STRUCTURES OF CULTURAL MEMORY:

THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF TOM WRIGHT

by

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DEDICATIONS

This work is dedicated to the three people without whom this simply would not exist...and one very good boy. To Tom Wright, for his raw and beautiful photography, documentarian spirit, and lust for life. Many have fallen under his spell—I am no exception. To my dear friend Patrick Markey, for introducing me to Tom and his craft, and for being a steadfast guide and supporter along the way. To my wife, Heather Bellamy, for faithfully copyediting every page of this work, and for her fierce love and unwavering belief in me which fuel my desire to fly further and higher in the pursuit of my dreams. Finally, to our tiny rescue Zeus, for spending the entirety of this writing on my lap – keeping my spirits up and blood pressure down.

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ABSTRACT

The photography of Tom Wright, archived at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin, is both art and history. Wright captured many musicians on stage and off at some of the most pivotal moments in both their own careers and in the history of rock music. Although Wright played an integral part with various bands, and produced an amazing body of photographical work in a career that spanned from the 1960s to the 1980s, he has remained unknown.

This dissertation argues that Wright belongs in the pantheon of rock photographers as a chronicler and artist; that Wright's photography, and the manner in which it was created, represent the turmoil and conflicts of his era (1960s-1980s) on which he had a specific Anglo-American take as a photographer born in America, but educated in England; that the so-called rock 'n roll life is embodied in Wright's life, including the concept of auto-destruction, that is a primary reason for Wright's lack of recognition; and Wright's relative obscurity is due in large part to his own refusal to work for any publications but to take photographs for their own sake.

Wright's photography tells a more nuanced story of rock music. By altering the collectively accepted narrative, his photographs provide a sense of awakening for all and touch on shared memories and how society remembers. Wright's work ultimately offers a more inclusive perspective on how photographs affect both memory and accepted history.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY

Tom Wright:

Photographer, Road Manager, Leader, and Muse

Tom Wright's name is virtually unknown, although he photographed many of rock's superstars who were iconic to the music scene of the 1960s and early 1970s. In reviewing and analyzing Wright's photography, this dissertation seeks to advance four main points: 1) that Wright's photography should be recognized and his place added to the pantheon of rock photographers as a chronicler and artist; 2) that Wright's photography, and the manner in which it was created, represent the turmoil and conflicts of his era and that he had a trans-Atlantic perspective on the time; 3) that the so-called rock 'n roll life is embodied in Wright's life, including the concept of auto-destruction, is a primary reason for Wright's lack of recognition; and 4) that the other reason for Wright's obscurity is due in large part to the capitalistic and neoliberal society that emerged in reaction to the resultant democratic principles initially espoused by the new generation. This dissertation tries to remedy Wright's lack of recognition and resultant anonymity by giving Wright his proper artistic place in both the history of rock and the history of photography.

Wright was directly connected to, and played an integral role in, the music of that time. As a participant in and observer of that era, it is serendipitous that there is a seemingly renewed

interest in the music and culture of this period.[1] As events are reemerging into the public consciousness, events relating to Wright are appearing, including the rediscovery and acknowledgement of rock music's blues roots. The connection to the British Wave, influenced by the sounds of American blues, is referenced with the announcement by John Mayall that he is going to, "hang up his road shoes."[2] Interviewing Paul McCartney for the *New Yorker*, David Remnick quotes the Beatle in response to the Rolling Stones saying, "I'm not sure I should say it, but they're a blues cover band, that's sort of what the Stones are."[3]

As the remaining rock legends of the 1960s are aging out, a revived interest in the blues is reappearing. More specifically, a nuanced look at the blues and its historical accuracy, based on a specific viewpoint, is being considered. In the review of a new B.B. King biography, Craig Seymour references Paul Oliver's "Blues Fell This Morning: Meaning in the Blues," who noted that most blues writing, "whether historical or discographical, empirical, or theoretical, has been done by white writers outside the culture." [4]

Tom Wright's story has direct connections with the blues and is an important illustration of

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[1] This can be seen in the recent proliferation of documentaries like *Laurel Canyon* (2020), *Once Were Brothers* (2019), *Rolling Thunder Revue* (2019), *Brian Wilson: Long Promised Road* (2021), *The Beatles: Get Back* (2021) and biopics like *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), *Rocketman* (2019), and *Stardust* (2020) to name a few.
[2] Matt Parker, "John Mayall Announces Retirement from Touring, Telling Fans 'It Is Time for Me to Hang up My Road Shoes,'" Guitar World (Guitar World, October 4, 2021), https://www.guitarworld.com/news/john-mayall-retires-touring.
[3] David Remnick, "Paul McCartney Doesn't Really Want to Stop the Show," *The New Yorker*, October 11, 2021.
[4] Craig Seymour, "A New Biography Depicts B.B. King as 'the First Guitar Hero.' But Does It Truly See Him?," The Washington Post (WP Company, October 21, 2021), https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/bb-king-biography-review/2021/10/13/a22c45ae-2c0f-11ec-8ef6-3ca8fe943a92_story.html and Paul Oliver, *Blues Fell This Morning: The Meaning of the Blues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

how rock of the 1960s was directly influenced by the blues. With such music experiencing a resurgence, Wright is directly linked to some of these events that are the focus of renewed interest. Jack White's Third Man Records released a bootleg set of the Stooges, "previously-unheard, high-quality soundboard recording of the original Stooges lineup's final performance at the Goose Lake Festival."[5] Wright organized and programmed this festival during the lengthy time he spent in Michigan. The excitement of such an unearthed artifact is palpable in the announcement. In addition to the Goose Lake Festival, the Grande Ballroom, which Wright managed from 1968 to 1969, was "nationally recognized as a historic site… the former rock n' roll hub at Grand River and Joy was added to the National Register of Historic Places."[6] Groups and organizations, most notably *the Friends of the Grande Ballroom*, have formed to restore the building to its former glory.

The Grande Ballroom played an important and positive role for the urban neighborhood, providing music to the youth. By studying Wright's photos, experience, and the music, we can better understand a pivotal period in American history. Before the Goose Lake Festival and when the Grande Ballroom was in its first years, the 1967 Detroit Riot/Rebellion occurred, which is also making a resurgence in coverage, being linked to other events such as Black lives Matter in contemporary times. Reintroducing the findings of the Kerner Commission that investigated the

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[5] Third Man Records, "Third Man Records Announces the Stooges' Live at Goose Lake: August 8th, 1970 out on Vinyl, CD and Digital on August 7, 2020," Third Man Records (Third Man Records, June 10, 2021), https://thirdmanrecords.com/news/third-man-records-announces-the-stooges-live-at-goose-lake-august-8th-1970-out-on-vinyl-cd-and-digital-on-august-7-2020.
[6] Fiona Kelliher and Brian McCollum, "Grande Ballroom Added to National Historic Registry," Detroit Free Press (Detroit Free Press, December 17, 2018), https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2018/12/17/grande-ballroom-national-historic-registry/2336052002/.

"riots" that occurred in 1967, the report "starkly blamed white racism as the cause of the riots: 'White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II.'"[7] This sentiment is contextualized with the issues of today in the title: "The Kerner Commission's Last Living Member Says We Still Need To Talk About Racism."[8] Stateside Michigan Radio interviewed journalist Ken Coleman, who covers national events and has written about African American life in Detroit during the 1960s. Stateside reports:

> …in 2020, there are still many echoes of '67 and '68, and a new generation of activists in Detroit is still protesting police brutality toward Black Americans. Coleman says civil rights movements of today share patterns with the late 1960s, like high-profile shootings and presidential politics, as well as civil unrest and how local and state law enforcement and officials respond to it… Coleman covered the rallies that were held in Detroit this summer after the killing of George Floyd in Minnesota, and he says he noticed some conversations going on among today's young activists and those who worked in the city during the late 1960s. "In interviewing people from both generations, [I] realized that there was a lot of commonality. And some things had changed, obviously," he said. "But there was still a disconnect and a divide between everyday people and the law enforcement agency that polices that neighborhood or that community."[9]

This connection is deeper and larger than merely the appropriation of African -American music, but was the fabric of Detroit, and America, at the time in which Wright lived there and in many ways has not changed or healed. The connection between present times and the 1967

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[7] Mycah Hazel, "The Kerner Commission's Last Living Member Says We Still Need to Talk about Racism," NPR (NPR, September 27, 2021), https://www.npr.org/2021/09/26/1040791834/the-kerner-commissions-last-living-member-we-still-need-to-talk-about-racism.

[8] Hazel, "Kerner Commission" NPR, September 27, 2021.

[9] Stateside Staff, "What the Political Legacy of 1967 Detroit Uprising Tells Us about Social Justice Movements Today," Michigan Radio, November 4, 2020, https://www.michiganradio.org/politics-government/2020-11-03/what-the-political-legacy-of-1967-detroit-uprising-tells-us-about-social-justice-movements-today.

riot/rebellion has not only been made by outside observers, but by those participating in the demonstrations. As reported by Dana Afana, "In an eighth day of Detroit protests against police brutality, demonstrators marched Friday through the neighborhood where the 1967 riots began," and one organizer was recorded as saying, "It was 12th Street and renamed Rosa Parks Boulevard because of the effect it had on our city. You are all in a tradition of history. You are all on the right side of history."[10]

The civil unrest and collective turmoil that boiled over in Detroit was not an isolated incident, nor was it the only event that directly affected and impacted Tom Wright. This is again why Wright serves as a great inlet to understand the history of that time. The riot/rebellion is not the only historic incident that is reappearing in today's political milieu and cultural landscape to which Wright had an intimate connection. The trauma of the Kent State Shooting in 1970 is resurfacing with having just passed its 50-year anniversary. The horror is relived in the reporting:

> Over 13 seconds, they fired 67 shots, grievously injuring nine students and killing four, including 20-year-old Jeffrey Miller. Kneeling over Jeffrey Miller in that unforgettable photograph — sometimes referred to as the Kent State Pietá— is 14-year-old runaway Mary Ann Vecchio, her arms extended in anguish as he dies. Jeffrey Miller's brother, Russ Miller, can't escape the picture, taken by John Filo, that freezes his brother in time.[11]

Kent State occurred during extremely heightened conditions as a large majority of Americans refused to accept US aggression in Vietnam any longer, especially with the prospect of more

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[10] Dana Afana, "Detroit Protesters March to Site Where 1967 Riot Began in Recognition of Historic Struggle," mlive (Michigan Live, June 6, 2020), https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2020/06/detroit-protesters-march-to-site-where-1967-riot-began-in-recognition-of-historic-struggle.html.

[11] Robin Young and Serena McMahon, "51 Years Later, Brother of Kent State Victim Reflects on Iconic Photo - and One That Just Emerged," Here & Now (WBUR, May 19, 2021), https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2021/05/19/kent-state-shooting-miller.

young men facing the draft. The Vietnam War, of course, affected Wright, but the war's tendrils touched nearly every American during that period. Just as the Detroit Riot/Rebellion has been linked to the death of George Floyd and recurring racism of current times, so too has Vietnam been contextualized to the war in Afghanistan.[12]

All of these events and happenings are embedded in Americans' collective memory. As cultural theorist Walter Benjamin wrote: "The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again." He then quotes the Swiss writer, Gottfried Keller: "The truth will not run away from us."[13] As many of these memories are reconvening in the present, it is important how these memories are remembered—that is, based on information. This is where Tom Wright's photography will serve as a useful tool.

Educated in photography, Wright toured with many of the most iconic musicians of the 1960s and was a close confidant to many of them. These are the two main constants for Wright: he was a friend and a photographer. He was, however, much more. Wright was first a friend to Pete Townshend, introducing him to American blues; he then acted as road manager for the Who; served as a muse for Joe Walsh and, at Wright's urging, gave Walsh the encouragement to sing. He also road managed the James Gang and J.D. Souther, knew the blues better than the Rolling Stones; led a group of industrious young men who worked tirelessly behind the scenes at concerts; and managed a music venue, booking blues musicians like B.B. King and Howlin' Wolf with American bands like Jefferson Airplane and Alice Cooper and British bands like Pink

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[12] Clay Risen, "Afghanistan, Vietnam and the Limits of American Power," The New York Times (The New York Times, August 17, 2021), https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/17/us/politics/vietnam-war-afghanistan.html.

[13] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) 255.

Floyd and Cream. He went on to birth two music festivals, for which he managed logistics, and invented a stage that eliminated teardown, keeping the live music continuous; aided in the realization of an art school, including renovating the buildings; and was the photographer for the Who, the Faces, and Joe Walsh, taking over 500,000 photographs, which are now housed at the Briscoe Center.[14]

Such an archive of photographs naturally plays a role in remembering: our collective memory is influenced by surviving artifacts and visuals. Through Wright's lens, Wright offers a deeply personal alternate view to liberate memories that will shake off the amnesia, and ultimately provide an awakening to better understand the music of the 1960s and early 1970s and its creators. In addition to the treasure trove of Wright's photographs that reside at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin, the archive also contains footlockers full of audio recordings and various artifacts collected throughout his years with bands like the Who, the James Gang, the Faces, and the Rolling Stones, to name the ones with whom he was closest though there were many more.

Wright's photographs offer a perspective that is not often observed—that is from one of a close friend. His images are not simply fly on the wall shots, though some could be initially seen as such. They could be misunderstood this way, since the band is relaxed and looking away, seemingly not noticing the camera. The pictures, rather, are images captured by someone whom the band trusts implicitly. This is an important distinction and can be seen in the other photographs, the ones of the musicians looking at the camera. Through these other photographs it

[14] See Tom Wright Photograph Collection, 1962-1994, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin and Tom Wright Papers, 1964-1994, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

is understood that Wright was not simply invisible, but was accepted and therefore allowed to photograph his rock star friends who were at complete ease with him. This quality is key to understanding Wright's work; what he is ultimately getting at in his photographs of the rock stars—his friends—is truth. This truth, which strips away the artifice of celebrity, lays bare a rarely viewed reality: one of duality. Wright shows the rock star on stage and off, but also pierces the constructed artifice and reveals the human. The people are one and the same, while simultaneously separate. They are rich, successful celebrities but ultimately living in a teenage wasteland. The image of the rock stars come into focus more clearly and the retrieved memory is more fully formed, not merely a nostalgic conjuring. The picture is in focus.

Approach, Methodology, Research, and Significance

In analyzing the photography of Tom Wright, this dissertation turns to the work of other photographers—including better-known photographers and specifically, rock photographers—in order to illustrate comparisons and define what sets Wright apart from them. As mentioned previously, photography is inextricably linked to memory and therefore it is natural to rely on those who have focused on the subject and the intersection of memory with photography. Finally, in looking at the field of American Studies, I ultimately propose expanding the view to include scholarship that emerged from design schools, like that of Gustav Metzger, Roy Ascott, and those from the Bauhaus. This is based on the influence design education had on Pete Townshend and Tom Wright and many others in the post World War II era.

Method is a logical place to begin, since the question of method in the field of American Studies is so pervasive that it is encountered in a shockingly large amount of scholarship. With

such a precedent and near right-of-passage, the plan is not to diverge from this path and follows in the giant footsteps of Cecil Tate and Vernon Parrington in their approach to method in American Studies.[15]

Both Tate and Parrington's strategy was simple enough: they did not outright contend the existence of method but saw it in different terms all together. To Tate and Parrington, method was a question of point-of-view. Instead of approaching an issue from a physical science's standpoint (the scientific method) of posing a hypothesis and rigorously testing those assumptions, they instead looked at their subject of study as a whole, sought discernible, recurring components and discovered themes and generalities that permeated the collective consciousness (hence Parrington's title, *Main Currents in American Thought*).

This anti-physical science stance extended into a critique of empiricism, in which Tate astutely pointed out that its quantitative methodology gives bias to a statistical simplification which is incapable of dealing with, "states of consciousness embodied in serious art."[16]

This act of turning from the empiricist, quantitative, pro-physical science standpoint started Tate on a path leading away from standard methodology. He instead sought to uncover what was present and attempted to abstain from forming any preconceived notions. From that jumping off point, both Tate and Parrington, among others, came to a *myth and symbol* interpretation of America.

Tate and Parrington observed the system (American culture), then looked at the parts and

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[15] See Vernon Louis Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1927/1987), and Cecil Tate, The Search for a Method in American Studies (Minneapolis: the University of Minnesota Printing Department, 1973).
[16] Cecil Tate, *The Search for a Method in American Studies* (Minneapolis: the University of Minnesota Printing Department, 1973) 49.

intellectually disassembled them in order to analyze and then glean some knowledge and understanding of the greater system from which it was spawned to understand how it all fits together. There is something about this approach that seems to be wholly American in spirit, particularly with Parrington— as Parrington's own story is one primary reason his approach was selected for this topic of research.

Parrington's personal life is probably best known from Gene Wise, who gave a brief synopsis of the field of American Studies, and in it dubbed Parrington, "the intellectual founder of American Studies."[17] Wise gives a brief but detailed history of Parrington's academic life and to further condense, Parrington was basically an outsider. Parrington lacked a pedigree, having not pursued graduate studies at one of the notable American Studies schools—Minnesota, Harvard, Amherst—but, rather, taught at the University of Oklahoma, before finally settling at the University of Washington. He was a lone wolf and approached academia as an act of rebellion and individuality. This is something that was distinctly American—and that the subject matter became American Studies is assuredly not a coincidence.

Parrington's approach and brief biography is important to the topic of Tom Wright. Wright approached the rock scene with the same attitude Parrington took to scholarship. Wright did not have the experience of training to understand what he was doing, but it did not stop him and arguably resulted in his playing an important role in what is now known as *Classic* Rock. Wright and Parrington are kindred spirits.

It is in the essay *Paradigm Dramas* that Wise criticizes the conventional wisdom in

[17] Gene Wise, "'Paradigm Dramas' in American Studies: a Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement," *American Quarterly* Vol. 31, No. 3 (1979): 298.

academia of what he calls the, "climate of opinion,"[18] in which he means that scholarship is often reflective and mostly reactive. As an alternative, Wise suggests looking to the rebels of American Studies, suggesting that academia look at shifts in academia as a *paradigm drama*, rather than such a reflective and disconnected view of what he viewed as status quo and traditionally accepted. This suggests a less passive role, indicating that there is an interplay or dialogue. This exemplifies why it seems necessary to integrate the subject of study with the method: it's all connected and there are meta-narratives when this interconnectedness is examined.

In this interconnected method, Wise would recognize that Wright approached events in his life the way Parrington approached his work, which in turn led to a new field. This may seem inconsequential, or worse, pretentious and shallow; however, this is, at its core, something distinctly American in spirit—the audacity to go it alone, for better or worse—and more so, speaks to the ingenuity and heart of rock n' roll. Additionally, Gene Wise lends further credence to this rebellious trait of American Studies and supplies the history that supports such a claim. Wright's story is born of America and so it makes sense that his story would embody the historiography and creation of American Studies. It is all integrated and the interconnectivity of Wright's story is an apt metaphor that is embodied in the structure, framework, and of the research.

Wise's *Paradigm Dramas* also lends itself to this integration, for Wright's life was a series of paradigm dramas. This scholarship will follow the narrative of Wright's life, the turns with each major point and in going through them we will see that they are anything but standard.

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[18] Wise, "Paradigm Dramas," 295.

Like any cultural works that mirror the times in which they were created, we will see how Wright's life, and that of rock n' roll, reflects America in each of those moments in time. The paradigm shifts highlight the concept of the existence of narrative by way of events that take place in history, and this will be applied to this project and seen through Wright's photographs. W.J.T. Mitchell has recognized "a deep mistrust and even fear of visual representation underlies a tradition in Western philosophical thought," and observed a "pictoral turn" in which visuals have become more important and seen as a language.[19] Additionally, Jennifer Tucker notes Mitchell's "pictoral turn" in interdisciplinary study and scholarship toward photographic inquiry has developed out of necessity, finding old methods to be limited and requiring methods that, "go beyond the conventional frames/boundaries."[20]

This could be a defiant point to the standard consensus of music in the late 1960s. It seems the agreed upon narrative that has perpetuated myth, is that, in some form or fashion, the music of the 1960s was a response to the radical upheaval of the times and was a product of the people wanting to change the system. Part of this is true, in that the music was a response of the time; however, this does not automatically necessitate a paradigm shift and does not account for the independent actors who help make and influence change. Most music responds to the times—this is a basic, fundamental characteristic of music—but, musical genres did not change every time an artist responded to the times. To borrow from Wise's lexicon, this could be explained through a paradigm shift and we will see through Wright's story that the birth of 1960s rock n' roll is certainly a response from the times, but, more importantly, and what is richer, that

[19] Jennifer Tucker, "Entwined Practices: Engagements with Photography in Historical Inquiry," History and Theory, Vol. 48, No. 4 (2009): 2.
[20] Tucker, "Entwined Practices," 4.

it is a *continuation* of the timeline of history and building on a foundation that was already there. A rich analysis is needed for Wright's story, including his close connection to Pete Townshend and what else served as inspiration to Townshend, since he was one of the key contributors to this burgeoning sound.

Utilizing the approach of Parrington, mixed with Tate, a few recurring themes keep appearing—what Parrington dubbed, *Main Currents*. These main currents continuously present themselves, and through the passage of time some are altered through paradigm shifts and dramatic turns, while others have navigated the changes and exist with connections to the past. The point is that history is a complex drama that remains in motion, living and breathing, changing all the time, which explains the multitude of theories, methods, and concepts employed to understand such a vast, all-encompassing field. From Parrington and Tate's approaches, we see that it is highly unlikely that events occur spontaneously and out-of-nowhere. The main themes, instead, should be viewed as being present while important ideas and changes that when they do occur, and have occurred throughout time, were born out of paradigm shifts and turns (often occurring collectively).

Wright and his photography collection offer a rare glimpse and unique perspective into an era and critical American experience. Anything but average, Wright was at the right place but also helped create the event. He was not only a witness, but an active participant. Through photographing, documenting, and archiving, he had a unique and rare experience that sheds new light and tells a different story of collectively held understandings of critical rock n' roll events and how they are remembered. This dissertation will therefore rely on writings that examine the relationship between photography and memory, most notably those of Walter Benjamin and

Siegfried Kracauer.

In exploring the relationship between photography and memory, it is important to include art in the dialogue, as well. Photography exists in a dialectic between the medium serving as a recording, authenticity and conversely as art, aesthetics, and beauty. Photography is therefore both mimetic and a mnemonic. Comprised of contradictory components, this paradoxical relationship is what sets the foundation for the medium that has arisen from the technology that pulls light through a glass lens and manipulates the shadows and exposure on a celluloid frame to produce an intact image.

