations, instead equating it to Punk Rock's use of the swastika for purely shock value. However, a downplaying of the symbol's significance did little to dissuade racist elements and sentiments amongst rockabilly fans, nor could it dissuade venues like Anaheim's The Doll Hut from being a regular haunt for hate groups well into the late 2000s.[57]

The Development of Raza Rockabilly

After the turn of the century, the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene had experienced a tremendous demographic shift towards a majority Chicana/o Latina/o make-up. This shift also happens to take place during a political moment of xenophobia and intensified attacks on civil rights. In the introduction to her compiled series of photographs, The Rockabillies, Jenner Greenberg noted that her own interactions with the scene at this same time coincided with the first term of George W. Bush's presidency and the intense xenophobia associated with the war on terror following the events of 9/11.[58] Greenberg remembered, "as an artist and a liberal –in fact- as a human being- I felt defeated and hopeless. All I wanted was to escape into the vivid world depicted in my grandmother's photographs." Many of the Chicana/os and Latina/os that I encountered in my field research were largely introduced to the scene as teenagers and young adults during this time as well. For many of them, issues of growing up poor, facing segregated schools, and dealing with other concerns such as drug abuse, gang warfare, domestic and sexual violence were woven into the experiences that they shared with me.

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[57] Arrellano, Gustavo. "How did the Doll Hut End Up Hosting a White Power Show." *OC Weekly*, September 14, 2009. http://blogs.ocweekly.com/navelgazing/2009/09/how_did_the_doll_hut_end_up_ho.php (accessed March 12, 2014).

[58] Greenburg, Jennifer. Xi.

Less than ten years after "Desperate Generation," the Latina/os who once peppered the scene documented in that film had become the majority.[59] This demographic shift also coincided with the popularity of the British model in the Los Angeles scene. While the broader subcultural landscape still saw a great deal of crossover of people from Rockabilly, Kustom Kulture, punk inflected Psychobilly and the burgeoning Burlesque scene, the phrase "Rockabilly Scene" ceased to serve as an umbrella term and referred solely to the people and venues in the British "Hepkat" model. While Chicana/os and Latina/os saw an increased representation in the Kustom Kulture world, that same population came to virtually own Rockabilly in Los Angeles.[60]

One probable material cause for this shift was the geographic location of Rockabilly venues in Latina/o communities and neighborhoods. Rockabilly in the British model largely

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[59] It would be a grave error to not acnkowledge the earlier generations of Raza Rockabilly fans from the Revival period, or as Michelle Habell Pallán knew them, the Mexi-billies. In fact, Chicana/o rockabilly fans like Sonny Madrid covered early Los Angeles based rockabilly revival shows for the fledgling *Low rider Magazine,* writing "there is a band called the *Blasters* who are L.A.'s favorite hometown band and the kings of California Rock A Billy. There is also an up and coming group of young chicans (sic) from San Gabriel Valley called Blue and the Suede Cats are also into Rock A Billy. . ." Sonny, Madrid. "Brown Sound." *Low rider Magazine*, October 1982, 42.

[60] Michael Scott Van Wagenen writes " Lowriding roughly paralleled the "hot rod" movement among Anglos of the same era. . . Although applying different aesthetic standards, both groups expressed a sense of youth identity and rebellion through their customized vehicles. In cities like Los Angeles, there was at times, an ethnic crossover between the two styles." "Lowriders." Herrera, Sobek, ed. *Celebrating Latino Folklore: an Encyclopedia of Cultural Traditions*. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2012. s.v.) For a more detailed look at Chicanas and Chicanos and car culture, see the work of Brenda Jo Bright and Denise Sandoval. Brenda Jo Bright. "Re-mappings: Los Angeles Low Riders." In *Looking High and Low: Art and Cultural Identity*, eds. Brenda Jo Bright and Liza Blackwell, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 89-123. Sandoval, Denise Michelle. "Cruising through Low Rider Culture. Chicana/o Identity in the Marketing of Low Rider Magazine," in *Velvet Barrios*, ed. Alicia Gaspar De Alba, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 179-95.

relied on obscure music that appealed to a small niche audience, a characteristic that prevented bookings at popular night life spots in downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood which at that time, focused primarily on popular music for mainstream tastes. Venues that were available and affordable to budding promoters were found outside in the immediate greater Los Angeles area largely in cities with highly dense Latina/o populations.[61] Vreede, commented that "the clubs in Hollywood were not even ready for rockabilly…they were doing just a lot of mainstream stuff." Vreede's Rockabilly promotion, "The Rumble Bar" was hosted for over 10 years at CC's Roadhouse in the largely Latina/o community of Paramount. Another of Vreede's popular venue, "Rockabilly vs. 80's", which is now located at Vertigo's Bar & Grill near downtown Los Angeles, got its' start at The Hully Gully in the city of Downey, another city with a high Latina/o concentration. Rudolpho's was located in the Silver Lake/Echo Park area, which at that time had a thriving Chicana/o and Latina/o community. Bowl-a-Rama was located in Eagle Rock, while Spike's Billiard's began hosting Rockabilly nights in the mixed Latina/o and Asian neighborhood of Rosemead. A common narrative for Latina/os who were introduced to the scene at this time is that they stumbled upon a Rockabilly venue by accident, or that they encountered the scene because their favorite hangout spot just happened to feature a Rockabilly promotion that night. As Mexican-American scene enthusiast, Rockin' Anna states, "I went to my first show at the Rumble Bar . . . and I was thinking, wow this is crazy, all these people and there is a show for *this*. And every weekend after that was I was like "I gotta' find more!"[62]

[61] Vreede, Richard, interview with the author, Paramount, CA, November 24, 2009.

[62] Rockin' Anna, interview with author, Las Vegas, N, Oct. 9, 2009.

Additionally, the rise of the world wide web ironically created greater local visibility for Rockabilly amongst Chicana/os and Latina/os in Los Angeles. By the early 2000s, the Internet had become more accessible and user friendly. Online services such as yahoo group listervs provided Rockabilly promoters, who once relied solely on physical flyers and word of mouth, with another venue to advertise their upcoming events. Developed by Ruth Hernández from Whittier and Erick Sánchez from Santa Ana, "Razabilly" was a MSN hosted user based forum and website where Chicana/os and Latina/os could share their love for Rockabilly music and style discussed in length in chapter two.

Figure 10. Erick Sánchez displays his "Razabilly" t-shirt at the Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly Festival in 2004.

In addition to Razabilly, social networking sites such as Friendster and Myspace provided anyone with access to a computer their own mini-web page, where they could upload pictures of themselves, compose their own self-descriptions, talk about their interests and interact with other members of the respective site's membership. The musically focused Myspace became a popular destination for Rockabilly enthusiasts and musicians who uploaded music, posted pictures of themselves and the Rockabilly scene, or shared upcoming events through the bulletin feature. At that time, Myspace was mostly a free and open

environment with few opting to make their webpage private. Instead of the off chance that a Chicana/o or Latina/o could discover a Rockabilly show only during specific hours on a specific night, Myspace provided a virtual Rockabilly scene that could be stumbled upon 24 hours a day. Images on Myspace of brown bodies in the Rockabilly scene normalized the demographic shift that was occurring and depicted the scene as Raza friendly.

While the location of venues in Raza communities and the role of the Internet provided a strong infrastructure for the scene, what did Chicana/os and Latina/os find about Rockabilly that was so attractive? Currently, two competing narrative have arisen explaining the draw to the Rockabilly scene for Chicana/os and Latina/os. The more popular narrative positions the Chicana/o Latina/o community as one deeply concerned and committed to tradition and familia. It is that commitment that has drawn Raza to a scene, which is not all that different from their cultural experiences. Isaiah Villarreal, the co-proprietor of My Baby Jo, a popular clothing store in the scene offers:

> LA has the biggest Rockabilly scene, I think, throughout the whole world and the fact that 90% of that scene is Hispanic really helps us out. A lot of them already know the culture from their parents, who still wear grease on their hair because that's just the way their parents grew up. The Hispanic culture, they're still old country and what Mexican doesn't have an old Chevy or Ford rusting in the backyard?[63]

Similarly, Rockabilly Fashion designer David Contreras offers:

> I know my parents were greasers and our first family car was a 1954 Chevy with spider webs engraved in the back window and zarape seats. When I saw the rockabillies do it I thought. "oh my God -hello- that's my history!" And I think that (*it's the same for*) a lot of them (*Latinos*) also. They all had a crazy tío from the '50s, a tía, their grandmother, or whatever.[64]

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[63] "Vimby Fashion," My Baby Jo at Vimby, Web, http://www.vimby.com/video/life/us/all/detail/939

[64] David Contreras, interview with the author, Los Angeles, CA, November 22 2008.

In both cases the narrative places the Raza Rockabilly as someone profoundly influenced by and driven by family tradition. Both Villarreal and Contreras draw connections between Rockabilly aesthetics, bodily and automotive, with those of traditional Chicana/o and Latina/o culture. Echoing the blending of Rockabilly and Kustom Kulture in Southern California, the reverence for vintage autos is another point of connection identified by both men for drawing a seamless link between Chicanidad/Latinidad and Rockabilly.

A competing narrative argues nearly the exact opposite that Rockabilly is a space for Chicana/os and Latina/os to rebel against traditional Chicano/a and Latina/o culture and family structures. In a segment produced for cable network Sí TV, long-time scene participant and disc jockey Rockin' Vic offers:

> I grew up in Los Angeles, a city that is rich with Latino traditions and customs. As a teenager, I was inspired to explore cultures beyond my Hispanic heritage. At that age, I was trying things outside of the status quo, specifically things that symbolized rebellion. My world changed the day I bought my first rockabilly record. It had that edge I was looking for. For me, in the beginning it was something very personal and private, but now it has grown into an international phenomenon that has extended its' reach beyond borders. For Latinos, Rockabilly is no longer an escape from the status quo, it has become a way of life.[65]

Rockin' Vic's anecdote is an about face to Villarreal's and Contreras.' While "the status quo" is never defined, one is left to assume that it either refers to traditional Mexican and Latina/o cultural traditions, or more likely, the cultural impact of hip hop and contemporary R&B that was popular with Raza youth at the time. In this highly polished statement, Rockin' Vic parallel's his own "border crossing" experience with the transnationality of the

[65] This clip, and others like it were pulled from YouTube following SiTV's relaunch as nuvoTV in 2010. "SiTV Mystyle," "My Style," Web: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdOt2B0bRm0.

Rockabilly scene itself.[66] Like Villarreal and Contreras, Rockin' Vic ultimately normalizes Latina/os adoption of Rockabilly.

The need to rationalize the interest of Latinas and Latinos in rockabilly music and style by Villareal, Contreras, and others speaks to the presence and policing of essentialized notions of race and taste in the popular American imaginary. After all, to question why Latinas/os like Rockabilly is to assume that there are forms of music, styles, of dress, and other cultural texts that are naturally Latino, and there are others that are not. As blogger Robert Rose claims, while what individual Latinas/os find rewarding in the Rockabilly scene is quite varied, the trope of la familia is a prominent element in the narratives of many Raza Rockabilly fans.[67] While Dick Hebdige may have observed the adoption of punk rock by British youth representing a symbolic break from the experiences, social location, and culture of their parents, Gaye Theresa Johnson noted that the adoption of punk by Latina/o youth in Los Angeles utilized the legacy of Mexican and Latina/o cultural texts, such as Alice Bag's incorporation of Pedro Infante's dramatic singing style, to scaffold the construction of their own take on punk rock.[68]

The Raza majority in the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene did not materialize without significant negotiation and change. The Chicana/o Latina/o presence significantly altered the Los Angeles scene, developing Razabilly along the way. With the exception of Rosie Flores, Robert Williams of Big Sandy and the Fly-Rite Boys, and Dave Gonzalez of Hot Rod

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[66] I am taking a cue from Chicana theorist Gloria Anzaldúa in looking at Rockin' Vic metaphorical border crossing and navigation of his own geography of selves. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Entrevistas/Interviews*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 238.
[67] Rose, Robert. "Rockabilly & Latinos: A Remixing Case." Remezcla. May 9, 2012. Accessed August 22, 2014.

[68] Gaye Theresa Johnson, *Space of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles*, (Berkeley: University of California Press 2013), 125.

Lincoln, Chicana/o and Latina/o rockabilly artists were rare prior to the turn of the century. By the mid-2000s, Los Angeles based rockabilly bands were largely Latina/o or featured Latina/o musicians. While some performers were content to play stock arrangements in the traditional Elvis Presley-Johnny Burnette style, others experimented with stylistic changes that largely spoke to and resonated with a predominantly Latina/o audience.

Pacoima's Luis Arriaga, lead singer of Lil Luis y Los Wild Teens looked towards early Spanish speaking rock & roll performers for inspiration. In Elizabeth Blozan's 2007 documentary "Rebel Beat The Story of Los Angeles Rockabilly," Arriaga offers:

> The funny thing is that all of the Mexican bands, they tried to interpret all of those rockabilly bands. . . but they interpreted the way *they* felt them, which wasn't at all hillbilly, wasn't at all rockabilly, it became this very rock & roll, rhythm and blues sort of (thing) because that's what they knew. . . because hillbilly; rockabilly; southerner- whatever; the whole hiccups in the singing, that's easy to *them.* To us (modern artists) that's not *easy*! But, that's the way they interpreted those songs. We come from that background in which there is more (pause) sabor*?* There's a little more rhythm to our stuff, so that's what Mexican rock & roll is and that's why (our music) falls into that category, not necessarily because it's in Spanish.[69]

Part of Lil Luis y Los Wild Teen's success in the Los Angeles scene was their decision to perform materially in the "Mexican rock & roll" style that they treasured. Invoking the Mexican artists dismissal of rockabilly and rock & roll's southern white roots, Arriaga symbolically speaks to how much the scene has changed since John Ewell angrily defended his confederate flag in *Desperate Generation.*[70]

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[69] My emphasis added. Blozan's documentary dedicates a sizeable portion to examining the influence of Chicana/os and Latina/os on the scene in Los Angeles, including a strikingly thoughtful analysis from East Los Angele's DJ Chuy. Blozan, Elizabeth. "Rebel Beat: The Story of L.A. Rockabilly." Betty Vision 2007. DVD.

[70] Other studies have explored the link between rock & roll performed by Chicanas and Chicanos and transnational influences, including Michelle Habell-Pallán's "'Death to Racism and Punk Revisionism': Alice Bag's Vexing Voice and the Unspeakable Influence of

The demographic shift of the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene was largely a peaceful process. Nonetheless, latent resentment often surfaced as scene boundaries were challenged and enforced. In response to perceived violence in the scene, long time Rockabilly enthusiast Tom Hall offered:

> Alot of these modern greasers just make trouble for the people that are really into the lifestyle and music. Like I said before, most of these greaser guys like Psychobilly, Cow-Punk and 80's and usually bring a cholo "I'm badder than you" attitude to the clubs. I know you said you are Mexican, but you have to admit the whole cholo gang mentality is bad news and just makes other Mexicans look bad. I don't see how cholos relate to rockabilly music anyway. I have a lot (sic) of Mexican friends and they dislike those bald and baggy pants gangbangers....[71]

In this email posted on a popular public list serve in the scene, Hall uses code words like "cholo" and "gang" to argue that Mexicans are the sole source for violence and trouble in the scene. If being violent were not bad enough, Hall also felt it was important to point out "the modern greasers" musical tastes fell outside those permitted in Rockabilly scene. Cognizant of the Chicana/o Latina/o audience his email is addressing, Hall also felt it was necessary to invoke anecdotal "Mexican friends" who happen to think exactly the same way he does. While violence unfortunately occurs in working class leisure spaces from time to time, Hall's thoughts on the subject speak more to the perceived threat posed by the influx of a new racial community than it does to preventing alcohol fueled fist fights in the scene.

While the invocation of Chicana/o "Cholo" street culture has been used to marginalize claims to the scene by Raza, it has been used to legitimize those claims as well. In an interview for V.Vale's *RE/SEARCH* series, Cindy Mejia, a vintage motorcycle

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Canción Ranchera on Hollywood Punk" in *Pop When the World Falls Apart: Music in the Shadow of Doubt*, ed. Eric Weisbard (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

[71] Tom Hall to The Rumble Bar mailing list, December 15, 2004, Re: What is OG in the rockabilly scene?" , http://groups.yahoo.com/group/therumblebar.

enthusiasts involved in the Oakland rockabilly scene stated this:

> If you're a Chola, then by definition you are into vintage stuff. You already like the music: the R&B oldies, *not* the Dick Clark Oldies-we make a big distinction! A lot of the styles that the Cholas wear are reminiscent of the pachucas from the '40s. So we like the '40s and the '50s where the guys had the baggy pants and the girls wore beaded sweaters. In high school you had to know where all the second hand stores were as part of "Chola" culture." Cholas were always into secondhand stuff: old clothes, old cars, old music. In high school I think I would have died if I'd heard rockabilly . . .But later on, it was an easy transition. . .We went from being hardcore Cholo to running with rockabilly people.[72]

By describing her easy transition from the Chola/o scene to the Rockabilly scene, Mejia makes a significant claim to Rockabilly that is at the center of the Razabilly, that the core cultural practices and signifiers that one finds associated with the international Rockabilly, are and always have been present in working class Chicana/o and Latina/o community. In this way, Raza claims to the Rockabilly scene, can be framed as a reclaiming of cultural practices that have been appropriated by whites and Europeans. For Mejia, the cultural practices of Razabilly not only reflect musical and aesthetics interests, it also reflects one's identity as a Chicana/o or Latina/o. Thus the construction of the Raza Rockabilly body not only includes the traditional Rockabilly arrangement of clothing, hair, make up and tattoos, but race as well.

[72] Vale, V. "Jose and Cindy Mejia." *Swing: The New Retro Renaissance, (*San Francisco: RE/SEARCH. 1998), 189.

II. Hey Bartender! Sites of Leisure and Memory in the formation of the Chicana/o Latina/o Rockabilly Scene of Greater Los Angeles

For Los Angeles rockabilly fans coming of age at the turn of this century, Rudolpho's was the place to see and be seen. While the Silver lake establishment was a non-descript Mexican restaurant by day, Rudolpho's transformed by night into the "Be-Bop Battlin' Ball," a rollicking 1950s nightclub serving stiff drinks alongside obscure music from rock & roll's very infancy. Patrons packed the venue to capacity attired in their best 1950s vintage ensembles, drinking, dancing and singing along to the records of Johnny Burnette, Janis Martin and Bunker Hill. With hot rods lining the parking lot outside, young musicians could be found inside demonstrating their mastery of rockabilly licks and slapping bass rhythms, often joined by the original 1950s artist booked for the night.

At its height of popularity, Rudolpho's overwhelmingly Chicana/o and Latina/o clientele eschewed the overwrought look of rolled Levi's and poodle skirts to recreate and revel in 1940s and 1950s working class glamour of color. Whereas mainstream bars and nightclubs in Los Angeles established dress codes to exclude working class people of color,[1] Rudolpho's patrons fashioned themselves in the finest atomic era wares, all thrifted from local Goodwill's and Salvation Army's, decades before the "Mad Men" effect reflected in the offerings of J Crew or Banana Republic. They prided themselves on their appearance, their tastes, their contemporary struggles, and their inherited histories. For that brief Friday night,

[1] The implementation of dress codes prohibiting baggy clothes and athletic attire in metropolitan areas nationwide has been noted as a way to prohibit or limit patrons of color. In 2010, Officer Aubrey Henry filed suit against Lucky Strikes lanes for barring entry for wearing boots while white patrons in similar footwear were admitted entry. Siemasko, Cory. "City Cop Sues Lucky Strikes Lanes for Discrimination Alter Being Barred Over Dress Code." *NY Daily News*, March 15, 2010.

a mere four hours, Rudolpho's working class young Latina/o patrons transformed a tiny corner of Silver Lake into a self-valorizing refuge, a four walled box where they could drink, dance, fight, sweat out the troubles of the day, and, maybe, just maybe, find someone to go home with all before last call. Yet after the close of each show, after the last 45' record stopped spinning, and after the sun rose, Rudolpho's transformed back into just another non-descript Mexican restaurant, hidden in the shadow of the 5 freeway somewhere in Silver Lake.

While Rockabilly sites of leisure can be found across the global north, what is significant about Rudolpho's and the other Los Angeles area based sites that followed, was the cooptation and subversion of European activity systems on behalf of working class Chicana/os and Latina/os. This cooptation and claiming allowed Chicana/os and Latina/os to transform and dominate the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene. A simple format, the British model for Rockabilly shows provided patrons with a comforting familiarity from venue to venue, and provided would-be cultural producers and promoters with a clear and imitable template. Yet within this seemingly rigid and static set-up, patrons and performers adapted the model to accommodate their own desires, effectively transforming the scene across greater Los Angeles, venue-by-venue, and site-by-site.

This chapter examines four sites within a shifting geography of Rockabilly spaces roughly spanning the decade of the 2000s. I focus on the historic sites of Rudolpho's in Silver Lake and the defunct Internet site, http://msngroups.com/razabilly, as well as the contemporary sites of Spike's Billiards in Rosemead and CC's Roadhouse in Paramount. It is through the lens of leisure that I explore contemporary Latina/o greater Los Angeles, as

well as the LA of recent memory. If we take for granted the basic cultural studies assumption that all cultural texts are products of their unique historical moment, than the evolution and changes observable in leisure practices provide scholars with alternative viewpoints and opportunities to bridge new connections between the Bush-Obama era and its effect on the lived experiences of Chicana/os and Latinas/os in Los Angeles. While Hollywood may produce entertainment for the entire world, leisure for working class Los Angeles is just as crucial to ensure that the entertainment, shipping, service, or any other industry based out of greater Los Angeles does not collapse.[2]

These four sites also served as spaces where enthusiasts could create and claim "authenticity." This chapter interrogates authenticity within the Rockabilly scene as an ever-shifting social construct.[3] Through an obsessive attention to detail, many Chicana/os and Latina/o Rockabilly enthusiasts immersed themselves in the activity systems of the scene. The intense labor invested in their leisure stands in stark contrast to often unfulfilling employment in the service sector of greater Los Angeles.

This chapter employs interviews with Be-Bop Battlin' Balls' promoter and patrons to historically situate Rudolpho's within a broader narrative of the Chicana/o and Latina/o

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[2] As Marx express in *Das Kapital*, time for the urban proletariat, was divided between working hours and free hours (leisure). While working hours were spent creating wealth for others, time away from work "was not only necessary for the restoration of health and strength of the working class who constitute the backbone of every nation, but also necessary for ensuring workers have the opportunity to develop their own intelligence, to conduct social interaction, social activities, and political activities." If the working class were deprived of free hours, they would rebel, and if provided too much free time, they would be hard pressed to labor for someone else's enrichment. Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, (New York: Penguin Classics, 1992).

[3] As I elaborate later in this chapter, I draw upon the work of Sarah Thornton.

experience in greater Los Angeles. Complimenting this analysis is a profile of Ruth Hernández, a Be-Bop Battlin' Ball patron-turned-cultural producer who co-created the Razabilly website in the early 2000s. The ethnographic method of participant observation was employed to examine two popular legacy sites, Spike's Billiards in Rosemead, and CC's Roadhouse in Paramount. Examined as a 'scene' as conceptualized by John Irwin, Los Angeles Rockabilly is framed against a broader landscape of working class leisure in post-industrial Los Angeles.

Studying Leisure: Methods and Subjectivity

The study of leisure practices of working class communities can provide particular insight into both the micro-politics of daily struggle, as well as the macro-political implication of the historical moment. The proletarianization of labor during the Industrial Revolution fundamentally changed the role of leisure and play for working people as they were forced to cope with an intensity and regularity of working hours that was unprecedented for those considered "free" laborers.[4] As work transformed into a sullen and silent affair,

[4] For this study, I rely on Robert A. Stebbins definition of leisure as un-coerced activities engaged in during one's free time. R.A. Stebbins, *Amateurs: On the Margin Between Work and Leisure*, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1979).Stebbins, R. A. (1979). *Amateurs: On the margin between work and leisure*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications. I define sites of leisure as spaces (both physical and virtual) constructed by cultural producers and consumers to engage in such uncoerced activities. Other scholars who address leisure within communities of color include : Jose Alamillo, who examines the transformation of the leisure spaces of citrus workers into political ones in his *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), Andrew W. Kahrl, who analyses African American beaches in the segregated south in *The Land Was Ours: African American Beaches from Jim Crow to the Sunbelt South.* (Harvard University Press, 2012), as well as Monika Stodolsk, Kimberly J. Shinew, Myron F. Floyd and Gordon Walker, who edited the work, *Race, Ethnicity, and Leisure: Perspectives on Research, Theory, and Practice*, (Danvers, MA: Human Kinetics, 2013).

working class leisure responded with an air of boisterous excess.[5] Indeed, as Mikhail Bhaktin suggests, the carnivalesque, the hedonistic excess and mockery of prevailing social norms, of working class popular cultural is directly tied to domination and control wielded over working class cultural producers.[6] The greater the control, the stronger the excess.

Additionally, capital's restriction on time and space shaped when and where working class leisure could and could not take place. For example, Hugh Cunningham identifies the decision to play football Saturday afternoons by Victorian urban workers as hardly arbitrary. Clark points to the fact that workers typically had Saturday morning shifts, that the playing field was made available by either an employer or the church, and reminds readers that Sundays were reserved for church service.[7] Within these restrictions, the Pub became a key element for community members to gather, engage in leisure activities, games, converse, and even organize for change. With the increased privatization of urban land during the Industrial Revolution, common spaces were sub sequentially reduced, restricted, and regulated.[8]

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[5] Hugh Cunningham cites a nineteenth century observer commenting on the increased strictures placed on working people by religious reformers and capitalists: "The more rigorous the Sabbath is observed. . . the more frequented are the public-houses and gin shops." Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 86.

[6] Mikhail Bahktin, *Rabelais and His World*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

[7] Cunningham, H. *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c1780-c1880*. (London: Croom Helm. 1980).

[8] Willis, Paul E. *Learning to Labor.* (Farmborough: Saxon House, 1977).

In this regard, a study of the contemporary Rockabilly scene of greater Los Angeles provides particular insight into the lived struggles of working class Chicana/os and Latina/os in the post-industrial age of the early twenty first century. The service sector already accounted for 60% of the greater Los Angeles workforce during the Stray Cats era in 1985, yet that percentage rose to 75% by 2013.[9] While I encountered and interviewed a small handful of college and university students and professionals, the overwhelming majority of participants I met through this project were employed in blue, brown, and pink-collar jobs in service sector.[10] Of the semi-randomly selected scene-goers I conducted short interviews

[9] In 1985, Los Angeles Times staff writer Bruce Horowitz wrote, "The service industry ranks as the fastest-growing job sector in Southern California and will stay that way for the foreseeable future, analysts say. And it's growing at about the same rate at which the manufacturing sector is weakening. Nearly 60% of all non-farm workers in Southern California are employed in services, a widely varied sector ranging from hotel bellhops and amusement park workers to accountants and auto mechanics. More than 1.41 million Southern Californians were employed in the service industry as of June compared to 1.35 million in June, 1984." Horowitz, Bruce. "Booming Demand for Workers in Service Industry Reflects Economy's Evolution." *The Los Angeles Times*, September 29, 1985. Nearly thirty years later, Times Reporter, Shan Li cites a report by the National Association of Counties, stating "In 2013, Los Angeles County's economic output surpassed pre-recession levels, thanks in large part to better-paying industries such as business and telecom services, the report said. However, the service industry continues to dominate the county's economy: almost 75% of the workforce is employed in this industry." Li, Shan. "L.A. County poised for full economic recovery, study says." *The Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 2014.

[10] I utilize the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) definition for the service sector as "the industries of wholesale and retail trade, utilities, transportation, information, financial and business activities, professional and technical services, education, health care and social assistance, government, leisure and hospitality, and miscellaneous services." Nationwide, 112.8 million people were employed in the service sector in 2011. According to the AFL CIO, while unions represent a significant number of service sector employees, only 37.1 percent are represented by unions, and women are still consistently overrepresented and underpaid in the service sector. Department for Professional Employees. AFL-CIO, "The Service Sector: Projections and Current Stats." Last modified 2011. Accessed March 15,

with, retail, automotive car and customization, shipping and delivery, food services, cosmetology and barbering, nursing and other service related fields (along with military service) made up the majority of occupations I encountered during the course of my study.[11]

Furthermore, of the twenty life history interviews I conducted, sixteen interviewees were employed in the service sector. Far from abstract statistics and cold numbers, issues of growing up poor, facing segregated schools, dealing with issues symptomatic of oppressed communities due to colonial legacies such as drug abuse, gang warfare, domestic and sexual violence were woven in to the experiences shared to me by the young men and women that I encountered through this project, many of whom are coping as wage laborers in a contemporary moment of record unemployment rates. As George Lipsitz argues in *Time Passages* "If one views politics as only the public struggle for political power, then rock-and-roll songs are apolitical. But if one defines politics as the social struggle for a good life, then these songs represent politics of the highest order."[12] As noted previously by (post)subcultural scholars such as David Muggleton, a "subculture's" ability to affect real

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2014. http://dpeaflcio.org/programs-publications/issue-fact-sheets/the-service-sector-projections-and-current-stats/.

[11] For this study, some of my life history interviewees were selected to highlight the voices of people from communities who are traditionally silenced. However, I deliberately chose to conduct short field interviews with individuals largely, but not exclusively, selected at random.

[12] In this case I would replace "rock & roll songs" with "the rockabilly scene." Lipsitz is, of course, referring to the original rock and roll songs of the 1950's and not contemporary scenes. However, I felt that this idea is equally applicable to the Raza Rockabilly scene/seen, as an example of a modern working class community of color. George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940*: (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 327.

substantive political change is not going to occur through an affectation of a certain style of dress or a claiming of leisure space.[13] However, communal gatherings channeled through a scene like Rockabilly can make life *livable.*

The findings I draw for this chapter are derived from participant observation at Spikes Billiards and CC's Roadhouse coupled with life history interviews to historically situate Rudolpho's and the Razabilly website. Site visits were conducted twice a month between 2007 and 2010. Roughly thirty short interviews and seventeen life interviews were conducted and analyzed between 2007 and 2012.[14] As a participant observer, I made the trek down to physical venues located in greater Los Angeles from Santa Barbara, usually showing up shortly after doors opened and leaving shortly after last call. As a *participant*, I chatted with friends, danced and enjoyed live or recorded music. As an *observer*, I made notes of my findings related to my research questions, engaged in short interviews with participants or scheduled longer interviews for a later time. Prior to each site visit, I developed a focused inventory of research questions, usually building upon unanswered questions or new ideas and connections theorized from previous data sets. My research questions were developed with the clear goal of situating the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene in the current political

[13] Muggleton and other scholars, identifying as post-subcultural studies scholars critiqued Dick Hebdige's model for studying subcultures as relying too much on identifying "radical potential in largely symbolic challenges." David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl, "What is 'Post-subcultural Studies' Anyway?," *The Post-Subcultures Reader*, ed. David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2003), 4.

[14] Adhering to my initial research plan, I "left" the field in 2012, yet continued to perform supplemental research, conducted four new life history interviews (primarily geared for chapter four's look at music), conducted four follow-up interviews and remained a semi-regular participant at sites utilized during the five year research period for my own leisure pursuits.

economy of contemporary Los Angeles while not losing track of the micro-politics of the everyday negotiations and struggles endured by aggrieved community members.

While not always identified as such, sites of leisure such as bars and nightclubs provide a rich environment for study. Not regularly seen as a political space, sites of leisure can play a crucial role in community formation, as Rochella Thorpe demonstrated in her study of African American lesbian nightlife.[15] If as Dan Ben Amos suggests, a sixty-year old cultural text like rockabilly music remains an inert super-organic cultural artifact until it becomes activated and given an organic life by a social context.[16] It is at sites of leisure like Rudolpho's, Spikes, CC's Roadhouse, or www.razabilly.com, that rockabilly music and the activities systems of the Rockabilly scene are given meanings and significance that shared in a communal gathering of enthusiasts.

Amidst the spilled drinks and tight quarters, conducting research in spaces filled with music, drinking, and dancing can be messy, both literally and figuratively. As researcher, I had to take into account not only my own interpretation of the sights and sounds of the scene, but the varied and often contradictory interpretations offered by others as well. Reflecting on the inconsistencies she encountered while conducting research in British dance clubs, Sarah Thornton writes "I was *working* in a cultural space in which everyone else (except the DJs, door and bar staff, and perhaps the odd journalist) were at their *leisure*. . . I tried to maintain

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[15] Thorpe, Rochella. "A House Where Queers Go: African American Lesbian Nightlife in Detroit 1940-1975" in *Inventing Lesbian Cultures in America*, ed. Ellen Lewis. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996): 40

[16] Dan Ben Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context," *Towards New Perspective in Folklore*, ed. Richard Bauman and Americo Paredes (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), 3-15.

an analytical frame of mind that is truly anathema to the 'lose yourself' and 'let the rhythm take control' ethos of clubs and raves."[17] Adhering to their responsibilities as participants, Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor eventually found themselves on stage performing with the drag queens they observed, interviewed, and developed bonds with in their work *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret*.[18] Furthermore, working class public sites of leisure are especially sensitive to the ripple effect caused by broader sociopolitical shifts. Conducting research in bars and nightclubs that hosted banda music, Helena Simonett had to shift her approach to engaging bar-goers, many of them undocumented immigrants following a dramatic increase of INS raids, due in part to the neoliberal policies of the Clinton administration.[19] My own sites and approaches to research were dramatically altered by the great recession, as many scene participants facing increased financial strain could not afford to spend money on nightly leisure pursuits.

Initially I sought to focus solely on two contemporary sites of Rhythm and Booze hosted at Spikes' Billiards and The Rumble Bar hosted at CC's Roadhouse. Yet, the invocation by several respondents of Rudolpho's role in the shift of the scene's racial make-up drew me to concentrate on life history interviews to historically situate the popularity of

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[17] Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital*, (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 2.

[18] Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabare*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[19] Simonett writes "under the circumstances, it was not advisable to use words such as "research" (investigación) or "questionnaire" (cuestionario) in Spanish – any person asking too many questions, even if anonymity was assured, was suspicious or potentially dangerous." Helena Simonett, *Banda: Mexican Musical Life Across Borders*, (Middleton CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 5.

Rhythm and Booze and The Rumble Bar within a longer narrative. Including Rudolpho's as a third site from a historical lens allowed me to make better sense of the dynamics present in the spaces that I observed as a part of my research. Additionally, the inclusion of http://msngroups.com/razabilly as a site of leisure challenges traditional notions regarding how nightclub and bar based scenes form and maintain communal bonds and is a part of growing body of scholarship employing ethnography to look at virtual sites.[20]

I draw upon the works of oral historians such as Susan H. Armitage, Sherna Berger Gluck, Alex Haley, Alessandro Portelli, Horacio Roque Ramirez, and Valerie Yow to develop my methods for conducting and analyzing life history interviews.[21] While I acknowledge and take into account the dynamics at play during the interview itself, I would be hard pressed to consider my work oral history, as the life history interviews I have conducted are employed in the service of my cultural and political analysis. As such, the works of Juan Vicente Palerm and Mary Bucholtz profoundly shape my use of interviewing

[20] Christine Hines, in her work *Virtual Ethnography* examines some of the unique implications faced by virtual ethnographers, as the internet can serve both as cultural artefact, as well as a form of culture in and of itself. Furthermore, many researchers can gather data solely by "lurking" or by observation alone, thus excising the shared experiences developed through participation. Christine Hine, *Virtual Ethnography*, (London: Sage Publications, 2000). See also J.A. McArthur, "Digital Subculture A Geek Meaning of Style," *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 33, no. 1 (2008): 58-70.

[21] Susan H. Armitage, P. Hart, and K. Weatherman, *Women's Oral History: The Frontiers Reader*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), Alex Haley, *Roots*, (London: Hutchinson, 1977), Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change*, (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1987), Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), Horacio Roque-Ramirez, "A Living Archive of Desire: Teresita la Campesina and the Embodiment of Queer Latino Community Histories. ," *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* , ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 111-135, Valerie R. Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2005).

as a cornerstone in my ethnographic methodology.[22] Life history interviews typically began with basic family and educational background questions. As interviewees became more comfortable, the interview shifted into a more conversational format. Interviews were recorded and interviewees were offered CD's of their recorded interview. While Rudolpho's organically emerged without my urging as a topic of conversation within six life history interviewees, I did seek out two individuals, "Rockin'" Ruth Hernandez, co-creator of the Razabilly website, and Vito Lorenzo, promoter of Be-Bop-Battlin' Ball to specifically discuss the venue and promotion.

