

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: SHRED CHICKS: GENDER AND IDENTITY
IN FEMALE GUITAR PLAYERS

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Female guitarists in the American rock industry are faced with challenges presented by gender scripts in culture that affect their public reception. In order to negotiate such challenges, women use public performance venues as spaces within which to negotiate power in gender scripts, and to create counter-hegemonic discourse. Public space may take the form of the stage, the internet, or televised media, and women utilize these spaces to render discourse performative in a variety of ways. Thus, counter-hegemonic discourses may be created that celebrate the accomplishments of guitar women.

SHRED CHICKS: GENDER AND IDENTITY IN FEMALE GUITAR PLAYERS

By

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Gender scripts in rock music mimic the larger social structure to which rock music belongs. As a result of *gender social scripts*, or implicit ideas in society that govern the way members of culture treat gender issues, women who choose to play the guitar are faced with challenges that set us apart from male players. This thesis is both an examination of such challenges and a celebration of how they are overcome. Primarily, this is a critical discussion of how women use the guitar in public spaces to challenge the power structure of a social script that renders us less important than men in the guitar's history. The word 'public' is intended to include any space where one's actions may be scrutinized by a body of observers. Our use of the guitar in public as a means of counter-hegemonic discourse, or discourse that challenges existing power structures, is often unintentional – meaning, women are not performing publicly specifically to negate the power of social scripts. Regardless, this discourse is by no means ineffective in terms of challenging them. Women perform simply for a love of music; challenging an existing power structure is coincidental. A further examination of social scripts and the role of women within them will take place in reference to Sandra Lipsitz Bem's, "The Construction of Gender Identity."

No Girls Allowed?

This thesis was initially inspired by David Segal's August 22, 2004 Washington Post article, "No Girls Allowed? In the World of Guitar Boasts, Few Women Let Their Fingers Do the Talking." Segal begins his critique by saying,

Where are all the guitar heroines?

Where are all the female guitarists who can light it up in some original, groundbreaking and influential way? Can you name any? Come to think of it, have you ever heard the phrase "guitar heroine"?

Probably not, and for good reason. This won't win you friends and maybe it can't be said out loud, but here's the hard and horrible truth: Fifty years after Elvis Presley recorded "That's All Right Mama," the grand total of pantheon-worthy female rock guitarists is zero.

There isn't a single one.¹

The question of why more women are not picking up the guitar is difficult to answer. Though I do not argue the question deserves careful consideration, my interests remain more with what happens when women *do* pick up the guitar – who listens, where is it happening and what are the results? By continuing to explore the question, I hope to spotlight the positive things that occur when women guitarists are musicking, rather than examine an only partially explicable social handicap that keeps women from gaining the same social status as their male peers.

I also choose this path because women players have tackled this social handicap rather well. One particularly strong piece, "Women and the Electric Guitar," written by guitarist Mavis Bayton illustrates the problems women face as players from a first-hand

¹ David Segal, "No Girls Allowed? In the World of Guitar Boasts, Few Women Let Their Fingers Do the Talking." *The Washington Post*, Sunday, August 22, 2004, No.1.

perspective: “At the turn of the 1980s,” Bayton writes, “when I was playing guitar in an all women band, the question intrigued me to the extent that I embarked on a sociological research project.”²

Like Bayton, I have played guitar for many years and am at the time of this writing the lead guitarist for all-female Washington DC-based punk outfit La Gorda. Though myself and the women who contributed to this thesis can sympathize with the difficulties one faces when approaching musicking as a minority, we look forward to producing a body of art that celebrates our achievements as guitarists. I believe that when guitar women take the stage to perform publicly, we celebrate our history as musicians as well as our possibilities for the future – one where we may overcome difficulties and look forward to musical and social equality.

This thesis is divided into five chapters, beginning with this Introduction. The second chapter provides a review of works written about gender and the guitar and women in rock by ethnomusicologists, rock/popular music columnists and gender theorists. A brief timeline regarding important events for women in rock guitar as summarized from this literature is important to provide context for an ethnographic analysis of women and the guitar. An analysis of gender theory and a brief examination of performance theory, particularly with regard to cross-cultural phenomena involving women, sexuality and the body as means of public counter-hegemonic discourse is presented in order to shed light on how gender, sexuality and performance are related in various cultural contexts. This is important for understanding the impact of gender social scripts on women and rock guitar.

² Mavis Bayton, “Women and the Electric Guitar.” *Sexing the Groove*, ed. Sheila Whiteley, (London: Routledge, 1997), 39.

The third chapter includes a transcription of a popular rock song as played by both a male and female guitarist. Differences in playing style and approach to the piece are noted for each player. In noting differences, I hope to demonstrate that playing guitar is only informed by, not defined by, one's gender identity.

The fourth chapter presents ethnographic data gathered through participant observation and hours of interviews with female guitarist informants from different regions in North America. This chapter is intended to highlight the ways these women present counter-hegemonic discourse publicly about playing the guitar, as well as how they have faced and dealt with challenges they have encountered by approaching the guitar as a minority. In this chapter, the idea of women using performance as a means of counter-hegemonic discourse is demonstrated, as women discuss the different ways their work influences the way women are perceived as guitarists in public spaces.

The final chapter summarizes the arguments presented here. Counter-hegemonic discourse can be realized in many different ways, and need not necessarily be executed with vitriol in order to challenge traditional power structures. The stories of women who contributed to this work are exemplary of the ways women publicly present such discourses.

At the time of this writing, American women stand at the end of a long road marked with fighting for equal rights and opportunities. Guitar women are still the minority in today's popular music industry. The fact that popular music critics such as Segal are addressing this issue in the Washington Post is an indication that our minority status is being addressed, and people are becoming aware of this issue.

Chapter 2: History and Literature

The entry of female guitarists into the rock genre has been a gradual process. The shift from woman as consumer to woman as performer has been negotiated in a way that moves women from listeners and performers behind closed doors to public areas where our presence is recognized throughout the industry. Books on the subject, both from a theoretical and historical perspective, have become numerous throughout the last few decades. Aside from literature on women in rock, studies of women and other marginalized groups using public space to perform in a way that challenges dominant social structures serves as an example that this private-to-public shift is not a phenomenon confined merely to rock in America. Through examination of the ways in which women are negotiating performances in public space on a global scale, we see the political power inherent in rendering the world as a stage.

From Consumer to Performer

This discussion of woman as consumer to performer is in no way intended to downplay or neglect the impact of rock subgenres, particularly those not featured on mainstream American radio or social/political women's movements in the 1960s and 70s that changed the role of women in rock forever.³ This section is intended to provide a comparison between the early days of rock and women's social standing within the

³ For further reference, please note Lisa Rhodes's, *Electric Ladyland: Women and Rock Culture*, and Maria Raha's *Cinderella's Big Score: Women of the Punk and Indie Underground*.

movement today. My focus here lies strictly on the movement of women into mainstream, not underground or independent rock music.