Siegfried Kracauer commented on the aspect of memory and documentation in photography, observing that, "since the days of Daguerre [photographs] have been valued as documents of unquestionable authenticity. Baudelaire, who scorned both art's decline into photography and photography's pretense to art, at least admitted that photographs have the merit of rendering, and thus preserving, all those transient things which are entitled to a place in the 'archives of our memory.'"[21]

To Kracauer, it seems that photography conceptually lands somewhere between art and memory. Tom Wright understood these nuances, characteristics, and contradictions of the medium; this can be seen in the photographs he took. Going back to his early photos at Ealing, where Wright was developing his own style by combining American and English aesthetics and subject matter; he was touching on what the masters, not too much time previous to him, were doing.

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[21] Siegfried Kracauer, Theory of Film: the Redemption of Physical Reality (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960) 21.

Unearthing and excavating relics of the past and having the luxury of hindsight, there is no doubt a clearer picture emerges to which Wright would have been blind to in the moment. Recurring themes and main currents are easier to recognize when looking to the past. The themes that keep popping up, reemerging and reaffirming themselves, come out as a narrative that through a materialist dialectic takes different turns, or paradigm shifts, and begins with the aftermath of World War II. There are contradictory attributes embodied in each subsequent turn, as well as geographical interactions based on regional conditions — here focusing on England and America. Since Wright was raised in America, educated in England, lived at different times in Europe, and travelled all over America, his photography is a great source for showing the difference between European and American photography, as well as his own Anglo-American take on the medium. The writing of Susan Sontag and John Szarkowski offers insight and a way of reading Wright's photographs, while to contextualize Wright's photography with his rock photographer contemporaries, it will be helpful to look at the body of work from Annie Leibovitz, Jim Marshall, Terry O'Neill, Ken Regan, and Baron Wolman. Similar to viewing the generalities of American vs. European photography, the work from such rock photographers will provide a point of comparison and contrast to Wright, but the real introduction to understanding Wright's photography is through two primary photographers: Henri Cartier-Bresson and Brassaï.

Since this is an examination of a life through pictures and the themes being discussed were built upon sequentially, it is fitting to look at those themes chronologically. The first primary event was World War II, followed immediately by the Cold War. This is not to be viewed like a big bang, where before it there was nothing. Instead, it serves as an appropriate entry point since it was a dramatic world event that had a huge impact on nearly every inhabitant on the planet. It

forever changed the course of countries, their peoples, ideas, cultures, memories—pretty much everything in some way.

Chapter One sets the recurring tone of Wright continually finding himself in a confluence of overlapping events. The chapter details key events: Wright's move to London, meeting Pete Townshend, studying at Ealing Art College under the tutelage of Cybernetics inventor Roy Ascott, and, along with Townshend, witnessing the astonishing and thought-provoking art of Gustav Metzger, who would leave an indelible impression on both Wright and Townshend. This was all the while, and simultaneously, when English youth were being turned on to American blues. The chapter also looks at the potential reasons for why the blues was accepted in England at this time and not in America, again, through Wright's photographs.

Visiting his first real dive into the rock music scene, Chapter Two investigates Wright's move back to America and reconnecting with Pete Townshend by road managing and photographing the Who on their first North American tour.

The third chapter finds Wright in Detroit where he ran one of the most beloved concert venues—and unbelievably also one of the most unknown. Wright's photographic body of work grew as he managed the venue and organized and executed two successful concerts, including the Goose Lake Festival. This chapter also goes into the reasons Goose Lake was a financial and musical success, but why it was purposefully forgotten, brushed aside, and ultimately how the financier ended up facing criminal charges by the state of Michigan. The story of Goose Lake conflicted with the larger rock narrative, and can be seen through a co-optation lens which an industrialized, capitalistic society, "with the increasing concentration and effectiveness of economic, political, and cultural controls, the opposition," writes philosopher Herbert Marcuse,

"has been pacified, co-ordinated, or liquidated."[22]

Chapter Four follows Wright and his loyal band of music workers to Texas, where Wright, again continuing to photograph his musician friends, helped in the creation and operations of an art school Craft Center (later Southwest School of Art). Wright has a swift fall from grace, but it is rectified as he pulls himself out of his own way and reunites with the Who once more on their 1989 tour.

The final segment, Chapter Five, looks at the importance and significance of Wright's work and how he fits into music photography and with music photographers in his own right. This is done through a specific collection of Wright's work that highlights Wright's style, craft, and connection to who he photographs. These photos are ones that only Wright could have taken, because of his relationship to the bands; photos that Ken Regan, Annie Leibovitz, or Jim Marshall could not have taken. The series of photographs, based around a central theme of access and intent, all taken of musicians backstage—and in front of cinder block walls—could be called, "The Cinder Block Wall Series." These photographs highlight the best of Wright's work and show his connection and relationship to the different bands, but also his craft and ability at revealing what is arguably a more subtle and sophisticated imagery of the band members.

As previously stated, a primary aim of this work is to contextualize Tom Wright's photography and to place him within the constellation of rock photography, where, it is the contention of this dissertation, he rightfully belongs. Contextualizing Wright's photography of the past is necessary and appropriate for the present. To unpack this notion, it is worthwhile to

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[22] Herbert Marcuse. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, (1964; repub., Boston: Beacon Press, 1991) xxiv.

turn to Walter Benjamin and his term of the "dialectical image."[23] To Walter Benjamin, the past and present can be understood as such:

> It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on the past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.[24]

This notion of the dialectical image, and how past and present relate to each other, was noted by Joseph Clark in researching old newsreels. There are certainly many crossovers and intersections between newsreels and photographs, but at the very least they are both images that captured something in the past. Clark refers to Benjamin to link the past and present, noting that the images, "become what Walter Benjamin has called 'dialectical images,' documents that become relevant in the present by forcing us to confront the past. By putting newsreel images back into context, by historicizing them, we can make them far more useful tools in understanding our history."[25]

This is precisely the point of contextualizing Wright's work. His photographs tell a story, but require further information, knowledge, and a connection to the present, or else they would simply be floating untethered in the ether. This contextualization is necessary to connect the past

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[23] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) 253-64; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[24] Max Pensky, "Method and Time: Benjamin's Dialectical Images." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. by David S. Ferris. (Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 177–98.

[25] Clark, Joseph E.J., "'Canned History': American Newsreels and the Commodification of Reality, 1927-1945" (2011). *American Studies Theses and Dissertations.* Brown Digital Repository. Brown University Library, 2011). doi: 10.7301/Z0V40SFJ

to the present and this is accomplished through narrative and historical research. It is for this reason that the research relies on many firsthand accounts and oral history of those who knew Wright, as well as drawing from multiple fields to form a complete picture. This method and approach was, again, born out of Parrington and his naturally derived method based on the first step of observation in order to suss out trends of the time—or what Parrington would call *main currents*.

In realizing these main currents, it will not only help to place Wright and the events in which he was involved, into a larger historical context, but will provide the same tool to Wright's photography. To place Wright's photography in context with his contemporaries, a certain amount of interpretation of the photographs will be necessary.

This context and the dialectical image of confronting the present with the past is essentially based on memory. These memories are presented in Wright's photography, which sheds a new light and at times alters the established narrative, and therefore shifts memory in what Benjamin called an awakening. The collective conscience has a head injury and must return to the story written as canon to remember. Memory changes and is viewed with the standards and perspective from the period in which the memory is being remembered. Notes and entries need to be referenced to either jog the memory or even inform in its entirety. If not fully formed and built upon, an incomplete image results. The effect will be further distorted and, in the absence of information, that which supports the already agreed upon narrative steps in to fill the gaps. This ultimately leads to only reaffirm previously held understandings and to not question the status quo. Wright's story, ultimately through his photographs, could alter the canonical narrative and provide nuance, tone, a slightly different perspective, and at times an entirely new take.

Wright was many things and, among them, he was a muse, confidant, inventor, leader, road manager, and photographer. The central character of the Who's album *Quadrophenia* is someone with four distinct personalities, housed in one person. This might as well have been Wright. There were two constants, however, and that was that he was first a friend and then a photographer.

Finally, in addition to contextualizing Wright's work historically, this dissertation seeks to also contextualize it artistically. Wright should be known and it is a great disservice to the culture that he is not in the ranks of others like Ken Regan, Annie Leibovitz, Jim Marshall, Henry Diltz, etc. Wright was an outsider; he was not hired by magazines as a photojournalist—he was just there. Perhaps the reason Wright is not known is that he was more than a photographer. Like the photographer Brassaï, arguably most akin to Wright, he also did not limit himself to photography as his only medium and was highly suspect of those who did. In this sense, Wright was perhaps the most genuine and authentic photographer of the rock scene. Describing himself, Brassaï's words could just as easily be describing Wright:

> To have success in a particular domain incites you and constrains you to exploit that success and to practice professionally as a "specialist" what you have done with the joy of an amateur. The dilettante's passion for an art will always be stronger than that of a man who is gifted to practice it, for the dilettante's passion, like a love without hope, always remains unquenched. To protect the amateur's freshness of vision and combine it each time with the knowledge and the awareness of the professional, that is what I have tried to accomplish all my life, hence my constant infidelities, my diverse curiosities, my numerous and parallel occupations… that apparent incoherence was my coherence.[26]

[26] Peter Galassi, "Brassaï: Photographer," in Brassaï: Exposition Fundación Mapfre, Barcelona, 20.02-13.05, 2018, Fundación Mapfre, Madrid, 31.05-02.09, 2018, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 17.11, 2018-17.02, 2019 (Madrid: Fundación MAPFRE, 2018) 20-21.



Tom Wright, Self-Portrait, New York 1967/8

CHAPTER TWO

EALING AND A BOX FULL OF BLUES

"I'll give you a little tip about the blues, folks: it's not enough to know which notes to play. You need to know why they need to be played."[27]

-George Carlin

By the late 1950's, mainstream America had almost completely bypassed the blues. It was old hat and all but forgotten, except by African Americans who had originated this genre of music after the Civil War. Even the blues' latest creation, born out of a motley mix of rhythm & blues, country, and gospel, a stepchild known as rock n' roll, had seemingly passed its zenith. Buddy Holly was killed in a plane crash, Elvis had been drafted into the army, Jerry Lee Lewis was blackballed after marrying his 13-year-old cousin, Chuck Berry was doing time in prison for Mann Act violations, Little Richard got religion and gave up secular rock, and Bill Haley's popularity waned as he fell into alcoholism.

The blues and its many incarnations did resonate with white, middle-class America. With the decline of rock n' roll, poppy and, most importantly, safe music filled the void. It was safe from conflict, safe from anything new, safe from introspection, safe from meaningful growth or evolution, safe from rebellion and disturbing the existing social and economic order.

Across the Atlantic, British youth were experiencing something culturally and musically similar to their American counterparts. The music proffered was different in one sense but relative to the two cultures it might as well have been the same. Where the American airwaves played pedestrian pop tunes, the English were transmitting big band, pre-war music that had no

[27] *George Carlin: You Are All Diseased* (HBO, 1999).

connection to the current times. English kids, just like the American youth, wanted, desired, craved something different from that of their parents' era. They, "rejected the austerity of the postwar years," and were after something specifically for their own generation.[28] Stale muzak forced down their throats must have felt quite Orwellian.

America had lost its savior in rock 'n' roll and nothing had yet filled the void. Similarly, England had not found an answer to the outdated big band music that was packaged, commodified and forcibly sold to them by an equally outdated and stodgy ruling class. The answer would ultimately come from an unlikely source—American blues.

The blues began slowly infiltrating England in the 1950s, and though a far cry from being accepted or even on the radar of the masses, a few events highlight the impetus for the musical change and inclusion of the Blues that would transform England. The first being in 1955 when Alexis Korner and Cyril Davies founded the London Blues & Barrelhouse Club. Korner would prove a mainstay in the burgeoning scene and carry the torch far beyond the initial period, earning him the name, the Father of English Blues. Later, in 1962, he and Davies would also found another blues club, the Ealing Club, which prominently featured Korner's band, Blues Incorporated. "By the end of 1962, the sound of electrified Chicago rhythm and blues was replacing trad jazz around London's hipper clubs," writes Andy Neill, "Blues Incorporated were the forefathers of this new music, and the Ealing Club, directly opposite Ealing Broadway station, became its mecca."29

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[28] Andrea Carosso, "The Paradox of Re-Colonization: The British Invasion of American Music and the Birth of Modern Rock," in *The Transatlantic Sixties Europe and the United States in the Counterculture Decade*, ed. Grzegorz Kosc (Ed.) et al. (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013) 124.
[29] Andy Neill and Matt Kent, *The Who: Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere: The Complete Chronicle, 1958-1978* (New York: Friedman/Fairfax, 2002) 16.

Another watershed event was in 1958 when Muddy Waters first toured England. These two events – Korner's blues club and Muddy Waters's UK tour – were connected. Trombonist and bandleader Chris Barber was the main driving force bringing blues to England by not only playing the music (Alexis Korner played in Chris Barber's Jazz Band), but also personally arranging the first UK tours of many American blues musicians. The sound produced from Muddy was like nothing they had ever heard, since British youth had no frame of reference for the blues. This proved true with the sudden resurgence of blues, albeit in England: "The careers of many black American blues singers were revived or boosted significantly as a result of the creation of a new, young, white audience."[30] Creating the next fissure in the old guard's musical and cultural blockade, the levee would ultimately burst and send the blues cascading into England. The generation who went to war were not talking about what they saw; the blues helped the youth of a war torn and economically depressed England both heal and rebel.

It was at this time in 1959 that a sixteen-year-old Tom Wright sat at his dinner table in Florida where his stepfather and mother announced that the family would be moving to England. Born in Alabama, Wright's mother, Jan, remarried Keith Laumer who was in the military. After failing to become a science fiction writer, Wright's stepfather, Laumer, went back to work in the Foreign Service and took a position in London via the Air Force. Wright, his mother, and two half-sisters, Ginni and Antoinette ("Tony") followed and with them came Wright's record collection of blues albums, many of which his stepdad helped to build.[31]

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[30] Dave Allen, "Feelin' Bad This Morning: Why the British Blues?," Popular Music, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2007): 143.

[31] Tom Wright and Susan VanHecke, *Roadwork: Rock & Roll Turned Inside Out* (New York: Hal Leonard Books, 2007).

In 1961 Tom graduated high school in London and, with no prospects or direction, tagged along with a friend who was taking an exam at Ealing Art College in West London. The exam consisted of charcoal sketches monitored by a teacher with a stopwatch. It was too nerve racking for Wright, so he wandered the halls and by chance ended up on the top level of the building where the photography department was housed. In Wright's words, "It looked interesting, and in the instructor's office a map of the world hung with pins in it from all over where the students were from. Well there wasn't one pin from America. So I went in and said I was always interested in photography. You didn't have to take a test — you just had to tell them you were real interested in photography."[32]

Wright and an American friend, Cambell "Cam" McLester, both enrolled at Ealing, and shared a flat at 35 Sunnyside Road, a couple blocks from the college campus. They spent their days smoking pot and listening to blues records—an eclectic collection numbering around 350. With Wright's roots in Alabama, he was hip to all the R&B and blues musicians, especially from the Deep South. Stacks of records lined the walls of Wright and McLester's English flat. They had all the masters of Delta blues including Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Buddy Guy, Jimmy Reed, Howlin' Wolf, Willie Dixon, Booker T and the MG's, Ray Charles, Junior Wells… the list went on.

Unlike most of their English classmates, the two Americans, Wright and McLester, were by comparison the rich kids. The English kids did not have flats, nor did they own records or even a record player. The reason for this was primarily one of economics.

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[32] Northern Express, "The Rock & Roll Odyssey of Tom Wright," *Northern Express*, August 27, 2003.



Ealing Art School, 1962/63

England experienced the war much differently than its ally across the Atlantic. Having experienced the horror and atrocities on their own soil, the English responded to the aftermath of the war in an entirely different manner. Whereas America's economy was booming and coming to the forefront, undeniably as the world's strongest power, England turned collectively inward in what today's lexicon would be labeled as post-traumatic stress disorder. Though the victors, England was left depressed and spiritually bankrupt and by the 1960s was economically behind

Germany, trailing the so-called defeated.[33]

These feelings, if not directly handed down, were molding, shaping, and, at the very least, affecting the youth of England. They had sugar, butter, and bread and were told that they better be happy with that; it was more than they had during the war. So, records were certainly out of the question.

There were other postwar fears. Apart from a suffering economy, struggling to shift gears and move away from war production, the Nazis may have been defeated but there was another enemy found in the Soviets and ready to take the Fatherland's place. For England, there was to be no catharsis, and this feeling was etched into the psyche of Great Britain. Ian "Stu" Stewart, the unsung creator and pianist of the Rolling Stones, known for his wry sense of humor and clever quips, would say, "I hate the Germans. Because of them I didn't have a banana till I was 14."[34]

Pete Townshend recalled that in 1962 he was generally a nervous ball of anxiety and worry; he was convinced he was going to die, that the Russians were going to drop the bomb. Mark Blake writes, "The fear, relief and disappointment he experienced during and after the Cuban Missile Crisis would later colour his songwriting: 'The threat passed, but when it passed, there was also this sense of, oh, we've been fooled again' – a feeling that would colour one of The Who's most famous songs, 'Won't Get Fooled Again', in 1971."[35]

It was a turning point for Townshend and he realized he needed to claw out of his

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[33] Albrecht Ritschl, "How and when did Germany catch up to Great Britain and the US? Results from the official statistics, 1901-1960." Humboldt University of Berlin and CEPR, 2004.)
[34] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottoville, Ohio, March 15, 2020.
[35] Mark Blake, *Pretend You're In A War: The Who and the Sixties* (London: Aurum Press, 2014) 72.

introversion; Tom Wright would be the first person Townshend's age to talk to him.[36] Attempting to alter his inward behavior, Pete was playing guitar around a small group of students. Wright strolled by and listened in, and then struck up a conversation. He invited Townshend to his flat to show off his record collection and introduce him to the scene at their flat. Nowhere did the difference between English and American youth stand in such stark contrast as it did at Number 35 on Sunnyside Road. The Americans, Wright and McLester, embodied the spirit, youth, and optimism of their country. Tim Bartlett, another English classmate at Ealing, who met Wright a little before Townshend, intimated that the British and the Americans at that time, after the war, were mirror images; the English economically and spiritually bankrupted, exhausted to their souls, while the Americans were full of vigor and optimism toward the future—the possibilities were limitless.[37]

The aftermath and feelings of the war lingered in the English psyche. From a young age, Bartlett had the serious impression that he was in a very structured society; a feeling that was ingrained in him. "The English did a phenomenal job of organizing; everything was very regimented."[38] In a way it must have felt as though peoples' lives were predetermined. The best British youth could hope for, once the food rationing, "ended in 1955," writes Ed ward, is "that the new economic recovery would allow them to participate more openly in British society, while chafing under the restrictions British tradition and the older generations imposed on them."[39] It is for this reason that it was such an upending, cataclysmic event for Bartlett when he

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[36] Tom Wright, interview by Quinn Klinefelter, *Detroit Today*, 101.9 WDET, 2007.
[37] Tim Bartlett, phone interview by author, Norwich, England, January 29, 2021.
[38] Bartlett, interview, January 29.
[39] Ed Ward, *The History of Rock & Roll: Volume I, 1920-1963* (New York: Flatiron Books, 2016) 373.

first met Wright. Bartlett describes it as, “it was like turning the lights on.”[40] Within minutes of first meeting each other, Wright asked Bartlett if he wanted to go for a drive, but Bartlett was adamant that they could not do such a thing. Wright told him not to worry and they got into Wright’s stepdad’s pearl green, finned Cadillac. Wright suggested they go to Heathrow and again, Bartlett exclaimed they could not do such a thing. Wright drove on, unfaltering in attitude and full of a brash, self-confidence, though Bartlett says Wright could barely see over the steering wheel. As they parked the Cadillac and went into Heathrow, sure enough, there was a visitor section and they watched the flurry of “important people doing important stuff.” They saw people landing from New York and to see someone from New York like that was incomprehensible to Bartlett. Yes, the differences between the English and American youth were painfully obvious.

Though America and England experienced the wars differently, and their outlooks were nearly opposite one another, both countries’ youth were craving something that was not from their parents' culture, but wholly their own. “Generation gaps are nothing new in history. What was unique to America in the 1950s, was the birth of the teenager,” writes Mitch Yamasaki, “It was difficult for youngsters growing up in their secure suburbs to comprehend the gravity of events such as the Great Depression, World War II and the Cold War. They could not understand their parents’ obsession with material and spiritual security.”[41] For American youth, the desire was generational since America’s economy was better and they were the victors. On the exterior, a pride and honor was exuded. Having lived through the time, Wright’s friend and confidant

[40] Bartlett, January 29.
[41] Mitch Yamasaki, “Using Rock 'N' Roll to Teach the History of Post-World War II America” *The History Teacher*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996) 187.