Rudolpho's and Sites of Leisure in The Greater Los Angeles Rockabilly Scene

Named after Mexican born founder Rudolpho "Rudy' Del Campo, Rudolpho's Mexican Restaurant, now a Home Restaurant, is located at 2500 Riverside Drive in the Silver lake neighborhood of Los Angeles. Rudolpho's was a second restaurant for Del Campo, a professional dancer best remembered as the eponymously named Shark, "Del Campo" in 1961's *Westside Story*. Also located in Silver Lake, his first restaurant, Casita del Campo, opened in 1962 on Hyperion Avenue. According to journalist Jesus Sanchez, Casitas del Campo not only attracted a following of Hollywood regulars the Del Campo met during his time in the industry, but also became a popular spot for gay Angelinos since the sixties, due in part, to its proximity to the Hyspot, a local gay bar. While the Del Campo family has since

[22] As noted in the introduction, my ethnographic methods are based primarily on those introduced to me through the methods courses I took with both Palerm and Bucholtz. See Mary Bucholtz, *White Kids: Language, Race, and Styles of Youth Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) and Juan Vicente Palerm, *Immigrant and Migrant Farm Workers in the Santa Maria Valley, California*. Report prepared for the Center for Survey Methods Research, Bureau of Census, 1994.

sold Rudolpho's, they still own and operate Casita Del Campo, considered by many, a Silver lake landmark.

Figure 1. on the corner of Fletcher Drive and Riverside Drive, the site of Rudolpho's is now a Home Restaurant.

Like many locally owned restaurants in greater Los Angeles, Rudolpho's in the 1990s and early 2000s hosted independent promoters who provided nightlife entertainment and leisure for their respective target audience or scene. While Rockabilly enthusiasts certainly remember Be-Bop Battlin' Ball, far more Los Angelinos will recognize Rudolpho's for its long running Wednesday salsa night, or for hosting Dragstrip 66' one of Los Angeles' longest running drag promotions outside the confines of West Hollywood, in addition to its regular scheduled Saturday 'gay' nights.[23] No stranger to niche audiences, Rudolpho's began hosting Vito Lorenzi's and Luisa Maria Del Campo's Be Bop Battlin' Ball in late 1996 and early 1997.

[23] Becker, Ramie, Dragstrip 66: Saying goodbye is such a drag, *Los Angeles Times*, January 7th 2010.

As a site of leisure, the space of Rudolpho's was transformed each night to meet the needs of its respective scene. In the appropriately tiled *Scenes*, John Irwin argues that a on a popular level, the term scene served as a metaphor for people to think of life styles as a thing or object. Irwin claimed that "make the scene," and another phrase, "that's not my scene," revealed that far from underground and hidden, scenes had to be well known and identifiable by both insiders and outsiders. "Make the scene" refers to a recognition that scenes occurs in definite locations, yet are transitory. "That's not my scene" reveals an understanding of the existence of a plurality of scenes. Irwin argues that both phrases share the following assumptions:

(1) The style of life is recognized as explicit and shared category. In other words particular scene is well known among some relatively large segment. It must be to be a scene since the term connotes popularity.
(2) There are various styles of life available to a particular person, since there is always more than one scene.
(3) Finally one's commitment to a particular scene is potentially tentative and variable.[24]

Of course, my intent is not to reduce lifestyles, and by extension, lived experiences, especially those shaped by hierarchical relationships of class, race, gender, sexuality and citizenship, to merely the spaces we occupy, least of all the spaces we choose to engage in leisure. However, I do contend that who and how we intentionally choose to make scenes is crucially significant as we continue to examine the alienation, individualization, and marginalization of aggrieved community members in post-industrial Los Angeles.

[24] John, Irwin. *Scenes.* (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1977).

Figure 2. Ronnie Mack on stage at Joe's Great American Bar and Grill (formerly Crazy Jack's) in 2012.[25]

Sites of leisure provide the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene space to construct, reinforce and challenge racialized and gendered notions of scene membership and identity and have remained an integral element since the genre's rediscovery. In fact, the longest running venue for roots rock was, and still, is Ronnie Mack's Barn Dance, established in 1988 and held monthly at Joe's Great American Bar and Grill (formerly Crazy Jack's) in Burbank.[26] Since the era of the Rockabilly Revival return to the United States, Los Angeles based promotions like Mack's have provided leisure sites such as bars, nightclubs and social halls for Rockabilly enthusiasts to engage in leisure activities, usually characterized by listening and dancing to, or performing 1950s rockabilly, and rockabilly inspired music with

[25] Mack hosted his last Barn Dance promotions on January 7th 2013 after 25 years. Whiteside, Johnny. "The Barndance door is closing." *The Burbank Leader*, December 30, 2012. http://articles.burbankleader.com/2012-12-30/entertainment/tn-blr-1230-the-barndance-door-is-closing_1_performers-warner-brothers-records-rosie-flores (accessed March 16, 2014).

[26] Ronnie Mack, a rockabilly musician himself, initially housed his promotion at the Little Nashville Club. However, the Barn Dance's residency at the Club Palomino is often cited as one of the best known of the consistent venues for Rockabilly in Los Angeles during the 1990s. http://www.ronniemacksbarndance.com/

friends of fellow enthusiasts, often accompanied by an alcoholic beverage for good measure.[27]

Los Angeles born, Italian American Vito "Da' Wop" Lorenzi began his Rockabilly promotion "Be-Bop Battlin' Ball" with then girlfriend Eliza Maria del Campo, whose family owned Rudolpho's, in late 1996 and early 1997. The venue provided Lorenzi several key qualities: it was physically located in a part of LA that was accessible to commuters, had a spacious dance floor, an outside patio area, plenty of seating, late night dining, and a capacity that could accommodate 300 patrons. While these attributes made Rudolpho's a desirable nightlife venue for any scene, rockabilly nights hosted by a previous promoter were met with a tepid response at best. However, what Rudolpho's offered Lorenzi and Del Campo was the space to implement a promotional format that would fundamentally shift the way the Rockabilly scene would be defined in greater Los Angeles.

Lorenzi and Del Campo foresaw establishing a night that emulated what was being offered and had been honed in Europe, a night of rockabilly music that was an obsessively immersive experience, one that brimmed with an excessive evocation of 1950s rock and roll for patrons and performers alike. "Back in the nineties" remembers Lorenzi, "all the shows were mixed, if you wanted to hear Big Sandy, or Deke Dickerson (traditional rockabilly or rockin' hillbilly performers) you had to sit through a crappy sixties surf band, or a some other

[27] In 2014, a handful of members of the southern California Rockabilly scene of the 1990s created the Facebook group, "Laying the Groundwork: Rockabilly in SoCal early 90's." The group serves as a rich archive of scanned photographs and shared memories for its members, especially those that haunted the Blue Saloon and the Palomino in north Hollywood. The group title's is an in-joke, as explained by musician Dave Stuckey, one which was used to half-heartedly justify why they "got paid poorly for gigs back around the Blue Saloon scene." Laying the Groundwork: Rockabilly in SoCal early 90's, "Facebook." Accessed March 16, 2014. https://www.facebook.com/groups/530391230407641/.

non-fifties style band, I wanted something more exclusive." Additionally, Lorenzi claimed that the lack of a disc jockey at many Los Angeles venues offering Rockabilly served to derail momentum and excitement built from act to act. This contrasted wildly from what he had seen in Europe where original recordings were held in the highest regard, often packing dance floors more so than the live bands. Additionally, Lorenzi encouraged his patrons to wear vintage 1950s clothing, clearly stating "wear your best vintage threads" on each and every of his event flyers. Lorenzi refused to book bands he deemed un-authentic, especially those that incorporated elements of punk and hard rock such as neo-rockabilly and psychobilly bands. He consistently booked performers from the 1950s, often backing them with musicians of his choosing to ensure a sound that was as close as possible to that of the vintage recordings.

Lorenzi essentially imported a uniquely British approach to hosting Rockabilly shows first developed during the Rockabilly Revival of the 1970s. What I term "the British model" is a standardized format many Rockabilly show promoters deliberately fit to align their venue with the international Rockin' scene. Utilized throughout Europe, Japan, and North America, the British Model provides a predictable and welcoming uniformity, especially in Europe where Rockabilly patrons to attend weekend festivals often traverse language and national differences.

Despite such strict guidelines, Rudolpho's gained a following of Rockabilly enthusiasts deemed considerably untraditional: young working class Latinas and Latinos. "In the early nineties, the scene was just white," recalls Lorenzi, "but by the late nineties, early two thousands, it was eighty five percent Latino." Lorenzi also cites the geographic location

of his promotion as significant, at that time Silver lake had yet to be gentrified, and the area was predominantly Latina/o.[28] Furthermore, the British model provided Latina/o patrons a comforting predictability during their leisure time. This was all the more impactful given the day to day chaos all too often encountered given their subject position as working class men and women of color in Los Angeles.

By the year 2000, Be-Bop Battlin' Ball had gained a strong footing with Rudolpho's serving as a popular site of leisure and Latinas/os serving as its primary clientele. According to Lorenzi, around the turn of the century, the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene was roughly 85% Latina/o with older white rockabilly fans being turned off by changes in the look, sound, and demographics of the scene. Lorenzi explained "things were going in more of an R&B doo-wop kind of direction, and they slowly started falling off. They didn't get the vintage clothing. They didn't like all the Latino kids. A lot of them became full on country fans." To be sure, Lorenzi did not set out to establish a Chicana/o Latina/o Rockabilly venue. However, he did not shy away from hosting key maneuvers by cultural producers in the scene to respond to and honor a Latina/o dominant audience allowing him a committed patronage averaging 40-60 patrons a week paying an average of twelve dollars a person.

[28] As of the 2000 census, Latinos made up a little over 57 percent of the neighborhood population, compared to just 40 percent for that same zip code in 2010. Ziegler, Curt. Take Sunset, "Silver Lake." Last modified 2012. Accessed March 16, 2014. http://takesunset.com/neighborhoods/silver-lake-los-angeles-ca/. and United States Census Bureau, "Community Facts." Last modified 2010. Accessed March 16, 2014. http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_SF1_QTP3.

Figure 3. A flyer from the early 2000s advertising a Be-Bop Battlin' Ball promotion held at Rudolpho's.[29]

A strong injection of Los Angeles based rhythm & blues and doo-wop records and consistent booking of original 1950s performers of color such as the Calvanes appealed to Chicana/os well familiar with the lowrider sound. Themes nights such as 1950s rock & roll en Español were popular draws featuring music rarely heard in Los Angeles of the 1950s, yet migrated to the United States years later: the recordings of Spanish and Latin American rock & roll bands form the 1950s and 1960s such as Los Teen Tops and Los Blue Caps.

[29] Rockin' Ryan and the Real Goner's, Rudolpho's de facto house band, receives top billing yet East Los Angeles R&B outfit Los Rhythm Rockets and UK born DJ, Tom Ingram are advertised displayed with the same the same font size. In lieu of photographs of the performers, the sexually charged imagery of a movie poster from Mexico's epoca de oro is featured as the names of the performers wrap around a Mexicana's face and chest,

Just as Lorenzi's promotion made gestures to welcome working class Raza to Rudolpho's, it also actively worked to prohibit the influence of other scenes. Lorenzi's decision to book bands that he considered authentic excluded artists and fans that preferred a harder more punk inflected edge, or a softer more contemporary country sound. Lorenzi responded to an influx of neo-swing enthusiasts in the late 1990s by placing a sign reading "No Lindy Hoppers" beneath the DJ booth. He recalls:

> Lorenzi recalls "The swing scene got real commercial and it started spilling into the rockabilly shows. I don't want to knock the swing scene because there was a lot that was really into the 40s, LA was kind of trendy from the beginning. It got commercial real quick, and we didn't want to do that. I was the first to do (place the sign), everyone would complain about it, but I was the first to do it. That offends me, well there is the door. They called me a fifties Nazi. But my crowd wanted me to do it, and it was about time it happened. In the long run they only drink water and I was willing to cover up their cover in charge I was good to get rid of them. After a while they knew better than to show up at my shows. Actually later on I did a couple of shows with a swing promoter, and that brought the lindy hoppers back. But what happened was they didn't lindy hop that night, they jitterbugged.[30]

The neo-swing scene was born in the early 1990s as a 1940s film-noir inspired offshoot of Rockabilly complete with its own blue-collar sensibilities. Yet with the mainstream success and exposure of films such as *Swingers* and bands such as Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, thousands of middle class white people in the Los Angeles area flocked to swing dance lessons and retro-themed sites of leisure to take part in the latest trend, including Rudolpho's.

The "No Lindy Hoppers" sign spoke less to the presence of members of another scene, but rather, the sense of entitlement they carried into the site and the raced and classed dynamics of middle class white people entering a space of leisure for working class

[30] While Lindy Hop has connotations associated with the swing era of the 1930s, a similar term 'jitterbug' remained popular appellation for swing dancing until it went out of vogue in the late 1950s. Vito Lorenzi, interview with the author, Chicago IL, March 15, 2011.

Chicanas/os and Latinas/os. Showing up in sweatpants, dominating the dance floor, kicking people, refusing to order drinks from the bar, and demanding free water were just of handful of complaints both regular patrons and Rudolpho's staff held against the neo-swingers. By the early 2000's the neo-swing scene would collapse under its own weight and over-exposure with only a handful of venues operating in the Los Angeles area.

Be-Bop Battlin' Ball's preoccupation with authenticity speaks to similar claims in other scenes. In her work *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital,* Sarah Thornton goes so far as to claim that authenticity is not only the most important value ascribed to music amongst nightclub based cultures, but for most forms of popular music across the board. (Thornton, 26). Music perceived as authentic must trigger an affective response, it has to subjectively *feel* real or genuine to enthusiast and produce a vibe, aura, or the term must commonly applied in the Rockabilly scene, energy, for the assembled crowd. In the case of the British model, records were the only way rock and rollers in the United Kingdom could access rockabilly music from the United States. Overseas, scratchy 45-RPM records were not seen as poor substitutes for live music, they were "music itself." (Thornton, 67.) By the time the Revival scene was strong enough to book and fly over original 1950s performers, age and shifting tastes had already altered sounds produced by the musicians. While the original performers were still loved and respected, their voices, recorded on vinyl, never changed and remained the definitive "authentic" source.

The authenticity questions also raises issues of race, place, and history. Paul Gilroy examines ways in which authentic blackness is read into post-war pop music in Great Britain in his study "Between Afro-centrism and Eurocentrism: Youth Culture and the Problem of

Hybridity."[31] Maureen Mahon also points out that Black rock musicians of the 1990s troubled claims that authentic Black culture excluded contemporary rock music and rock musicians by laying claims to hard rock pioneers like Jimi Hendrix.[32] As such, the shift identified by Lorenzi towards the doo-wop and rhythm & blues music embraced by Raza Rockabilly in the early 2000s may speak to stronger claims and ties to music that Chicana/os and Mexican Americans of the 1940s and 1950s also valued. Furthermore, if we apply Thornton's conceptualization of subcultural capital as a means to claim ownership and shift the boundaries of the scene to meet their needs, claims to authenticity by Raza Rockabilly would certainly achieve this.[33] Chicanas, Chicanos, US Latinas and Latinos and other diasporic peoples have historically been subjected to both physical and discursive violence based around questions and claims to authenticity.[34] While problematic, the claim to

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[31] Paul Gilroy, "Between Afro-centrism and Eurocentrism: Youth Culture and the Problem of Hybridity," *Young*, 1, no. 2 (1993)

[32] Mahon writes, "For BRC members, the racial and musical identities Jimi Hendrx embodied intensified the impact of the expressive and spiritual freedom he represented. Hendrix, is, in addition to everything else, a complex figure who takes on different meanings according to context and audience. For BRC members, he is a key symbol of their quest for artistic and social freedom." Maureen Mahon, *Right to Rock: The Black Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), p 232.

[33] Building off of the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Thornton writes "clubs are refuges for the young where their rules hold sway and that, inside and to some extent outside these spaces, subcultural distinctions have significant consequences." (Thornton, 11.)

[34] Speaking against those who would position Chicanas as unauthentic and warning Chicanos and Chicanas who would do the same to each other, Gloria Anzaldúa offered "We oppress each other trying to out-Chicano each other, vying to be the "real" Chicanas, to speak like Chicanos. There is no one Chicano language just as there is no one Chicano experience." Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2007), 80.

authenticity and the obsessive labor invested into "feeling" and "knowing" it, turns the tables on Anglo-American and European claims to Rockabilly; the outsider is now the expert.

Examined against the backdrop of W. Bush-Schwarzenegger era politics, the obsessive drive to craft a sense of authenticity speaks to the rendering of the Latina/o body in the United States as inauthentic unwelcome, and uninvited. While the reported hate crimes committed against Latinas/os in Los Angeles County declined in 2001, the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations found that of the unprecedented 1031 incidence of reported hate crimes that year, Latinas/os figured prominently amongst a host of other racial and ethnic groups targeted by vigilantes seeking revenge for the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, due to their phenotypical resemblance to Arabs.[35] Speaking to the overall xenophobia and heightened anxiety of the time, a Gallup poll taken shortly after the events of 9/11 showed that a third of Americans polled approved of putting Arab Americans under special surveillance as well as detaining any immigrants from nations deemed "unfriendly" to the United States.[36] Additionally, any federal legislation aimed at addressing social justice, especially immigrant justice was thrown asunder after the attacks of September 11th. The DREAM act, a congressional bill that sought to provide a pathway to higher

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[35] Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations. "2001 Hate Crimes Report." Accessed August 10, 2014. http://humanrelations.co.la.ca.us/hatecrime/reports/2001_hateCrimeReport.pdf.

[36] Jeffrey M. Jones. "The Impact of the Attacks on America." Gallup News Service. September 25, 2001. Accessed August 10, 2014. http://www.gallup.com/poll/4894/Impact-Attacks-America.aspx.

education for undocumented youth and that faced bright prospects when it was introduced on August 1st 2001, was ultimately derailed by the subsequent terror attacks.[37]

Meanwhile on a statewide level, the anti-immigrant and anti-Latina/o rhetoric crafted during the Wilson administration was joined by new discursive maneuvers to oppose measures to reinstate the ability for non-US citizens to apply for and obtain California driver's licenses. Following Arnold Schwarzenegger's 2004 veto of AB 2895, assembly Republican leader Kevin McCarthy equated undocumented laborers with the types of terrorist that attacked the World Trade Center and the White House stating "This veto makes it harder for terrorists to obtain the primary document used for renting cars, boarding planes, and making other travel arrangements."[38] The equation of Latinas/os with terrorism was facilitated in part, by the media coverage of the apprehension of José Padilla, a former member of the Latin Kings street gang who was detained as an enemy combatant for aiding Al-Qaeda.[39] Within this context, Raza Rockabilly's drive for authenticity pushes back against an American popular imagination that seeks to render the marker of brown skin as one of inauthenticity and un-American-ness. As Michelle Habell-Pallán argues, Chicana/os like El Vez who re-inscribe the symbolism of rockabilly and Elvis, the "supreme icon of

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[37] Andre M. Perry. "Lessons of September 11 and the Dream Act." The Louisiana Weekly. September 12, 2011. Accessed August 10, 2014. http://www.louisianaweekly.com/lessons-of-september-11-and-the-dream-act/.

[38] Jim Wasserman. "Schwarzenegger Vetoes License Bill for Illegal Immigrants." U-T San Diego. September 22, 2004. Accessed August 10, 2014. http://legacy.utsandiego.com/news/state/20040922-1918-ca-licenselaw.html
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[39] Deborah Sontag. "Video Is a Window Into a Terror Suspect's Isolation." The New York Times. December 4, 2006. Accessed August 10, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/04/us/04detain.html?_r=0.

Americana" for themselves, not only upset Chicano cultural nationalist assumptions, but hegemonic Anglo-American ones as well.[40] If the national imaginary wishes to deny how Chicanas/os and Latinas/os have contributed to 20th century American popular culture, then Raza Rockabilly can serve as a visual and sonic reminder of to the contrary.

While the turn of the century marked a massive shift in the racial make-up and overall growth in the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene, Lorenzi soon found himself in competition with other promoters and venues. While some, such as Ronnie Mack's Barn Dance hosted at Crazy Jack's in Burbank or Linda Jemison's The Doll Hut to the south in Anaheim, maintained the same approach to roots rock promotion, the British model with its strong focus on 'authenticity' and elevation of records to the forefront, steadily became the default approach to promoting Rockabilly shows in Los Angeles. Long Beach based Ed Boswell's promotions featuring western swing outfits like The Lucky Stars at the Dixie Belle in Downey, and The Culver Saloon on the Westside. Popular swing dance venues such as Yesteryears and the Derby also began hosting their own Rockabilly night. Equally significant was the placing of promoted events at venues located in Latino areas of the metropolis. Carlos Alvarado and Heather Paulos' hosted their wildly popular Bowl-a-Rama at All Star Lanes in Eagle Rock offering rockabilly and neo-rockabilly music for an all-ages' admittance. Popular venues such as The Foothill was located in Signal Hill near Long Beach, while dive bar the Stagger Inn was located Bellflower.

Lorenzi cites increased competition and an influx of brawl happy patrons for causing him to lose money on Be-Bop Battlin' Ball by 1999 and 2000. Prior to that, money that was

[40] Michelle Habell-Pallán. *Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture.* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005), 189.

left over after paying rent, security guards, doorman, disc jockeys and bands was spent on promotional materials such as flyer design and printing costs. After having split up with Del Campo, and going into the red at Rudolpho's, Lorenzi sought out and promoted Be Bop Battlin' Ball at other venues such as The Derby in Los Feliz, or Café Fais Do Do in mid-city Los Angeles. Working with Gonzalo Gonzalez, a bartender at Rudolpho's Lorenzi promoted shows sporadically through the mid-2000s, eventually growing weary of the Los Angeles scene and what he perceived as a loss of connection to the music. Lorenzi relocated to Chicago in 2007, due in part to a the presence of a Rockabilly scene that reminded him of Rockabilly in Los Angeles during the late 1990s, a smaller scale, but passionate scene with a growing interest amongst Latinos – a scene that Be-Bop-Battlin' Ball had been instrumental in shaping. In many ways Lorenzi's departure from Los Angeles to Chicago was a personal and professional effort to regain his sense of standing in a scene for Rockabilly, even if that scene was hundreds of miles from his region of origin.

Rockin' Ruthie and Birth of Razabilly

Of the scores of Chicana/os and Latina/os that discovered Rudolpho's in the late 1990s was "Rockin'" Ruth Hernández. Raised in a blue-collar family near uptown Whittier, Hernandez was influenced by the musical tastes of older siblings. Like many other greater Los Angeles area Chicana/o and Latina/o teens of the 1990s, Hernández adopted the music of the mid-1980s, specifically the melancholy sounds of British new wave (termed dark wave) and artists such as Depeche Mode and the Smiths. As she states "By junior high I knew what I was: New Wave/Mod/Punk. I was wearing doc martens, monkey boots, and flight jackets, all throughout high school. A couple of my friends followed along, but music definitely is

what really made me who I was. I had no money, and I would listen to the radio, and I used to record off of the radio with an answering machine and dub my own music! (KROQ)." As a teen, music and style provided Hernández an accessible outlet in a home constrained by economic means and gendered expectations. Her adoption of the iconic uniform of the disaffected young British punk rocker was far from unheard in Latina/o communities east of the Los Angeles River.[41] In a textbook example of Chicana rasquachismo, Hernández' use of an answering machine to record music off of the radio speaks to her inability to purchase compact discs as a working class teen, as well as to the strict household which prohibited her from going out at night.[42] Hernández wouldn't experience her first live concert until she was nearly an adult, snuck out of her house by an older sister. She recalls, "My sister was working at the time and she bought us the tickets and drove us there. That was my first concert, and it was pretty late in Depeche Modes' career. Well that (concert) and the KROQ Weenie Roast, and that's only because it was free!"[43]

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[41] For more on Chicana/o punks, See Gaye Theresa Johnson. *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

[42] Describing rasquachismo, Tomas Ybarra Frausto writes "In an environment in which things are always on the edge of coming apart, (the car, the job, the toilet), lives are held together with spit, grit, and *movidas*. *Movidas* are whatever coping strategies one uses to gain time, to make options, to retain hope. *Rasquachismo* is a compendium of all the *movidas* deployed in immediate, day-to-day living. Resilience and resourcefulness spring form making do with what is at hand. . ." Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, "The Chicano Movement/The Movement of Chicano Art," *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Levine (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1991), 128.

[43] Ruth Hernández , interview with the author, Los Angeles, CA, June 11 2011.

Hernández initially discovered Rockabilly through the musical performer Morrissey and the Chicana/o fandom that surrounds him, a common narrative for scores of Latinas and Latinos coming of age in the 1990s and 2000s.[44] Initially the vocalist for the 1980s British indie rock band, The Smiths, Morrissey's stage presence drew on 1950s icons such as a young Elvis Presley and James Dean, who in turn drew upon the influence of contemporary youth of color respectively.[45] The musical directorship of guitarist Boz Boorer, formerly of the neo-rockabilly band the Polecats incorporated elements of rockabilly music into a handful of Morrissey's songs. Enthralled by the rockabilly-inflected riffs present on the albums Boorer contributed to starting with 1992's *Your Arsenal,* and Morrissey's own fascination with Elvis, Hernández began to develop a passing interest in traditional rockabilly music of the 1950s.

Yet it wasn't until she was 21 years of age that Hernández discovered the Rockabilly scene, attending her first show at Rudolpho's at the bequest of a co-worker.

> She invited me to Rudolpho's, and I was in love. I couldn't believe, it was just something that I had never experience, and being the late bloomer that I was it, was

[44] Morrissey's Chicano fandom has perplexed music critics for decades. Some critics arguing that Chicana/o fans empathize with Morrissey's expressed alienation and depression given that the colonial relationship between Chicanas/os and Anglo America reflects the one between and the Irish and British. Klosterman, Chuck. "Viva Morrissey!." *Spin Magazine*, August 2002.

[45] I give special thanks to my colleague, Jose Anguiano, for pointing this out to me. Presley emulated the look and style of Black blues and R&B performers, while Dean's iconic performance in "Rebel Without a Cause" was drawn from director Nicholas Ray's interviews with incarcerated youth in the California Youth Authority, many of whom were Chicano. For more on the iconic 1950s film, see Douglas L. Rathgeb, *The Making of Rebel Without a Cause,* (Jefferson NC: Mcfarland, 2010) and J. David Slocum, *Rebel Without a Cause: Approaches to a Maverick Masterwork (Suny Series, Horizons of Cinema)*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005). Slocum, John David. Rebel Without a Cause: Approaches to a Maverick Masterwork.

> something that wowed, me and the music; it was amazing and from that day forward it was over. Rudolpho's seemed very exclusive. It was very clique-y. I felt a bit like an outsider when I first went; I was more mod-punk, not necessarily rockabilly. When I went, it was kind of private, the cars outside, it was quite beautiful. I pull up and all I see are hot rods, I see gang jackets, all the girls looked like they walked out of *Grease*, it looked staged! And I couldn't believe that people actually looked like this, that it was *a way of life*. You walk in, and you see guys with the cigarettes in the ears; I thought it was the hottest thing ever. I was bit sheltered, so when I saw something like that, it was awesome (emphasis added).

The sense of spectacle that Hernández felt is a common sentiment expressed in many of the narratives shared with me regarding first introductions to Rockabilly sites of leisure. The exclusivity that Hernandez sensed was not by mistake. Since its inception Lorenzi and Del Campo intended for Rudolpho's to garner a consistent, but exclusive following of die-hards. In turn, Hernandez became a committed patron of Be Bop Battlin' Ball at Rudolpho's and began patronizing other promotions throughout the scene. She began inviting her own friends and family to shows and gradually developed her own scene identity as "Rockin' Ruthie." Hernández adopted the aesthetic markers of the scene. Hernández states "You just kind of had to blend in. I tried to make it my own, I didn't start rolling my hair right away. When we first went, it was me, Erick, my nephew, and Steve. It just kind of started happening; you start doing your hair, your make-up, and your clothes."[46] She began to curl and style her hair and make-up not only for shows, but for work and daily life as well. On body size and the Rockabilly scene, Hernández offers "For me it was kind of funny because for that size, I don't think size mattered; I was a lot heavier, so you couldn't go and find vintage. But for me, black was my thing, and that went with the rockabilly thing; so that, and

[46] Ruth Hernández , interview with the author, Los Angeles, CA, June 11 2011.

hair and make-up."[47] With vintage clothing unavailable in her size, Hernández conspicuously consumed and fashioned contemporary garments to achieve a vintage look.

Figure 4. Hernández, (right-center) and Sánchez (center) with friends and family at Rudolpho's in 2004.

As years passed, Hernández transitioned into a cultural producer. Through Gonzalo Gonzalez, she became familiar with Vito Lorenzi and Rudolpho's resident disc jockey, Tom Ingram. Having organized the first Viva Las Vegas Weekender Rockabilly Festival in 1998, the weekend festival had grown into a wildly popular institution by the early 2000s with thousands of participants.[48] Hernández began flyering and promoting for Be Bop Battlin' Ball and Viva Las Vegas throughout the Los Angeles scene. Moving from leisure site to leisure site, Hernández peppered bar counters and side railings with quarter and half sheet flyers. For Hernández, the incentive for this unpaid labor was to strengthen Rockabilly's Latino following. Echoing a sentiment expressed by Cindy Mejia in the 1990s, Hernández

[47] See chapter 3 for more on Rockabilly bodies.
[48] It is estimated that 20,000 people attended Viva Las Vegas in 2011. KTNV, "Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly Weekend." Last modified March 2012. Accessed March 17, 2014. http://www.ktnv.com/events/137907293.html.

recalls, "I wanted to mix both cultures. I knew that a lot of the old lowrider look looked so similar to the greaser look….I was flyering for every show imaginable, putting our name out there, but I wanted it to be specifically for Raza."[49] Whereas Lorenzi never explicitly sought after a Latina/o patronage, Hernández's frank assertion to draw out Latina/o patrons to sites of leisure denotes a racialized shift in the Los Angeles scene by the early 2000s as cultural consumers introduced to the scene at Rudolpho's birth transitioned into cultural producers themselves.

The echoes of Chicanidad and Latinidad Hernández discovered in the Rockabilly scene speaks to the solidarities forged and the culture shared, borrowed and poached between working class brown and white people for generations. As early as World War II, Chicano boys were cuffing their blue jeans, rolling cigarettes packs into their t-shirt sleeves, and slicking back their hair in exaggerated pompadour with ducktails- a look that would be adopted as the uniform of the white working class tough guy a generation later in the 1950s. In early press interviews promoting the play *Zoot Suit*'s move to the silver screen, Luis Valdez stressed the influences of the Pachuco on white youth of the 1950s, claiming Fonzy of *Happy Days* as "one of El Pachuco's illegitimate children."[50] The uniform of the vato loco of the 1950s and 1960s, starched khakis pants with Pendleton shirts, was adopted by both white hot rodders and white surfers hoping to capture the same swaggering masculinity the look offered the Chicanos who fashioned it. The Beach Boys, the quintessential white

[49] Ruth Hernández, interview with the author, Los Angeles, CA, June 11 2011.

[50] "Eddie Olmos: The Anthony Quinn." *Lowrider Magazine*, September 1, 1981, 11.

surf-pop band of the 1960s, was originally dubbed the Pendle-tones, in honor of the appropriated style.[51]

Conversely, pockets of Chicana/os and Latina/os have held an affinity for the country music of artists such as Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, and Patsy Cline for decades.[52] The hybrid genre of Tejano traffics in sonic elements pulled from Mexican regional music as well as Anglo-American country western.[53] Singer Freddy Fender drew a popular following of white and Latino fans for his work as a solo rock & roll and country artist, as well as his work in the Tejano band, The Texas Tornados.[54] The same could be said of Linda Ronstadt work as a country artist, or that of the "Rockabilly filly" herself, Rosie Flores. While Hernández cued into what Michelle Habell-Pallán termed, a "family of resemblance, between brown and white styles in the late 1990s and early 2000s, similar connections were being forged in Los Angeles of the late 1970s and early 1980s with the friendship and working relationships developed between groups like Los Lobos and the Blasters.[55]

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[51] "Before They Were the Beach Boys, They Were the Pendletones." Pendleton Threads. October 3, 2012. Accessed August 24, 2014. http://blog.pendleton-usa.com/2012/10/03/before-they-were-the-beach-boys-they-were-the-pendletones/.

[52] Perhaps the most beloved syndicated radio call-in & dedication program amongst Chicanas/os remains "Art Laboe's Killer Oldies Show." I observed that, while Laboe and his producers rarely stray from playing a limited selection of postwar R&B and soul music, Laboe does read off a laundry list of dedication sent into him by listeners. Often peppered into the request are older country songs from the 1950s and early 1960s including Patsy Cline's "Walking After Midnight" or Johnny Cash's "I Walk The Line."

[53] For more on Tejano music, see Manuel Peña, *Musica Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

[54] Curtis Márez, "Brown: The Politics of Working-class Chicano Style" from *Social Text*, no. 48 (Autumn 1996), 109-132.

[55] Writing of El Vez, the Chicano Elvis, Michelle Habell-Pallán states "by positing a "family

Like many forms of gendered labor, Hernández's work was largely unpaid and uncredited while both Lorenzi's and Ingram's names were featured prominently in advertisements for their respective promotions. Like most rock-based scenes, men make up the majority of recognized cultural producers, mostly visibly as musicians and performers.[56] However, in addition to making up a slight majority of scene regulars, Latinas in the scene also are often responsible for unrecognized and uncelebrated labor as cashiers, barkeeps, waitresses, and in Ruth's case, PR and flyering.

The creation of Razabilly, Hernández and Erick Sánchez 's Microsoft network (MSN) website also denoted an undeniable racial shift in the scene in the early 2000s, but also provided a clear example of the impact that social media had, and continue to has on leisure sites. Born in the customer service department of an Orange County based corporation that Hernandez and Sanchez were employed at, Razabilly provided its creators with a respite from the monotony and isolation of a low paying job in a lonely office cubicle. Hernandez remembers "During our working hours, we started MSNing all day long. We worked in the same office and we would design the website, I learned HTML, we'd write stories on our lunch break, and People (members) started jumping on it. Everything that was

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of resemblance" that links the history of many Chicanos,- a working class past/and or present,- to Elvis's own childhood of poverty, El Vez's performance connect Mexican American working class histories to those of most other Americans and highlights the fact that any notion of multiculturalism is incomplete without understanding how class and racial position make some residents of the United States more equal than others." Michelle Habell-Pallán. *Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture*, (New York: NYU Press, 2005), 188. Also see Kelli Skye Fasrocki. "Old Friends Rally for the Blasters' Phil Alvin." Orange County Register. January 25, 2013. Accessed August 20, 2014.

[56] Cohen, Sarah. "Men Making a Scene, Rock Music and the Production of Gender." *Sexing The Groove: Popular Music and Gender*. Ed. Shelia Whiteley. (London & New York: Routledge Press, 1997.)

done was done at work because I didn't have a computer at home, I couldn't afford one. Erick didn't have a computer either." Hernandez found that much of the promoting that she did in person could also be achieved online, and to a broader audience. While computers may not have been readily available to young adults of color, they were at least accessible to this population who were well familiar with how to use and navigate the Internet. Like many of talented and creative youth trapped in unfulfilling work, Hernández, and Sánchez absconded time from their employer to engage in leisure they found fulfilling.[57]

The membership of Razabilly grew exponentially with a worldwide following all cued into what was happening in the Latina/o dominated Los Angeles scene. By the time that Razabilly moved to the then wildly popular Myspace, the member count had grown to the hundreds.[58] For Hernández, Razabilly became a Chicano version of the *LA Weekly*, an instantly and easily accessible guide to working class leisure. Show reviews and previews

[57] Elaborating on his notion of stealing time Robin D.G. Kelly writes "Not surprisingly, studies that seriously consider the sloppy, undetermined, everyday nature of workplace resistance have focused on workers who face considerable barriers to traditional trade union organization. Black domestic workers devised a whole array of creative strategies, including slowdowns, theft or "pan-toting" (bringing home leftovers and other foodstuffs), leaving work early, or quitting, in order to control the pace of work, increase wages, compensate for underpayment, reduce hours, and seize more personal autonomy. These individual acts often had a collective basis that remained hidden from their employers." Robin D.G. Kelly, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*, (New York: Free Press, 1996).