In his 1999 book, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945*, William Kenney discusses the role of American women as consumers in the pre-1950s music industry boom. Kenney's assertion that American women who stayed at home as wives and mothers cornered the music market lends a historical starting place to the role of women in popular music, and rock music at the mid-twentieth century.⁴

In the 1988 documentary *That Rhythm, Those Blues*, legendary blues singer Ruth Brown indicates that her musical travels ceased for some time when she became a mother.⁵ As Brown's story demonstrates, female performers in North American popular music in the first half of the twentieth century often took a backseat to male performers in the public eye. This occurred in the interests of maintaining the integrity of the American domestic family structure. As Kenney argues, women *did* influence the music industry, but as consumers rather than performers in a public setting. Though having a presence in the music industry as its top consumers did give women power in music during that time, the power of women in the market was limited. Women did not create or manipulate the art - we were the target audience.

The rock music market is, as any market, a *labor* market as well. Charlotte Davies writes,

Because women's relationship to the labour market is so different from that of men, fully assimilating it requires

⁴ William H. Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1999, 88-108.

⁵ *That Rhythm Those Blues*, Dir. George T. Nierenberg, Perf. Ruth Brown, Charles Brown, American Experience Series, 1988.

rethinking and reconstituting the entire classificatory system in order, for example, to find meaningful ways to include part-time work and home working, to make finer distinctions among women's occupations, and to incorporate housework and other forms of unwaged labor.⁶

For women, moving into the rock industry, even to perform as a minority, has been about negotiation from the beginning. The American rock sub-culture is nested entirely within a parent culture whose members, on the whole, view men and women as creatures with very distinct differences. Women had to negotiate to find spaces to function within, 'holes' in culture and music that accommodated their individual talents and goals. A male-centered framework governs both domestic and business structures in America – structures of which the music industry is a part. Therefore, popular radio music media is infused with these scripts, leaving women little room to fit into the framework.

If shifting into mainstream music as performers has been a difficult task for women, shifting into the industry as guitar players has seemed practically impossible. Women in 1960s female super groups (e.g., The Supremes), were featured as vocalists rather than instrumentalists – a bevy of attractive, well-dressed women who were heard from center stage. The presence of women in the industry primarily as pop vocalists during this time period is an indication of the way women were expected to behave publicly as musicians. Women worked onstage while men produced their music behind-the-scenes.

This trend shifted as the decade changed into the 1960s. Singer-songwriters such Joan Baez began to both write and perform their own music publicly, influencing

⁶ Charlotte Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 188.

generations of musicians to come. Vocalists such as Janis Joplin and Tina Turner left a lasting impression on rock. Though women were undoubtedly doing some excellent work on the guitar during this time period – one notable example being Canada’s Joni Mitchell, still recognized years later for her exotic tunings and distinct playing style – there were no women during the 60s whose guitar styles compared to performers considered *guitar heroes*, such as Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page or Eric Clapton.⁷ Though Segal’s *guitar heroine* may still be mythical, even at the onset of the twenty-first century, the presence of women as singer-songwriters and music executives creates a public forum for a future guitar goddess comparable to rock’s historically renowned heroes.

The recognition of women as an *assetto* rock music within the last fifty years allows the plight and achievements of female guitarists to become a public issue, moving us from musical consumers behind closed doors to musicians in the public eye of the mainstream music industry.

Rock Women in Literature

Both male and female writers have discussed the setbacks and achievements of women in rock from a historical perspective, particularly within the last ten years. When women take to task the patriarchal structure of rock and roll, they often discuss the plight of women whose desire is to succeed as guitarists within the rock genre. One notable example is rock writer Gillian Garr:

The irony is that women performers have often been caught in a double bind. Female artists were and are frequently not seen as having the commercial potential of male artists, and so were not given the chance to demonstrate that they

⁷ Segal; Ibid.

could sell records on their own merits ... the focus on commercial success, along with the secondary status women have in society, has meant that lesser-known female performers – unlike their male counterparts – are more likely to be absent from rock histories.⁸

Here, Garr uncovers an idea that is at the heart of her 1992 book *She's a Rebel*: women's place in rock history has been obscured by the focus placed on male rock legends by rock writers. And so, an apparent lack of female artists shadows the historically recorded female voice in rock. In this case, there is a marked absence of female artists (particularly guitarists), as compared with men. Though rock music's narratives of rebellion seemed to offer an escape from traditional domestic roles (i.e., subservience and familial responsibility), women still found themselves marginalized. This double standard functions as cultural irony; through rock guitar performance in a public setting, the women are themselves rebelling against impositions of a genre whose members consider themselves rebellious.

Robert Walser's 1993 book *Running with the Devil*, which focuses on rock music's sub-genre heavy metal, is an invaluable critique of gender in rock from a male perspective. Walser writes:

Heavy metal is, inevitably, a discourse shaped by patriarchy. Circulating in the contexts of Western capitalist and patriarchal societies, for much of its history metal has been appreciated and supported primarily by a teenage male audience. But it is crucial to specify not only age and gender but the corresponding political position of this constituency: it is a group generally lacking in social, physical and economic power but besieged by cultural messages promoting such forms of power, insisting on them as the vital attributes of an obligatory masculinity.⁹

⁸ Gillian Garr, *She's a Rebel: The History of Women in Rock & Roll*, (Seattle: Seal Press, 1992), 8.

⁹ Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, (Hanover, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 109.

Walser's insight exposes problems women may have when attempting to fit into this particular rock genre. Metal culture, which in part defines norms for guitar, is part of a larger male-dominated cultural framework that fuels how identity is formed and represented in musical performance. Female performers may have a difficult time squeezing representations of their identity into this aggressive patriarchal framework, whose members are fighting for space from the bottom of the patriarchal order. Attempting to do so despite these challenges places women in various ironic positions. Despite talent and ambition, women are made to question how their gender identity influences their playing. This is frustrating, particularly when many women do not feel they consciously need to factor gender identity into their technique and performances.

A number of other important works have influenced the writing of this thesis and rock literature. Many of these works are biographies or brief interviews involving renowned industry/independent female musicians. A majority of these women faced innumerable challenges on their paths to success as musicians. One such book is Amy Raphael's, *Grrrls: Viva Rock Divas*.

Barbara O'Dair compiled *Trouble Girls: The Rolling Stone Book of Women in Rock* is a compendium of interviews and biographies, including some of the most influential rock women of the twentieth century such as Janis Joplin and PJ Harvey.