Europe, 1960s

who was also American, Patrick Cullie noted:

> The war was thought of as the defining mark of America's greatness. We were the victors, the winners. And unlike in England, there was no real sign of damage anywhere. Here it was hidden in the psyches of our fathers. In England, kids my age were playing in bombed-out debris. There wasn't much "let's try and forget it" here—quite the opposite:

"Let's not forget that we're the conquering heroes of the whole world."[42]

The repression of the horrors of the war were internalized in both America and England and, in both cases, that exterior belied the real trauma that existed internally. America's repression was masked by an appearance of exceptionalism, a myth which the war helped buttress and was used as an expedient, whereas the British responded with stereotypical English stoicism. They were technically the victors as well, but, unlike America, they wanted nothing more than to forget the war. It was easier to not talk of such things and dredge up horrors of the past (this sentiment would later come from Townshend and be articulated in Tommy, "You didn't hear it, you didn't see it, you won't say nothing to no one").[43]

The desire to forget the war was perhaps greater in England, but rather than looking to the future, radio opted to return to the big band music of the past, before the war. This went beyond nostalgia: a redo was being attempted through repression. This left a mark on the younger generation who *did* want to talk about the war and understand it. They did not want to forget, again hearkening to the theme of the Who's *Tommy*, being, "deaf, dumb, and blind." Townshend saw this in his own musician parents. They were still performing the same music after the war as they had before. It was, "a sort of wishful thinking bordering on denial," which made Townshend feel, "so profoundly uneasy about the music his parents played and listened to. It seemed to draw a veil over the truth."[44]

"'Remembering' World War II requires no immediate experience of those years. This is

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[42] Patrick Cullie, "Chapter 1," email to author, May 3, 2021.
[43] Pete Townshend. "1921," Tommy, recorded by The Who. Decca Records, 1969.
[44] Ben Marshall, Pete Townshend, and Roger Daltrey, *The Who: 50 Years: The Official History* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015) 15.

especially true of the immediate postwar generation (born between 1943-1945 and the mid-1950s), who grew up suffused in the effects of the war years but whose ‘ memory’ of them came entirely after the fact,” writes historian Geoff Eley about the British collective memory of World War II.[45] The collective memory for the English was attempting to be systematically erased, but the youth were not going to accept what was being forced on them over the radio waves. They wanted, craved a music that was their own; something that carried the feelings, attitudes, values, and politics which they espoused.[46] “The old British variety and 'light' entertainment had survived from the pre-war years, the BBC had changed very little,” writes Dave Allen, “the new 'teenagers' sought cultural forms to reflect their new circumstances. In the 1940s and 1950s it seemed that there was nothing *essentially* British that might fulfil that requirement, but America offered many possibilities in its films, comic books, fashions, television and popular music.”[47]

In America the music was changing and according to *the History of Rock & Roll*, “the period of 1952-1953, in retrospect, seems to have been a stylistic watershed for rhythm and blues… artists were exploring a new area somewhere between blues and pop.” [48] The qualifier, “in retrospect,” is important because, “the record business was as clueless as ever, throwing records at the wall and hoping one of them would stick.”[49] America then turned to rock ‘n’ roll, and for a

[45] Geoff Eley, “Finding the People's War: Film, British Collective Memory, and World War II,” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 106, No. 3 (2001): 818-819.
[46] This can be seen in the emergence of pirate radio stations off England’s shores, with the broadcast, “first heard on the airwaves in Britain on Easter Sunday, 1964.” See: Kimberley Peters, “Sinking the radio 'pirates': exploring British strategies of governance in the North Sea, 1964-1991,” *Area,* Vol. 43, No. 3 (2011): 282.
[47] Dave Allen, “Feelin’ Bad This Morning: Why the British Blues?” *Popular Music*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2007) 144.
[48] Ward, *The History of Rock & Roll,* 63.
[49] Ward, *The History of Rock & Roll,* 373.

while it was exciting and held promise, but too soon fizzled. Ironically, it was the American blues to which English youth connected—this included all forms and permutations of the genre from Mississippi Delta and Louisiana to Rhythm & Blues. It was a musical style that was different and new to England. The British did not have the same history of slavery that America had, nor did they understand that relationship. There was pain, sorrow and a raw feeling and energy in the blues. Perhaps the British youth understood it in a way that young, white Americans could not. Though the experiences of England in WWII and slavery in America are wholly different and cannot be compared, the feelings produced from suffering and trauma were something the British youth could transpose to their own experiences during and after the war: the English experienced bombings, death, and relocation. For whatever reason it may be, mainstream America did not get the blues, but a growing number of British latched onto it with fervor and passion. Interest was spreading and sparked in pockets throughout Britain, but as the groups of blues listeners in the country were expanding in population, it seems supply remained stagnant. Of course, the allure only intensified and the records all the more desirable. News quickly spread when word got out that so-and-so had a blues record. Manfred Mann guitarist Tom McGuinness, recalled driving across London after hearing of someone having a Muddy Waters album to see it in person.[50]

That was just for one record. A collection like Wright's, numbering in the hundreds of albums, was a treasure trove and a happy accident that Townshend stumbled upon. Townshend especially resonated with Jimmy Reed and Wright had every Jimmy Reed album.

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[50] *Blues Britannia: Can Blue Men Sing the Whites?* directed by Chris Rodley (England: BBC 4, 2009).

Townshend and Wright became fast friends and Townshend showed up at the flat frequently. He would bring his guitar and play along to Wright's records, learning the chords, progressions, verses. Townshend was studying what these American blues musicians were doing. According to Andy Neill's book, *The Who: Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere*, "For the first time, Pete heard Chuck Berry, whose songwriting vistas left an impression as did Steve Cropper's stinging leads on Booker T and the M.G.'s 'Green Onions.'"[51] Townshend gives a lot of credit to Wright for what his path forward became: "Without Tom coming into my life, I don't think I would have heard the music I heard that was so important for me as a kid, particularly R&B, but other music too, which Tom exposed me and a bunch of people at Ealing Art School to."[52]

The blues was so different to anything the English had heard that they naturally gravitated to it. This was partly because the music was new, unique, and raw; however, there is a memory that comes with the blues and is indelibly attached to the blues, and that is one of oppression. The music is charged and with it comes a power. This will be delved into later, but it is no wonder why it became a vehicle to oppose the Vietnam War. The music was political because its creation was birthed as a response to oppression.

As Wright was introducing his Ealing mates to American blues and Townshend began incorporating the sound into his burgeoning musical style and vocabulary — Ealing was acquainting Wright with the British style of photography. Where America was commercial and glamorous, England was gritty, moody, and raw: Michael Kamman attributes the advancement

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[51] Neill, *The Who: Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere*, 17.
[52] Pete Townshend, "A Special Event Celebrating the Center for American History's Tom Wright Photograph Collection," Dolph Briscoe Center, Headliner's Club, filmed March 16, 2007, video of lecture.

of technology, in the form of handheld cameras, that allowed Americans to, "achieve a better understanding of the self-creation of identity and the transforming nature of a culture of celebrity in America."[53] As for England, this was at a time when the "Subjektive Fotografie" movement was gaining popularity, which "emphasized the photographer's ability to imbue his subject with personal and aesthetic meaning through photographic means—perspective and point of view; the use of the close-up; tonal rendering; defamiliarizing the subject through negative printing and solarization; and experimentation with time exposure."[54]

The Ealing Club, just down the street from Wright's Sunnyside flat, would become his lab—it was only natural that once he began his studies in photography that it would be the first place where he shot photos. Rather than training his lens on the Graham Bond Organization, Blues Incorporated, or whomever else happened to be on stage, he took to the British raw sensibility with ease and opted to first snap pictures of others in attendance at the show. The listeners who were illegally smoking joints did not at first appreciate their image being captured but were soon accepting of Wright and his camera through his honest charisma and love of the scene.[55] Wright could also take no for an answer and was able to masterfully read a room; his Ealing friends were with him at the club for him to photograph and were the first subjects of his lens before moving on to the bands.

With a solid understanding and experience of both America and England, it made sense that

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[53] Michael Kamman, "Photography and the Discipline of American Studies," American Art, Vol. 21, No. 3 (2007): 13.
[54] Lisa Hostetler, "Photography in Europe, 1945-60," Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History (The Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, October, 2004), http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/pheu/hd_pheu.htm
[55] Northern Express, "Rock & Roll Odyssey of Tom Wright," *Northern Express,* August 27, 2003.

like the music Townshend was developing, Wright's photography would borrow aspects, even when contradictory, from both cultures and attempt to meld them: pop and avant-garde; refined and raw; tone and volume; blind optimism and realistic pessimism. The photographic expression responded to the post-war condition in both countries: America's economy was booming, social mobility was on the upswing, consumerism was proliferating, Kennedy was in the White House, and life was good; England was war torn, had difficulty transitioning from a war economy to peacetime, was psychically traumatized by the firsthand atrocities of two wars in quick succession, and the future did not appear all that bright. They therefore remained sullen with their collective gaze looking backward to the past in nostalgic recollection of the time before war, before everything went to hell.

Of course, both responses were two sides of the same coin, and a psychoanalytic commentary would be that both countries, at least the adult populace in America and England, were responding to the trauma of war. Consequently, the youth of both countries revolted almost simultaneously. The British youth rejected the canon of turning to the past, which was reflected in the big band and waltz music that played on all radio stations; they wanted to look ahead. This is perhaps why the American Blues offered such an important outlet—it did not matter that it was old and uncool to Americans writ large; it was new and cool to the British youth. As for the Americans, they would eventually turn against the beginnings of what would in today's parlance would be labelled neoliberalism or consumerism and look for something that could unite all in an egalitarian and altruistic way. Though both sets were rallying against their parents' generation, the views and sensibilities of that older generation would ultimately trickle through and color each group's perception.

The photography, and all art forms, reflected this, but it was really the music that would serve as the outlet and vehicle for this collective powder keg. It just so happened that Wright was in the middle of it all and, unbeknownst to him, or anyone at the time, was playing an integral role in guiding this progression. His photography not only captured this evolution and radical change, but his photography itself played a vital role. It was the melding of two Western powers' views that simultaneously created what happened in England and America at that time, but also explains why and how it happened. The cipher lay in Wright's story and his photographs. Wright's post-Ealing period in France and Spain showcases how he could seamlessly blend the often opposing and contradictory American and English attitudes, views, and outlooks.



Paris, 1964



Dicken and Florence, Ibiza, 1964

Like any college student, Wright was finding his way, and in his photography he was honing his craft and developing a style that blended the two worlds he knew. This may have been done in a conscious way, through the rigor and theoretical demand of the university, or accomplished with a natural proclivity. More than likely, it was a combination of the two. Whatever the exact formula, Wright was a photographer, much to his own chagrin: his real desire was to be an artist. His interest lay in portraits in charcoal and oil, which would later influence his style. Though he developed an artistic expression and aesthetic, a more important component of his photography is that the process became an extension of his personality and often told as much about himself as those he was shooting.

In Wright's early photography, one can see the beginnings of what Wright would explore for the remainder of his time as a photographer. That can be summed up most simplistically as catching the moment, or as one of the masters Wright looked to—Henri Cartier-Bresson—would dub, "the decisive moment."[56] This may sound rather banal and photography's most base operation, but however simplistic it may sound, it is at the heart of Wright's photography and his ability to capture the decisive moment shines through in the photographs. For Wright, that moment was not merely surface; he was after the "true" moment. This shows through more prominently in his later work, most easily identifiable in Wright's photography of rock n' roll and pop stars, but his early photographs, beginning at Ealing, set the stage for everything that would come. The decisive moment is not only literally taken from Cartier-Bresson, but his influence on Wright is obvious.

In reviewing the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson, one can immediately draw a distinct correlation to Wright's photography. From the street photography to the many candid shots, Wright certainly took cues from Cartier-Bresson. These shots are notable and easily identifiable in Wright's earlier work at Ealing, but primarily immediately following his time in England. His photography after deportation, during his roughly two-year long sojourn in Paris and Ibiza, is rife with comparisons to that of Cartier-Bresson.

This is typical of anyone new to a craft, practice, art, profession where they emulate their idols through mimicry before they find their own voice. Wright began with street photography and then naturally took it to the rock music scene. This was the same for Bresson who initially

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[56] Henri Cartier-Bresson and E. Tériade, *The Decisive Moment* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952).

looked at surrealism, which was at the forefront of his day. “For all of its chances to reinvent life, Surrealism had been an art of the studio and the salon. It was Cartier-Bresson who had taken it into the street,”[57] as Peter Galassi writes. In context to Isaac Newton’s comment of “standing on the shoulders of giants,” Cartier-Bresson stood taller learning from the surrealists and was able to move beyond what they could not see. This was the case for Wright in relation to Cartier-Bresson as well; Wright was able to develop past street photography but retain the principles learned from Cartier-Bresson and utilize them in rock photography. Patrick Cullie makes a direct inference between Wright’s rock photography and Cartier-Bresson’s method and approach to photography:

> Tom was very influenced by Bresson, because Bresson had that same kind of sniper approach to taking photographs: waiting for that perfect moment. People leaping over puddles in mid-leap. There’s that classic photo of Tom’s of Rod Stewart who appears to almost be levitating—both feet are off the ground—running across the stage.[58]



Paris, 1964

[57] Henri Cartier-Bresson, Philippe Arbaizar, and Peter Galassi, “And Everything in Between,” in *Henri Cartier-Bresson, the Man, the Image and the World: A Retrospective* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2006) 21.
[58] Patrick Cullie, phone interview by author, Lyons, CO, December 09, 2020.



Spain, 1964/5



Paris, 1964



Rod Stewart at the last Faces Show, Montreal, 1975

It was no doubt in following such masters of photography that Wright initially gravitated to street photography to catch photos of not simply the unsuspecting, but rather subjects which caught his eye. As mentioned previously, it was the clubs, nightlife, and particularly the patrons and participants of the establishments that first captured Wright's attention. That attention never waned, but was supplanted with rock n' roll. Nevertheless, as a fledgling photography student at Ealing, Wright naturally looked to the work of a Hungarian photographer, Brassaï. Initially interested in fine art, specifically line drawing and charcoal sketches, Wright found himself unable, or at least unwilling, to be that kind of artist and instead took up photography. In one of many commonalities, Brassaï was a reluctant photographer. Also like Wright, Brassaï's passion was in the nightlife. The nightlife is what drew Brassaï to photography:

> I could no longer hold the pictures in me; I had absorbed so many, mainly during my nocturnal wanderings I had to express them in a different, more direct, form than the one afforded by the paintbrush. Even though I had always ignored and even disliked photography before, I was inspired to become a photographer by my desire to translate all things that enchanted me in the nocturnal Paris I was experiencing.[59]

As a photographer, Wright employed a similar point-of-view to that of Brassaï. It can be safely assumed that this was done both consciously as well as it being something natural to Wright's eye. It was unconscious because Wright approached everything in a natural way; if something did not make sense to Wright, he would not have marshaled forward. Wright, however, did attend Ealing and it is clear he did learn and was open to ideas (as discussed previously with Gustav Metzger, regardless of whether or not the teachings were misunderstood). Wright's approach to Brassaï was also more than likely partially learned, and

[59] Peter Galassi, "Brassaï: Photographer," in Brassaï: Exposition Fundación Mapfre, Barcelona, 20.02-13.05, 2018, Fundación Mapfre, Madrid, 31.05-02.09, 2018, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 17.11, 2018-17.02, 2019 (Madrid: Fundación MAPFRE, 2018) 13.

this is evidenced in that Wright was quite aware of Brassaï's work. According to Patrick Cullie, he and Wright discussed Brassaï directly, and Cullie readily finds the similarities between the two photographers:

> The work of Brassai's that reminded me of Tom's stuff was a lot of that you know Left Bank Montmartre cafes and bars and street scenes. That was the stuff that I know Tom liked of Brassaï's. It was, to me, the earmark of Brassaï. There was posed stuff, but you got to remember back then it wasn't a Nikon [like Tom had] that could push the film. You had to get people to pose a bit because the exposure is longer.[60]

To elaborate on Cullie's remarks, it would not be a stretch to say that Wright carried the spirit of Brassaï and was able to go further than Brassaï, because of breakthroughs in advancements of camera technology and the method of developing film Wright employed. As described previously, Wright's technique, which included the heating of the developing agent, could allow him to shoot in low light and therefore catch unposed subjects. Cullie compares the nightlife photographs of Brassaï to the rock scene photographs of Wright:

> Brassaï photographed the Montmartre and Latin Quarter section of Paris and photographed the cafe habitues, bohemians, prostitutes, and I always thought Tom was the Brassaï of rock'n'roll. In the 20s, photography was A, so new and B, it was like, "what are you doing taking photos of prostitutes, and bums, and cafe alcoholics of Paris?" But the respect that he gave his subjects was the same way Tom respected every player in the rock scene.[61]

In this sense, Wright's photography should not be compared so much to that of Brassaï's aesthetic style as it should be compared to his approach. Brassaï's approach, "was scandalous at the time… photography was this new artform and here's this guy out there taking photographs of the prostitutes of Montmartre, and it was the same with Tom taking photographs of groupies. He showed them a respect; he didn't photograph them as floozies… they were an integral part of the

[60] Patrick Cullie, phone interview by author, Lyons, CO, December 22, 2020.
[61] Cullie, interview, December 09, 2020.

whole scene."[62]

In the early years at university, the true moment Wright was capturing did not yet involve superstars and pop sensations but rather the places he went and the people he saw in that period of his life: scenes at the Ealing Club, friends, fellow students, shop clerks, passersby on the street. Wright would train his camera on a man on a sidewalk carrying a large bouquet of flowers, a dog trotting along the street, someone selling newspapers, a woman on a stoop with her children, or someone having lunch at a café.



Self-Portrait, 1962

[62] Cullie, interview, December 09, 2020.

The options were endless. Sometimes the people caught him with the camera. Patrick Cullie, a member, along with Russ Schlagbaum, of the ragtag group, The Hard Corps, which would play a vital role later in Wright's story, recalled that,"Tom showed me how to take pictures without anyone noticing. You'd brace the camera with your elbow at your hip and hold the camera in such a way as you were walking that no one spotted what you were doing." [63] The results were mixed. In these photographs, more times than not, Wright either missed the moment or the photos were unintentionally out of focus. When executed properly, however, and motion was captured in this unpremeditated style, the photograph was striking. The blur became integral to the photo and when some of the parts of the image were out of focus it actually added to the photograph as a composition, transcending the seeming lack of craft. This immediate and raw sensibility would become a hallmark of Wright's work. This perspective was perhaps something spawned at Ealing, for the valuation of emotion over technical precision harkens to Townshend's response to a BBC interviewer in 1966, not too long after the Ealing years. When questioned about the difference in the Beatles's sound and that of the Who's, Townshend directly replied that he favored volume over quality, production over aesthetic—a working class, post-war mindset— "If you steer clear of quality, you're alright."[64]

At other times, Wright was able to capture the moment perfectly and convey an attitude and feeling as well as motion. These shots are usually among a large grouping of others, nearly identical, but whether five or fifteen, there is the one that stands out above the rest, the one special cell. The photograph is generally a combination that employs Wright's budding technical

[63] Patrick Cullie, phone interview by author, Lyons, Colorado, December 3, 2020.
[64] "Pete Townshend Interview," A Whole Scene Going (BBC One, January 5, 1966).

craft in an interesting and compelling composition that conveys an emotion. This could be viewed as an interaction of aesthetics and poetics, or, more specific to photography, an interaction occurs between the photographer, the subject, and the resultant image of the subject. Some phenomenon occurs and the result through the mechanic manipulation of the camera can sometimes produce a transcendent result. The other component of what makes the one photograph from the others not only different, but special, can be better understood through the work of Roland Barthes.



Street Photograph, circa 1962

It is in Wright's early photographs that we see what will set the stage for his work to come and is related through, to use Barthes's terms, the *studium* and the *punctum*. The studium is the universal, the objective reading and analysis of the photograph. The punctum is the personal.[65]

Take, for instance, the following two photographs taken of Wright's stepfather, Keith Laumer. The studium, the logical and, in a sense, objective qualities of the photograph, are what causes the viewer to pause and look at the frame. These photos immediately tell us that they are portraits of Laumer. In one, Laumer is looking at the lens, and in the other, he is not. Regardless of opinion, the composition can be described as a gradient of blacks and whites, the first creating some interest perhaps from the angularity of the soffit directly above Laumer's head diminishing to its vanishing point in the background, and the second is a darker print with more contrast where he is looking off camera. Now, stepping a bit further into the picture and getting into the personal, to understand the *punctum*, the meaning will vary from viewer to viewer. To Barthes, this is extremely subjective. For instance, in *Camera Lucida*, Barthes continually refers to a specific photograph, *Winter Garden*, to which he has a connection because the child in the photo is his recently deceased mother, for whom Barthes cared at the end of her life[66]. There is an instant and immediate response for Barthes as well as a lingering meditation that penetrates his psyche. The reaction would not be the same as for others.

Reading photographs for the extremely personal point-of-view based on an individual's own experience and view seems pointless, unless doing so for oneself, and borders on the territory of

[65] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1981; New York: Hill and Wang, 2010).
[66] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 67-72.

solipsism. The idea of the punctum, however, should not be wholly discarded, but instead applied to the collective in a useful and meaningful way.



Keith Laumer, 1960s



Keith Laumer, 1960s

To illustrate, in reading the photographs for the personal, there are two tracks to follow: one, the argument is that the photograph should stand on its own, completely disregarding context, that the photograph attaches to the viewer's psyche—this is Barthes's view; the other track is that information and knowledge of the subject, so as to place it in context, enriches the photograph. This does not mean that a photograph cannot stand on its own artistic merit, based on composition and aesthetics (it should), but it is to say that the photograph provides a deeper meaning, which, again to use Barthes's word, a *punctum*, which, to Barthes, "it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me."[67]

This is readily apparent in notable historic photographs that have left an indelible mark on the collective psyche. Nick Ut's famous photograph, "Napalm Girl," immediately comes to

[67] Barthes, 26.

mind. The image of terrified children, crying and fleeing from a fire on the horizon, and a naked girl burning from napalm in the foreground while G.I. infantry casually chat in the background is a powerful image on its own. It is only when the image is placed in context with, and when the viewer has knowledge of, the Vietnam War, that the personal image in the heart and mind can click into focus. It is only when such context is applied that the image transcends the aesthetic of the grotesque and transfers to the grotesque of the idea—the chaotic Vietnam War and everything that went with it. The photograph of Kim Phuc, the *napalm girl*, is all the more powerful because it is shared; it is collectively personal.



Roadside in France, 1960s

The power of Wright's photographs are in the personal and the candid. This is the approach and intent that Wright discovered at Ealing when he first picked up a camera, and what would be his modus operandi for the remainder of his time as a photographer. With the exception of street photography and the innate ability of capturing a moment, when Wright intimately knew the subject trained in his lens, the photograph was all the more powerful and is one quality that separates Wright from other photographers.

Referring to the previous two photographs of his stepfather, Keith Laumer, the selected photos are both from a series of posed shots. Posed photographs are inherently difficult to capture, especially with the personal approach that Wright employed. The subject is overtly aware of the camera and how their body and presence should be for the lens. Wright rarely bypassed these constructs in posed portraits and the results were generally stilted. His lens could not pierce the facade and get an honest glimpse of the subject. In essence, to Wright's photography, these posed shots were lies.

When one is aware he or she is on camera a persona is created. These occur in varying degrees, but this is a disaster for a photographer trying to capture a moment (with the exception of when the moment is capturing that persona, which is usually a humorous photograph). Wright's portraits are some of his best work, but only when they were taken candidly and when the subject was at complete ease with Wright. In a studio setting, Wright struggled with portraits and only rarely do they work. There are examples, however, of Wright doing what he did best and that was his ability to peel back the layers and capture a truth of the person—almost penetrate to their soul.

In the posed shots of Laumer, we see a glimpse of the person or rather the feeling *from* the person. In the first shot, we see a serious visage; in the second photo we see Laumer perhaps being interrupted during his photo being taken and looking just as serious as in the first image. This tells us that Tom has pierced through the persona and is capturing something truthful of the person. This is where the personal history and a bit of background knowledge comes into play.

Wright and Laumer did not get along. The archetypal stepfather/stepson relationship existed for Laumer and Wright. With that knowledge, another truth that had been there all along now steps forward and presents itself in the form of a feeling: disdain. With that knowledge at hand, the second photograph is more powerful in its subtlety. As previously mentioned, it looks like he was interrupted by someone off camera, perhaps asking him a question (this is most probably the case, since the other photographs from the session are of Laumer carefully posing). It is here that Laumer lets his persona fall and it is why Wright snapped the photo. It is for this reason that Wright's candid photos are generally more powerful than his posed shots; they tell more about the people when their guard is down.



Keith Laumer, 1960s



Keith Laumer, England, 1960s

In the first photo, three people are in plain view, seated in a vehicle. Though Laumer is in the backseat, he is the focal point and where the eye is immediately drawn. No one is seated in the driver's seat—one can infer that Wright was driving and pulled over and snapped this photo. The shot is very Wrightian, in that he was continually searching shots from different angles, to see things from every possible vantage point. Sometimes this worked, sometimes it was contrived. What stands out in this photo of the three people is the disparity in attitudes. The woman in the front seat, by a registration sticker and rearview mirror is smiling and looking at Wright's lens.