[58] Although Hernández, recalls being impressed by the member count on the msn site as well as the number of Myspace users that added "Razabilly" as a friend, neither she nor anyone else I interviewed or consulted for this research project could remember exact numbers. Hundreds of users or Myspace friends seem hardly impressive in the current moment of mass communication via social media like Facebook and twitter. However, for Hernández, and Sánchez, the hundreds of users and friends of Razabilly, their small, localized pet project, worldwide is still a point of pride.

Figure 5. One of the more popular logos used for the Razabilly website utilizes iconography familiar in the Rockabilly scene such as hot rod flames, tattoo scrolls, and a sexualized pin-up as the focal point of the image.[59]

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were listed. CD releases were reviewed. Despite being a Rudolpho's patron and promoter, Hernández was never interested in dwelling in Rockabilly authenticity. As such, the Razabilly site also featured pages dedicated to Morrissey and Gwen Stefani; pop stars whose

[59] Latinidad is encoded into the image through the application of the Mexican tri-color scheme, the pin-up's dark hair and red dress, and the bottom scroll's featuring roses and a dia de los muertos skeleton. Speaking to the tongue in cheek sense of humor Hernandez and Sanchez brought to their site, the phrase "¡Viva La Graza!" is emblazoned across the bottom base. The phrase, roughly meaning "long live Raza Rockabilly" or "long live Latina/o greasers" plays off of the self-valorizing call "Viva La Raza" used by Chicana/os and Latina/os. The modified phrase plays with the audible similarities between the words "grasa" and "raza." The joke carries a distinctly Chicana/o rasquache sensibility, as most Spanish language purists are quick to point out, the standard term for hair grease (pomade) is vaselina. Ybarra Frausto writes, "a consistent objective of Chicano art is to undermine imposed modes of representation and to interrogate systems of aesthetic discourse, disclosing them as neither natural nor secure but conventional and historically determined." (Ybarra-Frausto, 148.) The use of picardía, or humor derived from wordplay is explored in Dolores Inés Casillas work on US Spanish language radio in "A Morning Dose of Latino Masculinity: US Spanish-language Radio and the Politics of Gender." Dolores Inés Casillas, "A Morning Dose of Latino Masculinity: US Spanish-language Radio and the Politics of Gender," *Latina/o Communication Studies Today*, ed. Angharad N. Valdivia (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 161-183.

music and personas Hernández adores that were only tangentially related to Rockabilly. The site also became a venue for political debates and flame wars, to which Hernandez often found herself stepping into mediate. Members of a span of political leanings debated over civil liberties in the age of the patriot act, terrorism, immigration as well as California specific issues of Schwarzenegger budget cuts and same-sex marriage. A common sight online were threads dominated by back and forth volleys between "Darin" a conservative white Los Angeles area based mid-century furniture enthusiast, and "Rat" an anarchist Chicano former punk rocker in Las Vegas.

Ultimately, Hernández would grow disillusioned with the Rockabilly scene following the passing of her father. As she remembers "When my father died, it made me realize these people weren't my friends: it was all a social scene for the time, and that was it. Every show I was there promoting, but after he was gone I was really turned off. I was 22-23 when I started getting into that scene, and I was already 27-28, it was all very juvenile to me after all. People fighting at the bar, the leather jackets. You can't be at shows every night, you have to work, bills to pay." Alluding to the limits of what sites of leisure are able to offer, Hernández found the scene unable to provide what she needed to work through her father's passing. In comparison to the sheer amount of labor she invested in promoting and keeping the scene going, the inability of those in the scene to reciprocate that investment proved hurtful. In 2008 Hernández left Los Angeles to pursue a career in make-up and fashion in New York.

Hernández still enjoys the music, appreciates and incorporates aspects of the Rockabilly aesthetic into her work and own personal sense of style, and maintains a handful

of friends she made in the scene. She remembers the scene, the work she invested, and the shows she enjoyed warmly, concluding our interview with a smile and reminding me that it was all "fun while it lasted!" Yet, she now regards the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene with a sense of distance as something that had value to her years ago. Without a doubt, the scene met Hernandez's needs as a young adult working an unfulfilling job in during the W. Bush/Schwarzenegger years. Although venues may still employ the same format introduced at Rudolpho's, the contemporary scene holds little meaning or value for her. While Hernández was never interested in drawing the feel of authenticity, as theorized by Thornton, what Hernandez once felt was true and meaningful about the Rockabilly scene is gone.[60]

The British Model and the Reproduction of Leisure

The Rockabilly scene grew steadily throughout the early to mid-2000s, due in part to the British model introduced to Los Angeles at Rudolpho's. In this regard, it is ironic for Lorenzi to bemoan increased completion at the turn of the century, considering that his competitors were employing a model, he himself was responsible for introducing. The British model offered a clear and codified format, or what Irwin termed, activity system, for would-be promoters to apply. For many, patronage of Rockabilly shows is the defining factor in scene membership. In fact, while some participants welcome the inclusion of Kustom hot-rodding, pin-up photography and modeling, vintage burlesque dancing, classic tattooing, and even the collection and restoration of vintage home furnishing under the umbrella term of "Rockabilly," many enthusiasts contend that only Rockabilly shows and festivals struck in the British model makes up the Rockabilly, or "Rockin'" scene. As a form

[60] (Thornton, 26).

of subcultural capital, the ability to set the parameters of who is in or out of the Rockabilly scene serves as a function of power.

Hosted at a bar, pub, or nightclub, The British model relies on two formats, live "shows" featuring live musical performers, and record hops featuring solely DJ'ed music. At live shows, performing acts are the primary draw and with DJ'ed music played before, between, or after band performances. While this is not uncommon of most musical performances of multiple genres, what is unique about the British model is the organization of music played by the DJ, who, far from seen as providing filler material, are held as high in regard as the live performers. DJ's spinning records at Rockabilly shows outside of the British model are free to organize their musical selections at whim, and will freely move from genre to genre depending on what they feel would be appropriate for the time. However, within the British model, music is divided into three genre categories: jivers, boppers, and strollers, each with their own dance. Incidentally, these three categories are freely crossed by several musical genres, for example Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers doo wop hit "Little Bitty Pretty One" is a popular jiver, while another doo wop song, "Long Tall Girl" is considered a stroller. DJ's are free to play whatever music they want, so long as they organize them correspondingly as boppers, jivers, or strollers, and offer 15 to 20 minutes sets of each genre for patrons to dance to. DJ's are expected to chime in and excite the crowd, provide updates on the night's progression, or announce that they are switching genres. At DJ'ed record hops, the musical selections of one or two DJ's are the sole draw, as they take turns spinning records or CD's for the listening pleasure of patrons.

Perhaps most fascinating about the British system within the context of the United States is the migration of distinctly British cultural values and history attached to the activity system. No matter how moving a song may be, a live performance is music to listen to, while a DJ'ed recording is music to dance to. While patrons can and will dance to live performances (and are often encouraged to do so by performers), it would be considered a faux pas to dance too close to the stage, as that area is expected to be occupied by patrons who stand and listen to performers, often rather stoically. Patrons often clear the dance floor during live performances, and yet flood it once the DJ plays recorded music. While considered rather ordinary and expected for many in the scene, those coming from dance backgrounds such as lindy hop are often perplexed as to why many patrons eschew dancing to live music, especially as dance friendly music as Rockabilly. Some point to the British cultural values incurred in the British model, namely that the way to show support for a performer is to be present and give them your undivided attention.

Regardless of the negotiation of cultural values, the British model offering of a standardized approach to shows has provided an accessibility for both patrons and promoters alike. Would be promoters are provided an easy to follow blueprint for their promotion. The leap from cultural consumer to cultural producer is thereby greatly reduced. In a way, the utilization of the British model democratized and expanded the scene in the early 2000s. Sympathetic venue owners in the greater Los Angeles area provided space, and kept the bar tabs, while promoters were free to host their show and collect cover charges. For patrons, the British model provided a comforting predictability during their leisure time. This all the

more impactful given the day to day chaos all too often encountered given their subject position as aggrieved community members.

The Los Angeles Rockabilly Scene and the Great Recession

Among the promotions established during the early 2000's, Richard Vreede's the Rumble Bar and "Brando Von Badsville's" Rhythm and Booze gained a strong following in their respective locations in greater Los Angeles, and proved excellent sites for field research by the time this study commenced in 2007. As Rochella Thorpe demonstrated in her study of African American lesbian nightlife, bars can play a crucial role in community formation.[61] Both venues are self-identified as Rockabilly or "Rockin' '50s" venues. As regularly scheduled venues, I could count on both promotions to occur consistently. Both venues share a similar format, and as long running venues, both have developed a core group of participants and scene "regulars" whose appearance at the venue and accessibility for follow up conversations can be counted on from month to month.[62]

The Rumble Bar in the Gateway Cities Region

By 2004, The Rumble Bar had become one of Los Angeles' scenes most popular venues. A consistent and reliable venue location in a centrally located area of greater Los Angeles combined with an open catering to the scene established Latina/o patronage, the Rumble Bar's bi-monthly shows were consistently packed to capacity. By eleven at night, a

[61] Thorpe, Rochella. "A House Where Queers Go: African American Lesbian Nightlife in Detroit 1940-1975" in *Inventing Lesbian Cultures in America*, ed. Ellen Lewis. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).: 40

[62] For maps: http://www.amren.com/mtnews/archives/2005/01/los_angeles_cou.php Latinos average at lower socioeconomic status, and thus have a lower life expectancy.

long line of would-be patrons wrapped around the side of the non-descript building housing CC' Roadhouse, the home of Richard Vreede's Rumble Bar.

Figure 6. Classic cars receive priority parking and draw attention to the otherwise non-descript façade of CC's Roadhouse in 2008 (left). Rumble Bar patrons in 2008 (right).

The Rumble Bar played a critical role in filling the void left by Rudolpho's and was one of the most popular venues in the scene in the mid-2000s. In fact, for many coming of age just after the turn of the century, the Rumble Bar was their Rudolpho's, an "authentic" Rockabilly venue by which all others are judged.[63] Once past security, bland non-descript, office building like exterior gave way to a loud, vibrant, exciting, and bustling interior, filled with laughter, music and conversation in English, Spanish, and a mix of both. Many in the scene used the Rumble Bar as a site to continue the Raza Rockabilly practice of turning obsessive and excessive attention to authenticity into an art form; a practice honed at

[63] A Yelp review of CC's Roadhouse written in 2008 lamented "cc roadhouse a.k.a THE RUMBLE BAR.....waaaaaa this used to be THE place to go listen to rockabilly bands like SIX years ago!!!!" Jess, B. Yelp, "CC Roadhouse." Last modified February 21, 2008. Accessed March 17, 2014. http://www.yelp.com/biz/cc-roadhouse-paramount.

Rudolpho's. Patrons attired in the most glamorous of 1950s evening attire rubbed elbows with those in the grubbiest of cuffed jeans or peddle-pushers.

With an exaggerated Roadhouse décor, the Rumble Bar oozed with Bhaktinian excess.[64] Pitchers of beer were sold as a single drink for thirsty patrons with a common Rumble Bar sight being patrons swilling Pabst Blue Ribbon directly from cartoonishly oversized pitchers twice the size of their head. Immaculately attired performers and patrons devolved in sweaty messes on stage or on the dance floor as the night progressed. When it got too hot inside, the smoking "patio," a narrow cement corridor on the side of the building was the space to cool off, bum smokes, and carry on audible conversations and catch up on the latest chisme.

Figure 7. Excess in action, the Rumble Bar Pitcher [65]

[64] In considering the implications of Bakhtin's carnival for American forms of popular culture, Lipsitz writes "Bakhtin identifies these sensibilities as the essence of carnival-ritualized celebrations oriented around the passions of plenitude, inversions of the social order, and mocking laughter designed to "uncrown power." (Lipsitz, 15).

[65] L. Diaz Photography. Circa 2006-2007.

While the Doll Hut in Anaheim and the Bigfoot Lodge in Burbank are often labeled "Rockabilly Bars," one would be hard pressed to find an establishment that solely offered Rockabilly or other vintage music. Like the Rumble Bar, most shows are thrown by individual promoters who locate willing venues to provide space, usually taking the income generated at the bar for themselves, and occasionally charging for use of the space and security, and even rarely asking for a cut of the door cover charge. Promoter Richard Vreede had initially worked out an arrangement with the management of CC's Roadhouse to host bi-monthly Rumble Bars. CC's Roadhouse, like most hosting venues for Rockabilly shows, is a mom-and-pop bar, usually patronized by working class locals. An non-descript square building from the outside, the inside décor of CC's Roadhouse is meant to evoke a country western roadhouse, with wood paneled walls painted red, pseudo Brick columns, and a DJ booth enclosed in chicken wire.

Spatially, the bar sits at the rear of the roadhouse, diametrically opposite of the stage. Behind the bar, parallel to the kitchen lies a small game room with a pool table and dartboard. Located nearest to the bar is a seating area featuring elevated tables and bar stools. Located nearest to the stage stands a corralled dance floor. At the stage is another raised bar separating the stage from the spectators. This set-up is unique to the Rumble Bar, and perfectly suited for a Rockabilly show, considering that fans of the bands could stand right in front of the stage and not disturb dancers on the dance floor, a common problem at many Rockabilly shows due to the music's nature as both rock music, and dance music.

While doors often opened at nine p.m., typically most patrons arrived between 10pm and midnight, and staying to just before last call at two a.m. During its height in the early

2000s, The Rumble Bar consistently neared the maximum capacity; with lines stretching around a quarter of the building with patrons ready to pay the twelve to fifteen dollar cover charge. Inside, patrons, conversed, laughed, sang, danced, drank and flirted with each other. The spatial set up of numerous tables, chairs, benches, bars, and railings required care to be taken while negotiating movement around the roadhouse. The close quarters and space restrictions paradoxically created the cramped conditions that provided opportunities for strangers to meet and build community, as well as incite aggression and confrontation over potential nudges and glances intended or perceived to be hostile.

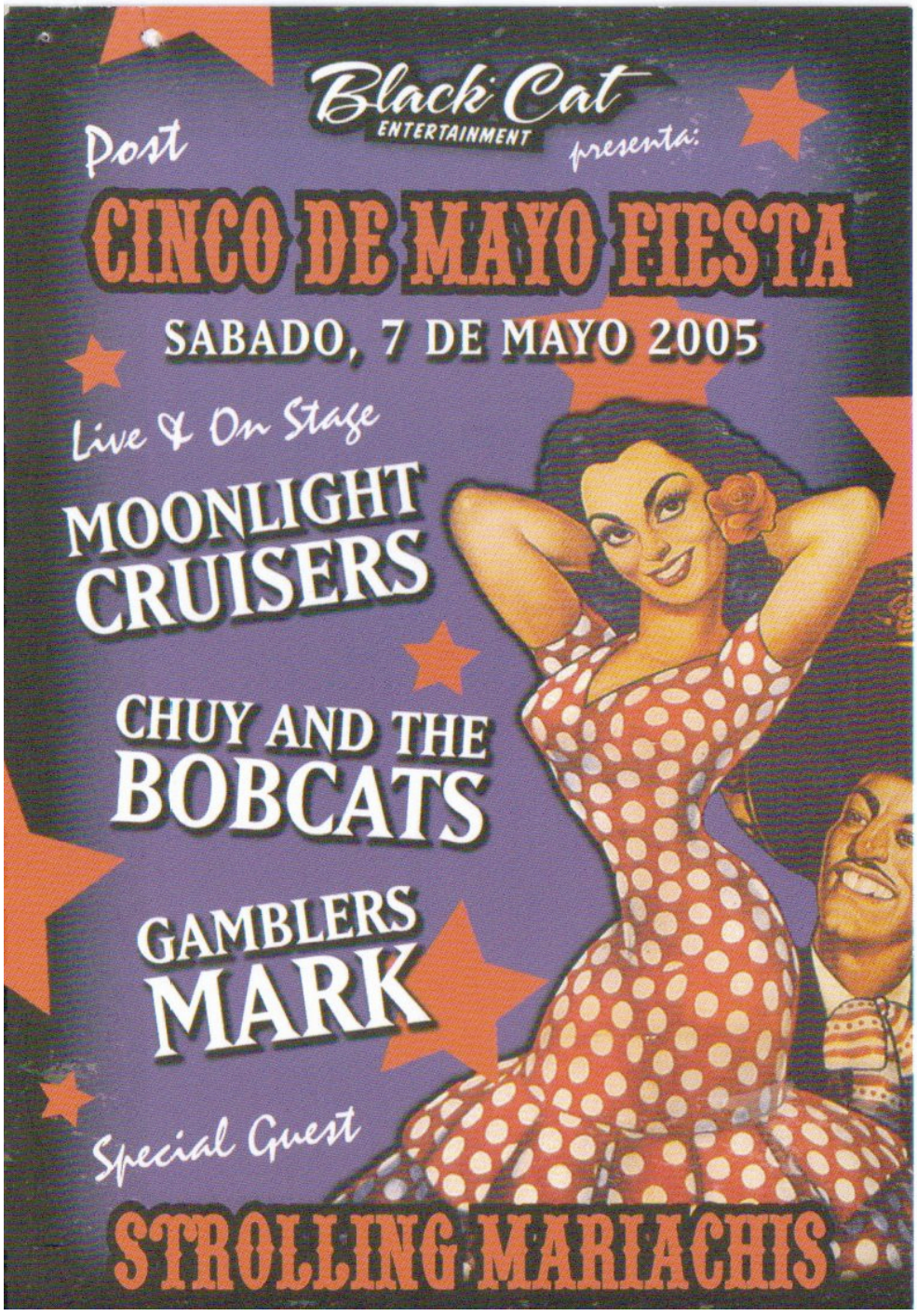
Most Rumble Bar shows featured live bands with prominent DJ's performing before, between, and after band sets. Typically, two or three bands were booked for the night and paid by the promoter to play one forty five to sixty minute set. An up-and-coming band was booked to open and pay the earlier timeslot, usually slated for 9:30pm. A headliner usually garnered a featured timeslot. If an original 1950s' performer was booked, that time slot was typically around 10:00pm, as many requested to not have to perform too late. Contemporary bands could be booked later, or even close out the night, depending on the how Vreede foresaw the evening playing out. All DJ'ed shows, or Record Hops, were considerably less expensive and often booked seasonally with a reduced cover charge. The Rumble Bar largely relied on flyers and online PR via Myspace and email listings to promote their venue.

Taking a cue for Rudolpho's, the Rumble Bar directly catered to its Latina/o patrons. DJ's such as Rockin Vic, and DJ Chuy, in addition to spinning 1950s Rockenroll, also harkened back to LA's own history, pulling directly from the Central Avenue based doo-wop and R&B performers popular with Chicana/o Latina/o performers for decades. Bands such

as Los Rhythm Rockets, and Lil Luis y Los Wild Teens were booked, alongside visiting bands from Europe making rare stateside appearances. Doo-wop performer Vicky Tafoya, and her band The Big Beat was another popular draw. All Latina/o line-ups were booked and celebrated each year with a Cinco de Mayo festival that eventually outgrew CC's Roadhouse and moved to the Knitting Factory in Hollywood. However, no band quite captured the Rumble Bar's unique impact on the scene as the Moonlight Cruisers.

The Moonlight Cruisers, a band managed briefly by Vreede, grew to be one of the Rumble Bar's strongest draws. The all Latino band musically drew from a Bluesy-lineage with a strong Rockabilly and western influence. Aided by front man Tony Pelayo's on stage antics, (he often swaggered onstage brandishing a handgun shaped bottle of tequila) the Moonlight Cruisers incorporation of traditional Mexican music and cumbias cemented their status as the representative Razabilly band of the mid 2000's. Their deft transitions from hard rocking numbers such as "gone" and the Link Wray inspired "Chicken Walk" to smooth boleros like "Sabor a Mi" and the cumbia "La Negra Tomasa" were adored by fans. Sadly, following the 2007 death of drummer Andrew Martinez, the band's full line up rarely performs. However a stripped down version of the group continues on as the Moonlight Trio.

Figure 8. 2005 flyer for a Cinco de Mayo show at the Rumble Bar.



Little did I realize that the economic recession would render the Rumble Bar financially unviable for Vreede who closed the door on that promotion in 2009. With the

2007 US subprime mortgage crisis resulting in the bursting of an eight trillion dollar housing bubble, the subsequent loss of wealth devastated consumer spending as millions of working families faced foreclosure. The combined drop in consumption and the financial market turmoil brought on by the bursting of the buddle led to a crash in business investments. Ultimately, by 2008 and 2009, 8.4 million jobs were lost disproportionately affecting Latinas/os and African Americans.[66]

Faced with tough financial decision, many prioritized more pressing concerns over leisure. According to the National Club Industry Association of American (NCIAA), a trade organization of the nightlife and club industry, bars and nightclub revenue declined an average of 1.8 percent each year from 2008 to 2011, with the sharpest decline of 10.1 percent taking place at the height of the recession in 2009.[67] Venues in addition to the Rumble Bar began drying up, and few promoters had the turnaround cash to pay performers, opting for DJ's. The interview that I conducted with Vreede for this project took place at one of his last Rumble Bar's promotions, the once capacity filled room reduced to a little over a dozen patrons. Ironic as it is; for a scene that was so much about it disconnection from contemporary woes and the modern world, it was ultimately radically affected by it.

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[66] According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009 unemployment rates of Latina/os ("Hispanics") stood at roughly twelve percent while African Americans unemployment stood at almost fifteen percent. By comparison, the unemployment rate of white people that year was nearly nine percent. US Bureau of Labor Statistics. The recession of 2007-2009. BLS Spotlight on Statistics; 2012. *http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2012/recession/pdf/recession_bls_spotlight.pdf*. Accessed August 28, 2012. See also "Unemployment and Underemployment." The State of Working America. Accessed August 20, 2014. http://stateofworkingamerica.org/great-recession/unemployment-and-underemployment/.

[67] "Snapshot." Our Industry. January 1, 2014. Accessed August 25, 2014. http://www.nciaa.com/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=160641&module_id=29898.

Yet for Vreede, it was more than the economic recession that contributed to a decline in the scene. He also attributes the decline to generational shifts and changing tastes. Vreede offered the following, "It's an expensive lifestyle (The Rockabilly scene) to be in, buying the music, the clothing, going out, and setting aside money to go out. A lot of people, party from 18 or 19, to 20 or 21, and (then) they have to make that big career step; (either) get a real job, go into the service; (some) get married and have children. After doing this for ten years, I can see a new generation coming in . . . and they are into psychobilly." Just as Hernandez drifted away from the scene, Vreede contends that the responsibilities of work and family of maturing patrons has drawn away those who once packed his club eight to ten years earlier. While his British model Rockabilly promotion has closed its doors; Vreede still promotes 1980s and Pyschobilly shows and festivals.[68] Vreede chose to focus on promoting his "Rockabilly versus '80s" shows hosted at Vertigos near downtown Los Angeles and various psychobilly shows and festival throughout greater Los Angeles. Ironically, Vreede's current promotions are concentrated in the downtown area and Hollywood area, parts of Los Angeles Vreede deemed unwelcoming and hostile to Rockabilly in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Other promoters and DJs banking on CC's Roadhouses association with the Rumble Bar periodically hosted record hops at that location, including one of LA's few longstanding women DJ's: Dynamite Lola.

Spike's Billiards in the San Gabriel Valley

[68] In 2012, Vreede was criticized for allegedly not paying bands what they were owed. His most vocal critic being punk rock documentarian and blogger Robert G. Rose. Robert G., Rose. Punk Outlaw, "Black Cat: Con-cert Promoter, The Real Story Revealed." Last modified February 22, 2012. Accessed March 17, 2014. http://punkoutlaw.com/po09/2012/02/black-cat-concert-promoter-the-real-story-revealed/.

Located on Del Mar Avenue surrounded by Asian American businesses and across the street from a striking Buddhist temple, Spike's Billiards is easy to miss. A box shaped building with an open dirt parking lot, the rear entrance to Spikes is the only way in or out for patrons passing the security guards and the hot dog vender beneath the sole overhanging porch light. A venue reliably spinning Rockabilly and 1950s rock & roll records each and every Monday night, Spike's in the San Gabriel Valley community of Rosemead is Los Angeles's longest running British model promotion, and the second longest retro-roots rock venue to Ronnie Mack's Barn Dance in the San Fernando Valley.

Spike's longevity may owe to the ways in which it differed from so many other venues. While Rudolpho's, the Rumble Bar, and many other venues felt more like events, Spikes and its' promoter "Brando Von Badsville" kept a lower key flavor and aesthetic. Spike's primary draw was its weekly record hops, only occasionally featuring live bands. While Monday may seem like an inopportune day, it never clashes with any other Rockabilly venue or promotion, as those are usually hosted on the weekend. Additionally, touring out of town bands, often end or begin their Los Angeles or Southern California tours at Spikes, allowing patrons who may have missed their performances at a weekend venue to catch them before they leave LA, or to get an early look and listen before a band may begin a week of performances throughout the rest of Southern California. These difference, while subtle, are significant as they serve to save costs for the promoter in the otherwise expensive venture of offering weekly entertainment regardless of the crowd size. The feel of Spike's is that of an old reliable neighborhood bar and pool spot, even if that neighborhood bar happens to be

miles of way given Rockabilly patrons willingness to travel out there way to hear good music.[69]

While Spike's is spatially small and condensed, the configuration and discipline of space creates distinct zones within the bar. The entrance hallway opens to the center dance floor. The small checkerboard dance floor is enclosed by bars on all sides except for the stage area, a low, near floor level platform framed by a red tinsel backdrop. On most normal days, a pool table sits on the dance floor, yet is moved on Mondays. Across from the dance floor lies the bar. While fully stocked, Spike's is definitely a bar for beer drinkers, as several craft beers as well as old standards are available bottled and on tap. A bell hangs above the bar, which the mostly women bar staff ring when patrons offer good tips. On the opposite side of the building is a raised section of the room, which serves as the pool hall; featuring four tables, which patrons keep consistently busy. On days with performers, DJs will set up near the stage in the pool area. On days without performers, which are most common, DJ's will set up on stage.

Ironically, while men dominate the cultural producing roles of promoting, performing, and DJ'ing, women are Spike's most diehard and committed of patrons. On any given Monday, women patrons make up 60 to 70 percent of attendees. Women often occupying the dance floor and bar area, while the men dominate the pool area. While there is considerably less pressure to dress up for Spike's, some patrons still choose to, yet they are in the minority. Generally the aesthetic of Spike's is casual 1950s style denim and t-shirts for

[69] Ironically, one patron interviewed on-site at Spike's admitted that it was one of his least favorite venues, despite the fact that he regularly drives across Los Angeles County to get there periodically.

men and women. An aesthetic in no doubt influenced by the ever-presence of the promoter Brando's social club; the Rumble Cats, whose own style draw heavily from the 1950s biker cult classic *The Wild Ones*. In fact Brando's own moniker, inspired by the film and persona crafted by Marlon Brando, speaks to Rockabilly's potential for self-construction and transformation within spaces of leisure; drawing upon cultural icons and the social capital of those icons.

Brando is not alone in the Rockabilly scene, as self-chosen nicknames and monikers are quite common. Many outside of Los Angeles are surprised to discover that Big Sandy is actually a stage name for performer Robert Williams. Williams once had a vintage work jacket with a name patch that read "Sandy," and chose to use the name for his band "Big Sandy and the Fly Rite Trio." Jose Lara, incorporated his nickname "Pachuco" when he named his band "Pachuco Jose y Los Diamantes." Most DJ's in the scene are known only by their performing names, "Rockin' Vic," Dynamite Lola," or Whiteboy James." Equally fascinating is the subtle name change of R&B songstress, Lil' Gizzelle to Gizzelle. As Gizelle transitioned from performing light and bouncy Ruth Brown numbers to heartier and stronger soul music, the dropping of the three lettered "lil" denoted a deliberate signaling of a more mature and serious sound.

Contemporarily Spikes exists as one link in a circuit of greater Los Angeles based Rockabilly venues that exist within and without the British model. Venues largely share the same pool of bands, both original 1950s and contemporary performers, as well as DJ's. Additionally, the same circles of patrons can be seen from venue to venue as far removed from each other as San Fernando Valley and Riverside. Despite rivalries and pockets of deep

seated resentment between certain patrons, the critical mass of Los Angeles patrons of British model Rockabilly patrons carry the weight and sense of a large extended not just familiarity, but oddly of family; a sense strengthened by shared classed, raced, and gendered experiences.

Conclusion: "Relive Memories and Create New Ones"

Despite the devastating blow dealt to the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene by the great recession, the scene has since resurged as promoters and patrons have adapted. While sites of leisure for a scene may come or go, the material conditions of work and the laboring bodies that experience those conditions remain the same. Leisure continues to serve the same purpose for working classes that it has before, during, and after economic downturns in capitalist economies: it is time and labor invested in something other than work at sites marked by racialized and gendered hierarchies of power and hyper-surveillance.

As sites of leisure began drying up in the Los Angeles scene, LA-based Razabilly became increasingly recognizable in the community at large. The predominantly Latino acts of Los Angeles based Wild Records drew diverse audiences to their own take on rockabilly and 1950s rock and roll. The style and aesthetics associated with rockabilly remained ever present as those coming of age in the late 2000s adopted these looks as well. Ironically, while Viva Las Vegas grew to epic proportions, the leisure sites of the Los Angeles scene itself dwindled rapidly following the onset of the recession, with many Los Angeles based bands garnering more bookings abroad than at home.

In response, Vreede began promoting all ages psychobilly shows, targeting teens not yet saddled with the adult responsibilities that he identified for drawing patrons away from the Rumble Bar. One of the key distinctions noted by European Rockabilly enthusiasts

between Rockabilly sites of leisure in the United States and Europe is the lack of pubs where high school age can attend shows.[70] Brando Von Badsville, working in close relationship with Spike's Billiards, continues to offer free admittance for his weekly Rhythm and Booze record hops, as well as hosting bands for a reasonable cover charge at both Spike's original locations in Rosemead, but at its sister location in Bellflower as well. Taking a cue from Spike's coverless approach, Karen Marmount's "Reverend Martini Presents" began offering free admission after taking residency at Viva Cantina a Mexican restaurant near the Los Angeles Equestrian Center in Burbank. The restaurant, already banking on their reputation for offering live music almost nightly, sponsors the all-ages shows. Thus, these sites of leisure serve as engines powering the cultural economy of Los Angeles Rockabilly.[71]

While those of the Rudolpho's generation may not be able to frequent sites of leisure as regularly as they were when they young adults, they still maintain a strong presence in the scene, both as producers and consumers. Viva Las Vegas has long served as a reunion space for friends separated by geography, it has also become a reunion space for friends who hadn't seen each other all year long, despite living relatively close to each other, due to their infrequenting of sites of leisure in Los Angeles. This is no truer felt at the late night record

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[70] DJ Cosmic Keith reporting on the Denver Weekender writes "we stopped to talk to some American Cats, who I think were in their early teens. They told us that it was really hard for them to go to clubs in the US as there is an age limit. Now that sucks!! You get the feeling that they want it real bad. It's that look of enthusiasm. I know it's how I was when I was that age." "Readers' Letters." *Continental Restyling*, November 1997, 8.

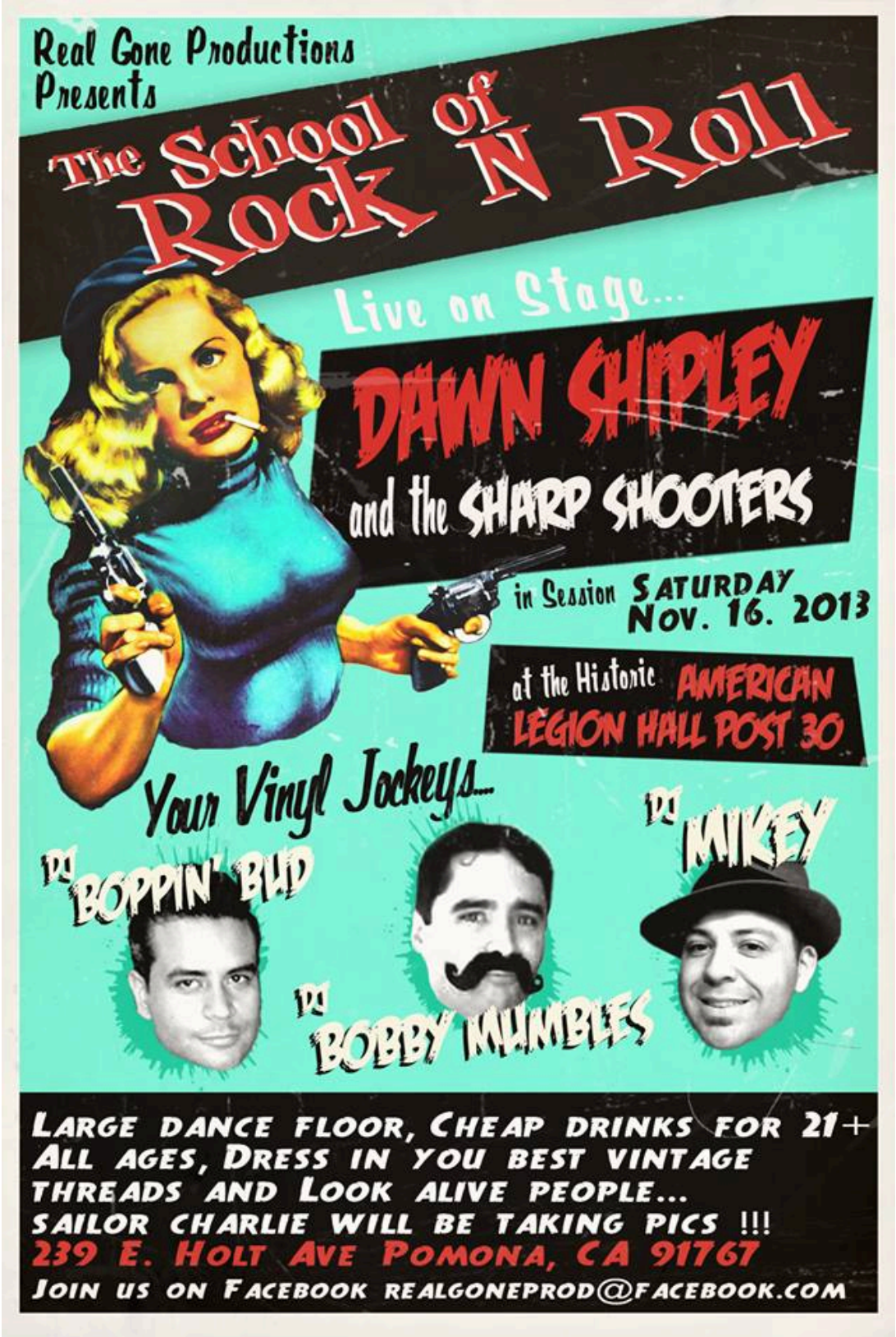
[71] In his work *Musica Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation*, Manuel Peña defines his use of cultural economy as "an organizing principle to elucidate the relationship between music as a form of artistic culture and the social processes out of which it emerges." Manuel Peña, *Musica Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), xi.

hops of the United States only International Weekender, Viva Las Vegas – while patrons can be spotted from all over the world during the day and night; 2am to 7am belongs to Los Angeles Razabilly, as those patrons descend upon the secluded bar reserved for festival afterhours. For those brief hours, that bar is transformed into any other Los Angeles area record hop.