Another notable example of a biographical /interview work is *Angry Women in Rock*, edited by Andrea Juno. The interviews contained within are conducted with many women who have been an important voice in the history of women in rock – particularly female rock guitarist June Millington, member of pioneer all-women rock band Fanny. Interview and biopic works such as these are important in women's rock literature and for

female guitarists in that they make public the stories of women who have succeeded as minorities in rock.

There are important academic works regarding women in rock as well. Simon Reynolds' and Joy Press' *The Sex Revolts* draws a distinction between a dichotomy that exists for rock males – one of a strong, dominant male who reinforces gender scripts that define masculinity, and one of a weaker, more sensitive male that counters these scripts. The point Reynolds and Press make in this work is enlightening – given the difficulty they portray men having in defining appropriate gender roles, women have little room to define their own roles.

Another work worth mentioning is Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality*. This work was controversial within the musicological community, as it suggested the misogyny evident in gender social scripts throughout the centuries in music composition actually translated to the form of some of the compositions themselves and the musical ideas they contained.

Books and articles discussing the difficulties of women in rock are informative regarding the plight of guitar women; however the margin of books treating women and guitar only is much less broad.

Criticism from a Theoretical Perspective

To understand why rock guitar women are marginalized, particularly in terms of music and gender, we need to understand how gender identity is constructed in culture and how these constructions affect all members of culture, including the marginalized. What, if anything, are women doing to confront such challenges? Are women “the other”

in American rock guitar genres, and are such gender distinctions present cross-culturally in music?

When women act out against questions regarding their talent, ability and “right” to perform a male-typified instrument onstage, they are acting outside an androcentric framework reinforced by a polarized gender culture. In “The Construction of Gender Identity”, Sandra Lipsitz Bem examines the way norms associated with gender polarization are propagated in culture. Bem writes,

Gender schema theory ... maintains that children in gender-polarizing societies internalize the lens of gender polarization and thereby become gender polarizing (or gender schematic) themselves. This internalized lens, in turn, helps lead children to become conventionally gendered. That is, in imposing a gender-polarizing classification on social reality, children evaluate different ways of behaving in terms of the cultural definitions of gender appropriateness and reject any ways of behaving that do not match their sex.¹⁰

Bem argues that those who do not fit comfortably within this polarized structure are “gender non-conformists.” With regard to this phenomenon, she writes:

Also included in the category (of gender non-conformists) are feminists, both male and female, who actively oppose the gender scripts of the culture, and even the relatively traditional women and men who become gender non-conformists merely by reversing some critical aspect of the male or female script – by choosing, if they are women, to sacrifice marriage and children for an ambitious full-time career, and by choosing, if they are men, to do the reverse.¹¹

Bem believes Western society (including popular music and guitar) as a whole encourages operating under male-oriented concerns and values, phenomena she

¹⁰ Sandra Lipsitz Bem, “The Construction of Gender Identity,” in *The Lenses of Gender*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 138.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 167.

collectively labels as “the androcentric lens.” As a part of a gender-polarized society, guitar women must operate under its focus.¹²

Bem’s theories may be used to explain both the plight of female guitarists and the way we respond to the challenges we face as part of an androcentric culture. When females behave in a way that does not reinforce binary cultural standards of male and female, we act as gender non-conformists. A female guitarist need not use profanity, violence, or other behaviors stereotypically attributed to male members of culture in order to fulfill the role.

Through the act of publicly performing with an instrument typically associated with male performers, women act as gender non-conformists. Public performance theoretically moves women out of a passive, domestic realm by putting their skills (in this case, performance skills typically attributed to males) on display in a public forum, weakening the ascribed link to sexist stereotypes of home and family roles for women, regardless of whether or not these women are rearing families or performing other “domestic chores” outside of the performance setting.

In Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond’s work *Music and Gender*, Marcia Herndon expounds on women’s social mobility as musicians in her discussion of Van Valen’s “Red Queen” Hypothesis, a theory based on the vengeance of the headstrong Red Queen in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*. Herndon addresses the theory as discussed in Jennifer Robertson’s work on the Japanese Takarazuka all-female Kabuki revue, particularly with regard to how “... the scrambling of gender markers in performance both undermines the stability of a sex-gender system premised on a male-

¹² Ibid., 151.

female dichotomy and retains that dichotomy by either juxtaposing or blending its elements.”¹³ Herndon uses Robertson’s example to illustrate:

In a Red Queen situation, the stimulus for change is not the physical environment but the social one. Change depends on the interaction of gender roles within a given social system. There is competition between genders in what social scientists call a zero-sum environment. That is, irrespective of time and change in the system, genders will still be ranked in the same order based on their “fitness,” or the ways in which the society perceives them to relate to one another.¹⁴

This idea of a “fitness factor” still applies to the settings female guitarists interact in, as their surroundings are still affected by and rooted in gender scripts present in American culture. It is within these settings that, if Herndon hypothesizes accurately, women are “running to stand still.”

In the following cross-cultural description of a Moroccan dance tradition, women who are insiders to the tradition are both criticized and revered for the role assigned to them in their culture because of their gender and social status. This is a further example of how women performing in public in a way that presents counter-hegemonic discourse serves both to celebrate women and allows them to perform against gender social scripts. I believe this serves as an important parallel of the way binary gender systems function globally, and present the following section as a comparative example of the way women use space and the body to create counter-hegemonic discourse.

¹³ Marcia Herndon, “The Place of Gender Within Complex, Dynamic Musical Systems” *Music and Gender*, ed. Moisala and Diamond, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press: 2000), 354.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 355.

Music and Gender Identity from a cross-cultural perspective

Rock guitar women in America are not the only women facing chastisement as a result of our choice to stand against an androcentric frame of culture. In “Moroccan Female Performers Defining the Social Body,” Deborah Kapchan discusses the social role of Shikhat performers in Moroccan Muslim society. Shikhat performers (*Shikha*) are females who dance in Muslim rituals, including marriage and other rite of passage ceremonies. Shikhat are central to such ceremonies, and are allowed certain social freedoms that, given the religious context, are not permitted many women in Moroccan Muslim society. Their social roles as *matluqat*, or free women, are due to their important performative roles. Their dancing and singing is often sexually suggestive in nature, rare in Moroccan culture and only made marginally acceptable by its ceremonial context. Because they are a necessary part of these performances, Shikhat are afforded atypical social roles for women in this culture, allowed to remain single and to own and run their own households.