The other person in the back, seated next to Laumer, is looking at the camera as well, though not smiling, and Laumer, in the back, gazes out with a expression of utter annoyance. This at once captures the collective personal of the family vacation, harkening to the drawn out road trip framed by bickering and exhaustion, and also captures the personal for Wright, and that is the relationship between Laumer and Wright.

In the second photograph, Laumer is in his home office, ostensibly plugging away at a new book. This was Laumer's passion and drive. He awoke early in the morning and wrote science fiction stories and only reluctantly took an assignment in England after his manuscripts were not published. Laumer would soon find success in being published. As his numerous titles would suggest, he was rather prolific and also experienced a cult following among certain sci-fi fans.

In this photo, Laumer does not look surly or annoyed, he looks rather content. In fact, he might as well have a sticker on the side of his desk that reads, "I'd rather be writing." This is not to say that Laumer was a selfish and angry person. He had daughters and by all accounts a close relationship with them. With the knowledge of his and Wright's relationship, however, the photograph is placed in a specific context and like Wright's lens, the viewer understands it from a different angle. It is subtle in the composition with the placement of Laumer at his desk and the moodiness of the contrasting lights and darks, but it is Wright and Laumer's stilted relationship that makes the photo. It hovers there like a specter in the room, but it takes the knowledge, the background history, the memory for the viewer to notice and understand.

It was at this time that Wright, like any photography student at university, was capturing images of everyone and everything in his orbit. It was also at that time when Wright, "held the

match to the fuse," as Patrick Cullie put it, helping set Townshend on the course to becoming *the* Pete Townshend that the world would know through his friendship and blues record collection.[68]



Self-Portrait, Ealing, 1962/63

In addition to blues, Wright introduced Townshend to something else just as enlightening – marijuana. Wright and McLester would venture to the reggae bars where they could buy weed from the Jamaicans. This was something their English counterparts had not considered, and more than likely, had not even known about the possibility. Cannabis was a restricted drug in the UK; however, since it was not yet part of the counter culture in England, it did not exist in the same place in society as it did in America, and England was a little behind. This is reflected in the inclusion of cannabis into the Dangerous Drugs Act that Parliament enacted in 1965. The latency

[68] Patrick Cullie, phone interview by author, Lyons, Colorado, February 2, 2021.

in law between England and America, and the difference in responses and timeframe to counter culture drug use—usually exploited along the clichéd lines of *corrupting the youth*—can also be seen in the intersection of pop music artists and publicized cannabis busts. England's most notable case was not until 1967 when the police raided Keith Richards's Redlands house and arrested Richards and Mick Jagger. Trumped up charges and overzealous police sticking it to the pop stars over marijuana possession worked in tandem with the sensationalistic coverage by the newspapers. It was a sign that marijuana was part of the counter culture and, in response, the authorities were sending a message, particularly to the youth, that drugs were serious business. This was nothing new to America, where such methods, which at the heart of it boiled down to fear-mongering, had been employed decades prior to the Redlands bust. In 1943, Gene Krupa was famously arrested for sending his valet to pick up joints, which, in addition to a "narcotics accusation," brought a charge of "inducing a minor to transport narcotic marijuana cigarettes."[69] Such exaggerated indictments, and the accompanying foreboding language, were thinly veiled attempts to scare the youth into staying away from drugs. The newspapers proliferation of these stories only played into and helped serve the State's position on drug use. In this sense, the newspapers were almost obsequious and subservient to the state and resembled a form of propaganda. Marijuana was common in jazz—hence Krupa's bust—and was entwined with other musical cultures, especially African-American musicians. This is why Wright and McLester went to the reggae bars. Marijuana and the blues were joined long before the British or rock n' roll; the famous antidrug film, *Reefer Madness*, was released in 1936.[70]

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[69] Associated Press, "Krupa Sentenced in Drug Case," *New York Times*, May 19, 1943, 20.
[70] *Reefer Madness*, 1936.

At Ealing, the Americans, Wright and McLester, quickly became the marijuana access supply and their flat was the place to be for good, wholesome debauchery. A motley collection of art students naturally formed and, aside from the Sunnyside flat, they also frequented a greasy spoon named Sid's. It was a hangout where all the Ealing kids went. Wright talked the owner into letting him play his records there and soon more students showed up. Townshend had come out of his shell and was no longer the quiet beatnik, but a well-dressed graphics design student, sophisticated, confident.

Developing his photography chops, Wright was obsessive in the dark room, constantly developing—and at lightning speed. He continued to hone his craft at the Ealing Club where he was developing a particular style and MO. It was one characterized by the intimate and candid with a moody, European sensibility.

One of those nights at the Ealing Music Club he saw the Stones play. As he related in an interview with the Northern Express, "It was dark in the club and the only light was from all the matches lighting joints and I sensed the people there didn't want their picture taken," said Wright. "However, I did get to see the Rolling Stones perform that night. They were just a trio, Mick, Keith and Brian. They didn't get booed, but they did get a lot of catcalls. The Stones only got to play when the other band took a bathroom break."[71]

While Wright was photographing the music scene and aiding in its creation with his music collection, this was only part of, and what augmented, both Townshend and Wright's primary purpose, and that was their enrollment at Ealing. Like the music scene that was happening around them, so was the development of a different pedagogy in art school. This could be

[71] Northern Express, Rock & Roll Odyssey.

chalked up to the changing times, that it was a new dawn and every solidly held belief of the status quo was in question. This is certainly part of it, but for whatever reason for such a shift, it would set the stage of what would become a recurring theme in Wright's life. Time and again, Wright would find himself at the center of some large scale happening that would change the course of history. Wright would not only be witness to this change but would play a participatory role, if not central instigator, in documenting and helping create the scene while connecting to something larger in the background. For Wright, being at the right place at the right time generally located him in the music firmament, but not always. Music was only half of Wright's life at Ealing; the other was his education and experience at university.

Wright's matriculation was certainly not the only signal of change at Ealing. In 1961, a year prior to Wright's attendace, a position was created—*Head of Foundation Studies*—taught by the newly hired Roy Ascott.[72] Professor Ascott dubbed the curriculum "Groundcourse" and Ealing was modeling itself, either consciously or not, after the Bauhaus. This was a post-war notion and almost a renaissance after the horrors of the war. It was only natural that such a rebirth following the war would look to the avant-garde and radical creativity of that which atrophied prior to, and died because of, the war. Building on the work of those at the Bauhaus, like Paul Klee, Wassilly Kandinsky, and László Moholy-Nagy, Ealing's curriculum transformed.[73]

Roy Ascott arrived at Ealing armed with the collective memory of Bauhuas and technology as central to the future. This was a post-World War II perspective. In her dissertation, *Systems in*

[72] "Professor Roy Ascott Profile." University of Plymouth Profiles (University of Plymouth), accessed January 3, 2021, https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/staff/roy-ascott.
[73] The inspiration from Bauhaus pedagogy can clearly be seen most notably in certain works like Paul Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook,* László Moholy-Nagy's *Vision in Motion,* and Wassilly Kandinsky's developments on colour theory as well as *Point and Line to Plane*.

the Post-War Art School: Basic Design, Groundcourse and Hornsey, Catherine Sloan points out the creation of Groundcourse as something that could have only come out of a post-war mind and experience:

> Ascott's background prior to his art school education was somewhat unusual in that he experienced Cold War technologies first-hand. He arrived at King's College, University of Durham in 1955 for an art school interview in an Air Force car. This moment is recounted gleefully in a number of short reviews of Ascott's career as a collision of one life with another; a measure of the transition which Ascott was about to make. That car had transported him from Edinburgh to Newcastle - at Turnhouse outside of Edinburgh he had, for two years, been engaged in the surreal game of fighter control. Positioned on the side of a pit looking down upon a large table-top map, Ascott had monitored radar readings, his findings plotted out on the map below with small plastic model airplanes by staff with long sticks. Next to him was a bright red phone which on the event of a confirmed unauthorised plane, he had to pick up in order to send fighter jets into the air to investigate. A game played out with the latest technologies and a series of plastic pieces; a game made necessary by the technological tensions of the Cold War.[74]

It is true that Moholy-Nagy had already been thinking of motion in the visual arts prior to the war, but World War II offered a new view of technology, which Moholy-Nagy was thinking of as early as 1947:

> …the formation of a "New Vision" became imperative due to the massive social upheavals in the first half of the twentieth century—a combination of the rapid expansion of industrialization, the mass media and urbanization, and the traumatic experience of industrialized mass murder during two world wars: "The industrial revolution opened up a new dimension—the dimension of a new science and a new technology which could be used for the realization of all-embracing relationships. Contemporary man threw himself into the experience of these new relationships. But saturated with old ideologies, he approached the new dimension with obsolete practices and failed to translate his newly gained experience into emotional language and cultural reality. The result has been and still is misery and conflict, brutality and anguish, unemployment and war…"[75]

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[74] Catherine Sloan, "Systems in the Post-War Art School: Basic Design, Groundcourse and Hornsey." PhD diss., (University of Edinburgh, 2013) 211-212.
[75] László Moholy-Nagy, "Introduction," in: *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald & Co., 1947) 12.

The war had a profound effect on everyone, and art schools responded in kind. As they had set their gaze on Bauhaus for inspiration and direction, they also looked back to the art movement of Dada. Dada was a response to the first World War and the senseless acts of killing and atrocities that humans committed on fellow humans. Surrealism and absurdity were therefore all that made sense in such a mad world. Dada, however, was only an inspiration and Ascott took Ealing in a different direction. Rather than looking to the past and transplanting Dada and Bauhaus to the present, the concepts were instead learned from and built upon. For instance, Ascott looked to the Bauhaus in the way that the school was set up in a holistic pedagogy where the classes intertwined, and the halls became a testing ground. Ascott then looked to Dada, not only in Dada's response to war, but also in the process. Ascott was interested in the work of Dada artist Marcel Duchamp, and in looking at his own work, in which Ascott was taking the gestural work of Pollock, tried to synthesize Pollock and Duchamp, in this case looking at Duchamp in the sense of a process as well as the mechanization, presumably.[76] This is most readily understood in Ascott's *Change Painting*. In this work, Ascott explored distilling a painting into a few basic gestures and put those strokes onto glass panels which could slide along a wooden frame. In doing this, Ascott was making the process the focus, and primarily, making the artwork almost a game in which the viewer could interact. The artwork was never in repose, never static.

As with applying motion to visual arts, Moholy-Nagy had previously experimented with art as an interactive game as well. In a series of black-and-white photographs taken during the late

[76] Roy Ascott, "Roy Ascott, Groundcourse," Lecture at Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, April 10, 2016). https://nmulholland5.wixsite.com/shiftwork/copy-of-decisions-decisions.

1920s at the Bauhaus in Dessau, Germany, Moholy-Nagy orchestrated his own hide-and-seek games of perspective meant to puzzle and disorient the viewer… As with many of his peers in the post-WWI European avant-garde, Moholy-Nagy took advantage of the recent innovation of the portable, hand-held camera to document the accelerating sensory traffic of an industrial urban modernity.[77]

The experimentation in photography was not only taken from surrealism and Dada, but was, "promoted by Constructivist ideology," and aimed to test the medium: "One aspect of this experimentalism involved eschewing subject matter and instead creating photographs that more closely resembled abstract paintings."[78] To those ends, Moholy-Nagy was looking to new technologies and what it meant for the future, just like what Ascott was doing. What set Ascott apart, however, was his focus on process. For Ascott, process was key, and that process was informed by the new post-World War II technology. This technology was, of course, different than with what Moholy-Nagy was experimenting (hand-held cameras in the example) and the critical piece was the interaction between man and machine. This germ of the idea no doubt came from Ascott's military history when part of his duties included deciphering radar readings. The machine gave information and the people responded, which in turn affected the machinery output. This created a feedback loop in which humans and machines were in communication. These concepts were part of a larger field called *Cybernetics*. Cybernetics looked at process and

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[77] Jennifer Pranolo, "Looking Up, Looking Down: A New Vision in Motion," in *Screen Space Reconfigured*, ed. Susanne Ø. Sæther and Synne T. Bull (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020) 153-178.

[78] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "History of Photography: Perfecting the Medium, c. 1900-c. 1945," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed January 11, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/technology/photography/Experimental-approaches.

the concept of the feedback loop and Ascott published his thoughts on Cybernetics and made a statement, or artist's manifesto:

> I work on two levels from a common set of attitudes: on the social level, elaborating plans for a Cybernetic Art Matrix; on the intimate level making individual art works. Both processes are concerned with creating triggers—initiating creative behaviour in the observer/participant. Modern art is characterized by a behaviourist tendency in which process and system are cardinal factors. As distinctions between music, painting, poetry, etc. become blurred and media are mixed, a behaviourist synthesis is seen to evolve, in which dialogue and feedback within a social culture indicate the emergence of a Cybernetic vision in art as in science. My artifacts come out of a process of random behaviour interacting with preestablished conditions. The Cybernetic Art Matrix is seen as a process in which anarchic group behaviour interacts with pre-established systems of communications, hardware and learning nets. In both cases the processes are self-generating and self-critical. Basically they are initiated by creative behaviour, and in turn give rise to its extension in other people.[79]

There are photographs from this time period that show Wright experimenting in different ways. Some appear rather typical for early photography and art students, but there are others that provide a glimpse into the budding development of where Wright's photography would lead. One particular photograph of Cam McLester, the result of a series of overlays with careful burning and dodging, is notable as it not only highlights the unification of the differing post-war outlooks of America and Britain (moody mixed with optimism), which would prove a perfect match for Wright's later rock 'n roll photography, but it also hints at the origins of Wright's later style that would come to define his work. This style was again based on capturing an emotion and the immediate. It is important to note, in relation to Roy Ascott and the changing atmosphere of art schools and the country in general, that the concept of the process was something to which Wright responded. Wright's photography looks immediate, natural, all force and typified by

[79] Roy Ascott, "The Cybernetic Stance: My Process and Purpose," *Leonardo*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (April 1968): 105.

abandoning concern, but this connection to Ascott and Ealing points to a more thoughtful Wright who was developing an approach based on the perspective of process. This is not readily apparent as anyone questioned who knew Wright said Wright did not theorize photography or intellectualize it. That does not mean he did not talk about photography; there are recordings of him discussing the art and craft and later confidant and Hard Corps member, Patrick Cullie, noted that he and Wright talked for hours about photography and that Wright was well versed in many photographers and their work.[80] Regardless of Wright's lack of intellectualization, opting for the immediate and arguably what came naturally, it is upon closer inspection of Wright's work that an understanding of process, developed at Ealing through the pedagogy of Roy Ascott, is apparent. This nascent concept of process would come out later in Wright's photography, specifically in the darkroom, and again it is questionable whether this was born out of a conscious desire or an unconscious one. It is likely a combination of the two.

Townshend, on the other hand, undeniably introspective, intellectualized the coursework at Ealing. This notion was clear in his future music, in subject matter and production, as well as nearly every future endeavor. Townshend also discusses this periodically in interviews and in his biography, at a time when he started with his band the Detours, the precursor to The Who, Townshend writes:

> I wanted to be a sculptor, but Ealing Art College lost its diploma status for Fine Arts and Sculpture, and my parents were concerned I might emerge from college without any qualification. The band still felt like a side-project to me, so I considered moving to another college. I was particularly interested in kinetic sculpture: installations combining vibrant colour, lighting, TV screens and complex, coded music. All this, I imagined, would be interactive, brought to life by the computers that Roy Ascott talked about.[81]

[80] Patrick Cullie, phone interview by author, Lyons, December 9, 2020.
[81] Pete Townshend, *Who I Am: a Memoir* (New York: Harper Collins, 2013) 55-56.



Study at Ealing, 1962/63



Cam McLester, 1962/63

Ealing was split between the old ways and the burgeoning new and avant-garde. The old guard represented the trade school perspective while the new faculty were opposed to regimentation and jettisoned such beliefs to make room for exploration in different fields for a multi-disciplinary art form. The tension was a reflection of the times in which they inhabited, and a portent of the clashing, generational ideals that would soon become apparent. The experiences at Ealing would prove formative for both Townshend and Wright and would color and inform their future focuses—Townshend on music and Wright on photography. That was the case particularly with Roy Ascott's influence and like the title of his introductory class, Groundcourse, implies, it served as the foundation and bedrock for Townshend and Wright.

Aside from Roy Ascott, the other figure from Ealing who would have a resounding impact on both Townshend and Wright was the artist Gustav Metzger. Metzger was a pioneer in his field and focused on the times in regard to a post-World War II era. Where Ascott developed a rubric and point-of-view exploring various Cold War technologies to look to the future—one could view this forward looking gaze as optimistic in a sense—Metzger went the Dada route and resurrected the absurdist feelings of war, but did so with a vengeance and a level of finality and gravitas.

Such an outlook was understandable. Born into the hopeful years of the short-lived Weimar Republic, Metzger's Polish Jewish parents saw firsthand the horrifying tranformation of Germany while Metzger would have little memories of such a time, and would instead spend his formative years during the anti-semitic rise of the Nazi Party. It was not until 1939, with the start of World War II, that he and his parents were able to flee and find safety in England. With only memories of a time which ultimately led to war, it is presumable that such internalized and

traumatic experiences would inform his artwork. This is not simply conjecture, as the experience of World War II and contemplating such an event is throughout his writings and the focus of his work.

In 1962, Roy Ascott invited Metzger to give a lecture at Ealing.[82] The subject of the lecture was on "Auto-Destructive Art," a movement that he and sculptor Brian Robins developed and, like the Dadaists, developed a manifesto in 1959.[83] First titled "Self Destructive Art," the manifesto describes the artwork as, "a form of public art for technological societys [sic]," and underscores the temporal and transitory nature of such works, that they, "have a lifetime duration existence varying from a few moments to twenty years. When the disintegrative process is complete the remains of the work are to be removed from the site and scrapped."[84]

The impermanence can be extrapolated and hint to feelings of a post-war era, attempting to make sense out of the senseless, but the 1959 manifesto only hints at the social context, while more predominantly looks from an industrial and technological angle. It would not be for a few years before the societal, cultural, and political context would be manifest. From a 1965 lecture at the Architectural Association, which would have been similar to the one given in 1962 at Ealing, Metzger opened with a brief definition:

> Auto-destructive art is a comprehensive theory for action in the field of the plastic arts in the post-second world war period. The action is not limited to theory of art and the production of art works. It includes social action. Auto-destructive art is committed to a left wing revolutionary position in politics, and to struggles against future wars.[85]

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[82] Gustav Metzger and Mathieu Copeland, *Gustav Metzger: Writings (1953-2016)* (Geneve: JRP Editions, 2019) 562.
[83] Gustav Metzger, Andrew Wilson, and Cyril Wilson, *Auto-Destructive Art: Metzger at AA* (London: Bedford Press, 2015) 2.
[84] Metzger, *Writings,* 57.
[85] Metzger, *Auto-Destructive Art,* 1.



Street Scene, 1962

Among the students in attendance at the Ealing lecture was Townshend. Metzger's ideas resonated with Townshend and they would appear on stage with Townshend experimenting with a feedback loop of distortion (hearkening to Roy Ascott's teachings) and completing the disintegrative process by smashing his guitar. Metzger's impact on Townshend is readily apparent, and not a secret; however, the impact of Metzger's lecture extended to Wright as well, though it is not certain if Wright was in attendance or if it was received secondhand.

In the same lecture, Metzger listed a series of ten concepts and terms to help understand auto-destructive art:

1. The time/material/process factor.
2. The time /material/prediction factor.
3. Falling bodies.
4. Fast subliminal speeds.
5. Decomposition, dematerialization and materialization.
6. Production of new forms and colours through thermal activity.
7. Random activity.
8. The discontinuous.
9. Irreversible processes.
10. The aesthetic of revulsion.[86]

As with Ascott's influence on Wright, Wright did not intellectualize Metzger's ten points or the lecture the way Townshend would. Where Townshend meditated on the theories and thought through each idea, Wright more-or-less grabbed on to them and ran with it. This is not to say that Wright took things at face value, but it is to say that he tested the motifs in a hands-on, experiential approach. These methods are two sides of the same coin, the process simply reversed. Townshend thought through each supposition before he could act, whereas Wright acted first, in order to help him think through the premise and make sense of it. In this context,

[86] Metzger, 16.

the notion of "fast subliminal speeds," sounds almost tailor-made to Wright's later style of photography. In fact, moving through the list, Wright's photography touches on each of the ten points and fits the criteria more than that of Townshend and The Who's music. It would all develop later.

The changes witnessed at Ealing were also occurring throughout the other art schools in the country and signaled how the empire was adapting to the times and responding to her postwar constituency. In researching the role English art schools played in music, Andrew Kellett notes:

> British art colleges, like British society itself, underwent something of a postwar transformation. Before the Second World War, art colleges had existed, of course, but young men like Eric Clapton would likely not have attended them... However, postwar education reforms established a system of secondary schools that all citizens could attend free of charge; this system offered art schools as an option alongside grammar schools, secondary modern schools, and technical colleges.[87]

Art college was one way the working-class youth could get an education. This is one way to see it, or as Patrick Cullie puts it, "England had a regimented system of A levels and B levels and art school was where they dumped all the outliers."[88] Cullie also commented on the history of England as having a socialist framework and from that mindset art schools offered education to such outliers. As socialistic and utopian as it may sound, it was also pragmatic. The education would serve as a way to, "populate industries like printing, graphics, advertising, broadcasting."[89] From the establishment perspective, and the working class as well, it seemed to be a benefit to all. This would prove to be a miscalculation and backfire in regard to maintaining status quo.

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[87] Andrew Kellett, *The British Blues Network: Adoption, Emulation, and Creativity*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017) 114.
[88] Patrick Cullie, phone interview by author, Lyons, February 2, 2021.
[89] Cullie, interview, February 2.

In recounting a conversation with Wright, Patrick Cullie said that Wright found this to be a tremendous irony and wonderful joke:

> The British government made this big mistake by putting all the rebels in the same place at the same time. They all fed off each other. They started bands, [were] designing clothes, and taking photographs, and creating pop art, opening bookstores and nightclubs. If you took all those leading figures in rock and pop music and pop art in England in the '60s, I bet 90 percent of them were art school students.[90]

It seemed everything in the universe conspired to create rock, including the British government, albeit inadvertently, and there was a strong correlation to art and design colleges.

Discussing the connection between art, design, and music, specifically art college's influence on music creation, Dominic Molon mentions Pete Townshend's education at Ealing Art College and references Eric Clapton, John Lennon, and Keith Richards as notable UK art school alum. Rather than dive further into Townshend's influence from Gustav Metzger, Molon instead discusses the art school influence on Townshend and that of The Who through the indirect line of Richard Hamilton, the artist who conceived the blank cover for the Beatles' *White Album* and the accompanying collage poster in the interior sleeve. Molon writes, "The extent of Hamilton's influence beyond his direct involvement with (or citation of) rock phenomena can be seen in the cover art and concept of The Who's 1967 album, *The Who Sell Out*. Complete with fake jingles and commercials linking the tracks, the album featured mock ads for various products with the members of the band as models."[91] This does not, however, seem to be a fair attribution, as

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[90] Cullie, interview, February 2.