Banking on that sentiment, promoter, Charles "Real Gone Charlie" Russell began hosting monthly rockabilly shows the American Legion Hall in Pomona, an old haunt of Ritchie Valens. Announcing his promotion, "The School of Rock and Roll" through Facebook, he states:

> If you were fortunate enough to experience the L.A Rockabilly scene in the early to mid 2000's, than you probably took part in some good times at places like Rudolpho's, The Foothill, Dixie Bell, Bowl-a-rama, The Derby, Yesteryears, The Rumble Bar, The Doll hut, Stagger Inn, Hully Gully, Crazy Jacks, Axle Shows and what is now the longest running Rockabilly ...hangout in L.A today Spikes.
> You've seen great bands, Dj's, promoters, friends and non-friends come and go, and if you were lucky you witnessed some great moments like Lalo Guerrero at Space City Vintage, The Extraordinairs at Yesteryears, Big Sandy's many jam sessions at the doll hut, Rudolpho's many christmas shows, the birth of WILD records, and Lets (sic) not forget the Viva Las Vegas Gold Coast room parties, where bed sets and dressers were left in hallways to make room for dancing. Saturday December 15th is your chance to re-live those memories or create some new ones.[72]

[72] Real Gone Prod. to Facebook online forum, May 12, 2013, School of Rock and Roll.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Fascinating about School of Rock and Roll is the layered sense of memory and the significance of "memory" itself to the scene. The laundry list of venues reminds us of the unique positioning of Los Angeles as a metropolis. On one hand, the Razabilly itself draws patrons and observers to remember a past that all too often sanitized and sapped dry of its racialized and gendered experiences. Yet, remembering Lalo Guerrero performing live is as much about remembering Lalo Guerrero, an icon of 1940s 1950s Chicanismo, as it is about remembering yourself at that moment in the early 2000s, a time marked not only by the new nativism birthed in the 1990s, but of an age of terror where marks of difference drew suspicion.

III. Fashioning Razabilly Bodies: Embodied Memory and Stance in the Chicana/o Latina/o Rockabilly Scene of Greater Los Angeles

Known for its working class 1950s aesthetics, Rockabilly style is a conspicuous sight in the greater Los Angeles area. For better or for worse, participants in the scene can be instantly recognized given the unique ways in which bodies are fashioned in the Rockabilly aesthetic. The Rockabilly scene is hardly alone in this regard, as other scenes employ similar codes of dress to fashion identity and scene membership. Yet, the self-conscious attempt to invoke a sense of historical or cultural memory tied to the atomic era, a memory that is embodied by a participant in the Rockabilly scene and subject to diverse readings by the spectator is certainly unique. Complicating matters are the dimensions brought on by race for Raza Rockabilly. If hegemony seeks to dehistoricize and individualize the struggles faced by aggrieved communities, what does it mean for an aggrieved community member to wear that history on their sleeve? Nevertheless, as personal and intimate as self-fashioning one's own body can be, it relies largely on employing broader networks and commercial interest that are integral components in the production and consumption of the Rockabilly scene.

While style can be employed in multiple ways, this chapter focuses on the transformed or fashioned body through dress and body modification by Chicana/o and Latina/o participants in the Los Angeles based Rockabilly scene. Through an engagement of concepts such as style, fashion, codes of dress, embodiment, stance, and aesthetic I intend to situate the self-construction of Razabilly bodies in way that speaks to their experiences as agents negotiating a post-industrial moment marked by colonial relationships of race, class, and gender. In his landmark study, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige argues

that groups of disaffected working class youth employ conspicuous consumption to create a shared style that offers a symbolic challenge and break to hegemony. While Dick Hebdige's use of style refers to elements beyond the visual, the intent of this chapter is to address the construction of spectacular style through the transformation of the body through dress and body modification including hair color and styling, application of make-up, and jewelry adornment. This remaking of the body enacts what Joanne B. Eicher call codes of dress, or the cueing up of cognitive and affective processes in a viewer.[1] These codes are read through what I term, a Rockabilly aesthetic, or in other words, a collection of key but non-static signifiers that call up the atomic era. In many cases, These cues form a stance taken on by Raza Rockabilly that communicates to the observer a tough, aloof and defiant demeanor worn like a shield against the daily assaults of a hegemonic order that treats working class women and men of color as less than equal.[2] I contend that the Rockabilly aesthetic, as practiced in Los Angeles by Chicanas/os and Latinas/os carry and cue an embodied sense of memory.

The title of this chapter is inspired by Catherine Spooner's 2004 text, *Fashioning Gothic Bodies*, in which she develops a genealogy of the construction of gothic bodies through fashion from late 18th century literature to the contemporary Industrial-Goth scene.

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[1] Joanne B. Eicher, "Introduction: Dress as Expression of Ethnic Identity," *Dress and Ethnicity: Change Across Space and Time*, ed. Joanne N. Radner (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1999), 1-5.

[2] A concept mostly readily employed in linguistics, I employ stance to refer to the communication of a relationship to a third party or object by a first party to a second party. Observed through the ethnographic fieldwork of Marjorie Harness Goodwin in her work *The Hidden Life of Girls: Games of Stance, Status, and Exclusion*, girls employed their stances on game rules to aggressively enforce fairness in hop scotch and other school yard games. Marjorie Harness Goodwin, *The Hidden Life of Girls: Games of Stance, Status, and Exclusion*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2006).

While my project shares a similar challenge of providing an analysis of a contemporary scene's self conscious invocation of and inspiration from a bygone era, I am less concerned with the discursive production of "Rockabillies" and more interested with the codes of dress, or the signs communicated through self-fashioning, both intended and unintended. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, embodiment is a "tangible or visible form of an idea, quality, or feeling."[3] I employ the term embodiment precisely because it is through body adornment and modification that style and aesthetics are employed to communicate meaning. Unlike Elvis impersonators, or Selena fans, Raza Rockabilly enthusiasts typically construct themselves *as* themselves, while simultaneously paying homage to and calling up the atomic age. Additionally, while Razabilly bodies are certainly *fashioned*, I am hesitant to refer to Rockabilly style as *fashion.*

According to Robert H. Lauer and Jeannette C. Lauer, fashion can be defined as style considered appropriate or desirable for a particular time and place.[4] For this chapter, I employ fashion as a verb, as it calls up notions of personal agency and creativity, as one might fashion a paper clip out of a bobby pin or fashion a floral hair accessory out of plastic craft flower and an old alligator clip.[5] Yet as a noun, fashion denotes a hegemonic and

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[3] Oxford Dictionaries, "embody." Last modified 2014. Accessed March 31, 2014. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/embody?q=embody.

[4] Jeanette C. Lauer and Robert H. Lauer, *Fashion Power: The Meaning of Fashion in American Society*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall 1981).

[5] In this regard, fashion as a verb speaks to sense of resourcefulness that is mindful of a pleasing aesthetic invoked in theories of rasquachismo and domesticana sensibilities. Mesa-Bain, Amalia. Amalia Mesa-Bains, "Domesticana: The Sensibilty of Chicana Rasquache," *Aztlan: Journal of Chicano Studies*, 24, no. 2 (1999), Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "The Chicano Movement/The Movement of Chicano Art." *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Ed. Ivan Karp, and Steven D. Levine. (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1991. 128-150).

modal temporality, ultimately tied to an industry built upon passing trends and disposability, qualities opposed by the Rockabilly stance. Just as my decision to employ the conceptual framework of 'scenes' is partly influenced by participants in Raza Rockabilly itself, my decision to not refer to Rockabilly style clothing uncomplicatedly as fashion is out of respect for the abhorrence many in the scene have to the very concept.[6] As my study reveals, Rockabilly style is ultimately tied to fashion, both as a concept and as a material industry. Yet this relationship is both a nuanced and a tortured one, speaking to the complicated subject positioning of contemporary Chicana/os and Latina/os in greater Los Angeles. While urban dwelling men and women of color may enjoy the freedom to fashion looks for them as they please, all too often the garments employed to do so were cut and sewn by exploited immigrant labor.

Methods employed for this chapter include participant observation, life history interviews, as well as the collection and analysis of primary sources including advertisements, catalogs, blogs, films, clips, and websites. In addition to the participant observation employed at the sites of leisure detailed in other chapters of this work, I also observed and interviewed women and men at the Rose Bowl Flea Market, various thrift shops and vintage clothing stores throughout the greater Los Angeles area, specialty stores such as My Baby Jo in Culver City, Tarantula Clothing Company in Boyle Heights, and 8Ball in Burbank, as well as vintage clothing gatherings such as the Vintage fashion expo hosted in Santa Monica, the vintage marketplaces held at the Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly Weekender, the USA Rockabilly Rave, the Rhythm Rocker in Long Beach, as well as backyard exchanges and yard sales held by enthusiasts.

A vintage clothing enthusiast myself, I bought and sold garments to and from local enthusiasts and shops, as well as to and from collectors and dealers internationally. Like many of the Raza Rockabilly enthusiasts that I observed and encountered, my own involvement in the vintage clothing market was more than a hobby. The money earned from selling clothing supplemented my modest income as a teaching assistant and helped fund my research.

Codes of Dress in the Rockabilly Scene

Figure 1: Young Latinos sport the greaser aesthetic at the Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly Weekend.[7]

Rockabilly style at its most recognizable (and equally most stereotypical) is the 1950s greaser and pin-up icons closely associated with the Kustom Kulture scene. The greaser, a familiar trope in American popular culture thanks to the popularity of the character Fonzy from the television program *Happy Days*, as well as films like 1978's *Grease*, is instantly

[7] Image by Tim Scott. Photographic Youth Music Archive, "Image of the Day." Last modified March 30, 2006. Accessed April 2, 2014. http://www.pymca.com/index.php?470897453171559370170000173161687266249781332901201412382 6.

recognizable by his high shine pompadour hairstyle, cuffed Levi 501's blue jeans, chain wallets, plain black or white t-shirt, and full sleeve length tattoos. The pin-up look, so named for the highly sexualized depiction of women geared towards US servicemen during WWII, is equally spectacular. Popular pin-up aesthetics are often composed of elaborate 1940s era hairstyles, stark make-up schemes, high heels, and form fitting dresses revealing tattooed arms, chests and legs. These looks are purposefully evocative of working class sensibilities, and though labor intensive, are quite accessible given a conspicuous consumption and transformation of readily available hegemonic fashions.[8] A pair of jeans purchased at a swap meet can be made "rockabilly" by turning up the cuffs. A pencil skirt and blouse from "Forever 21" can be transformed into a late 1940s ensemble by adding seamed stockings. Thus, mundane and everyday garments can be fashioned into transgressive markers of difference for the wearer.

Yet, while Rockabilly style seems quite uniform on the surface, it actually encompasses a broad range of diversity. In turn, that diversity is governed by codes of dress denoting not only scene participation, but interest as well.[9] It is not uncommon to find Kustom Kulture's "greasers" and "pin-ups" comfortably sharing leisure spaces with Mohawked, punk inspired fans of Psychobilly, or with other patrons more closely aligned with the British Hepkat scene, decked out from head to toe in actual vintage clothing from

[8] Dick Hebdige coined the term conspicuous consumption to describe punk rockers adoption and transformation of the mundane into the spectacular. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style,* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1979).

[9] In her auto-ethnographic study of women mariachi, Leonor Xóchitl Pérez notes that codes of traditional dress carry meanings of ethnic pride as well as gendered restrictions for Chicanas and Chicanos. Leonor Xóchitl Pérez, "A Chicana's Voice in the Mariachi World," *Chicana Traditions: Continuity and Change*, ed. Norma E. Cantu and Olga Najera-Ramirez (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 143-163.

Figure 2: Patrons at the School of Rock n Roll sport the pin-up look[10]

the 1950s.[11] While mundane observers can identify markers of a rockabilly aesthetic, most would be hard pressed to read those codes with the same fluency as those with more familiarity with the scene. In turn codes of dress can also be used to enforce boundaries, both physically and discursively. The Orleans Casino bans the wearing of motorcycle club "colors" at the yearly Viva Las Vegas festival in efforts to cut down on disturbances and violence associated with members of outlaw biker clubs. Flyers urging patrons to "wear their best vintage threads" often serves as a marker of allegiance to the British model where the donning of actual vintage clothing is a key component.

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[10] Sailor Charlie. Facebook, "School of Rock n Roll." Last modified November 15, 2013. Accessed April 2, 2014. https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1399243613647355&set=a.1399062816998768.1073741835.100006851880600&type=3&theater.

[11] See chapter II, for my look at the excessively authentic style of patrons of Rudolpho's and other Rockabilly sites of leisure like it.

Codes of dress can also mark generational differences, as seen in Elizabeth Blozan's documentary on the contemporary Rockabilly scene of Los Angeles, *Rebel Beat*. In the documentary, Los Rhythm Rockets saxophonist and disk jockey, Chuy Sandoval (DJ Chuy) interrupts his reflections on the contributions of 1950s era fellow disc jockeys, Art Laboe and Huggy Boy to hail an unseen bystander, standing or walking just outside of the camera's frame. For the shot, Blozan had framed DJ Chuy, leaning casually against a palm tree on East Los Angeles' Whittier Boulevard and positioned just below what once was the Boulevard Theatre, now home of the Latino evangelical Universal Church of God. The art deco theatre used to be a happening place for East Los Angeles teens, Dick "Huggy Boy" Hugg had once utilized the theatre to film a popular *American Bandstand*-type television program as late as the 1970s. His name, in giant letters looms over DJ Chuy, as he reflects on the love songs and dedication that both Huggy Boy and Art Laboe built their careers off of. Nevertheless, something catches Chuy's eye, as his attention quickly repeatedly diverts to his right, just off camera.

> They (*Laboe and Hugg)* played a lot of doo wop (*briefly glances to the right)*, a lot of love songs *(glances to the right again)* they were really cool…(*pulls off his clip-on mike and walks to the right, with the camera panning to keep him in frame)* you know the scene, about rockabilly; speaking of one of them…hey bro, can you wait? Here in East LA it is not really known for a lot rockabillies, but we got a young generation, which is here.[12]

As the camera (and presumably Blozan herself) struggles to smoothly keep Chuy's impromptu redirection of the segment in frame, Chuy switches roles from narrator to interviewer, interpolating a high school aged Raza Rockabilly enthusiast named Giovanni that he spots in front of a mom and pop 99 cent store.

[12] (Blozan, 2007)

Giovanni appears understandably nervous in front of the camera; awkwardly responding to Chuy's questions regarding rockabilly at his school as well as his love life. Following a jump cut, Blozan films Giovanni slowly from feet to head, as Chuy dissects and explains Giovanni's Rockabilly style; from his UK Rockabilly revival inspired suede creepers, to his heavily greased six inch pompadour. Concluding the street interview, Chuy attempts to elicit Giovanni's take on why he's adopted the Rockabilly style.

> Chuy: What do you do it for, do you do it for the love it, do you do it just to be different; because I know you stand out bro. Why do you do it? I mean, your dad influenced you but there's got to be a reason. Can you answer that or no?
>
> Giovanni: Ummm; I just do it because I like the style. I really don't care what everyone else thinks, or whatever.[13]

Giovanni's response, at first glance, seems like a non-answer. While some would be completely unsatisfied with the seemingly clichéd "I do it because I like it/other be damned" response, one must keep in mind that Giovanni is a high school student in the increasingly policed and criminalized world of young people in "No Child Left Behind" era Los Angeles. Like generations of youth before him, style is one avenue, albeit politically limited, afforded to young people like Giovanni to express resistance and personal agency. While the postmodern landscape of infinite choice offered to us by late capitalism has severely stunted the political threat posed by style; style nonetheless still matters to those both empowered and punished by how they transform their body.[14]

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[13] (Blozan, 2007)

[14] Speaking on consumer choices in the marketplace, Donald M. Lowe argues "lifestyle merchandisers, Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein, do not sell commodities. They produce and circulate the labels that connote a desirable lifestyle…" Donald M. Lowe. *The Body in Late-Capitalist USA*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995). p 66. Additionally, the field of post-subcultural studies, in part, speaks to a more nuanced and complex understanding of the limits of style as resistance for non-normative groups, most vigorously

The filmed interaction between Chuy and Giovanni clocks in at just less than two minutes of the roughly one hundred and twenty minute documentary. Nevertheless, this brief segment has fascinated me since my initial viewing of *Rebel Beat* shortly after it was released in 2007, and continues to intrigue me to this day. Part of that fascination lies is the stark contrast between the two young men that, aside from their embodied presence reflects the codes of dress read through the markedly different ways they appropriate masculine Rockabilly style.[15] Giovanni is attired as an archetypical neo-rockabilly, black suede creeper shoes, form fitting cuffed jeans, a contemporary black cotton western shirt with a black t-shirt underneath with the sleeves rolled for good measure. Giovanni's hair is swept up in a heavily greased and exaggerated pompadour and rear ducktail. Chuy's ensemble is markedly more subtle, almost unremarkable in comparison: iconic black and white Chuck Taylor sneakers and baggy cuffed rigid indigo Levi 501's, paired with matching vintage style denim chore coat worn over a vintage 1950s blue and white checked sports shirt. Elsewhere in the documentary we see Chuy under the 4th Street bridge in East Los Angeles, attired in a hip length red 1950s Stadium jacket with an embroidered Native mascot patch, or at rockabilly shows in vintage 1950s cuffed and pleated dress sacks, and vintage 1940s wide collared

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in David Muggleton's *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style (Dress, Body, Culture)*. Furthermore, speaking to the multiplicity of styles available in the global north of the 1990s, anthropologist Ted Polhemus writes "Today, when you look at what people are actually wearing on the street, in the office and at nightclubs, what is obvious is that now there *is* an alternative. Indeed lots of alternatives, as the 'edicts' of yesteryear are pushed aside by the demands of personal choice." Ted Polhems, *Streetstyle: From Sidewalk to Catwalk* (New York: Thames and Hudson. 1994), p10. Nevertheless, certain styles are still carried racialized notions of criminality and deviancy, especially in constructions such as John Dilulio's "superpredator." Victor M. Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys (New Perspectives in Crime, Deviance, and Law)*, (New York: NYU Press, 2011).

[15] Giovanni, a young teenager, is thin and dark with indigenous features, Chuy, in his mid 20's is a comparatively light complected mestizo and has a stocky frame.

Hawaiian shirt with two toned spectator shoes. In stark contrast to Giovanni's spectacular pompadour and ducktail, Chuy sports the close-cropped "high and tight" hairstyle popular in the rockabilly scene at the time.

Figure 3. Giovanni shows off his leather jacket as DJ Chuy holds his lapel mike to interview him. (Blozan, 2007)

Giovanni's and Chuy's marked difference in their takes on the rockabilly aesthetic complicates the way style has been traditionally viewed and studied in regards to so-called subcultures of people who choose to represent themselves as non-normative. Viewed solely as a text, Giovanni's extreme take on the Rockabilly aesthetic serves as Hebdige's symbolic stance, an affront to hegemony in the public sphere. Yet, youth of color, especially young men of color in Los Angeles are surveiled and objects of spectacle already.[16] Additionally,

[16] Rios writes, "In order to avoid this punishment (*young men of color)* they had to constantly prove that they were not guilty, that they were not criminals. These boys frequently felt that they were treated as guilty until they could prove themselves innocent and much of their worldviews and actions were influenced by this process." Victor M. Rios. *Punished: Policing*

youth are often afforded the opportunity to experiment with style in ways un-extended to adults. Chuy's less spectacular style nonetheless can also serve as a cue for historic memory. Furthermore, he already wields what Sarah Thornton refers to as subcultural capital as a musician and DJ, two revered stations of cultural production in the scene.[17] Yet, the sites of leisure where Chuy hold standing in our inconsequential and meaningless to Giovanni, as a minor he has no legal access to adult spaces. Their aesthetic markers of difference, while unrecognizable to the mundane, are often loaded with meaning for scene members, speaking to the layered multi-generational and multi-sited landscape of Raza Rockabilly in Los Angeles.

Vintage Clothing

The Rockabilly aesthetic of patrons of British inspired sites of leisure in the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene lean more closely to the fashions popular during the American atomic era, spanning the mid 1940s to the early 1960s. While clothing is often seen as playing a primary role both by insiders and observers alike, Rockabilly style also relies on other forms of embodied transformation, including adoptions and adaptations of vintage hairstyles, body modifications such as tattoos and piercings and, some would argue, the very stance associated with rock and roll itself. Dominant notions of the latest and hottest fashions as desirable are rejected as members of the scene seek to emulate a look that is

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the Lives of Black and Latino Boys (New Perspectives in Crime, Deviance, and Law). (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 19.

[17] Thornton notes that already by the late 1960s, "amongst youthful crowds, DJs were developing into leaders and local celebrities." Sarah Thornton. *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital.* (Middleton CT:Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 26.

considered dated and passé; a look that appears unnatural and costume-like to the mainstream spectator.[18]

Figure 4. Two patrons at the School of Rock n Roll sport vintage clothing from the postwar period[19]

While Rockabilly style is certainly *consumed*, its heavy reliance on vintage clothing and its perceived oppositional stance to the newest and hottest fashion stands in stark defiance to corporate *consumerism*. Yet, Rockabilly and other closely affiliated "vintage" scenes are by no means alone in its' incorporation of vintage and vintage inspired elements it its construction of style, the practice has since become common in the global north of Europe, North America and Japan. Most noticeably, fashion designs such as Ralph Lauren

[18] Claude Lévi-Strauss, commenting on the popularity of the dated and mundane items gracing antique store shelves in 1941 New York states "One surrounds oneself with these objects not because they are beautiful, but because, since beauty has become inaccessible to all but the very rich, they offer, in its place, a sacred character-and thus one is, by the way, led to wonder about the ultimate nature of the aesthetic emotion." Claude Lévi-Strauss. *The View From Afar*. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1985), 263.

[19] Sailor Charlie. Facebook, "School of Rock n Roll." Last modified November 15, 2013. Accessed April 2, 2014.

constantly mine the American 1940s and 1950s to develop new seasonal offerings at both exclusive (exorbitantly expensive RRL and the Purple label) and comparatively accessible (Polo Ralph Lauren) ends. Furthermore, as Angela McRobbie claims, the phenomenon of vintage clothing relies on the accumulation of a surplus of goods by the first owner to begin with. As she states, "for every single piece rescued and restored, a thousands others are consigned to oblivion."[20]

In the affectionately referred to "vintage ghetto," located in Lot K of the Rose Bowl Flea market, hundreds of sellers and thousands of consumers descend to pick through an endless supply of old clothing. Although one of the largest and longest running vintage clothing markets venues in the United States, the vintage ghetto of Lot K is just a drop in the bucket compared to broader industry built around vintage clothing. Once viewed as dirty and low class, dated second hand clothing adopted the Euphemistic title of "vintage," with the term becoming popularized by the 1980s.[21]

Currently, the buying, selling, and trading of vintage clothing is a multimillion dollar industry, its existence largely made possible through the extreme consumption and disposal of garments made possible by late capitalism. Specialty shops dedicated to the retail sale of vintage clothing are as ubiquitous as any other shop dealing antiques in urban and rural areas

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[20] Angela McRobbie. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (London and New York, Routledge Press, 1994), 139.

[21] Among the earliest specialty shop in high-end vintage clothing on the west coast was owned and operated by vintage guitar luthier and specialist, Jon Lundburg. Restoring and selling pre-WWII musical instruments in his Berkeley shop since the 1960s, Lundburg began stocking and selling vintage neckties and other items in the 1970s. Lundberg eventually moved his shop to Kensington in the early 1980s, dedicating it solely vintage clothing. Sadly, Lundburg's shop and its contents were destroyed in a fire in 2000. Johnson, Richard. "Obituary: Guitar Dealer Jon Lundberg" The Fretboard Journal. http://www.fretboardjournal.com/features/online/obituary-guitar-dealer-jon-lundberg

spread throughout the United States and anywhere else in the global north. Businesses such as the New Jersey based Trans-America Trading Company traffics in 70,000 pounds of used clothing a day.[22] Long thought a mark of quirky, off kilter tastes,[23] the wearing of vintage clothing while not completely embraced by the American mainstream due to its lingering signification as a working class practice, has certainly emerged as equally fashionable and desirable alternative to contemporarily produced garments in certain context. Generations ago, it would have been unimaginable for the first lady of the United States to been seen in public wearing second hand clothing, yet Michelle Obama's decision to wear a vintage 1950s Norman Norell gown to a 2010 Christmas celebration speaks to the ways in which views of vintage clothing has rapidly changed.[24] Yet, since the early 1990s, vintage clothing has grown in acceptance as a category of fashion, especially garments from well-known designers and labels. While second hand clothing has not shed its working class connotations, the appellation "vintage" now carries a sense of exclusivity with the appeal of a one-off item for fashion conscious consumers.[25]

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[22] Keith, Kelsey. The Black Book, ""The Vintage Clothing Industry's Best Kept Secret? A Factory in New Jersey." Last modified November 27, 2013. Accessed April 3, 2014. http://bbmag.uptime7.com/vintage-clothing-industrys-best-kept-secret-factory-new-jersey-shopping-blackbook/.

[23] One example would be the loud 1950s jackets worn by Jon Cryer as Duckie in the film *Pretty in Pink.*

[24] Katrina Mitzeliotis, Hollywood Life, "Michelle Obama Shows Off A Gorgeous Vintage Gown From The '50s!." Last modified December 17, 2010. Accessed April 3, 2014. http://hollywoodlife.com/2010/12/17/michelle-obama-shows-off-a-gorgeous-vintage-gown-from-the-50s/./

[25] Several guides and books have been published and geared towards women interested in vintage clothing as fashion and collectables. Including, Trudie Bamford, *Viva Vintage: Find It, Wear It, Love It!*, (London: Carroll & Brown Publishers, 2003) and Tracy Tolkien, *Vintage: The Art of Dressing Up*, (London: Pavilion Books, 2002).

Despite the waxing and waning acceptance of vintage clothing and vintage inspired fashion in the American mainstream, Rockabilly style holds a troubling element. While the dominant fashion industry attempts to decontextualize and dehistoricize these looks to meet contemporary postmodern tastes, Rockabilly style asserts a historicized and dated role for vintage clothing. It is this potential for a day-and-night devotion to an embodied sense of memory, either real or imaginary, tied to a specific time period that is certainly unique and the meaning wrapped therein is certainly worthy of closer understanding.

If the early Rockabilly scene issued a challenge to British hegemony in the 1970s through style, they did it by becoming what ethnomusicologist Craig Morrison described as "walking urban anachronisms." In his work *Streetstyle* Ted Polhemus positions the early British Rockabillies as using a total immersion into 1950s Americana as a way to cope with and momentarily escape the bleak landscape of de-industrial Europe. Style, just as music, served as another aspect with which one could immerse one self and invest labor in; especially when little actual paying work is available to you. As Polhemus notes, if a lack of jobs and hope was reflected in the punk motto, "No Future," then the British Rockabillies may have taken that slogan a step further by embodying the past (Polhemus, p 43).

Yet, the 1950s style evoked by the Rockabilly scene as it spread out of Great Britain in the late 1970s into the early 1980s was largely adapted to meet the sensibilities of the time. Just as the brief Teddy Boy revival of the early 1970s offered polyester updates the Teds Edwardian drape coats in bright colors unheard of in the 1950s, so too did the rockabilly revival put its own contemporary mark on its imagined version of vintage American looks. It is not uncommon to hear contemporary vintage clothing enthusiasts

viewing an old Stray Cats video bemoan the intentional distressing of what are now rare and sought after garments.

While many scene veterans are quick to point out the influence of British new wave on the neo-rockabillies, one cannot overlook the strong influence of camp on post-revival Rockabilly style. In Susan Sontag's "Notes on Camp" she identifies a necessary sense of ironic distance between an artist and a cultural text in a deliberate application of camp sensibilities.[26] Yet, the use of camp in rockabilly style speaks more to the way the sensibility is applied by film director and camp icon, John Waters. As argued by Daniel Mudie Cunningham, Water's use of camp celebrates and reconstitutes the trash and refuse of America's history as treasure.[27] Whereas "Grease" dispensed 1970s Broadway numbers in faux 1950s wardrobe, the excessively authentic camp sensibility of Water's "Hairspray" and "Crybaby" reveled in the varied meanings held by postwar rock & roll and rhythm and blues in Water's hometown of Baltimore.

Even if camp sensibilities had not been developed in gay white communities in the United States, clothes marketed to teenage rock and roll fans of the postwar era were light years away from the stuffy gray plaid suit associated with the American 1950s, and like Rock and Roll music itself, posed a challenge to expected gender norms of the time and still since.

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[26] Susan Sontag "Notes on Camp" in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Farrer Straus & Giroux (1964).

[27] Cunningham cites Andrew Ross, writing "camp is primarily concerned with reconstituting history's trash as treasure. Ross perceives camp as a delight in that which is considered culturally outmoded. He writes: "The knowledge about history is the precise moment when camp takes over, because camp involves a rediscovery of history's waste." Daniel Mudie Cunningham, "John Waters." *Great Directors*, October 2003. http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/great-directors/waters/ (accessed April 8, 2014). Andrew Ross, "Uses of Camp" in *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1989), 151.

Clothing for young men were produced with bright striking pastel colors, utilizing bold pinks and turquoises. Animal prints such as zebra, cheetah and Kodiak were popular. For young women, gold shiny gold lame and Lurex reached its' height in popularity. In addition to an open engagement with often bold and garish aesthetics, Rockabilly style also takes on fascinating gendered dimension.

Upon first glance, the Rockabilly aesthetic largely traffics in polar extremes of mid-century feminity and masculinity. Looks celebrating Marlon Brando's hyper-masculine swaggering Johnny in *The Wild Ones* offset by scores of women attired in the aptly named "wiggle dress" wherein the garment was so fitted and tapered that it prohibited normal sizes steps of the wearer. Yet just as Raza Rockabilly utilized traditional notions and boundaries to ultimately reshape them, many in the Los Angeles scene have turned to atomic era icons for inspiration. Pink garments, a marker of femininity, are highly desired by some men in the scene due to a fleeting popularity of that color in the 1950s. Additionally the popularity of brightly colored cable-knit t-shirts (a uni-sex style popular with youth in the 1940s) have caused some casual observers to remark "why do rockabilly guys were blouses?"[28] The donning of men's suits and masculine stage attire by artists such as Charline Arthur have inspired many women in the scene to do the same. The iconic atomic era masculinity performed in the scene has also proved attractive for self-described butch women. For smaller women, the high availability of vintage menswear in smaller sizes actually provide them with better access to vintage clothing than many men. While women attired in masculine clothing is a common site in the scene, one would be hard pressed to find men attired in feminine clothing beyond non-normative uses of color and prints.

[28] I overheard this remark made by an observer on the casino floor at the Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly weekender in 2009 as a man and a woman passed by nearly identical knit t-shirts.

As the international Rockabilly scene continue to develop its own identity, and as enthusiasts grew older and achieved disposable incomes, vintage 1950s garments form the United States reached unprecedented levels of fetishization. Small shops run by mom and pop custom tailors like Rock-a-Cha in Kensington Market began producing small batches of 1950s style clothing, while vintage clothing dealers began venturing to the United States scouring thrift stores and flea markets for vintage garments. Most Rockabilly enthusiasts that I spoke with who got involved just before or after the Stray Cats moment in the 1980s often reflect on the overwhelming amount of 1940s and 1950s clothing available in thrift stores of this era. Prior to rapid acceleration of garment production, consumption, and disposal afforded by the rise of globalization, second clothing once operated in a cycle of cycle of 25 to 30 years. Thus, unfashionable or worn out garments from the 1950s were being donated and appearing en masse in charity thrift stores in the 1970s and 1980s. Contemporarily, the cycle has been shortened from 25-30 years to 5-10 years.

A common critique of Dick Hebdige's seminal work on spectacular subcultures is his over-reliance on style as a symbolic threat to hegemony. Rockabilly, at it has been developed in the British model, is at its' core a community of *fans*, and like the Goths studied by Catherine Spooner in her work *Fashioning Goth Bodies*, is specifically geared around consumption. While the punks that Hebdige writes of transformed the mundane into the bizarre through their conspicuous consumption, Spooner utilizes Henry Jenkins' concept of textual poaching to describe how the Goths she studies build their culture from scraps and fragments scavenged from popular media.[29] I would argue that those in the Rockabilly

[29] Jenkins in turn is building his intellectual ideas off of ideas outlined in Michel De Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*. In this way, poaching serves as a tactic employed by subjugated people negotiating survival in organizational power structures. Catherine

engage in similar practices, yet the idea of "poaching" fails to capture a certain spirit unique to Rockabilly's unending quest for clothing, records, cars, furniture, art and other cultural products from America's atomic age. For many, there is a sense of rescue or preservation tied to Rockabilly consumption of old "things;" the feeling that one is fighting not only against the overwhelming force of de-historicizing hegemony, but literally time itself. What then, so the argument goes, can be so subversive about a scene dedicated to this type of backwards reaching consumption, especially given the questionable politics already tied to Rockabilly?

Nevertheless, contemporary Rockabilly styles still poses trouble for postmodern urban landscapes. Rockabilly bodies are still punished for not conforming to hegemonic standards. Following the publishing of Jennifer Greenburg's coffee table book, *The Rockabillies*, a member of the website Style Forum, an American contemporary men's fashion discussion board posted a link with the simple statement of "Great photos of 50' style in 2009." The response was overwhelmingly negative. As one member comments, "I was (*sic)* thought it was going to be pictures of people actually from the 50s. Not modern dweebs pretending to be something that never existed." Another adds, "There's a difference between dressing in a style influenced by an era and wearing a costume. These are the latter."[30] While this derision comments on the style of the individuals photographed in text, it most directly disparages the mentality, personality and quality of character of those individuals. Much like zoot-suiters of the 1940s, Raza Rockabilly's earnest commitment of time, money,

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Spooner, *Fashioning Gothic Bodies*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 167. Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

[30] "Texas Jack" To Style Forum online forum, September 9, 2009, 50's retro photos, http://www.styleforum.net/t/137756/50s-retro-photos.

and labor to leisure pursuits is deemed frivolous, vain and ill considered by hegemonic white middle class values. Yet, like the zoot-suiters before them, Raza Rockabilly's adoption of dated and passé styles loaded with working class signifiers speak to daily rituals of dress asserts a sense of dignity that is all too often not afforded to them as women and men of color.[31]

Razabilly Stance

According to longtime rockabilly fan turned musician Billy Poore, rockabilly was more than style or even a genre of music. As Poore argues, "Rockabilly's always been an attitude."[32] Citing the original cohort of 1950s rock and rollers like Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Gene Vincent and others, Poore claims the rockabilly attitude was anti-authoritarian, reckless, and epicurean, characteristics adopted by the contemporary Rockabilly Hepkat.[33] Drawing parallels with the iconic performances by Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* and James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*, Poore writes "These were actors portraying young cats who were goin' against the grain, were tired of the greedy crooked establishment they lived in, they wanted to be free of the chains that bound 'em in the past and weren't gonna take no grief from nobody." While contemporary artists and enthusiasts may adopt the look and master the sound, "authentic" rockabilly fans and performers carry the attitude.[34]

With the waxing and waning of midcentury influences on the mainstream fashion world, how-to-guides and rockabilly style profiles have surfaced from both mainstream

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[31] As Luis Alvarez writes, "If nonwhite youth were denied their dignity through discrimination, violence, and negative discourse, zoot suiters reclaimed it by asserting control over their own bodies and performing unique race and gender identities." Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot*, (Berkeley: University of California Press , 2008), 80.
[32] Billy Poore. *Rockabilly: a Forty Year Journey*, (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1998), 113.
[33] Ibid. 113.
[34] See chapter II for a detailed look at the contruction of authenticity in the Rockabilly scene.

fashion sites, as well as enthusiasts-produced blogs and YouTube videos. The Rockabilly attitude is also identified as an integral component of the Rockabilly look by contemporary men's fashion magazine *FashionBeans.* As *FashionBeans* editor Ben Herbert writes, "You need the 'attitude.' The effortless cool that these guys exude is all part of the persona; rock solid confidence is probably a by-product of feeling like you 'belong' and it being more of a lifestyle choice than simply getting dressed in the morning."[35] A characterization of the Rockabilly attitude as one of cool confidence is echoed loudly through American popular culture, personified by greaser archetypes like John Travolta's portrayal of Danny Zuko in 1978's *Grease*, or Henry Winkler as Fonzy on the 1970s sitcom, *Happy Days,* or even the affable Johnny Bravo from the late 1990s cartoon series of the same name.

However, the Rockabilly attitude, as identified by both Poore, a Rockabilly insider, and Herbert, a Rockabilly outsider, hardly differs from the same masculine, ruggedly individualist qualities embraced by every generation since the baby boom. Fittingly, that same attitude has subsequently been ascribed to leading men of whatever musical genre is in vogue at the time, be it rockabilly, punk rock, or hip hop. As Catherine Ramirez argues, coolness, carries coded meanings of masculinity and heterosexuality.[36] Like authenticity, attitude can serves as problematic category of analysis to determine who is in, and who is out; who is cool and who is not.