Moroccan Shikhat are more extreme examples of women facing the same double standard that influences American female rock guitarists, one which exists as a result of a binary gender social structure. Both scorned and necessary, respected and feared, Shikhat are allowed freedoms orthodox Muslim women are not, yet they lack comfortable, “respectable” roles in society afforded to women who marry and operate within traditional female cultural norms. Kapchan writes,

Shikhat have several functions in society: in breaching the world of male power they become anomalous, and as anomalies they become scapegoats – they epitomize “the fallen woman.” On the other hand, they exemplify feminine potential as embodiments of independent and brave

women, albeit outcasts. The fascination of the majority of Moroccan women of them bears this out. They are admired and feared, spoken of with both awe and conditioned disgust. They are women who, by virtue of their physical expressions of emotional and physical liberty, transgress the social codes of modesty. But although their performance is socially sanctioned, their personhood is not. Society both employs and rejects them. They stand for what women can do and for what happens to women who choose to do – that is, they stand for social exile.¹⁵

Shikhat are threatening not strictly because of the dancing. Orthodox Muslim society is challenged by the sexual freedom socially associated with the Shikhat, embodied in the sexually suggestive nature of the song content as well as the eroticism involved in the dancing.

Sex plays a large part in social norms of rock and roll. From Elvis Presley's hip thrusting on the Steve Allen show to a televised kiss between Britney Spears and Madonna, sexual undertones rule rock. Sex is equated with power on a global scale, and its expression, as in Shikhat dancing, is a challenge to orthodoxy and traditional power structures.

Guitar women may deal with gender marginalization by doing nothing, or, as the Shikhat do, by viewing their differences from males as positive. Such optimism takes on a different meaning when it occurs in public. Sex and gender take on a new power when negotiated in social space accessible to all members of a particular culture. The challenge of gender power structures through the utilization of public forums in a socially acceptable way is not unique to American rock culture – women share the ability and responsibility to disseminate such discourses globally.

¹⁵ Deborah A. Kapchan, "Moroccan Female Performers Defining the Social Body," in *The Journal of American Folklore*, 107 No. 423 (Winter 1994), 101.

Space as the Stage

When female rock guitarists take the stage and utilize performance space, the double standard set in place by gender social scripts is suspended momentarily. If the stage is the female guitarists' space for negotiating power, rock music is our language. Live rock music performance provides an accessible area of often unconscious counter-hegemonic discourse made by women, though only indirectly related to the feminist cause. Guitar women who choose to make our discourses public openly question the dominant power structures that in turn are question womens' ability and social presence onstage.

In her article "The Hegemonic Body: Politics of a Black Peruvian Dance," Marcia Loo discusses *El Alcatraz*, a dance embodying an African counter-hegemonic response to forced migration by Peruvian traders. The dance itself involves one dancer attempting to light the other on fire, while the latter chides, "*I bet you can't burn me – I will be burned by no one.*"¹⁶ Loo argues that the dance serves as a form of musical counter-hegemonic discourse by Afro-Peruvian slaves targeting their oppressive owners. These Afro-Peruvians use musical art forms to reclaim their bodies from the slavery imposed by the Peruvians through a dance that is sexually suggestive in nature. In describing the dance, Loo writes,

Strongly symbolic, the contents of the dance have been for the most part interpreted as an expression of exuberant eroticism, in colonial terms a characteristic usually associated with blacks in Peru. The variety of body movements that accompany the music were read as

¹⁶ Marcia Loo, "The Hegemonic Body: Politics of a Black Peruvian Dance," in *New Perspectives in Transatlantic Studies*, (University Press America: 2002), 139.

unrefined, primitive, immoral or promiscuous – these were the common colonial discourses attached to it.¹⁷

Loo goes on to explain that while it is important to understand how the dance is sexually suggestive, its main purpose is to act out a role reversal against the plantation owners by *reclaiming* the pain historically inflicted on slave bodies. Even so, the eroticism involved in the dance is a primary feature. The dancers are both creating a mockery of the stereotypical ways in which they are thought to act by slave owners, at the same time reclaiming their bodies as their own property through sexual expression. This is a particularly powerful example of the street becoming the stage, because the dancers are using their bodies and their performance spaces as a means of counter-hegemonic discourse. Similarly, women who play publicly and are therefore subjected to gender scripts implicit in American culture are battling such scripts simply with their public presence.

When females reclaim their own power through performing in a public setting, we incidentally create a counter-hegemonic discourse, or one that challenges existing power structures, both by appropriating public space and disrupting traditional gender roles. This power negotiation by no means exists strictly in American rock genres; it is present in other societies that feature both polarized gender systems and distinct norms of musical culture.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 3: *Foxy Lady*

Lemon James, a Detroit-area guitarist, refers to herself in her publicity as “the Female Jimi Hendrix.”¹⁸ I had the pleasure of discussing guitar playing and her career working publicly as a female guitarist with Lemon.

Using her education as an electrician as well as a lifetime of taking apart guitars and restructuring them, Lemon began making guitars that met her own specifications. This allowed her to gain a real perspective of exactly what she wants from a guitar.

I was well aware of the quality of Lemon’s work and music from her website,¹⁹ though I was curious as to how she actually earned the title, “The Female Jimi Hendrix.”

Lemon elaborated:

... You might have heard of a fellow ... he’s been around for a long time. Benny, from Benny and the Jets? ... He actually coined that. He started calling me ... Oh, Lemon James, the female Jimi Hendrix! And I... I totally shied away from that at first, but ... then I thought, Yeah, well, okay I guess ... for a lack of anything better to say, ... I guess I’ll use it ... It kind of stuck after hearing it enough times in thirteen years, it’s like yeah, alright, we’ll try it.²⁰

¹⁸ An easy way to understand the ways men and women perform in private spaces and how performance practices move from a private to public platform would be to monitor men and women practicing. Despite this, I felt one issue I considered with participant observation would render such an examination ineffective. I believe that practice is certainly something deeply personal for many performers, and the presence of a researcher in private space would come with its own set of distractions and complications that might render the participant observation moot. I felt that if a researcher were watching performers practice, whether gender was a research consideration or not, practicing might somehow cross the boundary into performing in a way that would entirely negate the research results. One efficient answer to analyzing the practice aspect of music came in the form of dissecting recorded music.

¹⁹ <http://www.lemonjames.com>.

²⁰ From an interview with Lemon James, 04/15/2005.