[91] Dominic Molon, "Made with the Highest British Attention the the Wrong Detail: The UK," in *Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll since 1967: Exhibition, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, September 29, 2007 to January 6, 2008 ; Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, May 31 to September 8, 2008*(Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), pp. 73.

Townshend's influence from Metzger and Ealing Art College is well-documented and more apparent than that of Hamilton. Moreover, Townshend did not design the album covers in a vacuum, but worked with graphic designers and artists like Mike McInnerney, who studied at the London College of Printing, to push boundaries and experiment in the medium.[92]

As the embers of Rock began to glow and Bohemian art schoolteachers were blowing Wright and Townshend's minds with the possibilities of the avant-garde and reframing a culture, post-World War II, Wright and Townshend were similarly expanding their horizons with marijuana at Wright and McLester's flat. Unfortunately, the police did not know much about art school or appreciate artists' manifestos, nor were they into Dada. With all of the commotion at the flat, the police inevitably caught wind of what was happening on Sunnyside Road. To further add to Wright's misfortune, according to historian James Mills's *Cannabis Nation: Control and Consumption in Britain, 1928-2008*, "in 1962 Drugs Squad officers took the decision to adopt a new approach to the drug… 102 arrests had been made for cannabis offences [sic] in the first four months of 1962 alone compared with 152 for all of 1960."[93]

Normally, this would not have been much of an issue; however, fears were heightened, and the Russian scare was at an all-time high. As Mark Blake contextualizes the event in his book, *Pretend You're In A War*, part of the demonization of marijuana was linked to the Russian scare.

Marijuana had made the newspaper headlines that summer in connection with the Profumo affair. Harold Macmillan's Conservative government had been shaken by the discovery that its

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[92] Mike McInnerney, "'Tommy' unfolding triptych album cover for the rock opera by The Who," Album Cover, *Tommy*, The Who, 1969. http://mikemcinnerney.com/biography/

[93] James H. Mills, *Cannabis Nation: Control and Consumption in Britain, 1928-2008* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 130.

Secretary of State For War John Profumo had been sharing a lover, Christine Keeler, with a Soviet naval attaché. There were fears that the nation's security had been compromised by careless pillow talk. But it was also revealed that Keeler had West Indian lovers and frequented what the newspapers called 'the dope dens of Notting Hill.'[94]

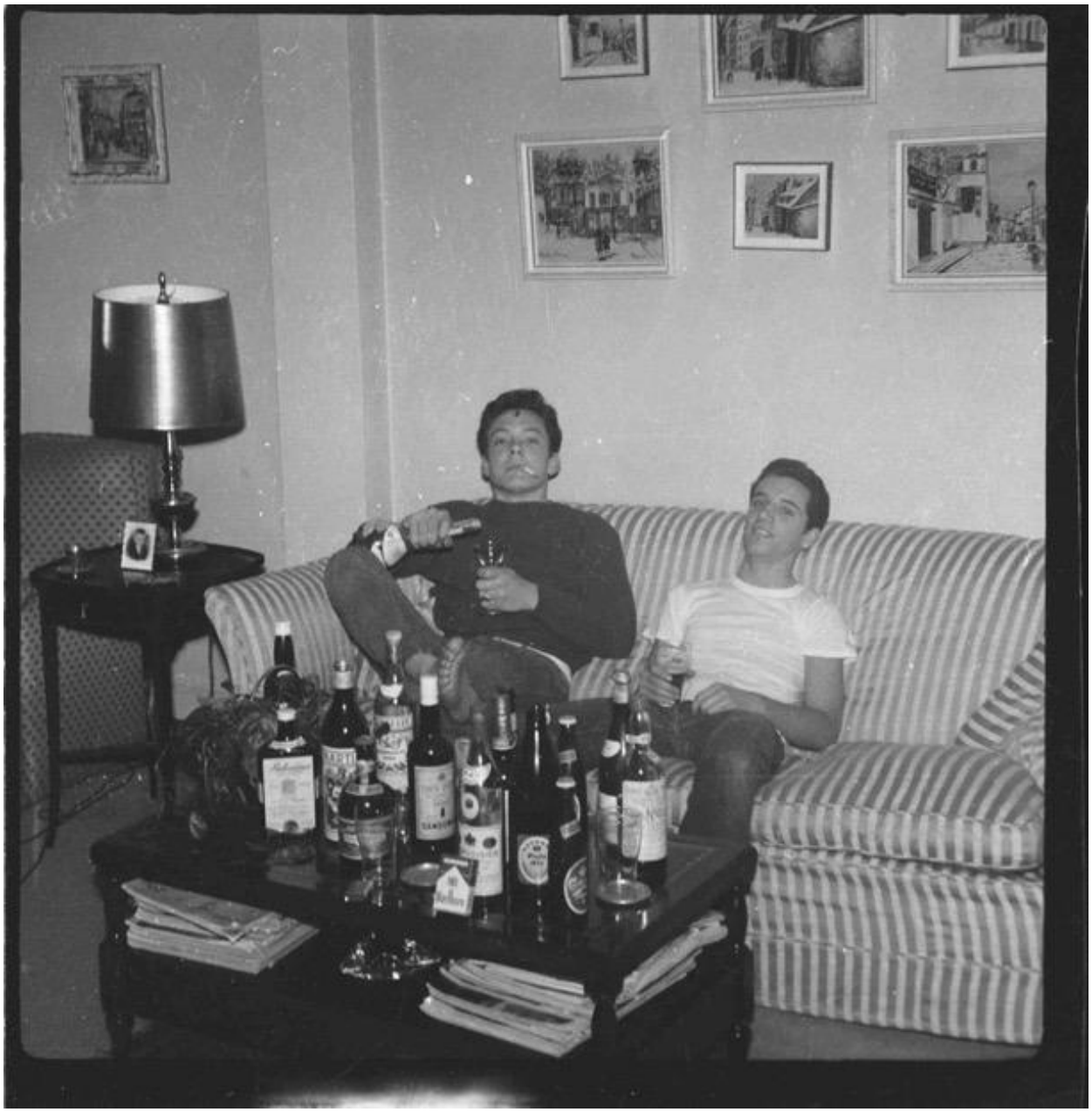
The drug culture was growing, but the police were still playing catch-up. After the tip-off, McLester and Wright came home late from college to find a group of plain-clothes officers searching the flat. In a panic, Wright handed over a jar containing a couple of ounces of pot. The police were delighted, unaware that there were actually pounds of marijuana still hidden throughout the flat. After spending a week in jail, Wright and McLester were told they had twelve days to leave England or be deported.

McLester went back to the U.S. and Wright fled to Paris. Townshend and a friend, Richard "Barney" Barnes – future Who biographer and incidentally the one who came up with the band's name for The Who – took over the Sunnyside flat. As for the record collection, they made the rounds and Townshend kept the collection in its entirety.

It is well documented that blues albums were spreading throughout England, but a collection like Wright's was something that was unique, in that it was carefully built: a handpicked discography collected and curated with intention—the difference between stacks of books and a library. Though as innocuous as it may sound, this event could arguably be seen as a defining moment for rock n'roll. Wright certainly introduced many of the art students at Ealing, both directly and via Sid's Diner, but with all that cast aside, at the very least, Wright introduced Townshend to

[94] Blake, *Pretend You're In A War*, 88.

the blues and as Townshend put it in his autobiography, “Everything changed when I met Tom Wright.”[95]



Tom and Cam, Sunnyside Flat, 1962

[95] Townshend, *Who I Am*, 56.

Wright helped coax Townshend out of his shell and introduced him to cool, but the record collection also had a profound impact on Townshend. Townshend is famously private and guards his personal life from his public persona. Russ Schlagbaum, who was introduced to the music scene by Tom Wright, later managed Townshend's Eel Pie Studios for nearly all of the 1980s and it was not until years into his time with Townshend that trust was built between them. Townshend invited Schlagbaum and his girlfriend for Thanksgiving dinner in 1982 at his place at Goring-on-Thames, dubbed "the Temple." It was then and there that Townshend led Schlagbaum to a large bank of oak cabinets and drew the doors open to reveal Wright's massive collection of records lining the shelves. "I still have them," Townshend said, "And the fucker's not getting them back."[96]

Wright was a photographer by trade but was spiritually rooted in the blues. For Wright it was always about the music; his photography was but an artifact, a symptom. The blues was not only inherent to Wright's photography, but was the inspiration and impetus of change. It served as a vehicle for these young British rebels to express themselves and carry a message that was different than that of their parents' generation. The reason this is important is that it signals a strong diversion in British music. Up until then the major breakout British band was the Beatles. Although the Beatles meteoric success blew the doors open for the rest of the British bands, the Beatles were a pop group that evolved from 50's pop music like Gene Vincent's "Be-bop-a-lula." The majority of the British bands (that came after the Beatles) began as R&B cover bands. The Who, The Rolling Stones, Eric Burdon and the Animals, Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac (before Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham), Pink Floyd, The Kinks, The Hollies, Small

[96] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottoville, Ohio, February 28, 2021.

Faces (Faces), Them, Yardbirds, Led Zeppelin, The Zombies, etc. were all heavily steeped in American blues.

This was a huge shift in the music and it could be argued that Tom Wright's music collection was part of the catalyst for change. This was before the internet and access to music was extremely limited. As mentioned before, English youth could not afford record players and the radio was not playing black American blues singers. Wright's extensive record collection offered some of the only exposure to American blues for his British contemporaries. The act of recording, compiling and hoarding was a talent and compulsion that can be seen throughout Wright's life. This collection would ultimately be archived at the University of Texas at Austin, which not only includes thousands of photographs, but 2,000 cassette recordings. These consisted of Wright's thoughts on music, interactions with artists, as well as one-of-a-kind bootleg music recordings at concerts and intimate settings.

Perhaps what further sets Wright apart from his English contemporaries, who passed records around the scene, and what adds another dimension to the British blues/American blues connection, is that Wright was American. In addition, he also returned to America and was a participant in the creation of a new music, rooted in the blues, that would ultimately transform a culture. As mentioned, Wright's photography was secondary to the music, but this goes beyond him simply capturing the scene. His intent was to document the impact of music, specifically American blues, and his love for the music is manifest in his photographs. There is a quality in the photography that transports the viewer to that time and place and one can almost hear the music. It is in the photographs that Wright's intent, focused on the music, shines through.

Wright's love for the blues provokes an obvious question, an overarching one that is larger than Wright and the components that made up the British blues, which needs further investigation if not introspection. The blues were already in America – it was born there—why did it take a group of people, as Wright puts it, "so white they were really pale blue,"[97] to appreciate the Blues? Secondly, and as previously noted, the young Americans, like British youth, were craving music that reflected their collective needs, wants, desires, something that they could carry forward. The blues was available to American youth, but was not popular, or at least mainstream. Apart from the obvious racist overtones, what was it about the blues that some Americans could not see, though it was right in their backyard? Did it need to be packaged in white bodies, or is that too simple an explanation, washing over the layers of complexity? Such an act, however, is nothing new. White front men in America have historically used black backing bands (even in early country music) to gain a sort of legitimacy musically, while still retaining a sense of whiteness, allowing for mainstream consumption by a white audience.[98] Eric Lott points out the complicated relationship between white Americans and black culture aptly: whites appropriating out of both adoration and simultanesously out of fear and disdain.[99] Mitch Yamasaki tackles the question of musical appropriation in rock 'n roll head-on, "the roots of rock'n'roll are African American. Brought over from Africa by slaves, this music is affective and participatory. Emphasizing rhythm (beat) over melody, the music makes your body move."[100]

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[97] Wright, *Roadwork*, 34.
[98] Nick Tosches, *Country: The Twisted Roots of Rock n Roll*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996).
[99] See: Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Eric Lott, *Black Mirror: The Cultural Contradictions of American Racism*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017).
[100] Yamasaki, "Using Rock 'N' Roll to Teach History, 180.

Racism in America is clearly one factor that explains why Americans, at least the general audience at large, missed the blues and why it took white British musicians to repackage the R&B tunes for Americans to take notice. Another was that the British "got" the blues. Again, they did not have a 1:1 connection—the British peoples were not enslaved—but after experiencing firsthand the destruction of war in their own environment, that feeling, which was pure, was transmitted. And that was the blues. It is why these British bands did not have to repackage the songs all that much, rather opting to begin as R&B cover bands and continue covering songs even on their own albums.[101]

Appropriating blues was clearly not specific to the British. As mentioned previously, this was done in rock n' roll and by white Americans as well. Greil Marcus touches on this in *the History of Rock 'n' Roll in Ten Songs*, in which he points out the *ordinary guy* image of Buddy Holly. Holly could pass the music off with his "aw shucks" demeanor and unassuming presentation. What Buddy Holly's music did achieve, however, was showing the power of the music. Marcus quotes guitarist and critic Robert Ray who said, "What's interesting about rock & roll is that the truly radical aspect occurs at the level of *sound*. 'Tutti Frutti' is far more radical than Lennon's 'Woman Is the N____r of the World,' and the sound of Bob Dylan's voice changed more people's ideas about the world than his political message did."[102] The power of Buddy Holly's music, and the transmission of that music, is seen in the appropriation of his sound by another band. Again, Greil Marcus writes, "when John Lennon, Paul McCartney, and George Harrison,

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[101] The Who, *My Generation*, Decca Records, 1965, LP Album.
Of the 12 songs on The Who's debut album, three are R&B covers: two by James Brown and the other by Bo Diddley.

[102] Greil Marcus. *The History of Rock 'n' Roll in Ten Songs*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014) 62.

as the Quarry Men, cut a version of "That'll Be the Day" for their first recording, in Liverpool in 1958, and later named themselves the Beatles in imitation of Holly's Crickets, they were not simply copying a hero but conducting a kind of séance with him."[103]

This interest criss-crossed the Atlantic, and some of the success of the English bands who came to America was due in part to some of the novelty of differentness. The British, from Swinging London, were hip and belonged to a faraway land. For the English, America was intriguing to them and, returning to imagery, the blues was uniquely American. The book *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music* turns to that imagery in the form of Robert Johnson and his purported—and mythic—deal with the devil, and then comparing it with F. Scott Fitzgerald's view of America:

> The image of the devil is a way of comprehending the distance between Fitzgerald's shining image of American possibility and his verdict on its result; it is a way of touching the sense… that America is a trap: that its promises and dreams, all mixed up as love and politics and landscape, are too much to live up to and too much to escape. It is as if to be an American means to ask for too much—not even knowing one is asking for too much—and to trade away one's life to get it, whatever it is; as if this what makes America special, vital, murderous, and noble.[104]

America was a land of mythic proportions to the British youth. They desperately wanted to go to America where their heroes like Muddy Waters and Jimmy Reed lived and the differentness of America drew them to the music in the first place. Both groups of teenagers, the Americans and the English, were craving something new and in each other they found it. The difference was the initial attraction and intrigue – the British to the blues and the Americans to

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[103] Marcus. *Rock 'n' Roll*, 106.
[104] Greil Marcus. *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music*, (1975; repub., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014) 28.

the British Invasion – and the similarities in desire and appearance is what made it gel; it is how Americans finally heard the blues. With his music and his camera, one American, Tom Wright, had already played a substantial role and he was just getting started.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WHO, THE HOW, AND THE WHY:

PHOTOGRAPHING THE WHO'S FIRST NORTH AMERICAN TOUR

When reviewing, analyizing, and creating a record of something historical for posterity, there are inherent issues with an oral retelling of events, and relying solely on one's memory is even more problematic. A similar point could be made regarding photographs. When the memory of the person and the memory of the camera are combined and used in conjunction with each other, however, a more honest and accurate understanding can be gained about the event. This can be illustrated in many of Wright's stories on the road, alone.

On their first American tour, accompanying Herman's Hermits, the headlining act, the Who played to an audience at the state coliseum in Jackson, Mississippi on a rainy Tuesday night, August 1, 1967.[105] Those inside the venue would not notice the deluge outside over the volume and distortion emitted from Pete Townshend's Marshall Stack or the fury erupting from Keith Moon's oversized drum kit.

The sound was overpowering. Until Townshend, no one had thought to put amplifiers on top of one another, inventing what would be known as the *Marshall Stack*, and certainly not to smash a guitar on stage for a finale.[106] But this musician, barely out of art school and after his

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[105] Joe McMichael and 'Irish' Jack Lyons, *The Who Concert File* (London: Omnibus Press, 1997) 67.

[106] "The Story Behind the Infamous Marshall Stack," Marshall Website - Marshall History (Marshall, November 12, 2019), https://marshall.com/live-for-music/history/the-story-behind-the-infamous-marshall-stack.

direct interaction with Gustav Metzger and the concept of "auto-destructive art," was ready to translate theory into praxis and present it on stage. The volume and stage presence was incomparable to anything American youth had heard or seen, startling some and confusing others. If this was shocking to the new generation it is only imaginable how radical and terrifying it was to adults witnessing these alien creatures. Dressed in crushed velvet and paisley, they crossed the Atlantic like they were riding over to deliver pestilence and plague to America's children gift wrapped.

Awareness of the corrupting nature of rock n'roll, particularly the Who's special brand of apparent debauchery, was present at each show. Most of the teenagers were as stunned as the adults. They came to see the heartthrob Peter Noone who they watched on Ed Sullivan sing *Henery the Eighth, I Am*, and the accompanying Hermits, not a group of hooligans from Shepherd's Bush (not that they knew where that was in West London) emitting feedback and distortion through amplifiers and smashing up their equipment.

The teenagers and 20 somethings in attendance watched from the floor, separated from the musicians by an elevated stage. At larger shows, there was another group present who were able to move freely between stage and floor without needing to display tickets—what in today's parlance would be called *security*. The built-in chaperones of the evolved school dance, they were the adults overlooking the whole spectacle; nervous, anxious, horrified, and surely aggravated. As they witnessed the music mutate and turn malignant, security naturally migrated to the stage, standing between audience and performer to serve as a buffer. This was not so much to protect the band from the crowd, or even the crowd from the band, but to keep separation and necessitate division in the interest of maintaining law and order or else havoc would erupt. It was

at this certain show, on a rainy night at the Mississippi State Coliseum, that the role of chaperone was filled by police.

In attendance was Tom Wright, busily snapping photos. Wright was road managing the band at the time, but during the show, wherever the gig may be, he would opt to watch the band from every angle conceivable: the side stage, behind the band, sometimes from far away, and he definitely favored being up front and in the thick of it with the crowd. Threading his way through the masses, rhythmically gyrating as best they could to the Who's brand of music, Wright relentlessly searched for just the right moments to capture with his lens. Deceivingly simple, these shots from the crowd required an almost contradictory set of skills. On one hand, Wright had to be like an infantryman in a foxhole, ready to shoot with accuracy and determination based on reflexes and intuition, while on the other hand, he had to be a sniper, patiently stalking, waiting for the most opportune moment, before snapping and moving to the next position.

The different vantage points was one tool he often employed from his arsenal in these concert shots; there are many photos of the Faces, the Rolling Stones, the Eagles, J.D. Souther, and others taken from a rarely witnessed angle: straight overhead, as though Tom had rigged a bird with a camera.

In searching for one of these shots, this time from the crowd, Wright neared the stage to better capture Townshend executing a windmill on the guitar or Roger Daltrey posing with microphone in hand and slipped under the rope that ran the length of the front of the stage. This was of course merely symbolic; the real cordon was enforced by the police serving as security that night. As Wright ducked the rope, one of the cops working security witnessed the perceived trespass and retaliated with one fluid shot with a baton, cracking Wright in the back of the

head.[107] The band played on and no one, crowd or band, noticed an incapacitated Wright, knocked out cold, dragged by his feet to the side door and tossed out with the same care as the garbage.

Wright eventually came to as heavy rain soaked his hair and clothes to his skin. He felt the back of his head. The rain camouflaged the blood but a welt had already formed. It was confusion at first, not knowing where he was as he looked around attempting to get his bearings. With such a powerful blow to the back of his skull as to split the skin and render him unconscious, it can be safely assumed that Wright experienced a concussion and was only by fortune that the damages were not more severe. A recognizable song coming through the walls and the emergency exit doors through which Wright had been deposited helped him come back to reality and realize where he was.

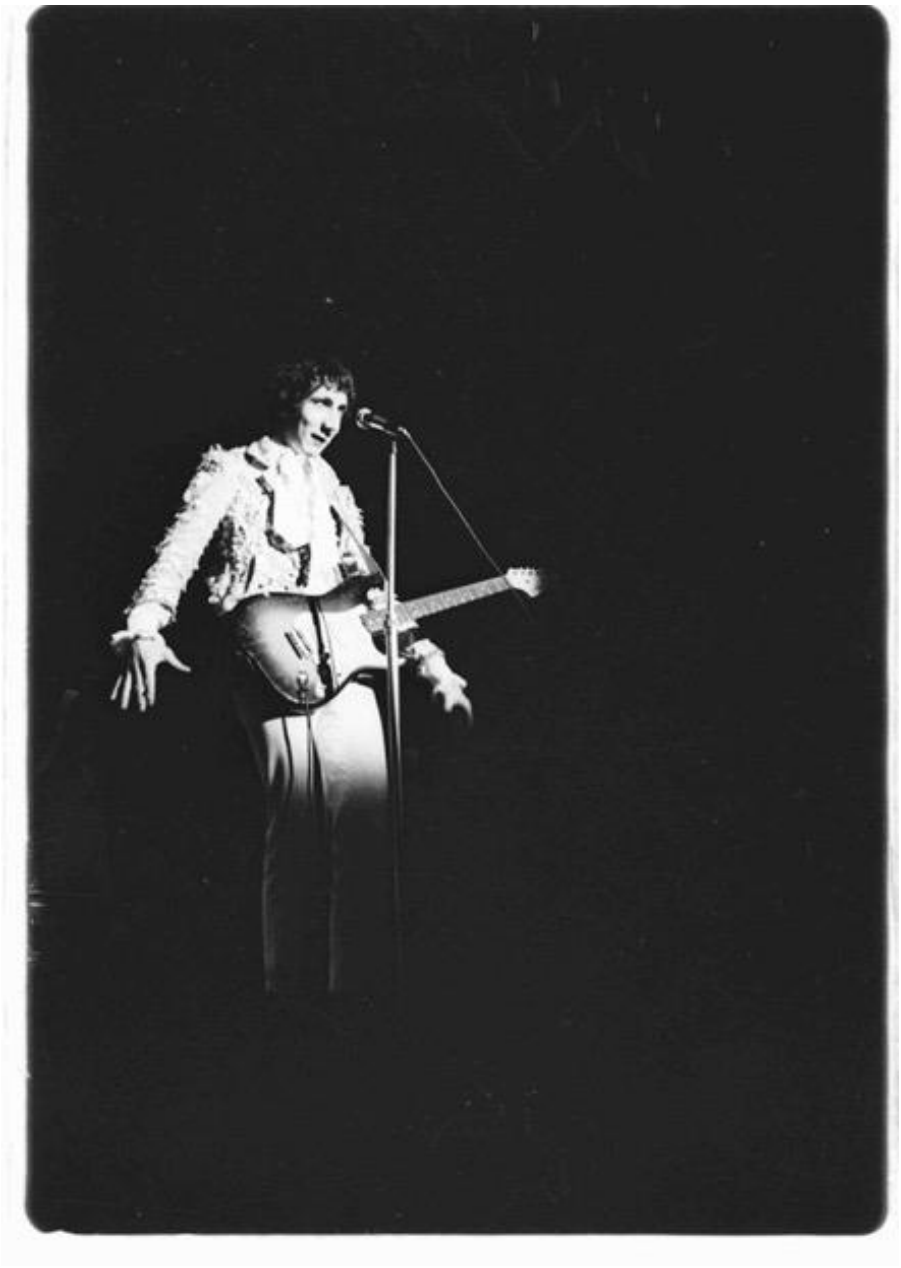
Between numbers Wright banged on the doors to no avail. After the show Townshend and others looked around and asked one another, "Where's Tom?" This would be something they could expect from Keith Moon, had he not been playing with the band, but this was something completely out of the norm for Wright, the whip-cracking road manager and compulsive photographer.