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[35] Ben Herbert. FashionBeans, "Signature Style: Rockabilly." Last modified December 19, 2011. Accessed May 5, 2014. http://www.fashionbeans.com/2011/signature-style-rockabilly/.

[36] Ramirez writes "Its opposite, uncoolness, has been equated with social incompetence and physical impairment, with being "lame" and "a sissy." Catherine S. Ramirez, *Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism and the Cultural Politics of Memory, (*Durham: Duke University Press. 2009), 92.

Yet, for Los Angeles based Raza Rockabilly enthusiasts, "attitude" fails to encompass the nuanced and layered meanings communicated through stance. A theoretical concept used most readily in linguistics, stance is the meaning a first party communicates to a second party in reference to a third party. For example a political pundit may communicate her or his stance on proposed legislation to an audience. Stance also carries a popular meaning as embodied "posture, body position," and "pose."[37] Located at the intersection of these two meanings lies Razabilly stance.

Perhaps the clearest meaning communicated to an observer through Rockabilly style is an identification with the music and the scene. Christina Coffey, a Burbank resident and one of the Los Angeles scene's few African American members states,

> "For people like us, when we chose to express this, we were interested in it from the top of our heads to the bottom of our feet and we wanted to *wear* it and say 'hey look!' it is like a banner or a flag that is an automatic statement to anyone that you meet: 'This is what I am into!' You can spot a rockabilly kid walking around LA, it's like 'hey, there he goes, do I know that guy? What's going on with him?' This is a really bad analogy, but when gangs used to wear red and blue you could spot another gang member from anywhere else because of what they had on. I feel that is kind of like what we do, We are our own gang of musical interest and that is what we wear. *These* are our colors.

For Coffey, vintage clothing communicates an allegiance to the Rockabilly scene. The markers of Rockabilly style can be easily read and identified by outsider. Yet it also serves as a marker of identification and affinity for others in the relatively small scene as Coffey alludes.

As a pose, the Razabilly stance is defiant but not aggressive. Men typically stand with arms and hands help down at their side, close to their body. Women often assume a three-quarters angle with one arm folded, hand resting at the hip. For both women and men,

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[37] Oxford American Dictionaries, "stance." Accessed May 5, 2014. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/stance.

chins are up, eyes focused determinedly through an observer, jaws held firm but not clenched. While certainly not universal, this pose is a common site at Rockabilly sites of work and leisure. Yet, accompanying this pose is a bearing witch to outsiders and those new to the scene in Los Angeles, is often read as aloof, hostile and standoffish. As Coffey recalls, "it was one of my first shows at Bowl-a-Rama, and this guy had this cool leather jacket, I couldn't help but stare. The woman he was with didn't say a word, she just nonchalantly motioned me away, like I was nothing!" Other respondents echoed similar brushes with seemingly hostile Raza Rockabilly enthusiasts, especially by those new to the scene.

Looked at holistically, the Razabilly stance adds a localized raced and gendered dimension to the inherited meanings of rebellion, anti-authoritarianism and coolness. Examined in conjunction with the *way* clothing and body modifications are worn deeper layers of significant meanings are communicated by, but also read onto, Razabilly bodies. The stance as pose is near identical to those adopted by pachuca and pachuco youth of the 1940s. After hosting a concert fundraiser featuring Rockabilly artists in 2005, a co-worker also commented on the seeming aloofness of Raza Rockabilly enthusiasts who came to support the fundraiser, especially the women. Yet for my co-worker, the Razabilly stance had communicated elements of cultural memory that reminded her of the intense racism faced by Chicana/os and Latina/os during the Jim Crow era. For her, the line distinguishing Raza from the 1940s and 1950s, and those that pay homage to them in the Rockabilly scene had monetarily blurred. Additionally, another friend and co-worker experienced a learning moment after he found himself upset that he was met with hostility from a Chicana Rockabilly enthusiast. As other reminded him, the Raza Rockabilly aloofness also serves as a shield or barrier for women from the daily fatigue of constant harassment.

Tarantula Clothing Company

Despite having been introduced to the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene in 2004, I did not meet David Contreras nor Esther Vasquez of Tarantula Clothing Company until after I began this research project. I initially approached David about volunteering to serve as an interview subject for a seminar paper I was working on regarding Rockabilly style in 2007. David agreed, and after a few setbacks, we conducted our interview in October of that year. Since then, I found myself constantly returning to that interview as I sought to contextualize my project simultaneously amidst the broader post-industrial landscape of Los Angeles, decades of Chicana and Chicano street style, and the implication of those contexts visible within the global Rockabilly scene. After several missed opportunities, I interviewed Vasquez in 2011, which provided me with a broader reflection on Tarantula, especially since the onset of the recession.

Tarantula Clothing Company is one of a small handful of businesses in the United States designing and reproducing vintage reproduction garments. Perhaps the most well known being Alicia Estrada's Stop Staring. Established by Estrada in 1997, Stop Staring produces dresses and separates for women and is internationally distributed to thousands of specialty shops and boutiques. A member of the Orange County punk and ska scene in the 1990s, Estrada and her business was awarded "the Minority Manufacturing Firm of the Year" in 2005 by the city of Los Angeles. Rivaling Stop Staring is Tatyana Khomyakova's Bettie Page Clothing, whose well-placed retail locations in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Las Vegas and in Bloomington's Mall of America have provided her business with unparallel visibility.

Aside from being a comparatively smaller operation, what differentiated Tarantula was its unabashed allegiance to the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene. Established in 2006 by David Contreras and Albert Rodarte, Tarantula designs and produces vintage reproduction clothing from the 1950's for both men and women, which is a considerable rarity. Esther "Cherry" Vasquez, who joined the staff shortly after the business's founding, plays a major role at Tarantula, assisting Contreras and serving as the company's art director and main photographer. A member of the Rockabilly scene, Contreras cites the main inspiration behind establishing Tarantula was the increasing lack of wearable vintage garments.[38] Contreras recalls, "we noticed that there is nothing left, (*or*) they are all little doll sizes, or if they are big, they are broken and stained, and nothing works." A fashion designer by trade, Contreras reproduced 1950s "Ricky" jackets for himself and Rodarte. Named after both Ricky Nelson and Ricky Ricardo, most casual "Ricky" jackets were worn to death. Those that survived and can often fetch upwards of 300 dollars on the secondary markets of EBay and vintage-specific clothing stores such as Aardvarks Odd Ark or Jet Rag on Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles. Tarantula sells their version of the Ricky Jacket; the "weekender," for roughly one hundred and fifty dollars.

After showing the jacket to Vasquez, she encouraged Contreras to offer them for sale, specifically at Darla Montoya and Isaiah Villarreal's retro specialty shop, My Baby Jo in Culver City. The core consumers of Contreras garments are members of the Rockabilly scene. While the thrift store is the destination of choice for many Raza Rockabilly shoppers; the search for the right garments from the right era requires a tremendous amount of time and dedication. Most 1950s garments left their owners and appeared in thrift store in the 1970s.

[38] David Contreras, interview with the author, Los Angeles, CA, November 22, 2007.

Since then, the probability of finding atomic era garments in wearable condition has exponentially decreased and the search for thrift store garments has required increasingly more time and energy. Reproduction vintage clothing lines like Tarantula offer an alternative that sits in a middle ground between the dedication of time needed to shop at thrift stores and the dedication of money needed to buy garments from high priced vintage clothing stores or vintage clothing dealers on EBay. By 2007, Tarantula provided clothing to over 20 specialty shops and established its own retail store in Boyle Heights, two houses down from Contreras' home. While the company was hit hard during the great recession of the late 2000s, Contreras still designs and sells garments carrying the Tarantula label, predominantly through My Baby Jo and online sales.

Accounting for Tarantula's persistence is the line's ability to negotiation multiple fashion vocabularies drawn upon the raced and classed experiences of it's city of origin. In exploring the impact Jennifer Lopez has had on American fashion, Aida Hurtado argues that Latinas and Latinos in the United States carry a repertoire of fashion vocabularies.[39] Inferred in this claim is the fluency held by Latina/os in the United States in multiple codes of dress and multiple fashion/style lineages encountered, embraced, resisted, and negotiated in the borderlands.[40] As a small business, Tarantula operates in an intersecting space of fashion vocabularies, bridging the lineages of mainstream fashion, vintage aesthetics embraced by the international Rockabilly scene, and Chicana/o street style.

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[39] Hurtado, Aida. "Much more than a butt: Jennifer Lopez's influence in fashion." *Spectator* 1: 147-153.

[40] One is reminded of Gloria Anzaldúa's poem, "To live in the Borderland means you." Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2007), 216.

Tarantula Clothing Company would not be possible without Los Angeles' garment industry and Contreras familiarity with the mainstream fashion world. A designer by trade, Contreras described the classism and subtle racism he encountered working in the fashion industry in the past as well as interacting with the fashion industry as a representative of a line that is targeted to specific scene interests.[41] Contreras recalls

> "In the industry they totally think different from us. We're like *something*, and the fashion industry is *something else*; so this one girl asked me. . . what would make you happy if you saw something from your store somewhere. (*I said*) "If I was looking through a second hand store and saw Tarantula I would be so happy." She was like <GASP>! She was mortified! . . .because that scene -the fashion industry- if you say you go and buy your stuff second hand they think it's because you can't afford the other stuff."

Expanding his line to focus on design for women, Contreras employed his familiarity with the Los Angeles garment industry to secure pattern cutters and sewers for his designs.

According to the Garment Worker Center of Los Angeles, LA has the largest garment industry in the United States, with over 100,000 workers and 5,000 contractors, of whom less than 1% are unionized.[42] A small operation, Contreras, Vasquez and others (in addition to working full time jobs elsewhere) scoured the Los Angeles garment district themselves for era-appropriate fabric and trim. Even for their most popular items, production runs rarely exceeded 150 individual garments, with local 1-2 person operations being utilized for the cutting and sewing of patterns designed and delivered by Contreras. Until Contreras established a retail space in 2007, post-production garments were sent back to his home for

[41] David Contreras, interview with the author, Los Angeles, CA, November 22, 2008.

[42] Garment Worker Center. "Garment Worker Center 2007 Year Report ." http://www.garmentworkercenter.org/background.php (accessed January 1, 2009).

individual inspection.[43] Working initially as a volunteer helping out her friend, Vasquez was eventually hired full time to handle Tarantula's wholesale and individual web orders, as well as coordinate fashion shoots and shows. With dresses running from $70-100 and men's slacks and jackets averaging around $150, prices for garments made by Tarantula are by no means cheap, yet reflect the small, local scale that the garments are produced on and are competitive with other small business such as Revamp Vintage based in downtown Los Angeles, Swanky's vintage based in Norwalk, Pike Brothers based in Germany, or ReproVintageClothing based in the Netherlands.

Longtime members of the Rockabilly scene, Contreras and Vasquez were well versed in the fashion vocabularies at play in the international Rockabilly scene. However, the raced, classed, and gendered experiences encoded in Chicana/o street style is visible in their designs. In fact, the midcentury time period already looms heavily in Chicana/o street style. In one of too few academic works to explore the topic, Richard T. Rodriguez's "Queering the Homeboy Aesthetic" explores the look of the Raza homeboy, an aesthetic simultaneously reviled and desired. I would argue that an accompanying "homegirl" aesthetic also exists, and inherits many of the same challenges of gendered hyper-surveillance, silencing, and punishment faced by the Pachucas examined in Catherine Sue Ramirez's *Women in the Zoot Suit*. Exploring similar sensibilities, Curtis Marez posits a homology between popular

[43] A missed opportunity for me was to talk to Contreras and Vasquez regarding their thoughts on labor standards and living wages in the Los Angeles garment industry. While Tarantula was a small operation that utilized independent contractors paid directly for their labor, both are involved in the fashion industry through their day jobs where labor standards and wages vary and union representation is virtually nonexistent. This is ironic, as Union labels are an important signifier for Raza Rockabilly in identifying vintage garments.

Chicana/o styles with the historical conditions they faced.[44] Many of the hallmarks of the Homeboy aesthetics; trim facial hair, full-cut, heavily starched work khakis, immaculately white pressed t-shirts or tight form fitting a-shirts worn with shadow plaid sport shirts hail from the post-war midcentury period. Peter Bratt, describes Che Rivera, the archetypical veterano "homeboy" in his film *La Mission* as "what you referred to as an authentic OG Lowrider Cat. He lives the whole aesthetic. It's a lifestyle; you know right down to the Stacy Adam Shoes, the 1940's pleated trousers, and Pendleton."[45]

While Chicana street style has continued to evolve from the 1940s to the present, artistically depicted in Judith Baca's *Las Tres Marias,* Chicano street style remained largely unwavered from the end of World War II to the mid 1970s. For the homeboys coming of age in the 1970s, the real-life Che Riveras, khakis and Pendleton's were less the abstract reference to decades gone that they would come to represent for subsequent generations, but rather a direct homage to their closest antecedents; the living, breathing, and at that point middle-aged pachucos of the 1940s and 1950s.

Yet the persistence of midcentury style Khakis and Pendleton's of the 1970s, and even pachuco tattoos were acknowledged as originating from an era now passed, they were never called into question as contemporary looks or fashions. Ben Davis and Williamson Dickies, two work brands who's Khakis were preferred, to this day produce the same largely unmodified product since the 1920s and 1930s. Additionally, the flap pocket loop closure

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[44] Remarking on the cultural memory present in Chicana/o style, Marez writes "these remobilizations of brown memory are in stark contrast to contemporary efforts to immobilize movements across the U.S.-Mexican border." Curtis Marez. "Brown: The Politics of Working-Class Chicano Style." *Social Text* 14: 109-132.

[45] Richard Ochoa. "La Mission District - Raza Report A Lowrider story hits the big screen." http://www.lowridermagazine.com/hotnews/1011_lrmp_la_mission_district_raza_report/viewall.html (accessed May 4, 2014).

Pendleton board shirt has remained as equally unmodified since roughly that same era, save changes in collar width and sizing. These items could still be purchased new in stores, conspicuously consumed by brown bodies that were subsequently policed and criminalized. Yet, it was the criminal nature read into these garments by hegemony that marked this style as bizarre, and not the dated nature of it.

In the 1970s and1980s, the only garment that carried that kind of weight was the zoot suit styles adopted by contemporary Chicanas and Chicanos in homage of the pachucas and pachucos of the 1940s. Teatro Campesino's Zoot Suit spawned a popular renewed interest in the Raza experience of the 1940s. As a result, 1940s themed dances and other social gathering briefly became popular. Enamored with the style, Fullerton based Phyllis Estrella started her own small business reproducing zoot suits, which by the 1970s had all but vanished.[46] While the pachuco's zoot suit and the pachuca's short skirt and juke jacket carried a sense of historical memory that the wearer could embody, they were ultimately viewed as novelty garments, meant for special occasions.

The Chicana/o Latina/o adoption of Rockabilly aesthetics created bodies that could potentially serve as mobile embodied units of historical memory, Morrison's urban anchronist operating in raced and gendered ways in Los Angeles that Britons of the 1970s could not. Whereas the zoot suit was worn for a special event and then taken off as the wearer reassumes their 'regular clothes,' the Razabilly's vintage and vintage inspired garments, *are* their regular clothes.

[46] Jim Washburn. "Following Zoot : A Fullerton Shop Suits Up Customers Looking for a Larger-Than-Life Experience." *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1994. Accessed July 30, 2014. http://articles.latimes.com/1994-11-08/news/ls-60154_1_zoot-suit-chain.

One of the initial appeals of the dated style of Rockabilly is that relied largely on a practice all to familiar to working class communities of color: thrift store shopping. The generation of working class Raza growing up in the 1970s often share stories of the sense of shame felt during one's youth for having to wear thrift store clothing that was either undesirable or out of fashion, a sentiment largely deriving from hegemony's marginalization of working class communities of color. Yet for the early Raza Rockabilly enthusiasts of the 1980s, the burgeoning scene offered access to spaces that not only accepted the necessity to shop at thrift store, it rewarded and celebrated it. Speaking of the contemporary Los Angeles Rockabilly scene, David Contreras, owner and designer of Tarantula Clothing Company offered this:

> "If you can find a good second hand store in the varrio, you could have that look. You don't have to pay $500 at the mall that you can never afford. You're poor but you want some style; and it's perfect because you could be stylish on a dime if you get really creative."[47]

As Contreras alludes to, "the look" associated with the Rockabilly scene can be obtained in the thrift store. Thus, Raza Rockabilly enthusiasts are able to fashion their own style by scouring thrift stores for the right garments from the right eras. The acquisition of rare items in good condition brings a joy and validation akin to finding a buried treasure. In this way, the thrift store itself is re-inscribed; its meaning flipped from being a site worthy only of class based derision from the dominant hegemony to a valuable space that offers rewards and pleasure. In turn, garments derived from the thrift store are re-signified as objects of pride instead of shame. As Dick Hebdige writes "these humble objects can be magically appropriated: "stolen" by subordinate groups and made to carry "secret" meanings: meaning which express in code, a form of resistance to the order which guarantees their continued

[47] David Contreras, interview with the author, Los Angeles, CA, November 22, 2008.

subordination."[48] In this way, working class Chicana/os and Latina/os reinscribing the thrift store and vintage clothing with a sense of pride exudes a form of resistance to hegemonic views that demonize the poor and people of color. Scouring thrift stores and flea markets are not without their monetary rewards. Items of value can quickly be sold to local enthusiasts or placed on the international market of eBay or Etsy to supplement often-meager incomes.[49] In addition to the reliance on thrift store garments, Raza Rockabilly has also turned to their own family and community history to develop their own style.

While traditional Rockabilly style is fashioned after the Hepkat wears of white artists such as Elvis Presley and the pin-up stylings of Bettie Page, Raza Rockabilly have looked to their own past for sartorial inspiration.[50] As Coffey observed, "The Hispanic kids, the Latinos, man, they do the pachuco look, or the great big pompadour on the girls, they go into what their culture was doing at the time and make it this beautiful thing."[51] Iconic looks from the pachuca/o and early lowrider eras have been adopted by Raza Rockabilly such as beaded sweaters, pedal pushers for women and Sir Guy shirts and pleated Hollywood waist

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[48] Dick Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style. (*London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1979), 151-52

[49] Angela McRobbie writes "The entrepreneurial element, crucial to an understanding of street markets and second-hand shops, has been quite missing from must subcultural analysis. . .Those points at which subcultures offered the prospect of a career have warranted as little attention as the network of small-scale entrepreneurial activities which financed the counter culture." Angela McRobbie. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 144

[50] As Ramon Garcia notes in his article "Against Rasquache: Chicano Camp and the Politics of Identity in Los Angeles" the pachuca/os of the 1940's and 1950's and the Lowriders of the 1950's and 1960's were early Chicana/o subcultures that relied "on style to forge an identity." Ramon García. "Against Rasquache: Chicano Camp of and the Politics of Identity in Los Angeles." *Aztlan: Journal of Chicano Studies*, vol. 24 no. 2. (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, Fall 1999)

[51] Christina Coffey, interview with the author, Burbank, CA, March 4, 2010.

trousers for men. Vintage *cinema de oro* stars are also emulated. Pedro Infante is looked to for Rockabilly biker fashion just as much as Marlon Brando, and Maria Felix is preferred over Marilyn Monroe.

Through Rockabilly, Contreras found a space that resonated with his own family and community history. By invoking notions of family and tradition, Contreras positions Raza Rockabilly closer to what are often considered "Latino" cultural values and further away from subcultural ones. For scene members like Contreras, Rockabilly fashion not only reflect musical and aesthetics interests, it also reflects their identity as a Chicana/o or Latina/o. Thus the construction of the Raza Rockabilly body not only includes the traditional Rockabilly arrangement of clothing, hair, make up and tattoos, but race as well.

Contreras' role in the mainstream fashion industry raises questions that echo Dick Hebdige's look at the commodification of non-normative style into fashion.[52] Yet, while fewer and fewer garments are made in the United States, Tarantula garments carry the label "Made in East LA," an assertion who's raced and classed connotations are not lost on its Latina/o consumers.

[52] As I discuss later, Tarantula's target audience is the Rockabilly scene. Although Contreras has the potential to do so, he has not attempted to use modify his garments for consumption by the mainstream fashion industry. When the mainstream does notice his work with Tarantula, Contreras spoke of it more as a possible recruiting moment for the scene as opposed to a commercial commodification. David Contreras, interview with the author, Los Angeles, CA, November 22, 2008.

Figure 5. "She Means Business Blouse," 2008

Figure 6. "Cholobilly Weekender Jacket,"

Figure 7. “Cardigan Dress in Black, White, and Red,” 2008

A standout element of Contreras designs is an open engagement with excess. In a traditional camp sense, the aesthetics of Tarantula's products, retail space, and website creatively parody and "ironize" both hegemonic and Chicano popular cultural. Contreras designs bright and flashy garments such as the "she means business" blouse for women (*see figure 1*) or the "cholobilly weekender" jacket for men (*see figure 2*) that draw from, *and* parody both mainstream and Chicano street fashion. The tiki décor of their East Los Angeles retail space features a mid-century style mural of a tropical sunset that parodies not only East LA muralism, but the over the top diorama style décor popular in the 1950's as well (*see figure 3*).[53] As a member of the Rockabilly subculture and fan of John Waters, Contreras is familiar with camp and consciously incorporates it into his business and products. He states:

> Oh yes, we love camp! I hate seriousness...Because if you can't laugh at yourself you're a stick in the mud and you basically need- to quote- pull your head out of your ass and have a good time. I've been alive quite awhile, and out of all the era I think this is the most paranoid, and-how do you say-stagnant time really, because people, well, with the George Bush thing and the war and with the bad economy and with the right-wing pushing their agenda and making everyone hate each other and turning each other against each other and getting rid of fun and party. . ."[54]

While Contreras focuses on the fun and *lo cursi* elements of camp, he also incorporates a fairly critical political analysis, blaming right wing conservatives for the division and hatred seen in the community and throughout the nation.[55] At the time of this interview, the voters of California had just passed proposition 8, an anti-LGBT measure. Yet, Contreras also alludes to the satirical and parodical elements of camp, speaking to the need to laugh at one's self, and presumably one's own pop culture sensibilities.

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[54] David Contreras, interview with the author, Los Angeles, CA, November 22, 2008.

The use of camp aesthetics are also indicative of Contreras' navigation of multiple margins and centers both as a Latino from working class origins working in the mainstream fashion industry of Los Angeles and as a gay man in the traditionally heterosexist Rockabilly scene.[56] Contreras notes,

> It seemed like for a little while ago it was really homophobic, and it was kind of like, "well I've been in the scene for a long time and my parents were greasers, so *no one's* going to push me out of the scene and if it's all about brawling, I'm going to brawl for my rights."[57]

Contreras had to fight to ensure that there was space in the Rockabilly scene for Queer Raza. As a cultural producer, Contreras carries a measure of power in the scene in Los Angeles, however making that scene more open to Queer Chicana/os and Latina/os is still an on-going negotiation. Much like how the Los Angeles rockabilly scene is neither explicitly racist nor anti-racist, it is also neither explicitly homophobic nor anti-heterosexist. However within Los Angeles, a handful of high profile cultural producers within the scene openly identify as gay, lesbian, and bisexual. Additionally, surreptitiously organized "gay greaser" meet-ups at large-scale events such as Viva Las Vegas have provided a welcoming space for those who are out, as well as women and men who are closeted, curious, or questioning.

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[56] According to Garcia, Chicano camp is "a form of survival for those Chicanos and Chicanas that live on the fringes and margins of both North American culture and Chicano culture Garcia, Ramon. 'Against Rasquache : Chicano Camp and the Politics of Identity in Los Angeles.' *The Chicana.o Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Angie Chabram-Dernesian, (New York : Routledge, 2006), 14.

[57] David Contreras, interview with the author, Los Angeles, CA, November 22, 2008.

Figure 8. "It Girl" Dress, "Weekender" Jacket, "Cardigan" Dress

Figure 9. "Sex Kitten" Capris

Figure 10. "Weekender" Jacket, "Hollywood High Waisted" Trousers, "It Girl" Dress

In early 2008 Tarantula hired professional photographer Shawn Smith to shoot a series of fashion photos to be used in promotional materials. As a clothing line designed for a marginal working class scene, Tarantula exists at the margins of mainstream fashion. This particular set of images parodies mainstream fashion advertising by pairing the kind of high quality film stock, and set design you would expect from a mainstream fashion shoot with the kind of vintage styled clothing you would expect to find in a Barrio thrift store. The models featured are the unlikely grouping of a professional male model from Croatia named "Dragon;" "Iris," the Latina YouTube queen of DIY hair; and "Mad" Marlene Perez, a

familiar mainstay of the Los Angeles scene who would later front her own rockabilly band, The Rhythm Shakers. The pairing of these three creatively pay homage to and parody Tarantula's roots and connection to the Rockabilly scene, the mainstream fashion industry, and the Chicana/o Latina/o community of Boyle Heights.

Figure 11.

The vintage styled clothing, exaggerated expressions, the bright vibrant colors, the depiction of boys and girls "behaving badly" all conspire to recreate the kind of images one would expect to find on the cover of a pulp fiction magazine or a juvenile delinquent novel. When I asked Contreras which photo was his favorite he pointed to a particular image (figure 11), and stated:

> It's a version of Marilyn; it's a version of Marlene; its a version of the scene; because if you dance with a circle skirt you will see this. . . and if you don't go out and see people dancing you will never see that anymore. So we though, *I thought* that this is

> perfect. . . it does all kind of things and I just like it. I like the lighting; and its a little ghetto-it has the bars still- *you know;* it's everything that Tarantula is: wild, ghetto, fabulous.[58]

Despite this use of familiar tropes found in Euroamerican camp aesthetics, Tarantula's use of camp is these images are in completely in line with East Los Angeles spirit that they infuse into their business. Furthermore, the presence of the "ghetto" in the image speaks to Valenzuela's body of color. The images are highly cinematic and each tells a unique story. In fact, some of the images are directly inspired by classic films such as 1943's *The Outlaw* or as Contreras notes, 1955's *Seven Year Itch.*

In the depiction of women in these photographs I am reminded of Rosa Linda Fregoso speaking of the pachucas that she remembered in her chapter "Familia Matters" from *MeXicana Encounters: The Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands.* Fregoso writes:

> "I admired their hipster fashion, tight, short skirts, and fitted sweaters/blouses, kaleidoscopic makeup and extravagant beehive. They were mythic figures, outspoken and confrontational, fighting and smoking cigarettes on street corners and outside tienditas (barrio grocery stores) and thus carving their presence in the public sphere. It was their transgression of gender and sexual norms and their rejections of Mexican American propriety (Buenos modales), that rattled my family's middle class aspirations."[59]

It is this "bad girl" image that is one of the hallmarks of Tarantula's particular take on vintage fashions. In an interview with *Latina* magazine, Tarantula art director Cherry Vasquez offered this was "People think poodle skirts. . . but no, think of the bad girls!"[60]

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[58] David Contreras, interview with the author, Los Angeles, CA, November 22, 2008.

[59] Fregoso, Rosa Linda. 'Familia Matters.' *MeXicana Encounters: The Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands*. (Berkeley: University of California Press. 2003.), 91

[60] Espinosa, Renata. 'Streetwear Standouts at London Edge New York.' *Fashion Wire Daily* 2008. <www.fashionwiredaily.com/first_word/fashion/article.weml?id=2072/>

This series of photographs certainly depicts women behaving badly; pistols are brandished, barstools are turned into weapons, men are tempted, and women with tattoos are poised to beat each other's head in. However, it the agency to transgress restrictive social norms makes the pachucas seem so admirable to some Chicanas.

As seen in the works of Catherine Sue Ramirez, the original pachucas were not only marginalized in their own time, but they have since been dismissed as putas (whores). Meanwhile, their male counterparts have been celebrated as rebels and the progenitors Movement era activism. Ramirez argues that the pachucas were branded as whores due to their transgressions of speech, dress and space.[61] Yet, as Fregoso notes, it is that freedom to transgress that had inspired and amazed Chicanas like herself. Chicanas and Latinas have found in Raza Rockabilly a space to figuratively and literally emulate the style of previous generations, specifically pachucas. By emulating the style of the pachucas in these images, Tarantula is not only referring to their aesthetic style, they are also playfully and ironically referring to the pachucas' freedom to transgress and act "badly." Through their clothing they are selling that sense of agency and freedom to demographic that yearns for it; working class Chicanas.

Of course, the male gaze is unavoidable in fashion photography, especially with fashion that is as hyper sexualized as Tarantula's. Even though the garments advertised are targeted at women, As Hillevi Ganetz notes in her article, "The Shop, the Home and Femininity as Masquerade" women not only see themselves, "they also see themselves being

[61] Ramirez, Catherine S. 'Sayin' Nothin': Pachucas and the Language of Resistance," *Frontiers*, (Vol 27 no. 3. 2006), 3.

seen."[62] Presumably, those doing the seeing are often men. With the popularity of pin-up photography, the hyper-sexualization, and the hyper-self sexualization of women in the scene is an on-going conversation. Additionally, as texts are re-inscribed, the pachuca images can also be interpreted as just another form of hyper-sexualization, devoid of any claim to agency.

Ultimately, through use of camp, these images intensely parody depictions of Chicanas and Latinas as pathologically violent and sexual to such a degree that they cannot be taken seriously. In doing so, these images call into question those very same mainstream depictions of Chicanas and Latinas that are taken for granted as normal and natural. Additionally, I believe that Tarantula's target audience is one that *is* concerned with historicity, and highly conscious of the archetype being evoked by Tarantula. That same audience would thus have the tools to needed to understand and read the transgressive elements of the previous generations of Chicanas and Latinas that they seek to emulate through style, fashion, and the construction of their bodies.

Following my initial interview with Contreras, Tarantula was hit hard by the global recession. As a result, Contreras let go of the lease on their retail space, and severely scaled back production. Vasquez, who had been hired to be Tarantula's only full time employee reflected, "we were doing really good for a year, or a year and a half, and then the economy went way down, . . the Internet orders slowed, and the foot traffic became non existent. . .and it came to a point that they couldn't afford me, it was really sad." For Vasquez, Tarantula represented more than just a job, it was a project that she developed with her friends that she poured her heart into.

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[62] Ganetz, Hillevi. 'The Shop, the home and femininity as a Masquarade.' *Youth Cultures in Late Modernity.* Ed. Johan Fornas and Goran Bolin. (London: Sage Publication. 1995), 78.

> "I've always believed in Tarantula, and at one point I was going to take it over, it is just really hard though, fashion is a really hard industry to be in, and I am so thankful I had that experience with him (Contreras). Tarantula was like our baby, I lived I worked their I poured my blood sweat and tears into that place. We gave it our all and we did really well, until forces beyond us took over. It's still alive and kicking, slowly. . .It was such a good little company, and it was only three of us! David, Albert and myself and myself and that was it. We got pretty popular, we were on national TV (laughs), published in different magazines all over the world. When I went to the Rockabilly Rave this past June, it was nice to be walking around and seeing a Tarantula jacket, it's like "ah, that' s our line!"[63]

For Vasquez, spotting a Tarantula jacket at one of the major Rockabilly festivals in Europe held in East Sussex is a moment of pride, but a claim of legitimacy for Raza Rockabilly in the broader international Rockabilly scene can also be inferred.

Revisiting Chuy and Giovanni

After their street interview concludes, Chuy's is filmed giving Giovanni a ride home, providing an oft-repeated narrative of the maturation process from a young greaser to a seasoned hepkat via a voice over.

> That was really cool that we found that lil'-(*cuts himself off)* young cat, because he must see me and think 'man you're a square!' You know?, ….you sort of become from a greaser, that what he has the mentality of, a greaser; a greaser to being a hepkat, which is what I am with the vintage clothes. He's like, fuckin' rock and roll all the way, and he has his big hair and he doesn't give a shit (*about)* what people say. I can't big hair anymore, because, you know, the girls ain't going to date me, but he doesn't care, he has heart and that's what we need, people more like him.

For sure, Giovanni's style marks him as a Rockabilly, but it also marks as a certain kind of Rockabilly: a greaser. To those dedicated to the British inspired Hepkat model of Rockabilly, the greaser is often derided either for their status as 'newbies' to the scene, or for their refusal to fall in line with what it means to be apart of the rockabilly scene from their perspective.

[63] Esther Vasquez, interview with the author, Los Angeles, CA, January 14, 2012.

Yet in providing a potential narrative for Giovanni that mirrors his own progression as a greaser (margin-consumer) to a Hepkat (center-producer), Chuy reveals a center where Giovanni resides in, in his own right. In the exchange between Chuy and Giovanni, Chuy clearly holds an element of power. Chuy can read and narrate the meaning and history behind Giovanni style in ways that we presume Giovanni cannot perform on Chuy. Chuy also controls the flow and form of the conversation, both as an interviewer holding a microphone, but also as an older man. Yet instead of exerting that power of representation to completely deride Giovanni as a young 'greaser' still residing on the margins of the 'authentic Rockabilly scene, he offers evidence of a slight pang of begrudgement in his reflection.

As an adult, Chuy has to operate with some modicum of responsibility not always expected of young people like Giovanni. Unlike Europe, where the pubs where Hepkat rockabilly shows are accessible to all ages, the Hepkat rockabilly scene of Los Angeles is exclusively held in adult venues off limits to youth. Chuy has to navigate the leisure space where he is both a producer (disk jockey, saxophonist) and consumer (enjoy leisure, pursue relationships) responsibly. This responsibility, is in part related to his indiscretions and violence he encountered as a teenager through his experience as a "Saint Sinner," one of many teenage Los Angeles-based social clubs that experienced minor clashes with each other during the 1990s. Nevertheless, that spirit of anti-authoritarianism and rebellion that Chuy reads into Giovanni's stance and style is perhaps one of the most fetishized yet elusive ideals to be found in rock & roll based scenes, be they Rockabilly, Punk rock, or any other genre.

IV. Your Roots Are Showing: Tracing Genealogies & Building Cultural Memory Through the Malleable Canon of the Greater Los Angeles Rockabilly Scene

"Grab your partner, grab your gal…and rock."

Uttering these lines, Vicky Tafoya kicks off the third song of their set at Oneida Casino's *Rockin' 50s Fest* before a packed ballroom of international hardcore rockabilly fans, many of whom travelled to the isolated Green Bay, Wisconsin casino from Europe and Japan. Commencing her rendition of Jimmy Cavallo and his House Rocker's 1956 hit, *Rock Rock Rock,* Tafoya, a Mexican American woman from Santa Ana, California fronts a veritable big band featuring the combined members of her own group, The Big Beat, as well as Mark "Torch" Tortorici's R&B outfit, The Hollywood Combo. With one of the most striking voices on the scene today, Tafoya had already won over the crowd by their first number, aided by a captivating stage presence attired in an immaculate rayon 1940s evening dress, towering hair, dramatic faux lashes and stark red lips in the tradition of full figured divas like Etta Fitzgerald, Etta James and Mildred Bailey.

On cue, the band's drummer takes on the song's signature drum roll, with the rhythm section joining in just after. While the band, spectators and throngs of jiving dancers on the floor expect to hear Tafoya belt out Cavallo's lyrical refrain, she instead shakes her head in disappointment, touches her forehead and stops the show. "No, no, no, no, no!" she calls out as she turns to her drummer, not quite turning completely away from the audience. "You are going to play that again" she states plainly, "and you are going to play it right!" The crowd and band freeze in anticipation, eyes drawn upon the drummer as he is given a second chance to do right by Tafoya. Tafoya takes the opening lines again "*grab your partner, grab your*

gal-and rock," yet this time she pauses, drawing out the 'and' after gal, and then gently easing into 'rock' like a smooth landing. The drummer, clearly nervous and sweating with anticipations bolts out of the gate with a carbon copy of The House Rocker's signature roll. Tafoya, in approval belts out the song's refrain "*Rock, rock, rock, everybody! You rock it and you rock it and you rock it around!*" The band raucously joins in as the cavernous ballroom explodes with cheers and applause. The show goes on.