When I asked Lemon how she felt about the label, she laughingly responded with, “Well I mean, it’s an honor, but it’s also you know, a chick who’s doing a bunch of Hendrix, what else are you going to call it?”²¹ She is also quick to say that she feels she needs to look deeper into the sound, the nuances present in Hendrix’s music, to gain a technical understanding of how the music she is making should sound. “I don’t play technically as good as Jimi,” Lemon says, “and we’re (using) totally different expressions, but just trying to channel who you are through the sounds ...”²²

I found this notion of channeling identity through sound interesting, and thought it might be helpful to compare the way Jimi Hendrix and Lemon James played the same piece of music to see if the male vs. female polarity could be reflected in the execution of a piece of music. Lemon’s disc *Livin’ in the Sun* features a cover of Jimi Hendrix’s *Foxy Lady*. This song is a Hendrix classic, released on his 1967 classic debut, *Are You Experienced?*²³ This song provides a useful point of comparison, as *Foxy Lady* is a well-known song in the world of rock guitar.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Jimi Hendrix website, <http://www.jimihendrix.com>, c. 1997-2005, Jimi Hendrix Experience LLC

I collaborated on a transcription of the two versions, including tablature, with my trusted colleague and guitar expert Harry Jones.²⁴ These are our results:

Hendrix

The score for Hendrix's 'Lemon' consists of two systems. The first system shows Guitar 1 with a treble clef and a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The notation includes chords and melodic lines with accents and slurs. Below the staff is a tablature system with strings labeled T, A, B. The second system shows Guitar 2 with a treble clef and the same key signature. The notation includes a complex melodic line with many accidentals and slurs. Below the staff is a detailed tablature system with fret numbers and string indicators.

1/2 step down

Lemon
7

The score for Lemon's 'Lemon' also consists of two systems. The first system shows Gtr. 1 with a treble clef and a key signature of three sharps. The notation includes chords and melodic lines with accents and slurs. Below the staff is a tablature system with strings labeled T, A, B. The second system shows Gtr. 2 with a treble clef and the same key signature. The notation includes a complex melodic line with many accidentals and slurs. Below the staff is a detailed tablature system with fret numbers and string indicators.

Figure 1

²⁴ Mr. Jones is an instructor of guitar at Mom's Music in Louisville, KY. His teaching and methodology have inspired my conception of guitar playing for many years.

Lemon herself declares that her playing is not as “technical” as Hendrix’s – phrases may not contain as many notes and/or fills. This transcription demonstrates that fact. Though Lemon does not fill spaces in between sounds with as many notes, her harmonic structures are the same and there are certainly enough sounds to fill phrases – i.e., there is significant musical activity going on in Lemon’s guitar playing.

Though, compared to Hendrix, Lemon’s version reduces the number of notes, the rhythmic structure of Guitar 2 as well as the vibrato on the strings (as indicated) in Guitar 1 are similar to Hendrix’s lines. Reduction does not necessarily mean less talent – here it is an example of how Lemon adapted Hendrix’s playing to fit her needs, which, I argue, necessitates much more musical skill than simply copying him note for note. Lemon plays Hendrix’s line in a different way, with an innately different musical nature, that simultaneously demonstrates her proficiency on the guitar.

The first few notes on Guitar 1 demonstrate notable musical differences between Hendrix’s playing and Lemon’s. Hendrix’s version begins with a guitar wail in a dotted eighth-note rhythm that ends in a glissando:



Figure 2a

Lemon retains the vibrato in her version, yet augments the rhythm and sustains one note at first rather than two:



Figure 2b

Another interesting difference occurs in the first few bars of the Guitar 2 part. Hendrix's guitar 2 begins the song with a mass of notes in several registers – i.e., a style of writing for the guitar that is familiar to his audience. This style is erratic and complex, a fast-flowing melody line that leaves the listener unsure of where he will go next. The X shapes indicate a point in the music where Hendrix mutes the strings. It is possible that here, Hendrix used muting as technique to establish a bridge between high and low registers in his Guitar 2 melody.



Figure 3a

Lemon's Guitar 2 part is at first glance less complex. The notes are played in a single register, and a melodic movement between bass and treble lines is not as defined as Hendrix's piece.



Figure 3b

Despite the note distribution, listening to the melody of the Guitar 2 line will reveal that the Lemon James version of *Foxy Lady* has a more distinguishable bass line than Hendrix's version, which could account melodically for her smaller amount of notes. Lemon's Guitar 2 line remains in the same register throughout this example, and the ascending run that ends with a C natural to a C sharp in the second measure of the example is similar to a typical bass run that ends the fourth count of a measure and begins a new phrase.

Lemon herself says that it is her intent not to mimic Hendrix exactly, but to master the soulful nuances he was able to infuse into his guitar playing. Performing *exactly* the same guitar melodies would defeat Lemon's purpose: she prefers to view Hendrix and his work as educational rather than an example for imitation.

It should not be inferred from this example that men and women naturally play differently from one another – the point is that men and women play according to the sounds they need to make and what they are attempting to do with the instrument. Many factors inform what kind of a musician a person might become, and gender is only one of those factors.

If gender does not entirely inform a guitarist's style, why does it seem to mean so much when a female player is onstage? Because there are less female guitarists than males, some believe females just do not possess the same ability as men in guitar playing.

Segal writes,

So all you chuckleheads out there who were thinking, *This is simple: Chicks can't rock because, you know, they can't rock*, take out your blue books and try again. Something else is going on here.²⁵

²⁵ David Segal, "No Girls Allowed? In the World of Guitar Boasts, Few Women Let Their Fingers Do the Talking." *The Washington Post*, Sunday, August 22, 2004, No 1.

The frequency of notes in a particular melody line, or how much finger movement occurs on the guitar when a performer plays is not the defining factor in guitar proficiency. Emotion, style and execution are also integral components of any good guitar solo or piece. The stylistic methods each player uses are as varied as the players themselves.

Lemon James plays a style of guitar that is inspired by the work of Jimi Hendrix, but the two players bring different musical interpretations to the instrument. The player may perform the piece however he or she sees fit to interpret the music on the guitar. Gender and sex are only one aspect of that interpretation.

Chapter 4: “Shred Chicks” speak

The experiences and influences of guitarists vary from one player to the next. The commonality of gender between the women whose stories are told in this thesis does not diminish the differences in the varied influences that define their repertoires. All these women are seen as guitarists in the public eye, though that public role has changed for some throughout their careers.

These women have different careers, are at different life stages or are taking on different roles in their development as musicians, and are located in different regions throughout the United States and Canada. Despite these differences, all have experienced both positive and negative aspects of performing in public, and are aware of gender scripts that influence the way their onstage presence may be received. These perceptions are due to attitudes about women and music that are common throughout North America, on and off stage, with and without guitars. Women are fighting against these attitudes by utilizing many kinds of public spaces for musical performances, including the stage, the internet and the studio.

Robert Johnson, Anyone?

The following field notes are part of an informal interview process I began on April 20, 2005.