They eventually reunited after the show backstage and as one of the stories goes, the one published in Wright's book, *Roadwork*, Wright's anger evaporated when he saw Pete Townshend in a state, blood everywhere and a towel wrapped around his hand where he had cut it on a guitar string. Wright then transported Pete to the local hospital and was sutured by Dr.

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[107] There are discrepancies in the details of this night from the retelling to the author, by Chris Easter, as well as in Tom Wright's book, *Roadwork*, although the gist is the same.

Billy Walters, who then told Townshend not to play guitar for a month to six weeks. Wright finished the story by inferring that the tour was over, but that sentiment is reversed when Townshend tells him he will need to glue the pick to the bandages so he can continue playing.[108]



Pete Townshend, 1967

[108] Tom Wright and Susan VanHecke, *Roadwork: Rock & Roll Turned Inside Out* (New York: Hal Leonard Books, 2007).

Unfortunately, the story did not happen this way, or at least it did not happen this way that particular night. As with all oral tellings and retellings, memories cloud and parts and pieces get jumbled with some specifics being imprinted on the psyche while others fade and get replanted with separate recollections or even false ones. This is when photographs can work in tandem to clarify a historical record and a photo does exist from the show that night in Jackson, Mississippi.



The Who at the Mississippi State Coliseum in Jackson, Mississippi,
August 1, 1967

The photograph tells a story. There is much going on in this image and is significant with multiple layers, but to begin with, and in regard to the story relayed about that night, it is a contradiction. This photo was in fact taken at that show at the coliseum and is corroborated by two photographs snapped from the vantage point of the crowd by a fan that night. Keith Moon's Who logo shirt is clear as is Townshend's white trousers, floral print shirt, and Moon's "Picture's of Lily" drumkit. To eliminate any doubt, Robert Allen Jackson, the fan who took the photos, described the action at the end of the Who's set with some key artifacts from Wright's photograph, specifically witnessing, "a huge rebel flag behind the smashed drums and the colored smoke bombs went off."[109]

Since the photo captures Moon walking by his kicked over drum kit, smoke billowing from the Marshall stacks—staples of the grand finale in their early shows—the smoke bombs dissipating and Daltrey and Townshend marching off stage carrying rebel flags in mock procession, it is presumably the end of their set. At that moment, however, Wright was not out in the rain having just come to, picking out the pieces of, "My Generation," through the backdoor with the hair at his crown sopped in blood. Instead, at that moment, he was at the side of the stage snapping this photograph. Wright could not have been out in the rain that night because it did not rain that night. It was a high of 90 degrees and no precipitation: a hot, dry, summer day in the Deep South.[110]

This is not to infer that Wright lied about this evening and the events. More than likely,

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[109] Robert Allen Jackson, "The Who live in Jackson, MS, Tuesday, 01. August 1967," The Who Concert Guide, accessed June 28, 2021, http://www.thewholive.net/concert/index.php?id=1835.
[110] National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, *Record of Climatological Observations for Jackson, Mississippi on August 1, 1967*, April 5, 2021, https://doi.org/https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/orders/cdo/2533120.pdf.

Wright stitched a few different memories, from different nights, together. Nothing sinister happened in Wright's retelling of the events—as Siegfried Kracauer commented on a difference between photography and memory, "Memory does not pay much attention to dates; it skips years or stretches temporal distance."[111] It is understandable that Wright, through the passage of time—not to mention the freeflowing use of alcohol and drugs—jumbled some dates and details. This is not specific to Wright, but is a hallmark of memory and the act of remembering. What is interesting about this specific event and what points to it being an amalgamation of different stories, is that the alternate version of Wright being hit in the head by security is vastly more interesting and compelling.

Long time friend and current caretaker of Wright, Chris Easter, recounted this story, leaving out the detail of Townshend's finger having been sliced open. Rather, after one of those early shows, Easter relates that backstage, Townshend and others asked where Wright was and if anyone had seen him. As they were trying to locate Wright, either Wright was able to find his way back inside or they eventually reunited after the show. Either way, after seeing Wright in such a state, it was clear something like that could not happen again. From that point on, Wright wore a lanyard around his neck clipped to a laminated card with the Who's logo printed and large initials, "TW," over the top. This was the genesis of the backstage pass.

Most of these stories remain unknown, but should be legendary; however, to the Who, to Wright, they were not attempting to create legends. Braving uncharted territory they were just

[111] Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Y. Levin, "Photography," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1993): 425.

trying to get by and as the saying goes, “necessity is the mother of invention.” Invention was their only option.



Pete Townshend, 1967

The other point to this story, and its relation to the previous photograph, is that it brings to awareness and accurately illustrates inherent issues of photography and history. This issue lends itself to examination through American Studies because of its interdisciplinary nature.

Photography is not an adjunct to history but embedded in it. Investigating a photograph for clues and allowing for interaction between photography and other historical records, as demonstrated with the photograph of The Who's finale at the Jackson show, is articulately and succinctly explained by Joshua Brown:

> …photography is intrinsic to the subject under examination: neither the Civil War nor westward expansion can be adequately comprehended without recognition of its visualization. Moreover, a close and critical evaluation of what photographs show and do not show changes our understanding of what occurred and its meanings in the past and present… for historians in general, events do matter: history is more than a historicist construction, and methods of inquiry must rely on more than analogies, shared traits, and seeming persistence over time. Both studies marshal a coherent body of photographic evidence, place it in relation to the larger visual culture of its time, and endeavor to recover the original context of "shooting" and viewing.[112]

The photographer choosing to reveal or hide, capture or evade, was also observed in this passage by Susan Sontag:

> A photograph is both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence. Like a wood fire in a room, photographs—especially those of people, of distant landscapes and faraway cities, of the vanished past—are incitements to reverie. The sense of the unattainable that can be evoked by photographs feeds directly into the erotic feelings of those for whom desirability is enhanced by distance.[113]

The Who's Mississippi Coliseum concert photo in discussion does just this. Working in tandem with the oral history of what occurred, the photograph eventually served as the litmus test for accuracy. This is not always the case, but the point is that communication exists between artifacts of history if one looks for it. Brown takes this a step further:

> When historians look at photographs, they see historical matters differently from those practicing other disciplines. They question if and how the evidence establishes demonstrable linkages, takes into account contingency and accident, and verifies causality. The results of such inquiry can both expand the purview of the history of

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[112] Joshua Brown, "Historians and Photography," American Art, Vol. 21, No. 3 (2007): 12.
[113] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Penguin Book, 1979) 16.

> photography and revise our understanding of the significance of events and experiences in the past. But historical scholarship informed by photography is still a rarity. For their part, historians must be willing to treat photographs and other archival visual evidence with the same seriousness and rigor they apply to text. Until they recognize photographs as a legitimate resource, the value of historical inquiry will never be adequately tested or fully realized.[114]

Photography itself is important to historical understanding and is deserving of such importance. As part of the notion of photography aiding in the understanding of historical inquiry, another key theme that recurs in American Studies scholarship is the democratizing aspect of photography. This democratizing characteristic is inherent to photography as Michael Kammen highlights, "It has allowed people to look at vernacular culture and has revealed the agency of people whose role in history was previously ignored or minimized."[115]

This is important and vital to research, however the point-of-view of photography as a component of history is only one side of the coin. Yes, photography serves as a way of triangulating a position in the context of history, but this is merely one facet of photography: that is the photograph's use for documentation and verification. Photography, however, is not that sterile of an artifact. It is also art.

Photography exists in this tension between analytical examination and artistic values. It is difficult to conjure another instance where one device is employed for documentation as well as for producing aesthetic works of art. Existing in such a dialectic it is no wonder that the emergence of photography as an artform was not initially accepted en masse. As photographs became accepted as an artform in itself, without historical documentation for accompaniment, art criticism came to dominant the reading of photography, "with the kind of intensity normally

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[114] Brown, "Historians and Photography," 12.
[115] Kamman, "Photography and American Studies," 13.

reserved for paintings."[116] The main difference being, as Susan Sontag noted, "The painter constructs, the photographer discloses."[117]



The Who—Keith Moon on Pictures of Lily Drumkit, 1967

With Photography coming into its own as an artform and being viewed on the same stage as a painting, with similar views in respect to aesthetics and form, then it was only natural that photography be brought into the fold with interpretation and critique. An obvious example of this would be among the post-structuralists where factions of critical theory splintered in every which direction in order to understand art and the world. If we look at Wright's Mississippi photograph of the Who's show, one aspect by which to view the photograph would be to interpret the rebel

[116] Lee, "American Histories of Photography," 4.
[117] Sontag, On Photography, 92.

flag from a contemporary context.

It is not a judgment of photography theory that a photograph can be interpreted with the same rigor and perspective as of that of a painting. This is just the other side of the coin of photography. On one side is the artistic, or the aesthetic shown by way of the photographer's craft, while on the other side is the documentation side: arguably an objectivity, offered by the mechanical apparatus. Of course this is not entirely accurate as photography *is* a process of representation. As Jesús Vassallo concludes, the understanding of representation in photography, "situates the realization of the inherent subjectivity of photography with the start of a sustained effort to construct a visual language of impersonality, and thus purge photography of its original sin of subjectivity and restore an illusion of scientific truth."[118]

One could view photography as a lie because of the lack of complete objectivity. Another way to view photography is on its own merit with its own distinct set of principles inherent in the medium. Photography is not a painting, nor is it an objective artifact. It has aspects of both. The two sides of the coin, objectivity of documentation and subjectivity of art, should be melded into one in order to understand, interpret, and ultimately appreciate a photograph.

> In other words, the "visual turn" that we witness in the widespread interdisciplinary engagement with historical photography has been produced not as the result of a sudden or spontaneous preoccupation with visual culture but rather as the result of the insistent needs of historians to excavate new subjects and answer questions that exceed a limited or straightforward engagement with photographs as either documents or historical evidence, and which go beyond the conventional frames/boundaries of formal art-historical analysis. Such inquiries have necessitated coming to terms with photography as an aesthetic, material, cultural, and psychic object of social attachment, yet always within the context of a broader set of historical questions that have required historians to turn to

[118] Jesús Vassallo, "Documentary Photography and Preservation, or The Problem of Truth and Beauty," Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Summer 2014): 15.

photographs and to bring forth meaning from them in the process.[119]

This can certainly implicate much of historical photography and grant an access point by which to understand a historical point in time or answer historical inquiry, but with Tom Wright's photography specifically in mind, this framework is necessary. This forms the foundation of what is necessary to understand and appreciate Wright's work. His photography not only captures a moment others did not see, nor had access to, but in conjunction with written and oral history, tells a different story with nuance and richness. In this way, a new (collective) memory is recovered—or perhaps the memory is newly discovered.

For these reasons, it is not only necessary to scrutinize the oral history or retelling of events from multiple viewpoints, but it is essential to analyze the photograph both in tandem with the recalling of events and on its own separately. Returning to the Jackson, Mississippi, show photograph there are multiple ways by which to approach and understand the image. The objective reading is perhaps the most straightforward: with the exception of a few pock marks on the film, the photograph is professionally executed and, regardless of opinion, is a composition of a gradient of blacks and whites. A thick haze clouds the background and as we know from Tom Wright's accounts from the road, this is from smoke bombs ignited at the end of a set for the grand finale during the time the guitars, amps, and drums were experiencing *auto-destruction* on stage. The other clear component of the photograph is Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend carrying Confederate flags. This is where what seemed to be completely straightforward and clear now veers into a world of signs and signifiers.

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[119] Jennifer Tucker, "Entwined Practices: Engagements with Photography in Historical Inquiry," History and Theory, Vol. 48, No. 4 (2009): 4.





The Who, Posed Photos and Outtakes

Jackson, Mississippi, July/August, 1967

At first glance there are two symbols that stand out: the Confederate flags and The Who logo on Moon's shirt. Upon closer investigation, another flag comes into view: the British Union Jack decal on Moon's overturned bass drum and another on a floor tom still standing. Such signs and signifiers, existing within the picture, is something akin to the modernist concept of a story within a story (a narrative popularly known in Joseph Conrad's novel, *Heart of Darkness*). The role of semiotics in photography is touched on by W.J.T. Mitchell and the sign within the sign is what he calls the, "metapicture."[120]

With the concept of metapicture one sees the collision of signs and their relation to one another in the Mississippi photo. The question is, "What to do with such information?" The reading of a simple photograph has quickly become complicated. Alan Trachtenberg points out the deceptively simple appearance of photography in analyzing the picture of a Harlem merchant: "The photograph seems perfectly straightforward, a lucid description of social fact: a street merchant posing for a picture at a site of unpretentious business. When we ask what the photograph actually shows, the how and the why of the image, conundrums push aside our certainty that we know perfectly what goes on here." [121]

One answer to reading, analyzing, and ultimately comprehending the Mississippi photograph is found in interpretation. Interpretation is critical to understanding photography and there is a rich body of scholarship that has directly impacted and influenced American Studies, most iconically the work of Stuart Hall and British Cultural Studies. Through such readings, they peel

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[120] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).
[121] Alan Trachtenberg, "Photography and Social Knowledge," American Art, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 7.

back and reveal a fundamental component of memory, which is that memories are not static: they change over time.

Taking a closer look at the Mississippi show photograph and through an interpretive lens found in cultural studies, more information can be deciphered. Referring to the most obvious signs already pointed out from the photograph, the Confederate flag, Union Jack, and The Who logo, there is no doubt a natural attempt to make connections between them. This is perhaps conducted preliminarily at a subconscious level and then if studied further transfers to a more conscious and active state of inquiry. Before analysis can begin, however, a choice between two tracks in regard to context needs to be made.

The first track is analyzing the photograph from the photograph's original context, the milieu and zeitgeist of which the photograph was born into existence. From this standpoint, when interpreting the photo through what semiotics would term the signs and signifiers, a certain story emerges that highlights the British Invasion existing in a dialectic with American blues. As related in the previous chapter, the British Invasion, or British Wave, had its roots in the blues. Because the blues was in America's backyard and played by older African Americans, the music did not hold much interest for mainstream America. The music did not. British youth, on the other hand, devoured American blues and copied and emulated the sounds. This was repackaged and resold to American youth. The Who, mainly through Tom Wright, were especially drawn to the blues, particularly the Mississippi Delta Blues and its later manifestation as rhythm and blues.

The photograph, with the apparent reverence for the Southern flag by a British band, presents a reading of the British bands adopting American blues. With Moon's smashed kit on the stage

with the Union Jack defiled, the Confederate flag is held high. It is worth remembering Stuart Hall's defense of interpretation in order to uncover meaning. As Eric Louw points out, "Hall argues that all messages have encoded into them a 'preferred' meaning (i.e. the meaning the hegemonically-dominant would prefer the decoders of the message to accept), but preferred meanings will not always be successfully conveyed."[122] In other words, not only is the one who is reading the photograph playing an active participatory role, but the act of decoding and interpreting offers an alternate understanding which gets to the heart of the matter and is inherently an act of dissent.

One way by which to view the photograph is through a purely contemporary lens. This can be a valid approach and offers alternate and often wholly different readings of past events. The resultant interpretation can have an almost surreal quality. This process is employed in order to develop a better understanding of the time in which the media is being viewed, but to also recognize clues and decipher meanings that were present all along. Such a framework for interpretation is borrowed from deconstruction, which is a hallmark of postmodern theory in cultural and media studies. The true negotiation is not a compromise buat an The act of holding two different ways of seeing simultaneously when reading an image is no easy task, but a necessary one when working with Wright's photographs.

Through this combination of contexts, both past and present, the Confederate flag is clearly the most charged of what W.J.T. Mitchell would define in semiotics as the sign, within the photograph.[123] A horrid history of race relations is signified by the image of the Confederate

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[122] Eric Louw, The Media and Cultural Production (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2001) 206.
[123] W.J.T. Mitchell, "The Surplus Value of Images," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (September 2002): 1-23.

flag. The flag is widely regarded as symbolizing a racist past and an institutionalized racism that still persists today. This seemingly small "sign" is also what Mitchell refers to as a metapicture—a picture within a picture. Whether it be literal, as in a painting within a painting, or, in this case, metaphorical and historical.

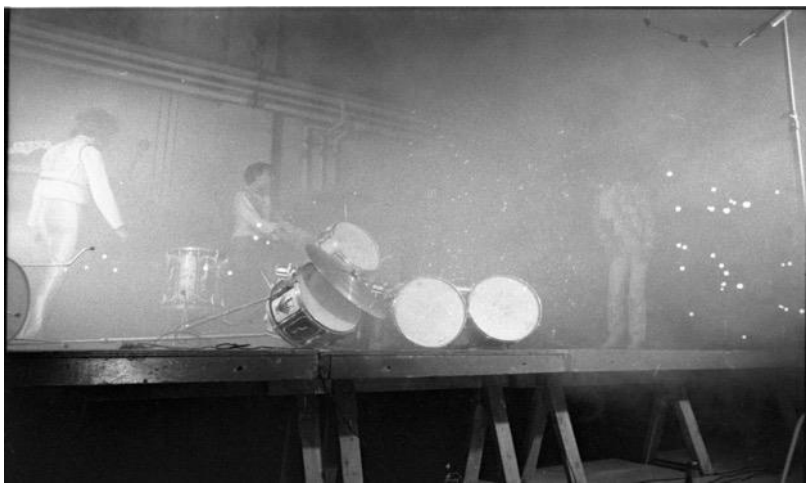
When the Who first came to America, on the tour when the Mississippi Coliseum photo was taken, they imagined the old Blues musicians would be revered and held up on a pedestal. When they were confronted with the reality of American racism, they were astonished and horrified.[124]

Reading the photo within this context produces a fascinating interpretation of the British Invasion and paints a different picture of Daltrey and Townshend marching off stage in lockstep wielding Confederate flags. They were at a concert playing music rooted in the blues and they had just smashed a guitar, amplifiers and drumset until things started smoking. The march with the flags was not done with reverence for the sanctity of the flag and what it signified, but was a performance filled with ridicule, mockery, and spite. They could not literally destroy the flag as they did to their equipment (this has a different historical context tied to it), but desecrated it in the only way they could—metaphorically. Through their mock pageantry the act was imbued with a historical context and jest (the sign and the signifier) as Keith Moon strutted through the debris in an aura of smoke defiantly with "The Who" displayed prominently on his chest. These were the rebels playing their music and thumbing their noses at the Confederacy and everything for which it stood. Jimmy Reed and Muddy Waters were *their* heroes.

[124] Chris Easter, in conversation with the author, Austin, Texas, September 20, 2019.



The Who at the Opera House in Peoria, Illinois, August 1, 1967



The Who at the Opera House in Peoria, Illinois, August 1, 1967

These readings provide some clues to Wright's photographs, but to fully appreciate his photography, it is necessary to include intent. Wright's motivation, purpose, and objective is key to the successful reading of his images. Wright always had a camera around his neck, but photography was ancillary to the music. Wright was first and foremost absorbed by the music

and everything that accompanied it. On the Who's first North American tour, the time at which the Mississippi Coliseum show photograph was taken, Wright, as Townshend's friend, was hired by the Who's managers, Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp, as road manager and photographer. With the title as almost a byproduct, Wright's motivation was always the music and with his photography his priority was capturing the moment through his lens. Wright would say, "The moment is always there, the question is, 'do you see it?'"[125]

This is a telling quote and gives insight into Wright's intent and how he approached his photography. Patrick Cullie underscores this intent with how Wright would wait like a sniper in a foxhole for the perfect shot.[126] By Wright's own account, and others, he would patiently wait for just the right moment and then reflexively jump into action to seize and memorialize the moment. This is one way to look at Wright's approach, and it would be accurate, but it is also worth evoking Alan Trachtenberg's ruminations on such a moment in a different context:

> Did the scene exist before the picturing, or does the picture originate (or manufacture) the scene? If one is true, then aren't both propositions equally true, equally subversive, and equally constituent of the other? Must we choose? Photography copies the world and invents the world at the same time, together and in the same act.[127]

Such an observation aptly describes Tom Wright's style of photography and his interconnectedness with the subject. Simply taking a photo of a scene sounds very passive, but aiding in the creation of a scene with a camera and craft reflects the participatory role Wright had. This participation in the music is paramount in the development of Wright's artistic expression and aesthetic. The process became an extension of his personality and often told as

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[125] Tom Wright interview clip, unknown origin, mp3, The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History.
[126] Patrick Cullie, phone interview by author, Lyons, January 13, 2021.
[127] Trachtenberg, "Photography and Social Knowledge," 7.

much about himself as those he was shooting. Placing himself in the mix and playing an integral part in multiple facets of the music, Wright successfully instituted a process that harkens to the teachings of Roy Ascott in Wright's Ealing days. From this standpoint there is a much more practical and utilitarian aspect of some of Wright's photography, especially with the Who.

During his time with the Who on their first North American tour, Wright was navigating his way through the crowd and snapping shots of the band from every possible angle, but especially from the spectators' point-of-view. Yes, he was trying to capture the moments, feelings, and energy to hopefully translate the aura to celluloid, but he was also taking photos to aid the band in their show from the audience's perspective. Again, referring to the ideas developed by Roy Ascott in his fundamental *Groundcourse* class, Wright created a loop between the band and the audience where both impacted and affected the other. With his camera, Wright would provide part of that response with his camera.