Vicky Tafoya and the Big Beat is just one of dozens of bands hailing from Southern California performing 1950s era rock & roll and rhythm & blues with a predominantly Latina/o make-up to a predominantly Latina/o audience. Yet in many ways, she and her band are quite atypical in the rockabilly scene. The Big Beat is a rhythm & blues outfit amidst a myriad of late 1950s style rock and roll bands. Additionally, Tafoya is one of even fewer women performers in a field dominated by men. While a popular favorite for many in the international Rockabilly scene and festival circuit, Tafoya cut her teeth performing on the doo-wop revival circuit to an entirely different crowd, under an entirely different context. While many bands actively distance themselves from the lowrider sound, Tafoya openly courts it, performing Art Laboe-esque numbers like "Angel Baby" and "Gee Whiz." Lastly, despite being lauded for the "authenticity" she brings to doo-wop, Tafoya has actually found greater commercial success and mainstream appreciation for her hybrid cross-genre pop/punk band, Vicky and the Vengents. Yet, this unorthodoxy not only speaks to interventions that Latinas/os have made through their claims to music, and the musical canon of the international rockabilly scene, but also to ways in which music has been employed to meet the needs of post-industrial Latinas and Latinos in greater Los Angeles.

This chapter examines music as an activity system in the Raza Rockabilly scene of the greater Los Angeles area. In this way, the musical canon of Los Angeles Rockabilly is explored through intertwining genealogies of rockabilly/roots music & musicians in Los Angeles, as well as Latina/o rockabilly/rock & roll and R&B artists in the US and abroad. The Rockabilly musical canon, as performed, expanded, and contracted within the Los Angeles Raza Rockabilly scene allow musicians, deejays, dancers, and enthusiasts in the scene to "show their roots" by embodying these genealogies. As embodied forms of memory, music does not so much anchor one to a historical past, rather it creates a present filled with significance and fulfillment often not met elsewhere, especially not at work. By sharing these moments, the scene itself becomes an intentional community made up of Chicanas/os and Latinas/os from across greater Los Angeles temporarily convened to engage in leisure together.

This chapter seeks to explore how music in the Raza Rockabilly scene of Los Angeles not only serves as a critical element of cultural memory for Raza Rockabilly enthusiasts, but also provides a means by which Latinas/os lay claims to that scene by bringing their own genealogies to the table. As Maureen Mahon argues in her work *Right to Rock: The Black Rock Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race*, artists and fans of color that enjoy and create music deemed outside of the parameters of their ethnic or racial identity must contend with the policing of boundaries by others.[1] In ideological and racial claims to the scene,

[1] Mahon writes, "BRC (Black Rock Coalition) members routinely noted that they did not see their musical tastes as being in conflict with their blackness even though they knew others did. Identifying as black rockers enable them to negotiate tensions between the expectations of both black and white communities." Maureen Mahon, *Right to Rock: The Black Rock*

music and sonic space is as equally contentious as physical space. Shifts in musical taste, and the cultural memory and meaning tied to those tastes provide insight into a community's desires given their specific historical context, which, in this case, is greater Los Angeles of the post-industrial age. Thus, the Rockabilly scene's obsession with music that is "true" or "authentic" may speak less to how historically accurate a particular rendition is, but more to how and why certain sonic elements, be they genre choice, rhythm arrangements or vocal delivery are preferred by Latinas/os in the greater Los Angeles area over others.[2]

I contend that as a community of fans, the Raza Rockabilly scene of greater Los Angeles employs a body of music and the narratives around it simultaneously as repository and performance of cultural memory, not only for themselves, but also for the broader Latina/o community of Southern California and the international Rockabilly scene abroad. Through affect, music not only renews deeply personal memories and senses of longing and belonging for loved ones, it also builds a sense of community as memorable moments are collectively produced within the scene and cued up by particular songs and performances.[3]

Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 13

[2] Mahon writes, "Authenticity is far from natural; instead, prevailing views of wat is authentic become naturalized. We construct authenticity and we depend on it to evaluate the quality of art and the integrity of people. A useful category, authenticity promises certainty in othweise ambiguous processes." Maureen Mahon, *Right to Rock: The Black Rock Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 10. See chapter two for a discussion on "authenticity" and the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene.

[3] Sara Ahmed writes "In such affective economies, emotions *do things*, and they align individuals with communities-or bodily spaces with social sace-through the very intensity of their attachments." Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text*, 22, no. 2 (2004), 119.

The Los Angeles Rockabilly scene engages in a contemporary form of community building and imagining of cultural histories tied to an era its enthusiasts largely did not experience. Yet, to dismiss Raza Rockabilly's engagement with the past simplistically as regressive nostalgia would be a mischaracterization. Far from navel gazing, the Rockabilly scene's open engagement with the past can provide a broader and more fulfilling understanding of their present. Operating at both a cognitive and affective level, this interpolation of the past, as imagined at that moment, places people, all too objectified and dehumanized, as subjects and actors with a valuable history of their own. Far from regressive nostalgia, this historical placemaking focuses on the present, reinforcing contemporary bonds and senses of belonging. When a Raza Rockabilly enthusiast longs for the past, it is not for an imagined 1950s that they never experienced, it is for those moments they experienced when the Rockabilly scene was most meaningful for them. That moment may be a night out with a friend who has since passed away or a romantic evening with a significant other.

To this end, I employ the analogy of one's roots showing as a way to talk about how music and performance in the Raza Rockabilly scene is an avenue by which artists deliberately expose their own genealogies on stage. Popularly, to remark that someone's roots are showing refers to one's natural hair color noticeably emerging and growing in from beneath a top layer of dyed hair. It is often intended as a slight, almost exclusively directed at women. Phrases such as "her roots are showing" or "you can see her roots" usually carry the undertones of discursive policing and punishment for a woman's failure to maintain a

"pleasing" appearance by exposing often naturally dark, or even worse gray or white hair.[4] For the purpose of this paper, showing one's root is re-inscribed to express ways in which performers make apparent the genealogies and influences they hail from through both sonic and visual elements.[5] Taking a cue from Catherine S. Ramirez's "a genealogy of *vendidas"* from her work *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender Nationalism and the Cultural Politics of Memory*, I trace non-linear and entangled paths taken by cultural texts inherited by performers and music enthusiasts in the contemporary Raza Rockabilly scene. As a genealogy inspired by the work of Michel Foucault, it is my aim to explore multiple origin narratives, not to discover a definitive and holistic history of musical forms in the contemporary Los Angeles rockabilly scene, but rather to understand why it may be important to show these particular roots now in the contemporary moment.[6] As Roberto Avant-Mier claims in his study of Latino/a garage rock musicians, genealogies provide a critical lens to see past reductionist narratives seeking to cast the history of American popular music as solely a Black and white affair.[7]

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[4] A brief trend amongst high profile celebrity women in 2010 such as Gwyneth Paltrow, and Madonna to flaunt dark or gray roots in their hair touched off quite a ballyhoo in the mainstream fashion and beauty world. Detractors claimed the look made the women appear ungroomed and lazy. Proponents lauded the trend for refusing to conform to beauty norms that value and overly privilege a youthful appearance for women.

[5] Others have also employed "showing their roots" as analogy, including musicians such as Natalie MacMaster and Megan Smolenyak, however my application of the phrase is specific to my own research and findings in the Los Angeles Raza Rockabilly Scene.

[6] Michel Foucault. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in the Foucault Reader. Ed. P. Rainbow. (Harmondswoth: Penguin,1984), 87-90

[7] Avant-Mier writes, "The significance of the Foucauldian "genealogical" path presented in this article is, first, that the history of rock and roll is not solely the province of black

As an examination of all musical forms and genres popular with all facets of the Rockabilly scene would merit its own volume, this chapter focuses on music played and performed within sites of leisure in the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene, specifically at my primary research sites: The Rumble Bar held at CC's Roadhouse, Spike's Billiards and the Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly Festival between 2008 and 2012. Equally important are the countless house parties and private/semi-private backyard gatherings attended during those years.

While I primarily focus on these previously named sites, participant observation was also conducted at other sites throughout greater Los Angeles, including the Rockabilly promotions held at the Bigfoot Lodge, Redwood Bar and Grill, The Airliner, Joe's American Bar and Grill, Viva Cantina, The Bamboo Lounge at Mission Tobacco, LA Live, Spike's II, The Monty Bar and several VFW, American Legion and Elks Club halls. Additionally, observations were conducted at festivals and car shows including The Claremont Latino Rockabilly Festival, The Hootenanny, The USA Rockabilly Rave, Primer Nationals and The Rhythm Rocker. Sites of work and service/consumption were also examined including barbershops and clothing stores including My Baby Jo, Zoot Suits - El Pachuco, Pinup Girl Clothing, Bettie Page Clothing, Big Ed's Record Shop, Sneaky Tiki, Stop Staring and Tarantula Clothing Company. Complimenting my ethnographic observations were short and long term interviews with music enthusiasts, promoters, musicians and disk jockeys as well

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and white youth in the United States, and second, that the garage rock phenomenon, as it emerged in the mid-1960s, was not solely the creation of British or Anglo-American youth." Roberto Avant-Mier, "Latinos in the Garage: A Genealogical Examination of the Latina/o Presence and Influence in Garage Rock (and Rock and Pop Music)," *Popular Music and Society*, 31, no. 5 (2008), 570.

as primary research utilizing interviews and coverage of music and musicians in the Rockabilly scene in magazines, 'zines, documentaries, professional and amateur film footage (YouTube & Vimeo) and websites.

As a matter of organization, this chapter traces the genealogies of the Rockabilly scene in Los Angeles: first by tracing 1950s era rock & roll and rhythm & blues by Latina/o performers and then by examining the role of greater Los Angeles in roots-revival music. While most music makers operating within identifiable genres have an open engagement with historically bound conventions of their form of choice, be it blues, classical, tejano or etc, very few actively engage cultural memory in the same way that music in the Rockabilly scene can do.[8] If, as Helena Simonett argues, banda music of the 1990s helped situate Latinas/os with a sense of place, music in the Rockabilly scene of greater Los Angeles helps Latinas/os invoke cultural memory to situate our place in history.[9] Thus, included is a broader look at music within the contemporary Raza Rockabilly scene, as influenced by key agents including Robert Williams of Big Sandy and His Fly Rite Boys, Reb Kennedy and Luis Arriaga of Lil Luis of Wild Records, as well as a cohort of Latina/o disc jockeys coming of age in the early 2000s. Lastly, is I focus on doo-wop and rhythm & blues diva, Vicky

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[8] As George Lipsitz states "one reason for popular music's powerful affect is its ability to conflate music and lived experience, to make both past and present zones of choice that serve distinct social and political interests." George. *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture.* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 104.

[9] Simonett writes ""Thus it is no coincidence that the banda phenomenon popped up in metropolitan Los Angeles during the early 1990s, nor that it became a major movement within the Mexican American communities in Southern California. Technobanda was able to meet the needs of thousands of young Mexicanos longing for a way to express themselves culturally." Helena Simonett. *Banda: Mexican Musical Life Across Borders*. (Middleton CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 276.

Tafoya of Vicky Tafoya and the Big Beat, The Redondos and Vicky and The Vengents. I chose to devote a prominent spotlight to Tafoya to upset notions of rock & roll as naturally male, but to also draw attention to a cultural producer whose role and influence in the scene has largely been overlooked.

The Malleable Canon: Music in the Los Angeles Rockabilly Scene

Dubbed the Cumbia Cats, Tony Pelayo, Tony Macias and the Martinez Brothers, Aaron and Andrew of the Moonlight Cruisers had already garnered a devoted following of Latina/o Rockabilly fans by the time they played the 8th Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly Weekender music festival in 2005. Relegated to a small lounge far from the main attractions in the ballroom upstairs, The Moonlight Cruisers played their own hard-edge blues influenced take on rockabilly classics to a raucous crowd of primarily Latina/o patrons, many of whom had forgone the $75 dollar festival tickets and opted to just drive out for the day from Southern California to check out the Shifter's car show, which was held on the open rooftop lot of the Gold Coast Casino's two-story parking structure. Cognizant of their second tier status at the festival, Pelayo testified to the crowd "We will never get booked for the main stage!" Pelayo added "Tom Ingram will never book us for the main stage, and this is why!" On cue, guitarist Alex Martinez ripped into the opening riff of their signature song, "Baila" a bass heavy cumbia greeted with a deafening uproar from the crowd.

While scores of bands with Latina/o musicians played the festival before and since, it was the Moonlight Cruisers' open engagement and hybrid approach to traditional Latin American genres like cumbia that blocked what they perceived as full acceptance in the festival, which at that time was still viewed as a European weekender hosted in the United

States. Cumbia sonically claimed space in a way that could still unsettle white audiences expecting to hear "American" music.[10] Unlike rhythm & blues, another genre of music with raced connotations, cumbia was a musical form of color un-embraced by white audiences – one that had yet to be contained.[11] Yet Pelayo inference, that racialized subjects playing untamed and uncontained racialized music, would be turned on its head when Pachuco Jose y Los Diamantes, another Los Angeles based band took to the main stage seven years later. With ticket prices now $120, and the car show a sprawling stand-alone event with $30 tickets of its own, Viva Las Vegas in its 15th year now hosted several thousands of attendees. Kicking off opening night, Pachuco Jose y Los Diamantes, a jump blues outfit styled after Lalo Guerrero played to a cheering crowd of international Rockabilly enthusiasts, moving the crowd to equal parts Los Angeles style rhythm & blues and Central American cumbias.

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[10] The musical genre of cumbia originates from working class communities in northern Colombia. It is fitting that cumbia has earned a foothold in the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene as the musical form owes its popularity to a stylistic flexibility that allows it to mix and absorb into local musical styles. As José Juan Olvera Gudiño notes that Tejano "artists such as Selena, Intocable, La Firma, Joe Olivares and Bobby Pulido, among others, took up cumbia as an appealing genre in which to construct their musical style much like what happened with Mexican grupero musicians." José Juan Olvera Gudiño, "Cumbia in Mexico's Northeastern Region," in Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste, and Pablo Vila, *Cumbia! Scenes of a Migrant Latin American Music Genre*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 94.

[11] Transgressive elements recognizable to audiences of 1940s and 1950s found in rhythm & blues have been stripped of meaning in contemporary popular culture. So much so that conservative pundit, Mark Cauvreu Judge, casually acknowledges dancing to "a jump blues number, I think it was "Good Rockin' Tonight"-" in a pivotal moment that caused him to yearn for a pre-*Brown v. Board* culture that he had believed had been tainted by 1960s radicalism and the ethos of sex, drugs, and rock & roll. Ironically, "Good Rockin' Tonight" penned by Roy Brown, and famously recorded by Wynonie Harris and Elvis Presley is about a man's anticipation for a sex-filled evening fueled by alcohol and music. Mark Gavreau Judge. *If It Ain't Got That Swing: The Rebirth of Grown-up Culture*. (Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 2000), 69.

Despite its name, the classic rockabilly sound makes up just a fraction of the music celebrated and enjoyed in the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene. In Los Angeles, music in the Rockabilly scene draws from a deep well of vintage influences, stretching roughly 10 years in both directions from a focal point of roughly 1954 or 1955, the fledgling years of Rockabilly music. In fact, rockabilly music, is just only one of several genres of music performed and played in the Rockabilly scene including jump blues, doo wop, early soul, early 1950s Alan Freed style rock and roll, later 1950s "juvenile delinquent" rock and roll, surf, garage & frat rock, 1960s "boppin' blues," 1940s and 1950s hillbilly (country western) music and western swing. It is not uncommon for a show to feature a rockabilly performer such as Ramblin' James and his Billy Boppers, doo-wop as sung by the Lonely Blue Boys and a disk jockey spinning 45 RPM records of mid 1960s blues boppers all on the same bill.

Music in the Rockabilly scene serves as a familiar activity system drawing the scene together. Whether one attends a Rockabilly show in Seattle, Los Angeles, London or Calafell, they can expect to hear the same body of recordings from show to show. Live acts often incorporate covers of familiar numbers and new material is expected to at least include familiar sounds and sonic elements, be it the heavy reverb of a vocalist's microphone, or the organic wooden slap of the upright bass.[12] Since the Rockabilly Revival, an ever-shifting canon of music has developed, influenced by musical trends and tastes over the decades. While the canon has clearly evolved, a few elements of taste have endured including an equal

[12] Revealing the technique to achieve rockabilly music's signature reverb, NPR reporter Christopher Blank states "slap back echo: it was created by using a reel to reel tape machine to feed a slightly delayed playback into the master recording." Christopher Blank. "Inside The Sun Records Sound, A Marvel Even Today." Last modified July 22, 2014. Accessed September 7, 2014. http://www.npr.org/2014/07/22/334040612/inside-the-sun-records-sound-a-marvel-even-today.

standing between live and recorded music, a predominance but not exclusivity of 1950s music, predominance of male performers, an appreciation of obscurity, a tempo range of 140-190 BPM and lastly, an ease of categorization. As Augie Cabrera, a college aged Latina/o and barista from El Sereno, declared "we don't play the pop '50s! I mean, come on, when was the last time you were at a show and heard The Big Bopper? Some people say we are more underground."[13] As discussed in chapter two, vintage recordings are arbitrarily divided into categories of boppers (often songs with a violently emphasized downbeat), strollers (mid tempo songs often featuring a rising chord progression) and jivers (up-tempo songs). Below is a sample of common jivers, strollers and boppers observed at sites of leisure in greater Los Angeles and at Viva Las Vegas and The USA Rockabilly Rave Festival. Far from solely Los Angeles favorites, these songs, among others are in frequent rotation at any self-identified Rockabilly promotion worldwide.

Common Jivers	Common Strollers	Common Boppers
"I'm Gonna Type a Letter" – Billy Fury (1959)	"Voodoo Voodoo"- Lavern Baker (1961)	"Tornado" – The Jiants (1959)
"High School Caesar" – Reggie Perkins (1960)	"Lucille"- Little Richard (1957)	"Hide 'n' Go Seek" – Bunker Hill (1962)
	"Jeopardy" – Jean Shepard (1959)	"Big River" – Johnny Cash (1958)
"Stop (Let Me Off of This Bus)" – Snooky Lanson (1955)	"Four O'clock Baby" – Darrell Rhodes (1958)	"Honey Hush" – The Johnny Burnette Trio (1956)
"They Call Me Big Mama" –Big Mama Thornton (1952)	"Have Love Will Travel" – Richard Berry (1959)	"Do Do Do" -Ronnie Dawson (1961)
"Dance Franny Dance" – Floyd Dakil Combo (1964)	"Goodbye Little Star" – Kenny Baker (1959)	"Cherokee Dance" – Bob Landers with Willie Joe and his Unitar (1956)

[13] Augie Cabrera, interview with author, Willowbrook, CA, August 24, 2009.

"The Walkin' Blues" – Jesse Powell & Fluffy Hunter (1952)	"Chills and Fever" – Ronnie Love (1959)	"That Certain Female" –Charlie Feathers (1974)

Although the Rockabilly scene traffics in decades old music, as a malleable canon it is subject to shifting whims and changes in taste. Figure 1 was posted to a public Rockabilly facebook page featuring a list of the top jivers, boppers and strollers in 1980, compiled by D.J. Fifties Flash (Keith Pinnel) one of the first London based Rockabilly DJ's of the revival era. While Billy Fury's "Gonna Type a Letter" and the Domino's "Sixty Minute Man" are still in regular rotation, other records have since eclipsed most of the listed songs. Despite a reputation for being frozen in time, music in the Rockabilly scene is in constant evolution.

As such, the canon, what is or is not appropriate for a rockabilly show, can be contested. In 2011, a popular European DJ playing records during the band breaks at the Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly Weekender was met with both boos and cheers when he opened his set with the declaration, "I don't play doo-wop, I don't play R&B – I only play rock & roll." Refusing to play music by black artists, this DJ staked his claim regarding what is and is not rock & roll at one of the largest Rockabilly festivals in the world. As Pierre Bourdieu argues, questions of taste, often betray questions of class, and by extension, race and gender.[14] While the Rockabilly

[14] Bourdieu writes ""Taste is at the heart of these symbolic struggles, which go on at all times between the fractions of the dominant class and which would be less absolute, less total, if they were not based on the primary belief which binds each agent to his life-style. A materialist reduction or preferences to their economic and social conditions of production and to the social functions of the seemingly most disinterested practices must not obscure the fact that, in matters of culture, investments are not only economic but also psychological. Conflicts over art or the art of living, in which what is really at stake is the imposition of the dominant principle of domination within the dominant class — or, to put it another way, the

Figure 1.

FIFTIES FLASH **CHARTS**

TOP TEN BOPPERS

1.	CAT TALK (would I lie to you Nick?)	Lew Williams
2.	EVERYBODY'S ROCKIN'	The Champs
3.	CRAZY BABY	The Rockin' R's
4.	JUMPS GIGGLES & SHOUTS	Gene Vincent
5.	I FLIPPED	Gene Vincent
6.	JENNY LEE	Moon Mullican
7.	NO HELP WANTED	The Carlisles
8.	MUMBLIN' GUITAR	Bo Diddley
9.	BUZZ BUZZ A-DIDDLE-IT	Freddy Cannon
10.	Y'ALL COME	Arlie Duff

TOP TEN JIVERS

1.	RAG MOP	The Four Kings
2.	REAL ROCK DRIVE	Bill Haley
3.	SEVENTEEN	Fontaine Sisters
4.	WE'RE GONNA ROCK TONIGHT	The Three Chuckles
5.	GONNA TYPE A LETTER	Billy Fury
6.	BEFORE YOU GO	Twin Tones
7.	JAM UP	Tommy Ridgley
8.	MOVE, BABY, MOVE	Larry Harrison
9.	BOOGIE WOOGIE TEENAGE	The Meadowlarks
10.	RAMSHACKLE DADDY	Don Lang

TOP TEN STROLLERS

1.	60 MINUTE MAN	The Dominos
2.	BERTHA LOU	Clint Miller
3.	DUKE OF EARL	Gene Chandler
4.	THE SHAG	Bobby Graves
5.	SEE YOU SOON, BABOON	Dale Hawkins
6.	TENNESSEE WIG-WALK	Bonnie Lou
7.	HENRIETTA	Jimmy Dee
8.	BABY SHE'S GONE	Jack Scott
9.	HANG UP MY R'n'R SHOES	Chuck Willis
10.	HEART LIKE A ROCK	Charlie Gracie

Flash at Caister

If you are hot into the Rockin', *Fifties Flash* gives you what you need, most nights of the week....Mondays at The Bobby Sox Club, White Horse, Church Rd, NW 10 (nearest tube Neasden), 7.30 till 10.30. Tuesdays at The Fox, 386 West Green Rd, N. 15 (nearest tube Turnpike Lane), 8.00 till 12.00. Alturnate Thursdays he hits the track north to The Crystal Palace, London Rd, St. Albans where the Rockin's free! Friday it's back to the Sox for the most fun you can have with your clothes on. Saturday it's back to the Crystal, and Sunday The Hopbine opp. North Wembley Tube Station.

The '50s Exposer is of course at the Caister Weekender, Gt. Yarmouth, 16th to 18th November.

Flash was filmed during October for a film called *Heavy Metal* (about motor bikes not hippies), starring Eddie Kidd.

mics as Chris is a fan and the cost of the bulletin letter

scene has always flaunted working class aesthetics and sounds, the shifts in musical tastes toward music that speaks to a transnational Latina/o experience in the Los Angeles scene are expectedly consistent with demographic shifts in the scene's make-up.

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securing of the best conversion rate for the type of capital with which each group is best provided — would not be so dramatic if they did not involve the ultimate values of the person, a highly sublimated form of interests." . Pierre Bourdieu, translated by Richard Nice. *Distinctions*: *A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 310.

Those shifts can be made observable through the musical genealogies artists draw inspiration from. One would be mistaken to write-off performing artists in the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene as cover bands or tribute artists.[15] For sure, these musicians can be recognized as roots artists and just as competent to play in historically bound musical styles as any other.[16] Yet to dismiss many of the artists in the scene as peddlers of simulacra is to deny the existence of their own artistic freedom and agency.[17] While familiar covers are a welcome part of any band's set list, each band strives for a unique identity through their performance style, group synergy and song choice including original material penned by or for the band. Complimenting (and complicating) this originality are the genealogical roots artists in the Rockabilly scene explicitly draw from.

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[15] While a small handful of tribute artists perform in the international Rockabilly circuit and bands will often do tribute shows to greats like Link Wray, Johnny Cash or Janis Martin, "Elvis-impersonator" style artists are largely seen as deplorable. When Tom Ingram booked Dean Z, a musician who performs Elvis numbers, he qualified the decision stating "I had always steer(*ed)* clear of Elvis impersonators until I saw Dean Z. It's like seeing Elvis in 56." Tom Ingram. "About the Bands" *Viva Las Vegas 10 Program*, 2007.

[16] Robert Santelli, director of the Grammy Museum writes of roots musicians as "an artist conscious of being part of the American music tradition. Often he or she feels a personal responsibility to carry on that tradition. The roots artist absorbs the cultural attributes of the music's origins while eschewing the always shifting swings in contemporary pop culture. He or she adheres to and respects the dress, speech and social habits that are part of the roots artist's community. Finally, the roots artist writes and sings songs that reflect such themes as gender and class relationships, regional and historical issues, and racial and ethnic tensions. Jim Brown, Holly George-Warren, and Robert Santelli. *American Roots Music.* (New York City,: Abrams Books, 2001), 12.

[17] Playing off of the postmodern theory of Jean Baudrillard, United Kingdom based fashion photographer Nick Clements produced *Simulacra: The 1955-1965 Photographs of Nick Clements* in 2005. The photography book featured contemporary members of the European and South African Rockabilly scene in full vintage and vintage inspired attire. Nick Clements. *Simulacra: The 1955-1965 Photographs of Nick Clement* (Photo Ed. Press, 2005).

Explored thoroughly in David Reyes and Tom Waldman's *Land of a Thousand Dances*, documented meticulously in Ruben Molina's *Old Barrio Guide to Lowrider Music,* and examined regionally in Anthony Macias' *Mexican-American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance, and Urban Culture in Los Angeles 1935-1968,* Chicanas/os and Latinas/os played a significant role as both performers and fans of rhythm and blues and rock and roll in the 1950s and especially in Los Angeles. As Reyes and Waldman assert, Chicanas/os of Los Angeles, musicians and fans alike, occupied an interstitial third space between race/R&B (read Black) and pop/rock (read white) music. Chicana/o and Latina/o musicians certainly could and did bring significant elements of hybridity and mestizaje to rock & roll music, most famously with Ritchie Valens rock rendition of the son standard "La Bamba" from 1959. However, it would be a mischaracterization to cast Chicana/o and Latina/o performers as able to *only* excel at hybrid forms and to ignore the skill and talent made apparent within the deliberate confines of an established genre. Take for example, jazz bassist Don Tosti who's "Mambo Del Pachuco" masterfully interpolates both Latino mambo and African American R&B traditions. Yet other of his recordings such as "Los Blues" and "Guisa Guina" are musically indistinguishable from contemporary Black performers such as Nat King Cole or Charles Brown save the caló lyrics. As Reyes and Waldman contend, Chicana/o performers had to be proficient in a variety of musical genres and forms because Chicana/o audiences expected and demanded it.[18] This versatility provided the base for musicians and performers to challenge and push boundaries. It is precisely because they could excel within the rules that they knew when, and where they could break them.

[18] See David Reyes and Tom Waldman. *Land of a Thousand Dances, Chicano Rock 'n' Roll from Southern California*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

While Ritchie Valens has become the icon of 1950s Chicano Rock and Roll, few performers in the Raza Rockabilly scene lay claim to his lineage.[19] Songs like "Donna" and "Framed" fall far below the average expected tempo, and songs like "Come On Let's Go" and "LA Bamba" carry a pop sound that is disdained. The only exception is Valens' "Cry Cry Cry," which is occasionally spun as a stroller. In fact, none of the three artists, considered by many to be the icons of 1950s rock and roll, lost on the day the music died are regularly played at venues in the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene. Few contemporary artists regard Valens as influential to their approach to performing and Latina/o artists rarely cover "La Bamba." Once while performing for a mainstream audience at the Hollywood House of Blues, East Los Angeles's R&B band, Los Rhythm Rockets were peppered with cries from the crowd to play La Bamba, despite the fact that they were self-styled after a post-war Central Avenue rhythm & blues band, and not after a late 1950s rock & roll outfit. While Los Angeles based Latina/o performers and fans seemed the most poised to welcome Valens into the canon, very few have tried, especially given the underlying and culturally determinist assumption that Raza Rockabilly must know and love "La Bamba" and Valens by racial default. Ironically, Luis Valdez's 1987 biopic *La Bamba* is an incredibly well-circulated and well-read text within the scene, with lines cribbed from the movie serving as popular memes.[20]

[19] The one exception being Pep Torres who organized and performed memorial shows for Valens and covered his song "Hi-Tone" on his 2002 album "Rockabilidad."

[20] I felt it was important to briefly mention a possibility for why Ritchie Valens and his work falls largely outside of the LA canon, and why most musicians on the scene chose not expose this root. In developing my research project, most academics assumed that Ritchie Valens

While performers may not expose the Valens root, the same cannot be said of Chan Romero. Romero was recruited to Del Fi as the next Ritchie Valens and had one commercial success, "Hippy Hippy Shake" in 1959. His parents, migrant farmworkers, relocated from Colorado to Montana where Romero was born and raised. Exposed to the country western music of Hank Williams and others on the radio, Chan took to and admired rockabilly stars such as Elvis Presley; eventually hitchhiking his way to Los Angeles to make it as a rock & roller at the age of 16 in 1958. Romero's uncle, who resided in East Los Angeles took him to Specialty Records, a well-known R&B (read Black) record label based in Los Angeles. At Specialty, Romero impressed then-producer Sonny Bono, who encouraged him to return in a few weeks. Romero missed his chance as he had to return to Montana for the start of the academic school year. After creating a strong following in his native Montana, Romero was recruited by Ritchie Valens' producer, Bob Keane following Valens death. In 1959, Romero recorded "Hippy Hippy Shake." While moderately successful in the United States, "Hippy Hippy Shake" sold extremely well overseas, allowing Romero to tour Australia with Jerry Lee Lewis, and inspiring the Beatles to add the song to their repertoire. Still performing at the time of this study, Romero remains a popular headliner in the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene, his songs "My Little Ruby," "I Want Some More," and "For Your Love" played by deejays and interpolated by performers emulating Romero's breathy, desperate delivery and unforgiving guitar solos.

While the mainstream music industry fetishizes the fresh and new as major selling points, cultural producers in the Rockabilly scene revel in its own history. In a historical

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was the sole inspiration and icon for contemporary Raza Rockabilly, when in fact, he and his music is largely irrelevant.

moment when pop radio friendly performers like Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams can sue the estate of Marvin Gaye because his 1977 hit "Got to Give it Up" sounds too similar to their 2013 song "Blurred Lines," performers in the Rockabilly scene openly pay homage to their forebearers.[21] Far from opportunistic appropriation, this callback to historic performers speaks to genealogical lineages. For some artists, the genealogy is literal. Orange County's Robert Williams draws from both classic country & western swing musical tastes inherited from his white Midwestern father and the lowrider/eastside sound from his west coast Chicana mother in his performances with Big Sandy and the Fly Rite Boys. For other artists the genealogies reach through sonic elements inherited from pioneering artists. While this chapter explores the application of these genealogical roots, it also seeks to situate the historical moment and life experiences of these artists within broader political contexts. To meet these ends, my analysis of performing artists and genealogical roots have been limited to snapshots of Robert Williams (Big Sandy), Reb Kennedy's Wild Records, and a more detailed examination of the life and work of Vicky Tafoya.

[21] Jon Blistein writes "Thicke, as well as the songs co-writers Pharrell Williams and T.I., took pre-emptive action back in August, seeking declaratory relief that their song was "starkly different" from "Got to Give It Up." Jon Blistein. Rolling Stone Magazine, "Sony Settles 'Blurred Lines' Lawsuit With Marvin Gaye's Family." Last modified January 14, 2014. Accessed September 7, 2014. http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/sony-settles-blurred-lines-lawsuit-with-marvin-gayes-family-20140114.

Figure 2.

The Power of the 45: Paying Homage to Rockin' Roots with Big Sandy

""I think our approach to the music and the sound we get is mostly a result of the music that I grew up listening to and have always played. Other bands and musicians sometimes have different musical backgrounds than we do and their take on things reflects that. I don't really feel like I'm on a mission to preserve traditional sounds, even though that might be the end result. I just want to make *music* and I have to stick with what I know because, well, it's what I know."
-Robert Williams[22]

Bookending their 2006 album, *Turntable Matinee,* "The Power of the 45" part I and II sing the praises of the solo artists and bands that have influenced and shaped the music of veteran performers, Big Sandy and Fly Rite Boys. The song, divided into two parts, name-checks familiar rockabilly and rocking rhythm & blues artists such as Little Junior Parker, Little Esther, Chuck Berry, Janis Martin and Johnny Powers in the lyrics sung by the band's

[22] Andy Hawley. "Big Sandy" *Garage 71 and Grease Inc. Magazine* March 4th, 2012. http://garage71.net/big-sandy/

frontman, Robert Williams (Big Sandy).[23] Yet as the song progresses, artists many would consider atypical influences on a country boogie/rockabilly outfit like Big Sandy and Fly Rite Boys are interpolated. Musicians like East Los Angeles doo-wop crooner Don Julian, punk rocker turned contemporary rockabilly performer, Ray Condo, blues diva Etta James, South Los Angeles vocal group The Medallions and the Chicano rock band Thee Midniters. While too easily dismissible as a vinyl collector's checklist of American roots music, Big Sandy's calling up of musical heroes, and the healing and regenerative power of their music speaks to Williams' own genealogical roots as an artist, but also as a bi-racial kid coming of age in Southern California in the 1970s and 1980s.

Born in Norwalk, but raised in the Orange county cities of Fullerton, Anaheim and Santa Fe Springs, Robert Williams is veritably the ambassador of Rockabilly. With featured guest spots on NPR's *Fresh Air* and *All Things Considered*, consistent booking on Conan O'Brian's late night talk shows, regular national and international touring schedules, including a performance at Nashville's Grand Ole Opry, it is little wonder why Williams as Big Sandy is one of the contemporary Rockabilly scene's most recognizable faces. Williams

[23] Essentially, a gospel number reworked to sing the praises of American roots music instead of the Lord, "Power of the 45" is the first song on *Turntable Matinee*, and is continued as the album's last track, "Power of the 45 part II." While the song succumbs to rather typical gender norms (of the limited lyrics is the oft repeated line "Give me a good lookin' woman and a stack of '45s"), where the lyrics do shine is the grouping of artists rarely mentioned in the same conversation, let alone the same breath. Williams sings, "Give me some Chuck and Richard Berry, Lew Williams and Link Wray/Little Esther, Lazy Lester, Don Julian and Joe Clay/ Vernon Taylor, Janice Martin, oh, the party will be startin' tonight/Yes, Tonight!" While Chuck Berry is internationally famous, most of the other names are of more obscure artists, such as R&B and blues musicians Richard Berry, and Little Esther Phillips, or rockabilly and rock and roll artists like Wray, Clay, Taylor and Martin. As mentioned, Don Julian should be familiar to most scholars and fans of what has been dubbed, The Eastside Sound in works such as Reyes and Waldman's *Land of a Thousand Dances.*

is a popular choice for Rockabilly festival promoters looking for a MC with the type of charisma and stage experience to command a passionate and often unruly audience. A veteran performer with over 25 years experience and 12 albums under his belt, Williams as well as his band, Big Sandy and the Fly Rite Boys, are an institution in and of themselves. They can be found reliably serving as the house band for The Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly Weekender, backing many of the original 1950s artists and providing the audience with sound true to the those artists' original recordings. Beginning as a rockabilly outfit in 1988, Williams and his ever-evolving band delved deeper into history and began performing western swing style tunes from an earlier era by the mid-1990s. While few printed reviews raised the issue, it was not uncommon for observers to remark on the seeming incongruity of Williams' music choice, 1940s and 1950s style country boogie, and his brown skin and Latina/o features.