On a stormy evening in April 2005, two friends, Aurora and Jerrod, accompanied me to the Black Cat nightclub. The club is part of Washington DC's historic U Street district, well-known among Washington's neighborhoods for its musical history. On this particular night, a rock concert was taking place upstairs at the Black Cat Lounge while the downstairs Red Room was packed full of twenty-something Washington professionals, eager to take advantage of the Red Room's free cover and reasonable alcohol prices. The male to female ratio seemed reasonably even on this particular night, which fueled my decision to attempt a research experiment.

"What are you doing?" my friend Aurora asked, stopping beside me.

"Just watch."

After about five minutes, a young man with unkempt brown hair and a leather jacket breezed through the doorway. He stopped a little in front of me, and appeared to be scanning the bar crowd for someone.

"Hey, excuse me ..." I started.

"Yeah?" It seemed obvious from his tone that he was in quite a hurry.

"I know you don't know me, but can I ask you a question?"

"Uh, yeah. Sure."

"Who do you think is the greatest guitar player ever?"

"Ever? Like, dead or alive?"

"Good question. How about either?"

The young man paused momentarily, then turned on his heel. "Honestly," he said, as he turned to walk away, "I think it's probably some studio guy we've never heard of."

I thanked him, and laughed smugly to myself as he walked away. Our other companion Jerrod returned from a trip to the bathroom, and asked who the young man was. I told him about the question I asked, and Jerrod agreed.

“He’s probably right.”

“I don’t know. I don’t know about that.”

“Really?” Aurora asked.

“Really. I mean, how do we know it’s some studio guy we’ve never heard of?”

My friends looked puzzled for just a moment, until a swell of recognition came over their faces. They knew exactly what I was getting at. Some ... studio ... guy ...

After further inquiries, I’d been ogled by two over-friendly young men, dismissed, answered thoughtfully, and giggled at by two females in stiletto heels waiting in line for the jukebox, one of whom informed me, after a few nervous moments following my inquiry, that “If it’s not Eric Clapton, it’s Robert Johnson.”

“Really? What songs of Johnson’s do you like?”

I was met with blank stares, and finally,

“Well, I don’t know. All of them are good.”

Later in the evening, Aurora, Jerrod and I rehashed the night’s events.

“You know,” Aurora said, “I mean just because he said studio guy doesn’t mean the guy is a misogynist. It’s kind of implied – like Hey you guys, I’m coming with you guys ... you know what I mean?” Jerrod nodded his head in agreement.

“But you know,” I said, “It just goes to show, for me, how deeply engrained within our culture this whole patriarchy thing is, especially with guitar. Women just don’t do it. They aren’t doing it. You know.”

“Well why aren’t they doing it?” Jerrod asked. “If it’s so hard to do it, then why do you do it?”

After a few moments of thought, I managed a chuckle. “You know what? I don’t know why I do it. I mean, I think that those girls in that bar were probably just saying Robert Johnson because it sounded cool, like they knew he was really good. But I don’t fault them for that, I don’t think they’re stupid. I just wonder why they didn’t seem to have an opinion when compared with the guys, or why it seems so many guys play guitar and so many girls don’t.”

“Maybe,” Aurora suggested, “You should figure it out.”

“I think,” I said, reflecting on a recent interview, “I’ve met some women who might already have it figured out.”

I conducted these informal interviews before beginning the formal interview process, and was interested in understanding the ways people of both genders in my age range (21-30) view gender in the identity of guitarists. The field notes I compiled during the experience at the Black Cat reflect my idea that both men *and* women tend to assign a specific gender identity to guitar players. I felt the next step would be to find an *expert* female guitarist – one who had a career in music and the experience as a guitarist - from whom to collect relevant and informative data.

The Guru

The internet served as an indispensable resource in my search for female guitarists. Not only was I able to locate many performers via message boards and band/solo work websites, I was also able to locate an exceptional instructor whose work with women guitarists specifically presents a new way for women to look at themselves as guitarists.

Charlotte Adams is a performer and teacher located outside Austin, Texas. She has played music her entire life, and the majority of that time she has focused on expanding her skill and repertoire as a guitarist. Charlotte spoke very openly with me, and publicly on her website, of a life-changing experience as a performer and teacher. As her ever-expanding number of students and performances progressed, Charlotte sustained an incredibly painful hand injury that threatened her emotional health as well as her career. Charlotte sustained a hand injury healed with time that is crucial and difficult to let go of in a musician's career. On her website, Charlotte writes,

I felt a great deal of pressure as a guitarist in those days. The fact is, a guy carrying a guitar could walk into a room full of guitar players and the general feeling was 'hey, man, let's jam!'. But a woman in the same situation felt something more like 'prove it'. I couldn't handle that. A performer feels vulnerable enough in a non-hostile environment. I don't mean to imply that there was intentional hostility, but there was a definite level of discomfort, probably not unlike that felt by some of the first women to enter the male-dominated world of politics. If you've ever been in a situation like that, you know exactly what I'm talking about.²⁶

I find Charlotte's story particularly fascinating because she handled her injury and the social challenges she faced as a female guitar player in a different way from all my

²⁶ Charlotte Adams, http://www.guitar-instruction-video.com/about_charlotte.htm copyright© 2003 - 2005 woman to woman guitar training & instruction.

other informants. Rather than cutting a record about the plight of women or taking her story to the stage, she began teaching all-woman workshops and made an instructional video to help women learn how to use the guitar to best fit their bodies. Men and women do have biological differences that influence the way they play the instrument, and Charlotte addresses how to use the instrument in a way someone who has experienced injury due to work and stress might understand. This is not to say men do not experience guitar injuries – the reality is quite the contrary – but Charlotte provides a female voice cognizant of the fact that men and women have different needs because we are physically different.

Charlotte was aware that during our interview I would be asking specifically about challenges she faced as a female guitarist before I even had a chance to utter the words:

All my life, if I ever advertised anything, I have to leave my name off it. I've always done well teaching guitar ... (and) people like it when I play out. It's not like I felt a bias in that way, except for people who don't know me yet. ... When I first started teaching, I taught thirty-five adult people every week, and I never saw another woman. ... I never saw another woman play, except folk music or classical as far as guitar. I never saw another woman in a band ... I still have met very few women who play lead guitar and I never taught a woman until – well, a little bit more here and there as the years go by.