As the road manager and as a fan who was genuinely into the music, Wright knew every part of every Who song and knew the setlist by heart. When there was a major key change or shift in the song Wright would wait and carefully watch to see what they would do visually and either let it pass or take a photo. At other times he would catch a glimpse of Daltrey standing a certain way or catch Townshend holding his arms out like an airplane and he would snap another picture. Later when developing the film, usually that night after the show in the bathtub of a Holiday Inn or whichever motel in wich they were staying, he would produce the images for the band to see and point out what they needed to do on stage and at what time at the precise moments. Again, this harkened back to the Ealing days when he would play a record for Townshend, or more accurately a song. To get his point across Wright would play only one song at a time and

highlight key parts. There would be a feeling that was brought out by just the right note at just the right time or better when the whole band did something that harmonized and played well with each other. It was at those times in the song Wright would stop it and replay it over and over until whatever thing he was trying to convey was heard.[128]



Keith Moon, 1967

[128] This characteristic of Wright's was repeated to the author from several sources including, but not limited to, Peter B. Leighton, Russ Schlagbaum, Patrick Cullie, and Chris Easter.



The Who, Keil Opera House, St. Louis, Missouri, August 25, 1967

On the road, Wright would follow the same pattern he did when pointing out critical points of the blues songs. Only this time he was not a passive observer, he was influencing these moments. After the shows he would pull out an image he took from that night and for example one would be of Daltrey clutching the microphone. Wright would show it to Daltrey and advise him he should do that specific stance at a certain point in the song, hold it for a longer duration, or even change arm positions with each of Townshend's windmill guitar strum.[129] This is how Daltrey developed his poses, holding the microphone to the side or thrusting it straight in the air to the heavens like a man frozen in time, or how Townshend leaped higher and higher, and his windmill strums coincided with notable power chords on the guitar. Wright did not necessarily evoke these movements or poses. They were not contrived as these naturally came from the performers—in the case of Townshend such movements like the windmill and his arms like an airplane came from a combination of postwar memories mixed with Ealing Art College education—Wright simply helped them refine and hone what they were already doing to make the show better. In this aspect, Wright's camera served as a tool to communicate thoughts in order to develop the band's persona and better their act as stage performance.

Using the photographs as he did, showing the band members pictures of themselves in order to develop an outward persona creates a feedback loop. This again allows us to refer back to the teachings of Roy Ascott, but this time with sign and signifier: the person, the rock star, the rock star, the person, and back and forward again and again. The resultant images also afford a somewhat different take on WJT Mitchell's definition of a *metapicture*. Instead of a picture

[129] The effects of this is exemplified in the song "Won't Get Fooled Again" from Ken Russell's *the Kids Are Alright*, in which Roger Daltrey follows Townshend's power chords.

within a picture, Wright using the photos as a tool and in the manner that he did, is a variation on the theme and is metaphorical as it is a picture of a person within a person. For example, Roger Daltrey, looking at Wright's pictures of himself on stage as he did, used the information from the picture to change his appearance and movements for the next photos that would be taken of him on stage. Wright was aiding in the metamorphosis of the rock star, and after all, Roger Daltrey is the personification of the rock star on stage.



Roger Daltrey, 1967

This creation of a persona is easily understood with a singer on stage and all looking on, but this is something that occurs with anyone when aware a camera is trained on them, and something which Roland Barthes recognized, "Now once I feel myself observed by the lens," he said, "everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of posing, I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image."[130]

This could be viewed as over sensitivity, inflated ego, or self-consciousness, but to Barthes's point, this phenomena of posing or creating a persona when a camera is present occurs with everyone from janitor to celebrity. Only when someone does not know they are being photographed or they are comfortable with a camera can they let their persona fade and sometimes only if desired. This creates a paradox for the average person as well as celebrity. The non-celebrity is not used to cameras being on them but does not have a carefully constructed persona the way a celebrity does and can end up appearing unnatural as a result. By contrast, the celebrity is comfortable with cameras, yet their public persona is so deliberate and constructed so as not to slip. The inverse relationship results in the same behavior of posing, presenting an alter ego, or as Barthes put it: making "another body."[131]

This is where Wright's work shines and transfers from the realm of utility and crosses into an artform of a unique style. Wright had a knack for bypassing all these innate and cultivated defense mechanisms and is the critical piece to his photography and understanding him as a photographer. The foundation had been laid at Ealing but the cornerstone was not set until Wright joined the first North American tour for tthe Who when he found himself plucked and

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[130] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1981; New York: Hill and Wang, 2010) 10.
[131] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 10.

dropped squarely into the rock n' roll firmament. It was with the Who, on that first North American tour accompanying Herman's Hermits, where Wright honed his craft and solidified his style.

Townshend was the perfect subject for Wright on which to develop his photographic approach and craft. Again, Townshend was a close friend of Wright's from the Ealing days; Townshend did not have the rock star (pop star at that time) aura in Wright's eyes. Wright knew him as a shy kid he befriended. Even though Townshend created an alter ego, a stage presence that was an amalgamation of pop art, some mod influence, and psychedelic ouvre of the time, all resting atop the foundations formed at Ealing, Wright could cut through it all. Amazingly, he captured this with his lens.

Wright had the presence of mind and intuitiveunderstanding that these were interesting shots. Images of Townshend—both Townshend the pop star and Townshend the person—were fascinating. Wright captured the persona on stage, the personality to the public, as well as the person behind the persona, the one who stepped past the curtain to the backstage. In one aspect the images are a meditation on the nature of people and projecting an outward appearance. This is one facet of the human condition.

Images pose another question: *Why does this interest you?* Such a question is not only directed to the viewer but reveals more about the viewer of the photograph than the subject in the photograph itself. This loops back to Wright knowing Townshend as a friend first and foremost and then being reacquainted a few years later when Townshend was the budding rock star. Townshend was on his way to becoming a pop icon but since Wright met him as the shy kid at Ealing when they first formed their bond, the aura of the star, and his celebrity, did not seduce

Wright. Instead, Wright used the subject for his photography and it is that key understanding of Wright's connection to the musicians that formed his approach. In other words, Wright did not have the same response to celebrity as someone not involved.

There is also another aspect of Wright's photography that is obvious and much simpler than his connection to the Who. The music, not just that of the Who, but the tunes coming out at that time, was different because something was happening on an epic scale that was at the very least transatlantic; Wright was capturing this moment.

Through his photography of musicians and the scene, Wright documented a segment of an era that can be utilized for study and as a record for posterity. That on its own standing is invaluable. It is only one side, however, of what Wright did through his photography and is limiting to photography. The other side of Wright's photography does not refute the reality of what is being photographed, but transmits a more immediate feeling that is quicker than language and therefore quicker than thought. It has the ability to provoke feelings and even conjure emotional responses. It is instantaneous poetry. To look at Wright's photography as merely an impression or carbon copy of what was witnessed removes the most magical aspects of the collection of photographs and denies them their essence, which is that these photographs are also *art*.

The final chapter of this dissertation delves further into Wright's photography as an art form, seeking to place him in context of his peers and explore where he fits in the constellation of music photographers and photography as a whole. It is important to note, however, that when Wright was on his first tour with the Who, much of his craft and style was already present. Like any artist Wright continued to hone his craft and develop it further, but the parts and pieces were

already in place. Of these parts and pieces at this stage in Wright's photographic development there are two vital components that are critical in order to understand what Wright was doing with his camera: his education and his relationship to the subject.

Wright's education at Ealing and his introduction to Roy Ascott and the nascent field of Cybernetics has already been explored; however, there were two other pieces from Ealing that remained with Wright and left a permanent impression on his photographs. The first was his deportation from England, which would leave an indelible scar on Wright's psyche and haunt him for the rest of his life. Later, working with Wright and quickly becoming a close confidant, Russ Schlagbaum intimated that Wright would bemoan that he, "missed the boat," and that, "had he only been there [in London] things might really have happened."[132] Wright's perspective was that London was on the verge of a cultural and musical explosion and that had he remained in England, he would have been part of something greater and would have been living a different life with pop stars. The irony, of course, and what will be delved into in the subsequent chapters, is that he did live that life and had unfettered access to a multitude of pop stars with his camera lens. Regardless, Wright felt cheated that he missed out on those London years in the early and mid 1960s.

The other piece from Ealing that remained with Wright and directly influenced his photography in a clearly more tangible way, is Wright's original desire to go to Ealing. This is glazed over in the one book that was published on Wright, *Roadwork.* As the story goes, Wright wanted to go into fine art at Ealing; however he did not want to take the art exam, so he took photography as it did not require anything for admittance. There is nothing to suggest this is not

[132] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottoville, Ohio, January 31, 2021.

true; however, the larger, fundamental spirit of the story is omitted. He was not as much of a lost wandering soul as the story suggested. Rather his interest in fine art heavily outweighed photography. His passion at Ealing really lay in charcoal sketches. The reality of the origin story of Wright not wanting to sit for the art exam is true, but it was not because it simply sounded too difficult; the reality was that Wright did not possess the aptitude for drawing that would allow him to pass. He wanted to be an artist working in the charcoal medium, but he did not have that skill. His response was to go into photography, but this interest in charcoal remained with him. This is what drove him to experiment with textures, both in the darkroom and in the camera itself.[133]

In his search to recreate charcoal he was able to create some photographs that at first glance look like charcoal drawings. Though and effective technique, this radical method was not something adopted as the typical by Wright. Instead of opting for a direct and arguably shallow representation of a charcoal sketch, Wright developed methods and technique to transpose the feeling and essence of a charcoal sketch to his photography. The aesthetic quality is much more profound than simply recreating a charcoal sketch. This resulting gritty photographic quality fit in with the rock scene and played to the personal, which Wright's photographs exhibit. The effects buttressed the immediacy in Wright's images. Perfection was not paramount; the rawness and capturing the precise instant was what mattered.

Wright's techniques were not birthed in a vacuum, but like every facet of Wright's experiences, were born out of necessity and ingenuity. Having no use for rules, Wright did not necessarily look for precedents as he developed solutions for problems. For example, in his quest

[133] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottovile, Ohio, May 3, 2020.

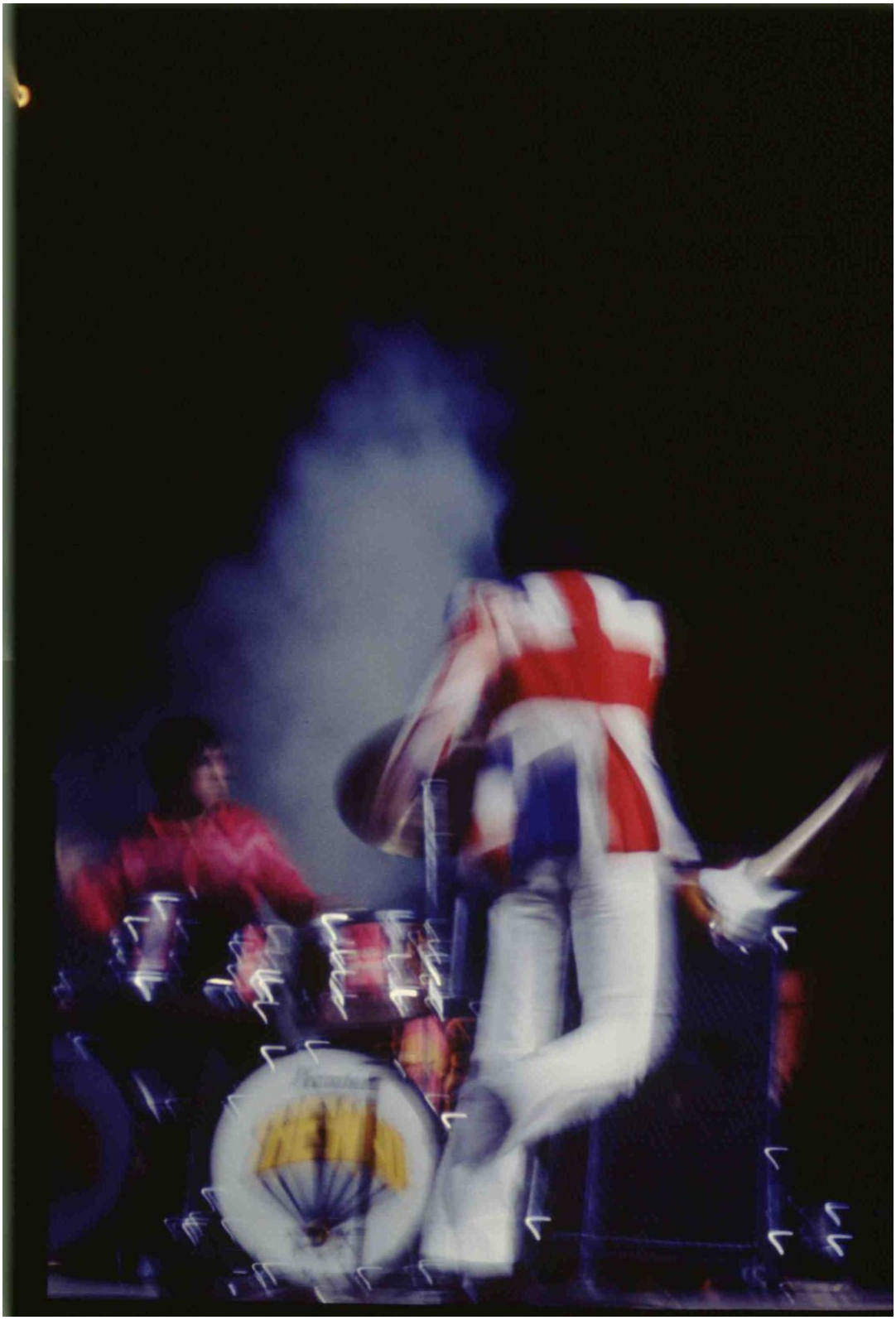
to capture the moment, or more accurately the precise moment, he did not have the luxury of setting up lights, finding the perfect f-stop, or meticulously composing a shot. Had he attempted this, almost all of his shots would never have been taken. Instead, he kept a camera hanging from his neck at all times and shot with available light. To accommodate for generally such low light, Wright, "never used a flash," as Patrick Cullie recalled, "He shot Tri-X [film], which is rated at OSI 400, but would push it to 800 and sometimes 1600 if [available light] was really low."



Pete Townshend, Charcoal Technique, 1967/68

This technique not only allowed Wright to shoot in extraordinarily low light sans flash, but it produced, accidentally, the desired grain and rawness that he sought. It is somehow fitting that Wright's style consisted of equal parts inventiveness and serendipity. This method of pushing the OSI a stop or two has been a technique employed by street photographers since it fundamentally uses smaller apertures and faster shutter speeds. Not being one to intellectualize photography and study the masters, however, it is doubtful Wright was aware of this history and believed he had discovered this method on his own. This natural tendency to experiment and refine through trial and error is certainly the case with the developing process. This is exhibited in his proficiency in the darkroom and how he manipulated the film developer. Wright used Acufine Diafine, which was known for developing negatives that were "pushed"—a technique used to overdevelop film to compensate for underexposure, like photographs taken without the aid of supplementary light. As the components of the names suggest—acute and fine—the developer was known for producing images with finer grain. Wright, of course, did not want the grain removed and devised a simple method of heating the Diafine. Film developer is typically a cold bath, but Wright discovered that by heating the Diafine, which again was optimal for pushed negatives, it allowed him to develop such pushed negatives while still retaining the grainy effect he was after.

Wright's early photographs of the Who, taken during the band's first North American tour with Herman's Hermits, showcase Wright's gritty, immediate, and completely personal style. The style would be tweaked and refined; however, the intent always remained the same and was created from necessity, which was another component that made up Wright's art. He was incredibly creative and inventive with no road map.



The Who, 1967/68

Serving in multiple capacities to bands, like his early days with the Who, he road managed and helped shape their presence. These blurred boundaries were born out of necessity, that no path really existed as Wright and the Who were in unknown territory, but it was also something that came from Wright and his personality. His charisma was palpable and all encompassing. Wright was a born leader that others were more than happy to follow and as everyone interviewed relates, it was as though Wright had cast a spell; his energy and passion were infectious. His early days with the Who are no exception. The band followed and listened to Wright as he made sure the bus left and arrived on time, they were close friends to Wright, and they followed his advice on their stage personas; Townshend particularly took Wright's musical advice and studied the references Wright pointed out with the aid of starting and stopping the record player, and the camera was just there and almost a part of Wright. The camera was a tool in different respects, capturing and documenting the times and events for posterity, but it served a dual purpose. The images Wright produced were not merely for recording but transcended the banal and were artistic. The photographs also embody Wright; not only are they covered in Wright's fingerprints, regarding craft and technique, but they capture Wright and his relationship to the subject and transmit his perspective in a quite literal sense but also figuratively as well. These are photographs that only Tom Wright could have taken.

The Who's first North American tour was Wright's first professional experience in music on the road, and as photographer in that scene. Some of the most iconic shots of the Who from that period come from Wright. His photography craft had matured and through managing the Who he was granted entrée into the rock n' roll realm. Like the pioneers before him he was setting out to discover the Wild West, to find the various outposts and help them along past their embryonic

form. This period would turn out to be the real start to what colored his following years, which ultimately set his life on a specific course in the music scene and was the first survey point on his unchartered road map in this brave new world.



Night of the Infamous Birthday Party, Keith Moon
Flint, Michigan, August 25, 1967

CHAPTER FOUR

KICK OUT THE JAMS: AMNESIA OF DETROIT'S ROCK MUSIC SCENE

The Grande Ballroom

Photographs have a direct effect on memory. As images, the artifacts can legitimize a memory and exist to buttress other memories and thoughts of a given event. "Photographs furnish evidence," writes Susan Sontag, "Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we're shown a photograph of it."[134] Photographs can also aid in the erasure of another memory and, therefore, either intentionally or not, actively work in the process of forgetting and supplanting with another memory.

Looking at the work of Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin in relation to memory, Esther Leslie writes:

> Where Kracauer diagnosed memory-loss, Walter Benjamin observed a sudden flooding of memory. Memory is flooded by memoirs—Benjamin points to a rash of biographical accounts of war appearing some ten years after the end of the 1914–18 conflict. Resentful soldiers on the losing side made efforts to reshape the meaning of what had occurred. The flood of memoirs as much as Kracauer's fixation on the forgotten and overridden are both elements of a wider fascination with memory and its processes…[135]

Photography is merely a symptom and a tool that is utilized in such processes—either to forget or to remember, and certainly a combination of both. Analyzing memory in relation to

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[134] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (1977; repub., London: Penguin, 2008) 5.
[135] Esther Leslie, "Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin: Memory from Weimar to Hitler," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2011) 123.

photography, specifically in connection to remembering or forgetting, is the cipher with which to understand the period that Tom Wright was in Detroit, his photography during that time, and Detroit and the rock music scene in general.

Before arriving in Detroit, Wright was on his second tour with the Who which, as he recounted, did not go well:

> The first headline tour was grueling. It went on for months. It was also depressing. If the crowd numbered close to a thousand at a show, that was a big deal. The dream had been to take America by storm and make a ton of cash. With the mounting bills for demolished equipment and hotel repairs, though, instead of returning to England as wealthy heroes, the Who were headed back to a mind-boggling mountain of debt. This was the big picture; the little one was the endless hours on the bus, apathetic audiences, and girls who wanted to know if the band had actually ever met the Beatles.[136]

What compounded matters was that the second tour came on the heels of the cold reception of the band's latest album, *The Who Sell Out*. Released in the UK on December 15, 1967, the album managed to eke into the Top 20. In America the record, "was released January 6, 1968, barely denting the *Billboard* album chart at #144, sandwiched between the Soul Survivors' *When the Whistle Blows Anything Goes* and Judy Collins's *Wild Flowers*."[137]

As John Entwistle biographer, Paul Rees, detailed, the failure of the album did not help Entwistle's anxiety that the Who's star would soon descend.[138] Rees quoted Entwistle saying, "We always thought we'd have about a year and that would be it. That's what was happening in those days… you would suddenly plummet from the charts."[139]

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[136] Tom Wright and Susan VanHecke, *Roadwork: Rock & Roll Turned Inside Out* (New York: Hal Leonard Books, 2007) 90.
[137] John Dougan, *The Who Sell Out*, vol. 37, 33 1/3, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016) 117.
[138] Paul Rees, *The Ox: The Last of the Great Rock Stars* (London: Constable, 2020) 116.
[139] Rees, *The Ox*, 122.

Both Entwistle and Keith Moon were seriously considering leaving the Who, and Moon had even recorded a song with Jeff Beck, John Paul Jones, and Jimmy Page, though, fearing retaliation from Townshend and Daltrey, did it in secret and was credited as, "You Know Who."[140] This song would be the precursor to Beck leaving the Yardbirds and the Page and Jones forming Led Zeppelin.

From the outside, The Who appeared to have all the trappings of a successful band with two consecutive tours in America, which was out of the realm of possibility for the vast majority of their British counterparts. However successful they appeared, the band's internal struggles, coupled with the precarious and fickle nature of pop music, creates a dramatically different picture of that time, especially in terms of how the group viewed their own future and the uncertainty that enshrouded it. The singles heavily steeped in Mod influence, *I Can't Explain* and *My Generation*, were becoming smaller in the rearview mirror with two more albums recorded and released since those hits.

Though headlining, the Who were still receiving lukewarm responses from the American concert attendees. The Who's brand of music with heavy distortion accompanied by the destruction of their musical equipment and amplifiers was amusing but lost on the concert goers writ large. The Who was failing to connect with an American audience. At one point, according to Wright, the Who were thinking of cutting the tour short and returning to England.[141] There were fans back home in England who at least understood their music, so what was the point of killing themselves in America?

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[140] Jimmy Page. "Beck's Bolero," Track 8 on *Truth*, recorded by The Jeff Beck Group. EMI Columbia, 1968.
[141] "The Rock & Roll Odyssey of Tom Wright," *Northern Express*, August 27, 2003.

This could not have been encouraging or good for Wright's morale, either: he contended with organizing a tour bus moving at grueling speeds for shows where the audiences did not quite understand what they were witnessing, and all the while simultaneously trying in vain to keep Keith Moon under control.

In 1998, Wright recalled, "I can remember many, many times saying [to Keith Moon], '*well it's Saturday night now, we got a show tomorrow—Sunday—there's not going to be any music stores open. Don't break all the drumheads and don't break all the sticks*.' Every time that I said something like that, I later learned that I just guaranteed total devastation, not just slight damage, but wipe everything out." [142]

On one such occasion at the end of a set, culminating in the Who's finale of auto-destruction, having thrashed the drums and kicked them around for the requisite amount of time, Moon, pausing for a moment among the debris, witnessed one drumhead still intact. He looked stage left, into the wing, and spotted Wright. With a drumstick, Moon pierced the last drumhead while maintaining eye contact with Wright.[143] The chaos of touring was one thing, but the level of obstinance was supremely frustrating for Wright, who valued efficiency and organization—a trait presumably learned from and ingrained in him by his military stepfather.