Yet to dwell on such contradictions serves to trivialize and diminish Williams' own genealogical roots, and the very cultural memories wrapped therein. In discussing my project with peers, academic colleagues, and personal friends, Big Sandy's name inevitably would arise, as many expressed an interest in the same seeming incongruity of a phenotypically Latino man adept at country and rockabilly music that I have overheard and observed for years in popular conversations amongst various audiences. In the primary texts I examined, including album reviews and concert coverage from sources produced within and outside the Rockabilly scene, I observed that while few had issue commenting on Big Sandy's age (as a young man playing old music) or his body size, most made no mention of his embodied phenotype, race, or ethnicity, the closest being a comparison of Williams to

another performer of color, Fats Domino.[24] The question of race is raised, however, whenever Williams is asked about his musical roots and influences as he often mentions and gives credit to his father and mother and the respective white and Mexican-American musical traditions inherited from both.

Williams' father, Robert James Williams, "a blond-haired, blue-eyed okie" and welder by trade met his mother, Angelina Avila, a second generation Mexican at a dance held at the long since demolished amusement park The Pike, in Long Beach, California. At the age of six, Williams' family relocated to a low-income housing tract in Orange County. As Williams has stressed throughout his career, his home was full of music: old country, rockabilly, and surf records of his father, and jump blues, doo-wop, and R&B records of his mother.[25] Echoing Gaye Johnson' challenge to claims that youth cultures naturally rebel against their parents, in a 1998 interview, Williams stated "some kids rebel against what their parents are into, but I really dug it." Even Williams' stage name reflects the raced and classed experiences of his family in working class Southern California. Williams had

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[24] Shaun Mather. "Big Sandy & His Fly-Rite Boys." *Rockabilly Hall of Fame*. March 2004. http://www.rockabillyhall.com/BigSandy1.html

[25] Writing of Chicana punk artist Alice Bag, Johnson writes "Bag's entrenchment in Mexican and Mexican-American popular cultural traditions and Sorrodeguy's characterization of a punk identity rooted in family, place, and language require a radical rethinking of the meaning of punk politics and their relationship to race and place." While neither of his parents were performers, his maternal grandfather was, playing in bands and touring the Tejano version of the Chitlin' circuit in the 1940s before becoming a traveling preacher with a live road show. Williams recalls "this was when Mexican border radio stations broadcast jazz, blues, and hillbilly music, inspiring musicians to create what would became known as rock'n'roll." See Gaye Theresa Johnson *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 25, and Vick Vale. "Big Sandy". *Swing the New Retro Renaissance*. (San Francisco. V-Search, 1998), 152.

inherited a work jacket once owned and worn by his uncle, Santiago, who labored as a mechanic. Deemed too long a name to fit on a patch by the manager, "Santiago" was shortened to "Santy," and subsequently misspelled as "Sandy" on the finished product. Bassist Wally Hershom suggested the moniker to Williams, who was looking for a stage name. Hershom, referencing the patch on Williams' jacket came up with the name Big Sandy.[26]

Attending Anaheim's Canyon High School in the early 1980s, Williams was introduced to the Rockabilly Revival scene of Southern California. On his 18th birthday, his mother bought him guitar lessons after seeing an ad promising a free guitar with the purchase of five lessons. In 1984, Williams joined the neo-rockabilly band, the Moondawgs before forming Robert Williams and The Rustin' Strings playing more traditional rockabilly at garage parties and local clubs. Williams' dissatisfaction with the neo-rockabilly sound was not only fueled by his familiarity with the original artists beloved by his parents, but also with the increased availability of reissued music being produced in the UK and distributed at

[26] Williams recalls, "There's a little bit of a story behind the jacket itself. It was given to me by my uncle Santiago, and he worked as a mechanic when he was a teenager, and the boss told him his name was too long to fit on a patch, so he said he'd shorten it to 'Santy.' And when the jacket came from the shop, it was misspelled as 'Sandy.' So people started calling him that. My cousin got the jacket, and when he was giving me some of his old clothes, the jacket was in that pile. So that's the whole Sandy connection." According to Williams, in addition to coming up with the name Big Sandy, Wally Hershom also drew on an old Nat King Cole song to come up with name "Fly Rite." Day. Holly. "Big Sandy and His Fly Rite Boys: From Somewhere Along the Endless Road." *Cosmik Debris* Issue 114. June/July 2005.

music stores like Tower Records.[27] Williams did meet considerable local success and popularity with the Moondawgs, playing packed houses at venues such as Radio City in Anaheim and riding high on the popularity of the Rockabilly Revival. Yet ultimately he felt musically restrained in the group, as his bandmates sought to cover familiar Rockabilly tunes while Williams sought to explore and draw upon the genealogies of lesser-known artists that he was passionate about.

While Williams played and developed mostly original material with Robert Williams and the Rustin' Strings, the Stray Cats moment quickly passed, venues began drying up and members of his band began leaving to pursue other interests in the late 1980s. Working with musicians mostly drawn from the band The Grave Diggers, Williams explored a late 1950s Johnny Powers sound with a new group named the SHAMBLES. It was with the SHAMBLES that Williams began playing his first gigs outside of Orange County, including the Anti-Club and the King King in Hollywood. The passing of Rockabilly's mass appeal may have diminished the number of venues performers could play, yet it did provide Williams the opportunity to gain bookings and play to audiences outside of his home base yearning for the kind of music he and a small handful of other bands still performed. With the departure of the SHAMBLES's guitarist, Williams opted to start over with a new band with bassist Wally Hershom instead of hiring a replacement.

The new band, dubbed Big Sandy and the Fly Rite Trio featured Williams on rhythm guitar and vocals, Hershom on bass, T.K. Smith, formerly of the Stingrays on lead guitar, and

[27] Williams credits friend and fellow record collector Jason Goodman for helping fuel his interest in vintage Americana including music, clothing and even architecture. Vick Vale. "Big Sandy". *Swing the New Retro Renaissance*. (San Francisco. V-Search, 1998), 154

Will B. on drums. Formed in 1988, the band recorded its first album on Dionysus Records in 1990. The album was entitled "Fly Right With…," and was recorded in a studio built by Hershom in his grandmother's tool shed using vintage equipment. Dionysus, a small label based out of Burbank and headed by Lee Josephs released the album on cassette and LP to limited distribution.[28] Williams, now working full time in a corporate mailroom was promoting his band from his place of work, surreptitiously copying flyers from the Xerox room and using the company phone line to secure bookings.

After their album was reviewed in an English fanzine, Big Sandy and the Fly Rite Trio were booked in 1991 for Tom Ingram's Hemsby Rock and Roll Weekend, at that time, the premiere Rockin' festival in the world. As Williams recalls:

> "When we arrived in Hemsby, I couldn't believe it; there were thousands of kids there. For the whole weekend it was like being in another world-everyone was completely dressed up. It was a full on festival, with record stalls filled with amazing records, clothing stalls, old cars and hot rods-everything…and we got treated like royalty. The money was great and people went nuts trying to pull you off the stage and waiting for your autograph. It was almost too much to take in all at once. When we came back to the "real world" in America, playing our little shows, it seemed like it had all been a dream."[29]

The band, lauded for their 'authentic' approach to the genre were embraced by European audiences, leading to consistent bookings year after year. However, the jarring contrast felt by Williams between his rock stardom overseas and his mundane life stateside has certainly been felt by subsequent performers in the Southern California Rockabilly scene, especially

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[28] Williams recalls "They had limited distribution, so it was surprising to me that someone on the other side of the country got their hands on one. I have vinyl copies of that, but what I don't have is one on cassette. I'm still searching for one." Jim Caligiuri. "25 Years of Big Sandy and His Fly Rite Boys." *The Austin Chronicle.* Wed. July 17th. 2013.

[29] Vick Vale. "Big Sandy". *Swing the New Retro Renaissance*. (San Francisco. V-Search, 1998), 156.

Latinas and Latinos. Despite the affective sense of empowerment performers may gain whilst commanding cheering crowds at a Rockabilly weekend festival, come Monday they are still due back at work, more often than not, in the service industry. While they may find adoration in Callafel Spain, Heathfield UK, or Munich Germany, at the end of the day, they have to return to a home where Latinas/os and the working poor are rendered to the margins and increasingly penalized.[30]

While Williams grew accustomed to performing for larger audiences on his European tour, nothing prepared him for playing large scale arenas as the opening act for Morrissey's 1992 US tour. With the original opening act, Gallon Drunk leaving to tour unexpectedly, Morrissey's band mates, including Boz Boorer originally of the neo-rockabilly band, the Pole Cats, suggested Big Sandy and the Fly Rite Trio as replacements. While Williams recalls the tour that greatly bolstered their recognition favorably, the hectic pace of the month long experience proved stressful for Smith, their guitarist, who left the group shortly after.

As Williams continued performing and recording throughout the 1990s, the band's music shifted and began digging deeper into the musical genealogies Williams and his band-mates hoped to explore. The band, no longer a 4 piece outfit, changed their name to Big Sandy and The Fly Rite Boys as drummer Bobby Trimble, steel guitar player Lee Jeffriess, pianist Carl Sonny Leland and guitarist Ashley Kingman joined the band. While Trimble had attended high school with Williams, Jeffriess, Leland, and Kingman were all born and raised in the UK. Through their invocation of western swing and pre-rockabilly country

[30] The 1990s, after all, was the era of NAFTA, welfare reform and California's proposition 187, while the 2000's lays claim to increased rates of deportations, further weakening of collective bargaining laws, California's Schwarzenegger budget cuts and Arizona's SB 1070.

tinged music, Williams called up a white working class genealogy and history of Los Angeles largely overlooked. As bay area DJ "Joe Sixpack" claimed, the Music of Big Sandy and the Fly Rite Boys could be positioned in the lineage of artists like Merle Travis, Cliffie Stone and Joe Maphis.

In many ways, their music could be seen in conversation with, and debate against the middle class sensibilities that had come to dominate the neo-swing scene of the mid and late 1990s. An offshoot of the Rockabilly scene, neo-swing through bands like Royal Crown Revue and bars like the Club Deluxe in San Francisco or The Derby in Los Feliz drew upon markers of a film noir-tinged 1940s-ness. Fronted by white former punk from New York named Eddie Nichols and Watts' Mando Dorame, a Chicano saxophonist influenced by Big Jay McNeely, the sounds of Royal Crown Revue blended a mix of horn driven American roots music including swing, jump blues, doo wop and Latin music. Propelled by movies like *Swingers* and *Swing Kids,* the "Jump Jive and Wail" Gap television commercial, the commercial success of Squirrel Nut Zippers' song "Hell" plus heavy rotation of neo-swing bands like The Cherry Poppin' Daddies and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy on MTV, swing became a national fad that swept the nation in the mid to late 1990s. Local scenes were dominated by white middle & upper-class enthusiasts, many of them college students and young professionals. As swing grew in popularity, it strayed further and further from the raced and classed memory of Louis Jordan, Cab Calloway and Billie Holiday whose music was

appropriated by artists, but given a glossy updated make-over in the production studio to fit what was quickly becoming a formulaic approach to neo-swing.[31]

Big Sandy's foray into western swing both compliments and contests the neo-swing moment. Without a doubt, a healthy portion of Williams' CD sales in the 1990s was due in part to his recognition as a "retro" artist popular with swing dancers, which in turn supported the independent record labels he recorded under including the UK's No Hit Records and Oakland's High Tone. Yet, the working class aesthetics, and the country-tinged Bob Willis inspired sounds of the band served as classed reminders to a listenership: a reminder embraced by Rockabilly, yet often eschewed by a popular audience. While many neo-swing bands called it quits after the scene died out, Williams' country swing outfit continued on, sustained in part by the rockabilly scene locally and abroad.

Williams' solo album, "Dedicated To You" draws upon the musical genealogies inherited from his mother, namely the soulful R&B later dubbed the eastside sound. Released in 1998, Williams' "Dedicated to You" and his forays into R&B and later doo-wop with the group The Lonely Blue Boys helped to establish a musical landscape within the Rockabilly scene that was well familiar to Los Angeles and Southern California Raza. The album is a virtual love letter to predominantly African American Los Angeles based vocal

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[31] In a conversation with multimedia artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Josh Kun writes "a perfect example of this is the song "Zoot Suit Riot" by this band of white swingers from Oregon, the Cherry Poppin' Daddies. . .this particular song is amazing for the way it uses style- a kind of neo, depoliticized pachuquismo- to erase not just the people of color who inspire the hit, but the histories of racism so overtly embedded in it." Gómez-Peña concurs, remarking that the patrons of Siegel's, a zoot suit store in the then rapidly gentrifying Mission district of San Francisco, had shifted from brown to white. Gómez-Peña offers "It's a cultural gentrification where culture is reproducing the same process that is happening in urban settings." Guillermo Gómez-Peña. *Dangerous Border Crossers.* (New Jersey, Routledge, 2000), p 169.

groups, including appearances by the Calvanes on "Every Where I Go" and Dewey Terry of Don and Dewey on "I'm Leavin' It All Up To You."

As Williams' career progressed, he felt less bound to rigid borders placed upon the genre, recording songs such as the late 1960s Stax influenced "Slippin' Away" on 2006's Turntable Matinee or the ska inspired "Baby Baby Me" and "I Know I've Loved You Before" in 2013's "What A Dream It's Been." As Williams puts it:

> There was a time, though, when there were self-imposed musical boundaries. In our early days we restricted ourselves to what we thought fans expected to hear from us. Over the years, we've come to be more comfortable with playing whatever moves us. It's an approach that seems so obvious to me now ... but it took a few years to realize that this was the best way to go.[32]

In some ways, Williams has been able to have his cake and eat it too. He is still considered a traditionalist and lauded for his and his band's authenticity. Yet his longevity has afforded him the opportunities to perform, record and draw from the musical genealogies he has inherited.

Wild Records

"We're not 1956! We're 1976!"
-Reb Kennedy[33]

Few bands speak to Latinas/os arrival and mark on the international Rockin' scene quite like those signed to Reb Kennedy's Wild Records. Established in 2001, Wild Records has grown into a force to be reckoned with, both locally and abroad. Wild currently is home

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[32] Captain America. "Big Sandy & His Fly Rite Boys: An Interview with the Big Man Himself" *Alibi*. Vol 20 no. 27. July 7-13, 2011.

[33] Dan Monick. "Luis and the Wildfires: Never Not had a Hangover." *L.A. Record*. Dec 17th 2009. http://larecord.com/interviews/2009/12/17/luis-and-the-wildfires-interview-never-not-had-a-hangover

to a growing stable of over 17 bands, predominantly made up of working class Latina and Latino musicians from the greater Los Angeles area. Organized more like a family than a business, Kennedy serves as the label's patriarch singularly overseeing the recording, promotion and bookings of the majority of his bands, as well as the day to day operation of the label including mundane tasks such as answering emails and even putting records in sleeves for sale. Shows promoted by Kennedy, as well as performances booked by other promoters are popular draws locally, but immensely successful overseas where Wild has developed an intense following. Yet it all started with a single 45' record featuring Lil' Luis y Los Wild Teens fronted by Pacoima's Luis Arriaga.

While Arriaga was hardly the first Latino to play 1950s style rock and roll long after the genre's midcentury heyday, the global popularity of his band Lil' Luis y Los Wild Teens and his role in building Reb Kennedy's Wild Records helped usher in and cement Raza Rockabilly as a Los Angeles phenomenon in the early 2000s and beyond. Born in San Fernando and raised in Pacoima, Arriaga grew up in a working class Spanish-speaking home, picking up English as a second language from school and friends. Like many Southern California Mexican-American teenagers in the 1990s, Arriaga gravitated to the look, sound and feel of Rockabilly. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Arriaga picked up a guitar and started his own band. As Lil' Luis, Arriaga was backed by Los Wild Teens consisting of Angel Hernandez on Drums, Richard Coronado on lead guitar, Alex Vargas and Omar Romero on bass, and Alex "Howlin' Al" Cadena and David Acosta on sax.[34]

[34] The constant members of Lil' Luis y Los Wild Teens remained Arriaga and Hernandez until the group disbanded, and reformed as Luis and the Wildfires, and even the earliest formations of the band would feature different players depending on who was available for

Arriaga and Kennedy first met after the latter drove from San Francisco to Downey after seeing a Xeroxed flyer of the band's gig promising a night of "Mexican Rock and Roll" in 2000. Kennedy, an Irish North Dubliner from a working class family who grew up in London had worked as a teacher and child care specialist by day, and a DJ and Rockin' promoter by night in the UK.[35] Like many disaffected youth in the 1970s, Kennedy was a punk during the genre's first wave, eventually working at Rough Trade Records, an independent London-based record label established in 1978. A self-professed vinyl junkie, Reb dove into American roots music, finding punk's raw and raucous energy retroactively infused in 1950s rock and roll records like "Jungle Rock" and "Lil Lil." Yet by the end of the 1990s, he relocated to San Francisco, in part, because he felt that the spark in London's Rockin' scene had since extinguished and was a shadow of its former self. Despite the relatively diminutive size of the Rockabilly scene of San Francisco at the turn of the century, Kennedy found success booking monthly shows featuring original acts. Yet, he sought to promote a sound that was vibrant and fiery. As Kennedy describes:

> "Originally I started working with original recording acts, Hayden Thomas, Narvel Felts, Jack Earles; all the original guys, which worked very well. But for me, paying homage to the originals was one thing, but I wanted something new, something fresh, so I decided to find something fresh."[36]

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specific gigs. The names listed here were the credited personnel on their 2003 release, *Rip It Up*.

[35] Ironically, Kennedy notes, his experience working in child care and special needs would later help in managing and mentoring Wild's musicians, as many turned to him for guidance in dealing with interpersonal issues far outside the realm of music. Reb Kennedy, interview with author, Pasadena, CA, April 17th, 2013

[36] Reb Kennedy, interview with author, Pasadena, CA, April 17th, 2013

Kennedy began making monthly forays to Los Angeles with his wife Jenny, getting booked for DJ gigs and checking out bands. At the height of the Rudolpho's moment, Kennedy was largely disappointed with Los Angeles Rockabilly for emulating the London scene that he had long grown weary of.

While many Latinas/os embraced the British model, Kennedy disliked the elevation of recorded music and deejays over live acts, as well as the doo-wop and swinging vocal music that was popular with dancers and was driving sonic landscape of the scene at the time. For Kennedy, Los Angeles Rockabilly of the early 2000s mirrored the stale predictability he had left the London scene for. While not technically proficient, what Kennedy saw in Lil' Luis Y Los Wild Teens' chaotic performance was a spark of raw talent that could eventually germinate. As he recalled:

> "What impressed me was not the musicianship—they were atrocious! . . .But there was fantastic energy in what they were trying to do! It went back to the first wave of punk. It was the most honest energy I'd seen from a band."[37]

The band became Wild Records' first signed act.

Under the guidance of Kennedy, Arriaga and his bandmates reverse engineered familiar Mexican rock & roll numbers into fresher, rawer, and grittier versions of those of the original artists. While Arriaga drew upon the genealogies inherited from Mexican rock & roll, the unique ways in which they interpolated bands like Los Gliders, Los Teen Tops and others provided Raza Rockabilly with a soundtrack that was familiar enough to draw upon shared genealogies, but fresh enough to speak to their contemporary moment and mark on history. "La Rebeldona," a song the band had largely dismissed, was released as the band's

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[37] Chris Ziegler. "Mexican Revolution: Reb Kennedy's Wild Records, The Most Important L.A. Indie Label You've Never Heard Of." *LA Times Magazine.* June 2010.

first recording at the urging of Kennedy. As originally performed and recorded by Los Gliders, "La Rebeldona" is a pop surf rock tune driven by lead singer Carlos Guevara's smooth vocals. As performed by Lil' Luis y Los Wild Teens, the same song is transformed into a gritty stroller featuring Arriaga's growling vocals and Carlos Gomez's lo-fi guitar work.

Released as a 45 record, "La Rebeldona" completely sold out at a time when CDs reigned supreme. The band recorded a full-length album entitled "Rip It Up" in 2003. Black and white photos in the liner notes posed the Latino band members in slick black leather jackets and greased hair stripping a Ford thunderbird. The cover art featured the band behind a gated fence meant to evoke bars of a jail cell with the subheading "Wild Juvenile Rock n' Roll." Amidst interpolations of English language rock and rollers like Jerry Lee Lewis' "Wild One," and Florian Monday and his Mondos' "Rip it, Rip it Up" are Spanish language covers of Los Teen Tops' "Presumida," Los Beatniks' "Mucho Amor," and Los Boppers' "Porque Soy Rebelde." The majority of tracks on the album consist of original material, including "Delincuente," "Oye Mi Chiquita" and "Solo No Quiero Estar" which are penned in Spanish and performed in the raucous late 1950s style developed by the band. Lil' Luis and his band's look, sound and attitude spoke to the way Chicana/o and Latina/o young adults, many of them immigrants, sought to shape the music of the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene into a soundscape that was appealing and useful to them. Far from being just a band in the right place at the right time, Lil' Luis y Los Wild Teens under the guidance of Kennedy were instrumental architects in shaping the sonic landscape of Los Angeles Rockabilly.

This infusion of a band's unique synergy into familiar and not-so familiar vintage guitar driven rock genres would become one of Wilds Records' hallmarks and drive their popularity locally and abroad. Within the greater Los Angeles area of the early 2000s, Lil' Luis y Los Wild Teens' open engagement with material more familiar with transnational immigrant Latina/os than with third and fourth generation Chicanos speaks to the broader shifts in the make-up of the local Latina/o community as immigration status rose to be as pertinent an identity as race, ethnicity and gender given the rise in nativist sentiment and anti-immigrant measures reignited in the 1990s. Described in Eric Zolov's book, *Refried Elvis*, Mexican rock and roll bands of the late 1950s and 1960s re-interpreted popular American rock and roll songs in Spanish for a middle class urban male audience.[38] While Zolov bases this claim on the population buying records and attending concerts, the proliferation and continued rotation of these songs via radio expanded the consumption of Mexican rock and roll beyond the middle class and beyond national borders. Although decades old, songs such as Los Teen Tops' "La Plaga" and "El Rock de la Carcel" can still be heard in radio rotation in Los Angeles, especially on the Univision-owned station KRCD/KRCV "El Recuerdo" a Spanish language "oldies" station.

Yet while the original rendition of these songs reflected the increasingly British influence upon rock music in the early 1960s, Arriaga's band reverse engineered the songs, suturing the Spanish language lyrics to re-arranged pre-Beatle instrumentation. Arriaga added a gritty snarl to his delivery far removed from the almost pop sounding clarity of the

[38] Zolov writes "Spanish language rocanrol came to embody the modernizing aspirations of a middle class in ascendency, but stripped of the offensive gestures of defiance that defined the original." Erick Zolov. *Refried Elvis The Rise of The Mexican Counterculture.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 11.

original Spanish language recordings. Complimentarily, Los Angeles based Latina/o DJs began adding Spanish language music to their rotation, including Roberto Carlos's "Es Prohibido Fumar" from 1964, Los Loud Jets' "Sputnik," and Los Milos' "Pitagoras" among others.[39] For Raza Rockabilly in Los Angeles, bands like Lil' Luis y Los Wild Teens provided a soundscape that was familiar, but also uniquely their own and created by their peers. Omar & The Stringpoppers and Dusty Chance &All-Nighters, two rockabilly outfits who also infused their own unique sound into traditional genres, followed Arriaga's band.

Wild's stable grew through the 2000s, comprised mostly of Los Angeles based bands with a majority of Latina/o musicians including San Fernando's Chuy and the Bobcats, blues rockers The Hi-Strung Ramblers, R&B and soul diva Gizzelle, Salvadoran-American Santos, and the rockin' country sounds of the Vargas Bros. Kennedy, well familiar with the networks of Rockin' festival promoters and music dealers secured bookings and CD and record distributions for his bands throughout Europe. Wild artists gained a strong following overseas, consistently selling more records and playing to exponentially larger audiences than in the United States. Wild's bands, consisting of young working class Latinas/os from greater Los Angeles quickly became the most sought after acts from the United States. Yet, this hardly transformed into commercial success for the bands or label. Nearly all of Wild musicians work day jobs to support themselves and their families. As explored in Elise Salomon's *Los Wild Ones*, the money Kennedy makes as the label's head is put back into to

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[39] Vito Lorenzi recalls hosting all Spanish language record hops at Rudolpho's, as well as booking a show with one of the few surviving U.S. Latino rock & roll performers from the 1950s. He states "I promoted a few nights that were dedicated to 1950s rock en Español, I also had Chan Romero. He lives in Palm Springs, but he still rocks. He's older, but he's still good!" Vito Lorenzi, interview with author, Chicago, Il, March 15th, 2012 .

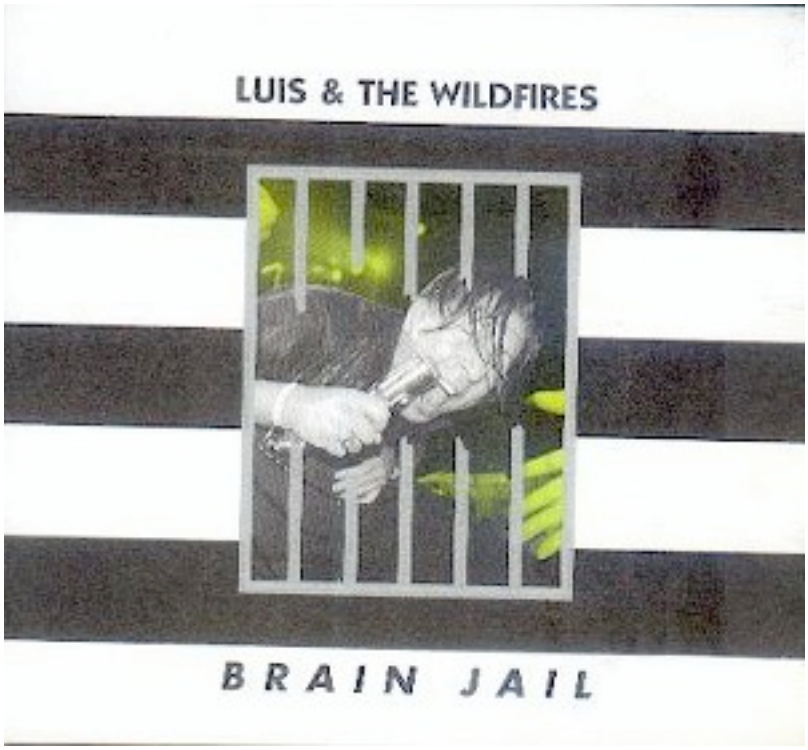
the label itself as his family's income largely relies on Jenny Lin-Kennedy. In addition to working a day job, Lin-Kennedy also serves as Wild's coordinator of retail sales and is responsible for the label's website.[40]

Many of Wild's musicians from the early years have remained with the label, both out of their love for the music as well as the bonds they developed with each other after nearly a decade of touring and recording. Many of them serve in different capacities in each other's bands as well. In addition to fronting his own band, Alex Vargas also plays bass for Gizzelle (Gizzelle Becerra), Santos and the Hi-Strung Ramblers. Victor Mendez, who plays bass for Marlene Perez's Rhythm Shakers, also plays bass for Omar and the Stringpoppers and piano for Gizzelle. Many serve as mentors to the label's up and coming artists. Romero, a full time barber also serves as the label's chief engineer. All of Wilds' releases are now recorded in their studio, a one-room shack in Kennedy's backyard in Altadena. Engineered by Omar Romero using a secret rig, the recordings are captured on analog 8-track and then flipped over to16 track. Recording sessions are typically held on Sundays, the only day that most of their young working class musicians consistently have off. Wild is known for recording their artists in a single 14-16 hour day. While considerable prep work goes into a

[40] Among the small businesses that cater to the Rockabilly scene, a handful are equally helmed between a married couple or partnership, including El Pachuco Zoot Suits/La Pachuca, My Baby Jo and Swanky's. However, during the course of this study, I did encounter at least three situations where a husband or man partner has embarked on a seemingly financially risky business venture related to some aspect of the Rockabilly scene due in part to an assured safety net provided by the steady income of a wife or woman partner. While an uncommon narrative, the gendered implication of a male partner being afforded the opportunity to pursue interest- related work, while a female partner is not is worth noting.

recording, Reb, who produces all of the recordings, is hardly aiming for perfection. Mistakes and flubs are often included in a band's final recording.[41]

Figure 3.



Arriaga continues to perform, having since disbanded the Wild Teens and re-forming a new band called Luis and the Wildfires with Angel Hernandez returning on drums, Victor Mendez on bass, and Santiago Bermudez on lead guitar. Their album *Brain Jail* caught the ear of Billy Miller and Miriam Linna (the original drummer of The Cramps) at the Rockin' 50s Fest in Green Bay who re-released the album through their label Norton Records in 2007. *Brain Jail* remains one of Wild's few commercial successes. With the Wildfires, Arriaga

[41] Kennedy states "I always want the right take. There can be a lot of fuck ups on the right take. The band can be out of tune or off time. I want to get the band past their fear and start to play with heart and soul." Nicholas Pell. "Wild Records Keeps Rockabilly Fresh ." *LA Weekly*, September 26, 2013. http://www.laweekly.com/westcoastsound/2013/09/26/wild-records-keeps-rockabilly-fresh (accessed June 20, 2014).

continues to explore a sound largely untouched by "Rockabilly" artists: early 1960s British inspired rock & roll. In 2010, they recorded a Spanish language version of the Rolling Stones "Get off My Cloud" for Norton's Ep *Their Hispanic Majesties Request*, featuring music inspired by the Rolling Stones performed by Latino artists.

Of Arriaga's body of work, few speak to the diversity of genealogical roots that Raza Rockabilly draws from quite like "Dame Una Señal," a song he penned in 2006. Arriaga was contracted to work with Cesar Rosas of Los Lobos on Los Straightjackets's *Rock En Español Vol. I* to compose a Spanish language translation of Brenton Wood's "Gimme a Little Sign," a song that Arriaga had grown up listening to in Pacoima.[42] "Gimme a Little Sign," resignified as "Dame Una Señal" was recorded for the 2007 album with Robert Williams appearing on lead vocals. Taken as just another track on a musically solid album, the recording is not particularly groundbreaking. Nevertheless, the production of "Dame Una Señal" brings contemporary Raza Rockabilly in Los Angeles full circle, and speaks to its impact on American popular culture. With Los Lobos, Cesar Rosas laid the groundwork for generations of Chicana/o and Latina/o roots rockers. In some circles, Los Lobos are recognized as the original Chicano Rockabilly band playing in Los Angeles alongside contemporary bands and collaborators like the Blasters years prior to the stateside landing of the European influenced Rockabilly Revival. While Los Lobos repertoire draws from a

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[42] Arriaga recalls "They gave me the address and one day's notice—'Can you come tomorrow?' I also translated Barbara Lynn—'You'll Lose a Good Thing.' Freddy Fender did it too but I did my own. . . So they took me down to the house and asked me to do a few translations and who opens the door but Cesar with the goatee and sunglasses? I'm like, 'Ohmygodohmygodohmygodohmygod.'" Dan, Monick. "Luis and the Wildfires: Never Not Had a Hangover." *L.A. Record*, December 17, 2009. http://larecord.com/interviews/2009/12/17/luis-and-the-wildfires-interview-never-not-had-a-hangover (accessed June 20, 2014).

broad swath, their rockabilly and 1950s rock and roll inspired music, including 1985's "We're Gonna Rock," 1987's "Shakin' Shakin' Shakes," as well as their work on the soundtrack to Luis Valdez's 1987 film "La Bamba" cemented their relationship to rockabilly both within the Chicana/o and Latina/o community as well as the world of American roots music. The East Los Angeles sensibilities they brought to their performances presaged what Raza Rockabilly bands would be doing a decade or two later.

The choice of a Brenton Wood song is a callback to a genealogical root little recognized or understood outside of the Chicana/o community of greater Los Angeles. Wood, a former track star from Compton, California still performs, largely to Chicana/o and Latina/o audience singing a small catalog of songs he made famous in the late 1960s including "The Oogum Boogum Song," "Me and You," "Baby You Got It" and the song that Arriaga translated, "Gimme a Little Sign." Considered a part of the canon of lowrider music, or the eastside sound, a Spanish language cover or "Gimme a Little Sign" is seemingly a strange choice for Los Straightjackets, a Nashville based surf rock band made up of white musicians. Yet given the involvement and collaboration of Rosas and Williams, who as previously detailed, readily pays homage to Southern California's Black and brown rhythm & blues and soul roots, the song is a fitting tribute. As Big Sandy, Williams tore the roof off when he closed out his set fronting Los Straightjackets by singing Arriaga's composition of "Dame Una Señal" at the 16th Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly weekender. By the end of the song, the crowd, predominantly Chicana/os and Latina/os well familiar with the

original and quick to pick up on the Arriaga's lyrics in Spanish joined Williams in singing the song's signature refrain.[43]

Now in their thirties, Arriaga and his peers largely remain stable elements at Wild. Romero, now a small business owner, employs a handful of his labelmates at "Vinnie's" his Silverlake barbershop.[44] Well aware of the generational shifts and the limits of Rockabilly's sites of leisure, Kennedy regularly books performances for Wild bands at seemingly unlikely locations, such as the Santa Fe Swap Meet, targeting new audiences be they already interested in the music of Wild Records or not. The Swap Meet, as well as Wild's own shows held at the Observatory in Santa Ana are all-ages, attracting mostly Chicana/o and Latina/o rockabilly fans too young to get into a Rockabilly show, which are almost exclusively hosted at bars and nightclubs for adults only. In many ways, Wild Records has transformed into a lifestyle brand, a rebranding of a Chicana/o or Latina/o re-inscription of the "rockabilly hepkat" with scores of Raza, mostly men, looking to take up the rebellious and hard partying attitude portrayed through stage performances, CDs and YouTube clips.

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[43] The original refrain, as sung by Wood includes the lines "Just give me some kind of sign girl, (oh my baby) to show me that your mine girl(alright) just gimme some kind of sign girl (oh my darling) to show me that you're mine girl (alright)." Arriaga's interpretation of the lyrics are equally catchy: "Dame una Señal, (o mi neña), y dime que me amas (oh yeah), Dame una Señal, (o mi neña), y dime que me amas (alright!)."

[44] Barbering and hairdressing are common forms of employment in the Raza Rockabilly scene. Period correct and period inspired hairdos take an exorbitant amount of skill and experience to create and those that offer them have developed niche followings in the greater Los Angeles area. Historically, the barbershop and beauty salons of people of color, although adhering to the strictest of spatial gender divisions, have served as spaces of networking, working class composition and self-valorization. See Quincy T. Mills. *Cutting Along the Color Line: Black Barbers and Barbershops in America.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

A film festival favorite, producer Jessica Golden and director Elise Salomon's 2013 documentary *Los Wild Ones* has delivered a fair share of mainstream attention to Wild Records, and by extension the Chicana/os and Latina/os of the Los Angeles Rockabilly scene. Filmed over a seven month period, The film is remarkably candid, raising questions regarding Kennedy's autocracy, but also detailing his day to day life managing his de facto family of musicians while his own father passes away. Within Salomon's film are sub-narratives focusing on Romero's endeavor to open a barber shop to be a better provider to his son, Arriaga's struggle with a job loss, the complicated relationship between bandmates Perez and Mendez, and Becerra's balance of her commitments to her daughter and to the record label. Wrapped within these narratives are class and gender-based dynamics familiar to post-industrial Chicanas/os and Latinas/os. While these day-to-day struggles were new to audiences at independent film festivals such as South by Southwest, the International Documentary Film Festival and the Upton Film Festival, they were all too familiar to those in the tightly knit Rockabilly scene of greater Los Angeles. Kennedy states:

> "Rockabilly appeals to a working class person for the same reason punk does. If you're a working class person with aspirations, this is something you can do. Our listeners know that Omar Romero gets out of bed every day and cuts hair for eight hours. They know that they're always going to need a job. But if they start playing in a band, they can make a statement with music and they can see the world."[45]

While genealogical roots and artists' creative agency are crucial aspects that shape the soundscape of Los Angeles Rockabilly, it is also the familiar raced, classed and gendered experiences that resonate on stage and fill that music with meaning.

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[45] Pell, Nicholas. "Wild Records Keeps Rockabilly Fresh." LA Weekly. September 26, 2013. http://www.laweekly.com/westcoastsound/2013/09/26/wild-records-keeps-rockabilly-fresh

Figure 4.