And it was different back then. And that was strange. I didn't know it was strange because it was all I knew. But in retrospect it was really hard. So... I thought you know, if I make a videotape, all these guitar players are going to look at it and go, "Ha ha ha, I see some little girl strumming her chords for a folk song." And I thought, 'What about all the women that need to see it? Screw the guys; I'm going to make a videotape. For women!' And the little light bulb

went off right there ... and I knew then that's what I needed to do. We all needed that and I needed it.²⁷

Charlotte's production of her technique video is not in any way an effort to thwart males or remove male influence from guitar playing. It is not about bringing women to center stage as guitar players – simply, it is about recognizing the needs of a category of players that is often left out in the instructional video market. Charlotte is contributing to the music instructional video market, and she is doing it as a woman. Women do enroll in and benefit from her retreats. She has mastered the capabilities of the internet, both for marketing and as a platform for discourse on being a female guitar player. Through Charlotte and her retreats women are able to address their technique concerns as well as meet other women guitarists. Charlotte said plainly with regard to her videotape, “It’s not like I sat around and thought, ‘Well, what do I want to do for women?’ It just came to me in the paddock [the horse paddock at her estate], you know?”²⁸

Like many female guitarists, Charlotte believes being a great *female* guitarist is secondary to being a great guitarist. The gender distinction is important only in that, as Charlotte points out, the distinction has been made for a long time. There is no reason to single men out as progenitors of this distinction other than the historical power relations that have long fueled gender scripts. Female guitarists, like Charlotte, are in need of resources with which to network and face their placement as outsiders in guitar culture. When Charlotte Adams creates communal space for women to consider their guitar technique, and creates a video that allows a look at physically approaching the guitar, she combats a taboo silence that surrounds not only the bodies of female guitarists, but the

²⁷ From an interview with Charlotte Adams, 11/12/04.

²⁸ Ibid.

female body. Through making her video and sponsoring retreats, Charlotte Adams is demystifying the female body among guitarists.

Re: The Female Jimi Hendrix

Previously, I discussed my communication with Lemon James, a Michigan guitarist who has the title, “The Female Jimi Hendrix.” My initial conversations with Lemon left me feeling as if I were speaking with someone both aggressive and ambitious, willing to take the necessary steps to make her love of music a worthwhile trade for herself, while incredibly maternal and nurturing. With time and the analysis of my research notes, it occurred to me that my binary ideas of Lemon reflected the kind of polar thinking I set out to dispute in writing this thesis. Lemon is an accomplished guitarist – she has been publicly associated with one of the most celebrated guitar heroes of our time. She has conviction without being pretentious, and is entirely satisfied in her own skin. Lemon James is a walking discourse about women who play guitar, and her playing renders that discourse public.

Lemon picked up the guitar after becoming enraptured by one of David Gilmour’s guitar solos on *Dark Side of the Moon*. Much of Lemon’s life has followed the same course: she sees something she wants, and she goes for it. After a brief stint away from the guitar, Lemon enrolled in and finished a two-year Electronics degree program, where she met her husband.

Currently, Lemon writes and performs with her band. She also has an interest in the mechanics of the electric guitar that she has kept with her since she started playing. Lemon says, “... I also learned to take the guitar apart and put it back together. Every

night I had this routine where I would take the whole thing apart, clean it out and put it back together.”²⁹ Lemon custom-builds guitars, and has built guitars to suit her own physical needs.

Like Charlotte Adams, Lemon is body-conscious and interested in finding better ways to approach the guitar based on the needs of the body. However, rather than producing an instructional video that helps to tackle the problem, Lemon modifies the instruments themselves. The ways in which people feel comfortable around their guitars are as varied from person to person as styles of playing. Though it is true that male and female bodies are very different, bodies also vary from woman to woman. Charlotte and Lemon are proof that those needs may be addressed in different ways.

Lemon says she was a shy child. She claims the transformation into the conscious and confident performer she is today is a result of really embracing Jimi Hendrix’s influence as a performer on recordings and video:

When I saw the videos of Hendrix, I was like, “Now THAT is what you’re supposed to do... you’re supposed to be the music. You’re supposed to be the sound, you’re supposed to be the colors of the sound, you’re supposed to be the texture, the rhythm...and that’s what Jimi was. He actually was all the notes and all the sounds he was making, and that’s it. So it just went from there. And from there a lot of different things changed.

The biggest being that I went from being totally shy and not able to play in front of anybody to being in touch with ... that’s exactly what the truth ... the sound and the music that I saw through Hendrix ... that’s it. So then I could play in front of people, I could try to channel that same kind of realness, the same kind of energy. And then a whole lot of transformations happened with regard to being ... being me, I guess. Waking up, opening up and not being shy. And to open up around people and all that.³⁰

²⁹ From an interview with Lemon James, 4/15/2005.

³⁰ Ibid.

Lemon James is not attempting to *be* Jimi Hendrix in her music. Their approach to playing is different. However, “The Female Jimi Hendrix” is an interesting and accurate name for Lemon, because though there are stylistic differences, Lemon’s drive is to get to the heart of the same passionate expression of her music Hendrix was able to with his – an expression that endears him to fans globally many years after his untimely death. This goal has little to do with gender, though the title gains Lemon added attention as a player. Lemon admires the way Hendrix played and has since she became familiar with his music.

Lemon shared a story with me regarding a recent guitar competition she decided to play in. She informed me that most of the judges in the competition seemed to enjoy her performance, but one judge in particular was openly disturbed. When she inquired why, the man responded with mumbled comments about the guitar work of 80s female pop group Suzy Quattro, then walked away.

She told me that this was the only instance she could think of where she had felt objectified or treated differently because she was a woman. Lemon will be the first to inform you that if a person does not like her playing, whether that person is a man or woman, it’s “their problem, not mine,” and that typically she did not feel that she had not met with a lot of adversity in her guitar playing.

In fact, *every* woman I talked to indicated that a negative reaction to public performances was something they had rarely experienced personally, much less something that discouraged them from continuing to play or perform publicly. Charlotte says of stopping regular club performing,

There have been times that I stopped performing for a couple years and I’d go back to it, and when I’m not doing

it, I think about, well that's fine because I'm tired of guys pinching my ass and I'm tired of cigarette smoke, but when I go perform it's like, "Oh, this is great!" and I don't ... those things don't bother me as much.³¹

Lemon and Charlotte are both experienced performers. I was curious to compare their experiences with that of younger women like myself, who are active within a productive music scene. I was fortunate enough to find that woman in Monica Yonge, an alternative pop rock singer/songwriter/guitarist from Toronto, Canada.

On "Dressing Sexy"

I was ecstatic to find a sense of kinship with Monica within the first few weeks we were in contact. I enjoyed Monica's music, and was also interested to learn of her project, *indieguitarists.com*, in which Monica personally interviews and promotes guitarists who are not signed to a major record label.