Vicky Tafoya: Southern California's Doo-Wop Queen

Based in the Inland Empire, Vicky Tafoya is the scene's reigning diva of doo-wop and rhythm & blues. Performing her first major gig in 1989, Tafoya is more than just a singer, her ability to emote and transmit lyrical content, be it teen angst in "So Young" or sheer joy in "Jump Children" captivates audiences. That ability is combined with the uncanny knack to not only convincingly sound like original artists, especially Frankie Lymon, but to also carry key inflections and subtle changes to place her own unique stamp on the music. Tafoya's performances speak to the cultural memory and legacy of women of color wielding a powerful stage presence. As a multi-faceted text, Tafoya's use of music cues in audiences affectively and cognitively to a sense of historical place as opposed to nostalgia. That sense of historical place made all the more significant by being inextricably linked to a sense of belonging amongst loved ones, and in the case of the artist, her relationship with her mother.

Born and raised in Orange County, Tafoya was the youngest of twelve children. Her father, a mechanic who worked on the replica tramp steamers on the jungle cruise ride in Disneyland passed away when she was very young, leaving her mother Eleanor, to raise her children on her own.[46] With her brothers caught up in gang life in her neighborhood in Santa Ana, Tafoya recalls her mother striving to divert her away from the pain of street life. She remembers:

> "We grew up in a bad barrio, (and) she fed me a lot of '40s stuff -she saved old articles, and she would always read them to me. I knew the cholo scene, and some of my brothers were totally full blown into that. I saw the bad and I knew what I didn't want, some of my brothers got hurt, my family got hurt and my mother asked me 'is that what you want'?"

Channeled into school and singing, Tafoya recalls her mother providing support, love and guidance as she grew up.

Tafoya began singing in school choirs in elementary school at the request of her mother. Yet in sixth grade at the urging of her music teacher, she performed on her own for the first time. Ever supportive, her mother took her to a local thrift store to pick out a dress and shoes for her performance.[47] Receiving a standing ovation, this performance was the first for Tafoya that allowed her to work through painful shyness. At Saddleback High

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[46] With land readily and cheaply available in Orange County, Disneyland was built over a 160 acre orange grove in Anaheim California and opened to the public in 1955. The theme park has since grown to be Orange County's largest private employer, making tourism a powerhouse industry there, employing scores of Latinas/os as service workers. In addition to servicing and repairing the boats in the jungle cruise ride, Tafoya's father also worked as a laborer during the park's construction, paving Main Street. One of her cherished memories is of a turquoise lunch bench her father brought home after they were discontinued from park.

[47] Tafoya recalls, "It was very memorable, my mom took me to the thrift store and picked out the most tacky dress, and beige clogs! It was tacky, but I loved it. I didn't wear dresses, all I wore was jeans and cords. She always wanted just the best for me." Vicky Tafoya, interview with author, Claremont, CA, May 22, 2013.

School in the late 1980s, Tafoya continued to sing, often joining and lending her talent to student organizations including MEChA and the Black Student Union in which she starred in a production of Dreamgirls.[48]

In her later years in high school, Tafoya began attending shows featuring soulful vocal performers, many of them original west coast vocal acts that led her to seek out shows dedicated to doo-wop. Founded in 1988, The Doo Wop Society of Southern California promoted dozens of shows over their 18 years of operation. The shows were frequented largely by an older crowd, many of whom were teens during doo-wop's heyday of the 1950s and early 1960s and had enjoyed the music first-hand. Her older sisters and mother introduced Tafoya to vintage vocal recordings a key piece of an eclectic mix of records left to her.

> "There was a little record player upstairs. There was maybe five comp(ilation)s, some of them were theirs' and some of them were my moms. There was Frankie Lymon, the Four Seasons, there was an Ella (compilation), There was a Julie London (compilation). It was an eclectic mix, but I learned (the songs), even "My Boyfriends Back." (We had) The K-tel (records), none of them had covers!"[49]

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[48] Tafoya recalls, "they wanted me to be part of the Dreamgirls! The teacher said you can't be in it unless you are in the drama class. Ms. Depaul (the teacher), gave me improvisation activities. It was so hard. But I finally did that, but they (BSU) did a lot of beautiful stuff from the thirties. I had no idea how to sing that song (from Dreamgirls) -it was tough-, I hadn't even seen Dreamgirls! It was definitely one of the hardest songs I sang at that time. I definitely done a lot harder ones since then!" Vicky Tafoya, interview with author, Claremont, CA, May 22, 2013.

[49] As the youngest of twelve siblings, most of Tafoya's older sisters had moved out, leaving their records behind. Known primarily for their record series, K-tel was a corporation peddling a variety of goods through television advertisements in the 1970s and 1980s. Best known for their cheaply pressed but affordable compilation albums K-tel offered those with limited incomes, including youth and working class families, access to a variety of musical forms and genres. One blogger recalls, "When I was a kid, K-tel Records published the sorts of compilations, on glorious, shiny vinyl, that meant I could get big hits of the day (or at least the day before) with my meager allowance. Well, if my sister and I pooled our allowances we

This eclectic musical upbringing is not an unfamiliar narrative for many Chicanas/os and Latinas/os growing up in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, especially amongst Raza Rockabilly fans who often attributed an exposure to multiple musical genres by older siblings as influential in a later appreciation for music of the Rockabilly scene.

Attending doo-wop shows around southern California, Tafoya saw and met many of the vocalists familiar to her from records. As she recalls, the people she met formed a veritable who's who of African-American and ethnic white vocal artists of the 1950s, "Vito and the Salutations, Jimmy Merchant and the Teenagers" Tafoya states, "and they would turn to me and ask 'who is this kid?' How does she knows this (music)?'" As Tafoya remembers, many of the performers from the 1950s, although older, were still able to perform regularly in the late 1980s.

Although Tafoya was attending the shows, she did not begin performing at them until the 1990s. As she shares:

> "In '89 or '90, there was a promotion called The Classic New York Doo Wop Show. They had awesome shows with doo-woppers and girl groups, and you would stand in line and see people with "Wanderers" satin jackets! I used to sing in the aisle (while waiting in line). I talked to Tony (the promoter) and asked him if I could sing on stage. He told me, 'keep dreaming kid.' However, there was a gentleman named Bruce who gave me his card! I was so excited I was jumping out of my skin! I talked to him and I got on the show in 1991, it was the Flamingos, the Spaniels and the Capris, I sang a tribute to Frankie Lymon. Before we went out, he (Tony) told my story, about how I used to sing in the halls. I was verklemmt, It was awesome!"

Tafoya's pride in this moment speaks more to than just getting a lucky break. The recognition not just of her singing prowess, but also of her love and knowledge of doo-wop

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could get a record from time to time." Legmabel Not-Pop, "What Ever Happened to K-Tel Records?" http://music-industry.squidoo.com/what-ever-happened-to-k-tel-records

and 1950s R&B by the pioneers of the genre marks a coming of age for Tafoya. As a young woman, Tafoya continued to perform on the doo-wop circuit as well as small scale local private and public gigs around southern California.[50] Since Tafoya did not drive, her sister took her to gigs.

By 2000, Tafoya, together with her husband Vince Maldonado formed and fronted her band, Vicky Tafoya and the Big Beat. Speaking of recruiting musicians, Tafoya states, "They were different friends of mine who I have had all my life. We would have backyard parties and hangout. I would bring up songs and we started to play them in the backyard." Crafting the band's look, her backing musicians donned vintage style suits to match Tafoya, who had already adopted a vintage aesthetic for her stage presence. Aided by a duet on Big Sandy's 1998 cover of Oscar McLollie and Jeannette Baker's "Hey Girl, Hey Boy" Tafoya was making a name for herself in the Rockabilly scene, performing at the Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly Festival Car Show in 2001. They recorded a short six track album in 2003, featuring covers of Bill Haley's "Rock-A-Beatin' Boogie", the Students' "I'm So Young," Chuck Berry's "Around and Around," Roy Tyson's "Not Too Young to Sing the Blues," an original composition "Lover Blues" as well as "Jump Children" originally performed by the all-women big band, the International Sweethearts of Rhythm. Recorded in a house in Southern California, the EP was released and distributed by El Toro Records, a small

[50] Tafoya added, "A lot of (shows) were not in LA. We played oddball places, a lot of private shows because they pay. We played Maggie's Pub, we played at The Hop. We even opened for Dion and The Belmonts! We found a lot of echo in the kitchen and we asked to sing, there. Then all of a sudden somebody walks around the corner saying, "Hey, you guys are from the old school! Sing me something!" It was Dion with his guitar! Vicky Tafoya, interview with author, Claremont, CA, May 22, 2013.

Rockabilly record label based in Spain. The CD, as well as Tafoya's reputation as a skilled performer led to increased booking on the international Rockabilly circuit, playing the Screamin' Festival in Spain, and the Rockin' Race Festival in the United Kingdom.[51]

Vicky Tafoya and the Big Beat became a popular draw in the Rockabilly scene given the band was one of few rhythm & blues vocal groups in the scene, and quite unique given that Tafoya, as a woman, fronted the group. As argued by Sara Cohen, rock & roll music is neither naturally masculine, nor expresses a predetermined male culture. Rather, rock, and by extension rockabilly, is actively *produced* as male through the everyday practices that make up that activity system.[52] As detailed throughout this dissertation, promoter and performer networks are made up of almost exclusively men. Additionally, musical instruction and mentoring is largely a gendered practice among men. While there are dozens of original vintage recordings featuring women musicians in regular rotation in the Rockabilly canon, there are hundreds of recordings featuring solely men.

Tafoya in her stage persona plays with gender norms and expectations. Countering the de-sexualization of full figured women, Tafoya crafts a hyper feminine pachuca inspired

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[51] Regarding the El Toro recordings, Tafoya stated "at the end of '03-'04 we recorded that (album) at somebody's house. It was ok, but I wanted a bigger sound. We have yet to record a full-length album. People like the CD -people in other countries- they always want "Angel Baby," I am so tired of it. I like that song, but I don't want it to be my legacy! Same with "So Young." I've written so many new songs but we haven't recorded them." Vicky Tafoya, interview with author, Claremont, CA, May 22, 2013.

[52] Of the indie rock scene in Liverpool, Cohen states "rock is produced as male through the everyday activities that comprise the scene; through the sensual, emotional aspects of the scene; and through the system of ideas that inform the scene, including the contested concept of 'scene' itself." Sara, Cohen. "Men Making a Scene: Rock Music and the Production of Gender" in *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender.* For more Liverpool's indie rock scene, see Cohen's *Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the Making.* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991).

look, with exaggeratedly ornate hair and make-up, often paired with a fitted eye catching blouse and drape zoot suit slacks.[53] In crafting her stage attire, Tafoya states:

> "A lot of people argue with me in my family, but I was an ugly kid. I was very plain and shy. My mom would talk to me and say "I got you a little lip gloss." And then she got me some mascara. She told me 'I know a lot of people (performers) fix themselves up.' I started curling my own hair, sometimes it's been really big and sometimes it's not been so nice. I put a flower in my hair, put a little sequins in them and my husband said you should sell them and I do! My mom says, I love it! You really come a long way!"

Harkening to the dangerous sexuality of the pachuca, Tafoya dons draped pachuco slacks with thick-soled bluchers.[54] She also often switches gendered voices in on stage, easily covering Frankie Lymon's "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" or Rosie and The Originals "Angel Baby."

As the Big Beat gained momentum around Southern California, Tafoya developed side projects to explore complementary musical interests, including the Redondos, an acapella doo wop group with other Southern Californian singers. The project started with a chance encounter with Royal Crown Revue frontman Eddie Nichols. Propelled by appearances in the Jim Carrey film, *The Mask* in 1992, and a radio hit with "Hey Pachuco," Royal Crown Revue crossed over into the mainstream market by the mid 1990s. While the neo-swing moment had largely passed by the turn of the century, Royal Crown Revue still toured and recorded regularly throughout the 2000s. In 2002, her husband's band, Los Infernos a rockabilly/psychobilly outfit, opened for Royal Crown Revue at the Glass House

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[53] Vicky Tafoya, interview with author, Claremont, CA, May 22, 2013.

[54] As Catherine S. Ramirez reminds us, "When worn by a Mexican American *woman* during World War II, *el tacuche* became all the more transgressive." Catherine S. Ramirez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender Nationalism and The Cultural Politics of Memory.* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 75.

Concert Hall in Pomona. Tafoya watched the performances from a crowded backstage area, eventually wandering off to explore the hall. Finding what she believed to be a secluded area with favorable acoustics, Tafoya began to sing.[55]

> " I had just seen everybody leave, but there was one guy left. He was like, 'hey, that sounds pretty good!' It was Eddie Nichols and he peaked his head out. I said, 'oh my God, I am so sorry, let me get out of here.' Eddie said, 'no-no-no, sing that song again, I know that song!"

Despite her husband having to work the following morning, Tafoya agreed to meet Nichols after the show to sing doo-wop. Afterward, Nichols and Tafoya exchanged numbers, with the former promising to call.

Although Tafoya initially dismissed Nichols's promise, true to form, he called her to get together to sing.[56] Despite her husband's reservations, Tafoya took the train from the inland empire to Los Angeles where Nichols picked her up in his green 1950s Hudson for their noon rehearsal. Little did she know she would be offered a guest appearance with Royal Crown Revue at an upcoming gig at The Derby, the epicenter of the neo-swing revival Nichols and his band help put on the map.[57] They kept in touch, and pulled together The

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[55] Tafoya recalls, "The back area of the glass house is real echo-y, and I was just trying to sing a little bit of doo wop in the corner. I do that when I can. It was just so echo-y and I was like yeah!" Vicky Tafoya, interview with author, Claremont, CA, May 22, 2013.

[56] Reflecting on Nichols's fame, Tafoya recalled, "I thought "oh yeah, (sarcastically) you're famous, you're not going to call me!" Vicky Tafoya, interview with author, Claremont, CA, May 22, 2013.

[57] Tafoya would be a frequent collaborator with Royal Crown Revue, appearing in their music video for "Something's Gotta Give" and singing a duet with Nichols on "Baby It's Cold Outside" for Network Records retro Christmas compilation, *Maybe This Christmas Tree.*

Redondos at the end of 2003. In addition to Nichols and Tafoya, the acapella group added Jimmy Gimelli from the ska band Subway to Venus and Mathew Mazzola from the Kissfits.

The Redondos performed various gigs around Los Angeles as well Viva Las Vegas, mixing both west and east coast doo-wop material. The group recorded and released an album in 2006. On the album, Tafoya sings lead on "Love is A Clown" originally performed by Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers in 1957, Lillian Leach's and the Mellows' "You've Gone" and others. The album also gave Tafoya a chance to record "ABC's of Love" and "Gee Whiz," songs she performs regularly with the Big Beat. The band briefly reunited to open for Vicky Tafoya and the Big Beat, playing the Viva Las Vegas Car show in 2013, yet the original members had since disbanded the group to focus on their own projects.

Surprisingly, Tafoya gained her most commercial and international exposure through Vicky and The Vengents, a Ramones inspired outfit Tafoya had initially considered as just a side project. With airtime on Los Angeles' premiere rock station, KROQ and making the pop charts in Japan, the commercial success of Vicky and the Vengents has supported a steady international touring schedule for Tafoya. Consisting of Tafoya on vocals, Matt Beld on guitar, Dusty Watson on drums and Vincent Malachi on bass, Vicky and the Vengents released their first album in 2011, entitled *Cry Now, Smile Later*. With Beld, a former member of Los Infernos, Tafoya composed original material for the Vengents, taking elements of 1960s girl groups like the Ronettes and the Shangri-La's with Phil Spector-era The Ramones. Describing her sound, Tafoya offered "I can't growl or scream like other punk bands, but I don't know if I want to." In 2013, they released a 45, entitled "Sha-na" to kick-off a national tour.

Through her music, Tafoya connects not just to her audience, but to their cherished memories as well. The songs she performs serve as cues, reminding and renewing significant bonds and relationships for her predominantly Latina/o audience. As Tafoya describes,

> "People cry. Some people say, I proposed to my wife to that song, or one time we had a kid at a festival tell us, 'my mom is sick, can you just dedicate that song to her?' I did, and I will if I can, because it is important to me. They don't have to tell me that private stuff, but they do because they care enough about the song, or how I sang the song. I always want to respect the crowd and have reverence for the music. Number 1, you have to respect the music, and respect the whole game that comes with it. I just want to give it to them, the way I'm supposed to."[58]

Tafoya stresses the affective impact her music has an audience. That affect is intimately tied to memory and the sense of belonging developed with loved ones.

That affect is fueled in part by Tafoya's performance of memory. Tafoya has more than proven that she is able to express her artistic creativity as a musician that is capable of creating new hybrid sounds with projects like Vicky and The Vengents. Furthermore, she clearly puts her own spin on classic rhythm & blues and doo-wop numbers as the frontwoman for the Big Beat. Yet it is her embodied presence on stage and her attention to musical detail, such as giving her drummer a second chance to make good on a flubbed roll, that calls up deeply felt memories tied to specific songs, or genre of music. To put it plainly, her live renditions sound and feel more like the original recordings than those performed by surviving original artists on the oldies circuit who are all too often saddled down with overwrought electronic production and cheesy arrangements in hopes of keeping their best loved songs palpable to modern tastes. Tafoya's audience adores her music precisely because it carries a dated sensibility. To be sure, I observed men and women old enough to

[58] Vicky Tafoya, interview with author, Claremont, CA, May 22, 2013.

remember when the songs Tafoya covered were new. Yet, for the majority of audiences, especially at Rockabilly sites of leisure, the memories called up by songs like "So Young" or "ABC's of Love" are not of a 1950s they did not experience, but rather of moments and people they know, love, cherish and hold significance for them.

For Tafoya, that person was her mother. Eleanor Tafoya figured heavily when I interviewed Vicky Tafoya in 2013, in part because her 90th birthday was approaching. Tafoya credits many of career successes to her mother's love and support. Her mother helped her craft her stage presence, gave her the confidence to perform and most importantly continues to share her love of music. Tafoya offered, "Mom was like, I love that you really have come a long way. She had encouraged me to sing. And when we are not singing or listening to "Sway" by Julie London, we are listening to "Moonglow" by Ella Fitzgerald. Or she might just want to hear some rock & roll and some Frankie Lymon." In recalling the times she enjoys with her mother, Tafoya lists off the genealogical roots she draws upon in her work as a musician. This is all the more significant given that dominant cultural practices of musicianship, especially rock musicianship, is passed from man to man; in Tafoya's case, it was woman to woman. For Tafoya, it is not so much the songs that carry memories, rather it is the act of singing itself.

Dig That Crazy Beat!

The Raza Rockabilly scene's soundscape is a highly contested terrain. Conversations over which DJs are good or bad, which bands are worth driving a half hour to see and hear, or which bands did or did not make the yearly Viva Las Vegas bill can be overhead are common in sites of leisure throughout the scene. While the answer to the question "is music

in the Rockabilly scene significant?" is an emphatic yes, the answer to "what significance does music in the Rockabilly scene have?" is infinitely more complex.

For some enthusiasts, music in the Rockabilly scene is historically situating. By paying homage to his musical genealogical roots, Williams recognizes and honors the lived experiences of both sides of his family. For Rockin' Anna, music introduced her to the raced and classed experiences of generations prior. She offers:

> "I loved the Johnny Burnette trio, Carl Perkins and other rockabilly bands. Ok, but who influenced these guys? Why are these guys doing this? I remember hearing a story about how Elvis Presley went to go see Wynonie Harris, and that's where he learned to dance, from watching Wynonie Harris dance! So who's Wynonie Harris? Then you gotta' look him up. You just started going back, and back and back."[59]

Inspired by her love of classic rockabilly music, Rockin' Anna was driven to understand and historically situate the cultural productions of performers of color often disregarded and dismissed by American popular culture and official narratives of the mid-century. For DJ Javi, a Mexican American healthcare employee in his early thirties by day, sharing rare and overlooked gems brings him fulfillment as a DJ. He states "I've been booked all over LA, out of state, and at different weekenders. All for the love of the music: I love it and want to share it with people. All the DJ's have the same stuff, but some have *different* stuff you may have never heard of - like the outtakes, or one guy covers another song-so it might be a different version to what you commonly hear in the club."[60] DJ Javi acknowledges Rockabilly's canon ("the same stuff") yet resurrecting forgotten and overlooked songs

[59] Rockin' Anna, interview with author, Las Vegas, NV, October 8, 2009.

[60] DJ Javi, interview with author, Las Vegas NV, April 24, 2012.

("*different* stuff") he touches on the canon's malleability and his own personal drive to share a more complete picture of 1950s rock & roll.

For others, music signifies and calls intensely more personal meaning. For Augie Cabrera, the music he found in the Rockabilly scene helped him cope with the loss of his mother to cancer. He remembers:

> "I grew up with doo wop and danzones that my parents liked. . .but I didn't get into rockabilly until my junior year in high school. At that point in my life I was searching for myself because I tragically lost my mother to breast cancer. It was a really weird time in my life. I told myself, you know what? This (*music*) is helping me out. It helped me escape so I got more into rockabilly shows."[61]

Cabrera's parents were middle aged when he was born in the late 1980s, so the music of the late 1950s was the music of their youth. The music of the scene providing Cabrera with seemingly contradictory ends; a way to both remember his mother, as well as a respite from the pain her passing had left him. Christina Coffey shared a similar narrative. Remembering her grandmother she states:

> "I went with her to jazz shows my whole life, and she always had jazz music and had jazz records I think I was just acclimated to that sound, and the first time I heard a similar sound in pop music was in ska with the trombones and the horns, and like these great soulful rhythms, this pulsating heartbeat of a sound. Oh I can feel that! It was like the modern version of what she had been saying along. And then from that, you get acclimated to the sound of the horns, and so swing becomes very natural and then after swing what comes after that? You get rock and roll and rockabilly! Now I'm into folk music with a jug and a banjo! And I'm listening to modern bands like The Carolina Chocolate Drops."[62]

Coffey, a biracial Black and white graduate student in her late twenties traces her discovery and love of Rockabilly through tracing a musical genealogy that starts with her grandmother.

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[61] Augie Cabrera, interview with author. Willowbrook, CA, August 24, 2009.

[62] Christina Coffey, interview with author. Burbank, CA, July 11, 2011.

Much like the role Eleanor Tafoya played for her daughter Vicky, Coffey's grandmother played a crucial role in Coffey's transition from rude girl to lindy hopper to rockabilly. Bridging the potential for the music of Rockabilly to meet the needs of both a yearning for communal cultural memory as well as a deeply personal need to cherish and honor loved ones, Coffey traces a musical genealogy forward and then backward to the contemporary work of The Carolina Chocolate Drops, an African-American string band performing turn of the century music informed by a keen analysis of the racial and cultural politics of that time.

As a multi-faceted activity system in the contemporary Rockabilly scene, the consumption and production of music carries multiple meanings and values that change and flex from person to person over time. Surely music serves as expressions of creativity and energy by the artists who perform it and the DJs who select it. Yet, music in the Raza Rockabilly scene of Los Angeles accomplishes so much more. Music, as it is shaped, shared and contested at the sites of leisure of Los Angeles Rockabilly interpolates memory, be it communal or personal.

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Appendix of Research Sites

Bars and Night Clubs of Greater Los Angeles
Redwood Bar and Grill (dowtown Los Angeles)
The Reverend Martini Presents at Weber's (Reseda)
The Reverend Martini Presents at Viva Cantina (Burbank)
The Bamboo Lounge at Mission Tobacco Lounge (Riverside)
Pachuco Boogie at LA Live (downtown Los Angeles)
The Airliner (Highland Park)
Spike's (Rosemead)
The Rumble Bar at CC's Roadhouse (Paramount)
Spikes II (Bellflower)
The Monty Bar (downtown Los Angeles)

Festivals
Claremont Latino Rockabilly Festival (Claremont, CA)
The Hootenanny (Irvine, CA)
The USA Rockabilly Rave (Las Vegas, NV)
Primer Nationals (Ventura, CA)
The Rhythm Rocker (Long Beach, CA)
Viva Las Vegas (Las Vegas, NV)

Businesses
My Baby Jo (Los Angeles, CA)
Zoot Suits El Pachuco (Fullerton, CA)
Pinup Girl Clothing (Burbank, CA)
Betty Page Clothing (Hollywood, CA/Santa Barbara, CA)
Big Ed's Record Shop (Long Beach, CA)
Sneaky Tiki (Long Beach, CA)
Stop Staring (Paramount)
Tarantula Clothing Company (Los Angeles, CA)

Abridged List of Rockabilly Bands of Greater Los Angeles.

The following chart is a sample of Rockabilly/roots bands based out of greater Los Angeles since the rockabilly revival. The list is not comprehensive, nor does it represent every self-identified rockabilly band of the last thirty years. However, bands with Latina/o musicians are outlined in red, while bands that have featured women musicians are highlighted in pink.

Artist(s)	Formed	Sound	Region	Recorded Under	Comments
Los Lobos	1973	Chicano Roots Rock	Greater LA (East Los Angeles)	429 Records, Mammoth, Warner Bros	Members have included David Hidalgo, Louie Perez, Cesar Rosas, Conrad Lozano, Steve Berlin, and Enrique Gonzalez
The Blasters	1979	roots rock	Greater LA (Downey)	Slash, Shout! Factory, Rip Cat Records	Featuring Phil Avlin on guitar and vocals and Dave Alvin on guitar
Jimmy & The Mustangs	1979	punk inflected neo-rockabilly	Greater LA	Vanity, Nervie Records, Curb Records	Fronted byJimmy Haddox, aka Jimmy Silvers
The Kingbees	1980	neo-rockabilly	Greater LA	RSO	Featuring Jamie James, Michaels Rummens, Rex Roberts
The Rockaholics	1981	rockabilly	Orange County	American Standard Records	After disbanding the Status Seekers, a garage/punk band, Crash Justice formed the Rockaholics with Steve Olson and Johnny Rockin.
The Knitters	1982	country, rockabilly, folk	Greater LA	Slash Records	Formed as a side project of Exene Cervenka, John Doe, and DJ Bonebrake of X, Dave Alvin of the Blasters and Jonny Ray Bartel of the Red Devil Blues Band.
The Paladins	early 1980s	rockabilly/roots rock	San Diego	Rhino Records, Alligator Records	Members have included frontman Dave Gonzalez, Brian Fahey Thomas Yearsley, Jeff Donovan, Joey Jazdzewski and Scott B. Campbell
The Rockin' Shadows/James Intveld	early 1980s	rockabilly/country	greater LA/ Orange County	as the Rockin' Shadows: Rhino Records, as James Intveld: Molenaart, Innerworks	The Rockin' Shadows feautred brothers James and Ricky Intveld. After his brothers' passing, James Intveld continued on a solo career.
Keith Joe Dick & The Goners	early 1980s	rockabilly	Greater LA	Rhino Records	Featured on Rhino Records 1982 compilation, "LA Rockabilly"n
The Rockin' Rebels	early 1980s	Revival 1950s Rock and Roll	Greater LA	Rhino Records	Featured on Rhino Records 1982 compilation, "LA Rockabilly"
The Red Devils	early 1980s	Rose Maddox influenced rockabilly	Orange County (Huntington Beach)		Unique in it's Emmy Lee

The Moodawgs	1984	neo-rockabilly	Orange County		Robert Williams first band, followed by "Robert Williams and the Rustin' Strings"
The Rockin' Renegades	1984	neo-rockabilly	Greater LA	Real Rock-A-Billy Music	Feautred Russell Scott, who penned their sole recordings
Big Sandy & His flyrite Trio	1988	rockabilly/hillbilly boogie/western swing	Orange County	Dionysis, YepRoc	The "Flyrite Trio" became the Flyrite Boys" in Robert Williams, Wally Hershom, T.K. Smith, Will B., Bobby Trimble, Lee Jeffriess, Carl Sonny Leland, Ashley Kingman
Royal Crown Revue	1989	noir tinged neo-swing	Greater LA		Consistent members Eddie Nichols and Mando Dorame have been joined by James Achor Mark Stern, Jamie Stern, Adam Stern, Veikko Lepisto, Scott Steen, Greg Erba, and Marc Calley
Dave & Deke Combo	1991	rockabilly/hillbilly boogie	Greater LA	Heyday	Featuring Deke Dickerson, Dave Stuckey, Lance Soliday, and Shorty Poole
Hot Rod Trio	1991	rockabilly	Orange County		Featuring Buddy Dughi, Suzy Dughi, Pete Bonny
Sugar Daddy's	mid 1990s	rockabilly/psychobilly	Inland Empire		
The Sun Demons	mid 1990s	rockabilly	Orange County		
The Jumpin' Jimes Band	mid 1990s	R&B	Greater LA	Hepkat	Featuring Bobby Smith, Michael Jones, Gustavo Bulgach, Thomas Sanderson, Charles Lake. Mark Totorici, Drew Shaw.
Three Bad Jacks	Late 1990s	rockabilly	Greater LA (Woodland Hills)	Boston Krown	Elvis Suissa Dave Erkles, John Palmer
Russel Scott and His Red Hots	mid 1990s	rockabilly	Orange County	Bear Family	Frontman and bassist Russell Scott also contributed and backed other acts throughout the 1990s, including Rosie Flores and Phil Seymour. Current line-up features original member Archie Vowell, and Philippe Aubuchon.
Hot Rod Lincoln	Late 1990s	neo-rockabilly	San Diego	Bear Family	Fronted by Buzz Campbell
Deke Dickerson and the Ecco-phonics	Late 1990s	western swing/hillbilly boogie/rockabilly	Greater LA	Hightone Records	Dickerson continues to perform with the Ecco-phonics and as a solo act.

Dave Stuckey and His Rhythm Gang	Late 1990s	Western Swing	Greater LA	Hightone Records	Fronted by Dave Stuckey, featuring Jeremy Wakefield, Whit Smith, Dave Biller, T. Bonta on piano, Elana Fremerman, Eamon McLoughlin, Stanley Smith, Bob Stafford, Lisa Pankratz, Kevin Smith and Jake Erwin
The Lucky Stars	Late 1990s	western swing	Greater LA	Ipecac Records	Featuring Sage Guyton, Jeremy Wakefield, Mike Bolger, Wally Hershom, and Lance Ray Soliday
Rockin' Ryan and The Real Goners	Late 1990s	rockabilly and 1950s rock and roll	Greater LA	Golly Gee Records,	Originally served as the house band to back orginal 1950s acts booked at Rudolpho's by Vito Lorenzi's Be Bop Battlin' Ball.
Rip Carson	Late 1990s	rockabilly	Greater LA	Part Records, Golly Gee Records,	
Lil Luis Y Los Wild Teens	Late 1990s	late 1950s rock and roll	Greater LA (Pacoima)	Wild Records	Featuring Luis Arriaga, Angel Hernandez, Alex Vargas, Carlos Gomez, Omar Romero and Al Cadena
Omar & The Stringpoppers	Later 1990s	rockabilly	Greater LA	Wild Records	Formed in 2000 by Omar Romero after the disbanding of his first band, The Screaming Solo Flights. Fronted by Romero, this band has featured Jeff Gerow, Victor Mendez, and Corey Siu. In the mid 2000s, Omar also performed as Omar and the Shake-em Ups.
Los Rhythm Rockets	Late 1990s	R&B	Greater LA (East LA)	self-released	Evolving from the punk/psychobilly band The Hellstones, members of Los Rhythm Rockets have included Jorge Patino, David Patino, Alex Cadena, Chuy, Gilbert Rodriguez, Israel "Chango," Moises Melchor, Takao Inoue, and Hector Patino
Vicky Tafoya & The Big Beat	2000	Doo-wop and R&B	Orange County	El Toro	Vicky Tafoya, Vince Maldonado
Moonlight Cruisers	2000	bluesy rockabilly & cumbia	Greater LA	El Toro	Fronted by Tony Pelayo, the band has feautred Andrew Martinez, Tony Macias, Aaron Martinez, and Al Martinez
Border Hoppin' Boys	early 2000s	rockabilly	Inland Empire		Featuring Constancio Sanchez, Jorge Barajas, and Miguel Enriquez
Rene Dalva and The Lonesome Trio	Early 2000s	rockabilly	Greater LA		

Chuy & The Bobcats	Mid 2000s	Rockabilly	Greater LA (San Fernando)	Wild Records	Fronted by Jesus Felix, featuring Victor Mendez, Santiago Bermudez, and Angel Hernandez
The Vargas Brothers	Mid 2000s	early country and rockabilly	Greater LA	Wild Records	Fronted by Ernie and Alex Vargas featuring Jose "Watts" Rodriguez, Jeff Gerow, and "Uncle" Ernie Vargas
Crown City Bombers	Mid 2000s	rockabilly	Greater LA		Featuring Dave Bertiz, Mandy McMillian, Joel Morin, Jack Johnson, and Tristan "The Kid"
Stardust Ramblers	Mid 2000s	hillbilly boogie	Greater LA		Featuring Joey Buttler, Sally Joe Curtis, Mike Coultier, Edie Murphy, and Johnny Sneed
Bop Tones	mid 2000s	rock and roll	San Diego		
The Wiseguys Big Band Machine	Mid 2000s	Las Vegas Style Big Band	Greater LA (Montebello)		
Gamblers Mark	2004	rockabilly, neo-rockabilly, ska	Greater LA (San Gabriel Valley)	self-released	
Lil Mo and the Dynaflos	2005	doo-wop	Greater LA	Rhythm Bomb Records	Featuring Morris Everett, Cliff Quan, Marc Lessman, Dave, Martine, Eltaro, Jack, and Takao Inoue
Pachuco Jose y Los Diamantes	2005	Lalo Guerrero style R&B and cumbia	Greater LA (San Gabriel Valley)	Wild Records	Fronted by "Pachuco" Jose Lara, this band has feautred Jorge Zamora, Gilbert Rodriguez, Takao Inoue, Alex Vargas, and Catherine Garcia
The Sidewynders	Late 2000s	rockabilly/hillbilly boogie	Greater LA	Rhythm Bomb Records	Featuring Rene Cervantes, Carlos A.Velázquez, Ramón I. Espinoza, and "Shorty" Poole
Captain Jeffrey & The Chumbuckets	Late 2000s	early country jazz and western swing	Greater LA		Featuring Jeffrey Morin, Eli Hathaway, Patrick Morrison, Carlos Reynoso, Zack Mayerwitz, Dan Weinstein, Marquis Howell,
Rip 'Em Ups	Late 2000s	late 1950s rock and roll	Greater LA	Rhythm Bomb Records	
Luis and The Wildfires	Late 2000s	rock and roll	Greater LA	Wild Records, Norton Records	After disbanding Lil Luis y Los Wild Teens, Luis Arriaga formed The Wildfires featuring Victor Mendez, Santiago Bermudez, and Angel Hernandez
The Rythmn Shakers	Late 2000s	1950s rock and roll	Greater LA	Wild Records	Fronted by Marlene Perez, feauturing Victor Mendez, Andrew Himmler
Moonlight Trio	Late 2000s	rockabilly and cumbia	Greater LA (La Habra)		Original Moonlight Cruiser member Tony Macias formed this group with Al Martinez and Aaron Martinez
The Desperados	2011	1950s rock and roll	Greater LA	Wild Records	Featuring Slim Cervantes, Andrew "Popeye" Iniguez, David Covarrubias, Jesus Rivera
The Alex Vargas Experience	2012	soulful rock & roll and country	Greater LA	Wild Records	Fronted by Alex Vargas and featuring Iggy Garcia, Carlos Gomez, Jessie Gomez, Victor Mendez, Takao Inoue, and Luis Gutierrez
Hi-Tone Boppers	2012	rockabilly	Greater LA (San Fernando)	Wild Records	Featuring Chris "Mellow" Frausto, Noah "Frisky" Martinez, Alex "Phoenix " Demeza, and Derek Medina
Ernie Vargas	Early 2010s	rockabilly	Greater LA		
Rudy G y Los Hi-Tones	Early 2010s	rockabilly and rock and roll	Greater LA (Baldwin Park)		Featuring Rudy Gonzales, Ally Gonzales, Psyclops Mike, and Doo Wop Beto
Boppin' Bebo & His Goodtime Boys	2013	rockabilly/rock and roll	Greater LA	Wild Records	Fronted by Boppin' Bebo, featuring Iggy Garcia and Jeff Gerow
Mary Simich	2013	early country and rockabilly	Orange County	Wild Records	Mary often performs acoustically with her brother Chis Simich
Frantic Rockers	2013	rocking blues	Greater LA		