Interviewing Monica was an interesting experience. We were able to spend some time discussing marginalization on stage. I asked Monica if she ever experienced a feeling of being sexually objectified while playing, or if she had been made to feel uncomfortable as a result of her gender. She reported:

I have found that men have been really supportive... And women have been supportive, too. Like I'm thinking back now before I even went out there ... like the Monica Yonge thing. When I was a singer in a band called Riverstone, we did all like classic blues rock ... like yeah, I had a lot of women coming up to me and telling me what they liked about the show, or that they liked my voice, and so ... I think equally the same with men from my experience, anyway.³²

³¹ Ibid.

³² From an interview with Monica Yonge, 11/7/ 2004.

Although Monica describes herself as “new to this” when it comes to performing in her respective scene as a female guitarist, she is no stranger to the music scene. She feels men and women have been supportive of her equally as a front woman for a blues-rock band as well as an indie guitarist.

Monica and I discussed at length how appearance and social gender norms affect performance. Monica implied that she wears a style of dress while performing that embraces practicality rather than provocation. When I asked Monica if she felt pressure to act or behave a certain way while onstage, she said:

No, up until now I just ... I think a lot of it has to do with my type of dress. You know, I've been asked, “Are you going to wear a miniskirt, are you going to...” There was actually one comment that really relates to what you're talking about. Prior to my CD release party, I was telling people about it, and one guy had said, “Are you going to wear something sexy, why don't you wear something sexy, why don't you wear a miniskirt,” you know? And when I get up, I ... I like to be comfortable, so I go up and wear my jeans and a t-shirt, you know? I'm a woman, and I don't mind dressing sexy sometimes, but I find it ...not practical to get up there wearing high-heeled shoes and try to press your foot pedals, you know?³³

With regard to “dressing sexy” and my other data, I wondered if perhaps Lemon's performances were similar to Hendrix's, and whether or not a sexual openness contributed to her success as a guitar player and a low occurrence of negative incidents that occurred during her playing. Lemon told me that she was open onstage with sex in that she dressed to be sexy, but that this was certainly not something she wanted to be her “gimmick”. “Hendrix,” she told me, “dressed sexy on stage.” Lemon indicated that dressing provocatively while performing could be considered another outlet for the

³³ Ibid.

creative energy that is a part of guitar playing. Her clothing while onstage never made her feel uncomfortable in terms of others' reactions to her attire. Again, Lemon refuses to allow her playing and stage personae to be categorized in what to her are simple, binary terms of musicianship. She plays as neither a man or woman, but as a guitar player.

This dichotomy of practicality vs. sexuality is one of the biggest challenges female guitarists face. In a world where our television heroes are chubby men featured in sitcoms as married to sexy twenty-somethings (e.g., *King of Queens*), women often find it necessary to sacrifice practicality in terms of dress so they can appear sexy and draw more attention to themselves onstage. Here, we invoke the dichotomy of dress, of the way a woman portrays herself to the public, as in sexy versus practical. To sacrifice practicality is to potentially lose control onstage – as Monica says, it is difficult to operate a pedal board in high heels. However, to sacrifice sexiness is to sacrifice the expression of personal power that goes with it.³⁴

Lemon James openly claims that she dresses sexy and enjoys it, but it is also obviously something that benefits her musically. By dressing sexy, Lemon feels confident onstage and truly in her element, as did her male counterpart and idol Jimi Hendrix. For Lemon, provocative dress is practical. This is another example of the way women make accommodations for themselves as guitar players despite the restrictions and limitations of societal gender binaries. Guitar women, rather than succumbing entirely to social pressures such as those Monica faced, are adjusting in their own way – picking a third path between those binary oppositions and moving themselves in slowly.

³⁴ “Sexy” women in magazines are often portrayed in high heels and makeup, while a sexy man is portrayed as rugged, uninhibited, often “dressed down” in simpler clothing – i.e., men are not often expected to walk around in high heels, at least not at the same frequency as women.

Bodies and all their capabilities, as we discover from the Afro-Peruvian *El Alcatraz*, and from the thoughts of female guitarists on healthy guitar playing technique and "dressing sexy," may serve as powerful tools for counter-hegemonic discourse.

The fact that women are moving into a place of recognition as guitarists is a powerful thing, and it is powerful because it is *public*. No longer only consumers of music, women are motivators and movers in a new way. Monica Yonge is building an informational internet database for indie guitarists while simultaneously creating and promoting her own music. Lemon James is keeping the spirit of Jimi Hendrix's music alive and inspiring others to play with all the emotion of which they are capable. Charlotte Adams is teaching players of both genders and beyond to become comfortable with their instruments by becoming comfortable with their bodies. Their textual contributions to the discourse of rock guitar are important because they demonstrate that the voices of guitar women are very public. Such discourse also creates spaces for women to be heard in public.

Women are present in the world of rock guitar, and through the power of new technology are able to network and share music in new and important ways. They are determining those ways, and they are making them public in a manner that everyone can see and take advantage of. Women *are* playing the guitar, they are talking about the guitar, and they are leaving a legacy for themselves on the guitar that promotes the positive things women do and are capable of doing on the instrument. This leaves hope that perhaps someday, when a writer such as David Segal inquires as to the whereabouts of the world's guitar heroines, at least a few names will come to mind.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This ethnographic research shows how deeply engrained ideas about gender and the guitar are in American society. Awareness of and education about gender issues and the public presence of women as guitarists will allow women to enter the mainstream and have our voices heard in the guitar world equally with men. In order to do that, women must contribute publicly to the discourse of the rock guitar, whether their performances are on the stage, in the news or in educating a student.

Women such as Charlotte Adams, Lemon James and Monica Yonge will continue playing because they love the instrument. Hopefully, such strong, talented women will continue to breathe life into the guitar and will carve out a comfortable niche that will come to represent the voice of women in rock's history – *publicly*.

The idea of space, as unpacked in this thesis, is not static. Private space may include any space where musicking occurs that is not open to the public. Possibilities include a closed rehearsal, the use of listening through headphones, or even singing in the shower. Private space becomes public when an audience begins to interact with the performer. Public spaces may include a concert venue, the internet, or the popular music industry. The latter example is a powerful place for the enactment of social scripts, as the music industry defined much of what is perceived as popular or acceptable by the American public.

After looking over Segal's Post article for the first time, I sat down and wrote a brief reactionary paragraph. Today, all that remains of those lines is the following:

By being aware but largely ignoring it, keeping our heads up and playing, it's not a bad thing necessarily. We're getting out there and doing it. And that is the protest here. Just by getting out there, we're keeping up the fight.

I still have that same sentiment, and I hope this is evident in my writing. We can never move forward if we only concentrate on the defeats of the past or present. It is through challenging those social scripts we personally did not create, and executing those challenges in the public eye, that we will finally change them.

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