Things went from bad to worse when the band joined the Doors on tour. Wright and the members of the Who thought that "Jim Morrison was weird so we avoided him. He was constantly trying to incite riots."[144] They played a date together in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park in Queens at the Singer Bowl. The stadium was a leftover artifact built by the Singer

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[142] "Behind the Music: Keith Moon," *Behind the Music* (VH1, May 31, 1998).
[143] Chris Easter, Interview with author, Austin, Texas, September 22, 2019.
[144] Northern Express, Rock & Roll Odyssey.

Sewing Machine Company for the 1964 World's Fair. Like the rotating restaurant in the Space Needle, which was built for the 1962 World's Fair, the Singer Bowl had a revolving aspect as well, in the form of a stage which turned slowly to allow for views from all angles.

The Who were upset that they did not receive top billing, but were instead the opening act for the Doors. Upon seeing the Doors equipment already on stage, they refused to play until it was all removed.[145] This added to the already delayed show and the atmosphere in the stadium was chaotic as tensions escalated. As detailed in a biography of Jim Morrison:

> Then, just when everyone thought things would settle down, it got worse. The Who were not performing up to par and the revolving stage stalled during their set, resulting in several hefty repairmen hustling onstage to bang away in an attempt to fix it. Nothing doing. It was stuck and stuck good… a fourth of the crowd was left with a view of nothing but amplifiers and these people were starting to get mad. [146]

The whole experience with the Doors for the Who, for Wright, was miserable at best. Morrison was a strange creature to them and they did not understand or appreciate what he was doing. It is for this reason that we do not see any photos of the Doors in Wright's archive. Remember, Morrison was a big star and his celebrity was only rising. Wright had direct access at a level most did not experience. Still, because Wright did not appreciate Morrison, he did not photograph him; he did not see anything he liked in Morrison or the rest of the band. Wright's intent was always to photograph those to whom he was close, or if he saw something that caught his eye and intrigued him. Morrison and the Doors were certainly interesting, but Wright did not like them.

This leads to the second reason Wright did not photograph Morrison and the rest of the

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[145] Greg Shaw, *The Doors on the Road* (London: Omnibus Press, 1997).
[146] James Riordan and Jerry Prochnicky, *Break on Through: The Life and Death of Jim Morrison* (New York: HarperCollins,1991).



Keith Moon and Bob Pridden, Singer Bowl, August 2,1968



John Entwistle, Singer Bowl, August 2,1968

Doors: for Wright, the connection to the Doors was not a happy one and therefore he did not wish to preserve it. In essence, by not employing the camera and photographing Morrison and the Doors for posterity, he was attempting to erase memory. The shots of the Who are uncharacteristically close and zoomed in on each member with only a few wide shots that can place the band in context with the time and place, even though the arena was a unique venue and could have added to some of the photographs.

Photographs can be used to remember and they can also be used to forget. The same is true in the act of omission: not taking a photograph, not documenting, can be used to aid or to erase memory. Subconsciously or not, Tom was willfully erasing the experience from his psyche and

making sure that at the very least his efforts were not going toward elevating the experience into the public sphere.

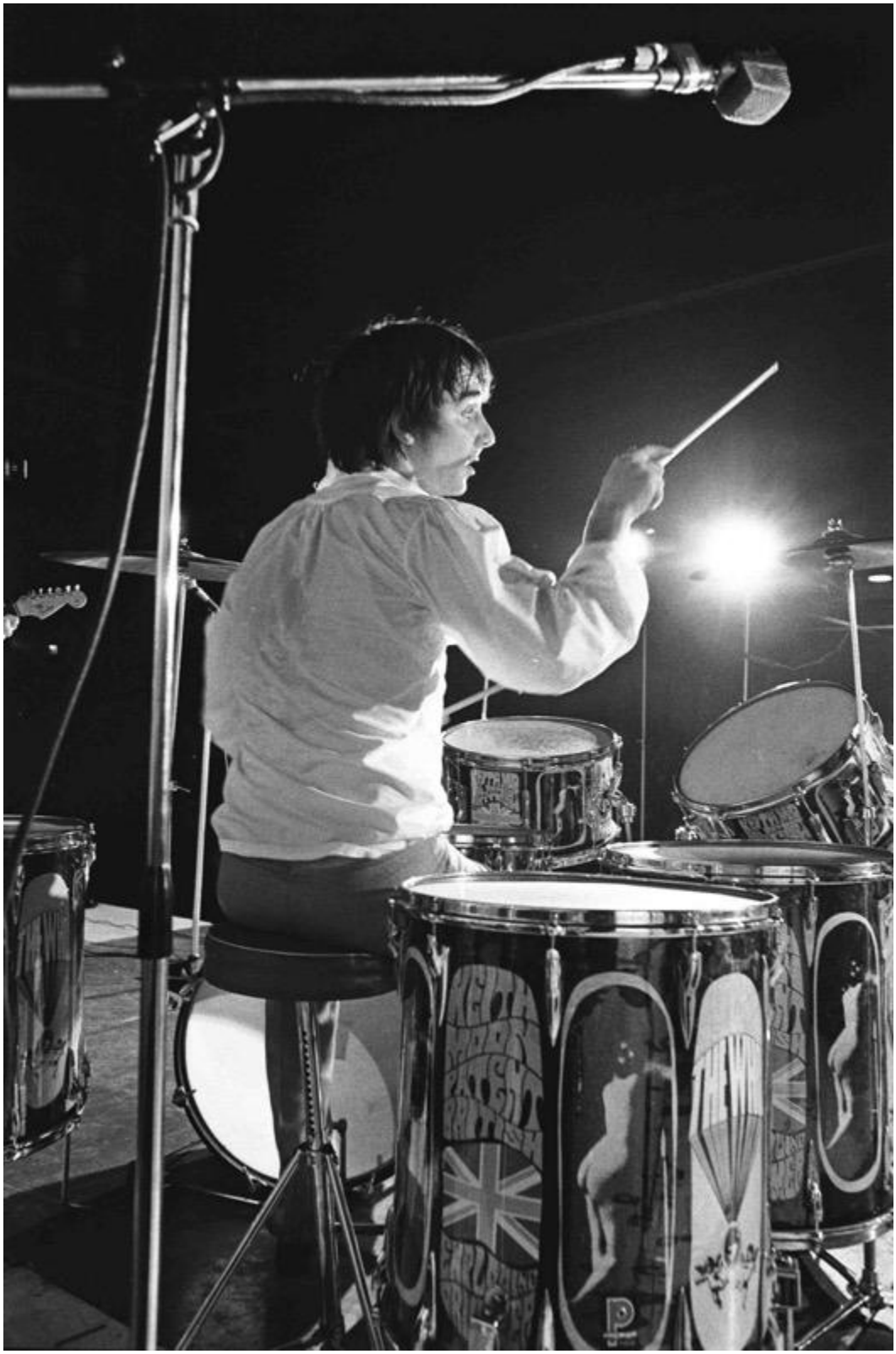
The tour was moving at a grueling pace and Wright could not contend with Keith Moon and his destructive tendencies, which often included self-destruction as well. It is certain that Wright regrets introducing Moon to super glue after Moon glued everything in the hotel room to the ceiling.[147] Mounting debt from the smashed equipment and a fan base that did not necessarily understand what the Who's music was really about made for a deflating and Sisyphean experience. The destruction of equipment was turning into a gimmick and was beginning to be seen as a marketing device. Music critic Richard Meltzer wrote, "the *live* Who have routinized the selling of simulated destruction."[148] People were coming to see them simply to witness a group of English youth destroying instruments and perhaps retrieve a piece of the wreckage. They did not understand the post-World War II implications and the basis of the act as performance art, steeped in the narratives of Dada and an evolution of technology—they just wanted a chunk of Townshend's Stratocaster or Moon's used drumstick to commemorate their proximity to celebrity and the spectacle. Such a date was recorded at a small show in Peoria, Illinois. At the end of the show, after the performance art of auto-destruction had completed, the crowd began to nab things from the stage. Through the smoke, Wright can be seen immediately jumping on stage, camera in hand, coralling the equipment and salvaging what he could to repair and use for the next show.[149]

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[147] "Late Show with David Letterman," Interview with Pete Townshend (New York: CBS, November 19, 2012).
[148] Richard Meltzer. *The Aesthetics of Rock*, (1970; repub., New York: Da Capo Press, 1987) 35n.
[149] "All My Loving," *Omnibus* (United Kingdom: BBC, November 3, 1968).



The Who, Opera House, Peoria, Illinois, March 10, 1968



Keith Moon, Opera House, Peoria, Illinois, March 10,1968

The tour was not all terrible. After all, it was the Who's first headlining tour and there were a substantial number of shows on the North American leg of the tour—"Fifty-one cities in fifty-nine days"—and from Wright's photographs alone it is clear that at least some of the shows were well attended. This is not to diminish the band's perspective, the view from inside and the outlook they had.[150] It is fact that Entwistle and Moon were considering leaving and only a few years before, in 1965, Roger Daltrey was temporarily kicked out of the band after attacking Keith Moon in Denmark. [151]When Wright had said that the Who was thinking about calling it quits in America, after their first two tours, where the audience did not understand their music, it was probably accurate. This was before the Who's wildly successful album, *Tommy,* which propelled them on a meteoric rise and secured their place in the annals of rock history. At that time, however, in 1968, they were just a band that was brought over to America because there was interest in the British Invasion.

The tour took a decidedly different turn for the better, in fact changing the attitude and trajectory of the band, again, from Wright's perspective, when the Who played a show on July 13, 1968, at the Grande Ballroom (pronounced *Gran-dee*) in East Detroit. As the story goes, as told in Wright's memoir, *Roadwork,* they were late to the show and when they finally found the dark ballroom, dimly lit by one lone bulb over the entrance, the venue looked closed. They could not have been more incorrect in their assumption. The deserted appearance from the street belied the energy and congestion inside. The band pushed through the tightly packed crowd, to the side stage where the small, unadorned dressing room was located. Not quite sure what they had just

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[150] VanHecke and Wright, *Roadwork,* 89.
[151] Mark Blake, *Pretend You're In A War: The Who and the Sixties* (London: Aurum Press, 2014) 197.

walked into or what they were witnessing, the real shock came when the Master of Ceremonies, Dave Miller, announced them on stage. The crowd erupted with excitement and, as they played, the crowd actually knew the words to their songs. According to Wright, the Grande gave the band their second wind to finish the tour and, to sum up their playing, "They never topped that show."[152]

Amazingly, this experience was not limited to the Who. In fact there were many bands that have displayed such affection and fondness for the Grande Ballroom that it is clear the venue was a unique and special place for many. This was certainly true for Janis Joplin and Big Brother and the Holding Company as they had recorded their sets at the Grande in March of 1968, intending to use the material for their second album which was ultimately rejected by producer John Simon and would be recut as *Cheap Thrills*.[153]

There was a unique energy and presence in the building that captured and exuded the spirit of the times in an honest and genuine way. As Dave Miller, the Grande's MC from 1967-1971, recalled, "There were a mix of people at the Grande, no divisions… the original hippie types—pot wasn't prevalent yet. It was a magical experience without the drugs. Drugs weren't the focus, but being together, being free and expressing yourself how you wanted. There were dayglo paints at a painting station, a disco ball in the center with spots, a light show using overhead projectors with liquids. Everyone just doing their thing."[154]

Located at the corner of Grand River Avenue and Beverly Court, the Grande Ballroom was

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[152] VanHecke and Wright, *Roadwork*, 93.
[153] Leo Early, *The Grande Ballroom: Detroit's Rock 'n' Roll Palace* (Charleston: The History Press, 2016) 158.
[154] Dave Miller, phone interview by author, New Mexico, October 15, 2019.

situated in the area of the most fire damage during the so-called Detroit "riot."[155] The event was sparked when the police raided an after hours club on July 23, 1967 and, as Leo Early astutely noted, "The press labeled it a riot. Considering the degree of police oppression and substandard conditions dealt with by residents, many today still call it an uprising."[156] The residents were predominantly African American and "were residents of the occupied sections of the city, and of the neighborhoods that had long suffered and continued to suffer from police brutality, racial segregation, and unequal opportunity in the Jim Crow North."[157] Detroit was a city divided and that division was present in how the events that stemmed from the raid on July 23, 1967 were labeled. To one side it was a *riot*, "while black Detroiters who were surveyed… the majority, by a wide margin, gravitated to calling it a 'rebellion,'" according to Scott Krashige's book *the Fifty-Year Rebellion*.[158]

The Grande Ballroom was spared during the rebellion as it was part of the community and had such a positive reputation in the neighborhood. In his dissertation on the rock music scene of Detroit, Jason Schmitt interviewed Tom Wright and highlights the connection of the Grande with the surrounding community: "Wright also acknowledged that the success of The Grande Ballroom was in part due to the location. Wright says, 'if the Grande had been in Grosse Pointe or Birmingham [more affluent cities] it would have never got off the ground.' He said the main

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[155] William Bunge et al., *Field Notes, Field Notes* (East Lansing, MI: The Detroit Geographical Expedition and Institute, 1971).
[156] Leo Early, *The Grande Ballroom*, 135.
[157] Matt Lassiter, "Visualizing Detroit '67," Detroit Under Fire: Police Violence, Crime Politics, and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Civil Rights Era (Matthew D. Lassiter and the Policing and Social Justice HistoryLab, 2021), https://policing.umhistorylabs.lsa.umich.edu/s/detroitunderfire/page/detroit-67-photos-maps.
[158] Scott Kurashige, *The Fifty-Year Rebellion: How the U.S. Political Crisis Began in Detroit* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017) 21.

reason for The Grande Ballroom's success in Detroit was that the city was more tolerant to 500 long-haired people coming and going to and from the shows."[159]

Tim Buckley's drummer, Carter Collins, and the Grande's operator and concert promoter, Russ Gibb, went to survey the damage the following morning:

> Up and down Grand River, businesses were in smoldering ruins, yet the Grande was intact, virtually unharmed. The astonished party spotted some of the neighborhood kids whom Russ often offered chips, pop and free admission. As these boys ran by, Collins managed to grab one and asked him why the building was untouched, to which the boy replied, "You got music here, man!"[160]

It is peculiar that for such a beloved place, the Grande Ballroom has been mostly forgotten and ultimately snubbed by mainstream America. This aligns with the story of the rock scene in Detroit and, in some ways, the forgotten history of the Detroit rock scene and the Grande begins with the Detroit Riot, or Rebellion.

The central theme of Scott Krashige's well-researched book, *The Fifty-Year Rebellion*, is that Detroit serves as a microcosm of neoliberal politics—to put simply, a belief in free-market capitalism and a reduction in government programs and spending—and an agenda that falls within such a space, which still persists today. In other words, the issues that were in Detroit, present in 1967, are still there today and are also the same issues of America as a whole. This may be true; however, another way to frame a view of Detroit is that the memory has been fractured, altered, and forgotten. It is this perspective that best serves as the lens in which to view and understand the Detroit rock scene, the Grande Ballroom, Wright's photography, and Wright's time in Detroit and the surrounding area as well.

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[159] Jason M. Schmitt, "Like the Last 30 Years Never Happened: Understanding Detroit Rock Music Through Oral History" (dissertation, 2008).
[160] Leo Early, *The Grande Ballroom*, 136.

The fires that shone a light on all the turmoil and social upheaval were in July 1967, but were still smoldering when Wright first came to Detroit on the Who tour. At the conclusion of the North American leg of the tour, when the band was heading back to England, Wright could not travel back with the band since he had been deported for marijuana, some years prior. Wright took up residence at the Albert Hotel in New York and roomed with the Blues Magoos, the other opening band who toured with the Who on the Herman's Hermits tour. The psychedelic rock band Moby Grape used the Albert's basement as a practice space and it was during that time at the Albert that Wright decided to return to the Grande Ballroom. At first, it was to take photographs for a magazine, but then Wright called the operator and promoter, Russ Gibb, and offered to manage the Grande. Gibb hired him.



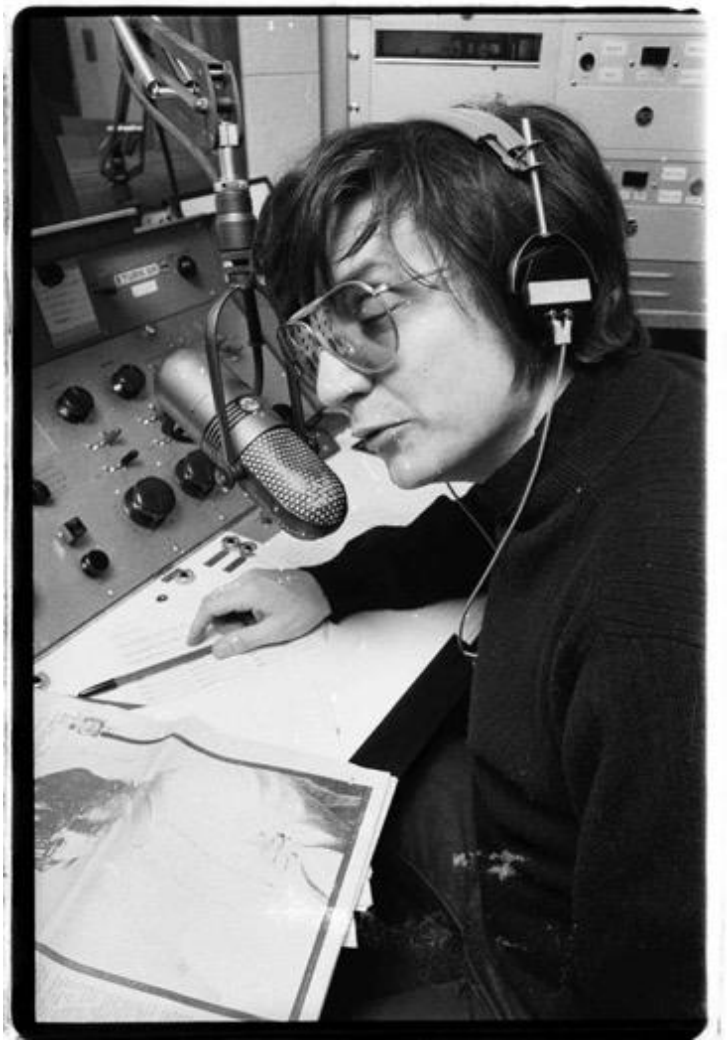
The Grande Ballroom Entrance, Russ Gibb (Center), 1968/9

If such a phone call and non-interview sounds strange, it is; however, Russ Gibb was not the typical concert promoter. A school teacher by day, he moonlighted as a disc jockey by night. He merged the two passions and came up with the idea of dances, socials, and, ultimately, concerts. What began as one show at a rented Elks Lodge blossomed and turned Gibb into a full-fledged concert promoter. Gibb took the framework of promoter Bill Graham's Fillmore in San Francisco and deployed it in Detroit with the Grande. Gibb quickly understood the financial profits in concerts, earning more money than he ever saw as a teacher, though for Gibb the monetary gain was not the drive or even goal. Gibb was an educator and broadcaster—entertainment and music for youth is what was central in Gibb's mind and heart. This is perhaps the reason why Gibb hired Wright so quickly—they were kindred spirits who ultimately cared about the music.

Wright could whip anyone into a frenzy and get others to follow him on practically any scheme. A natural, magnetic leader, exuding charisma and presence, Wright had a loyal, "ragtag assemblage of friends," as Wright described them, "who could be counted on to do the impossible."[161] Wright coined the group the Hard Corps—a tongue-in-cheek name that was, "a take-off on Apple Records, the Marine Corps, and porn in general."[162] This would prove to be the first incarnation of the Corps, but not the last. Wright was not given a lot of time for the renovation, but his newly formed crew of those hanging around the Grande were up to the task. Wright and the Hard Corps began by painting everything, "including the ceiling, archways, alcoves, etc. in brilliant white. The stage, of course, was painted flat black as was his PA riser,

[161] Wright and VanHecke, *Roadwork*, 147.
[162] Wright and VanHecke, *Roadwork*, 147.

dressing rooms and PA wings."[163] Wright's ingenuity and creative spirit that perhaps developed from Gesamtkunstwerk, or total art work—designing all parts in a holistic sense—that was learned during his time at Ealing Art College, also presented itself at the Grande. Schlagbaum recalls some of the touches Wright employed: "He bought plastic tubing and put Christmas lights in it and wrapped it around the staircase."[164]



Russ Gibb, WKNR-FM Studio, 1968/9

[163] Russ Schlagbaum, "photo ID," email to author, October 6, 2021.
[164] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottovile, Ohio, January 31, 2021.

During the renovation, according to Schlagbaum, Wright also, "had the PA front-of-house riser built just large enough so he could sneak in a girl underneath with the sounds of the MC5 or Savoy Brown. This space is where he had the Nagra tape recorder and condenser mike pointing toward the magnificent house PA. That's how he recorded every show."[165]

The most ingenius and creative move Wright made, however, was not in the material realm and physical space of the Grande, but rather the cultural connections and eclectic mix of who played, and often on the same night. It was Wright's genius to put acts like Alice Cooper and Howlin' Wolf on the same stage. This no doubt came from Wright's love of Blues and Rhythm & Blues, but Wright did not see the musicians as being entirely different. To Wright, the new bands were continuations of what the Blues guys were doing—it was an evolution. Gibb had generally opted for British acts, as that was what the youth were apparently into, but it is to Gibb's credit that he believed in Wright and let him have carte blanche. In that vein, Wright brought in the acts as he saw fit. He mixed and matched acts that most would not associate together, but as for so many things to Wright, were completely natural to him in his thinking. To make things better, and a crucial point to the Grande's success, was that Detroit was the perfect spot in time and place for such an endeavor.

Detroit was the true melting pot in America, the American Dream incarnate. Leo Early noted, "Since the initial announcement of Ford's five-dollar-a-day wage in 1913, workers had been migrating to Michigan from all over the world in search of employment."[166] With such a mass migration, cultures were transplanted, rerooted, and naturally intermixed with others.

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[165] Schlagbaum, "photo ID," October 6, 2021.
[166] Leo Early, *The Grande Ballroom*, 79.

Additionally, the influence of R&B already had firm roots in Detroit and the surrounding areas. Dave Miller, MC of the Grande, related this influence:"Motown was huge and then the psychedelic music of the Grande spontaneously happened. It was a progressive generation."[167]

While California had the Summer of Love in 1967, Detroit was experiencing the burning of buildings and massive cultural unrest and upheaval. The music, of course, followed these currents and were also expressed in the audience. It could be said that the Detroit concertgoer was more sophisticated in a certain sense, in that more was on the line, more was at stake. The music of Haight-Ashbury had no connection with those in attendance at the Grande since the two areas were approaching the music from different vantage points. The Grateful Dead were nearly booed off the Grande's stage and, as Dave Miller remembered, when Creedence Clearwater Revival played the Grande: "They were a bunch of California assholes."[168]





Hog Farm Commune Bus at the Grande Ballroom, 1968/9

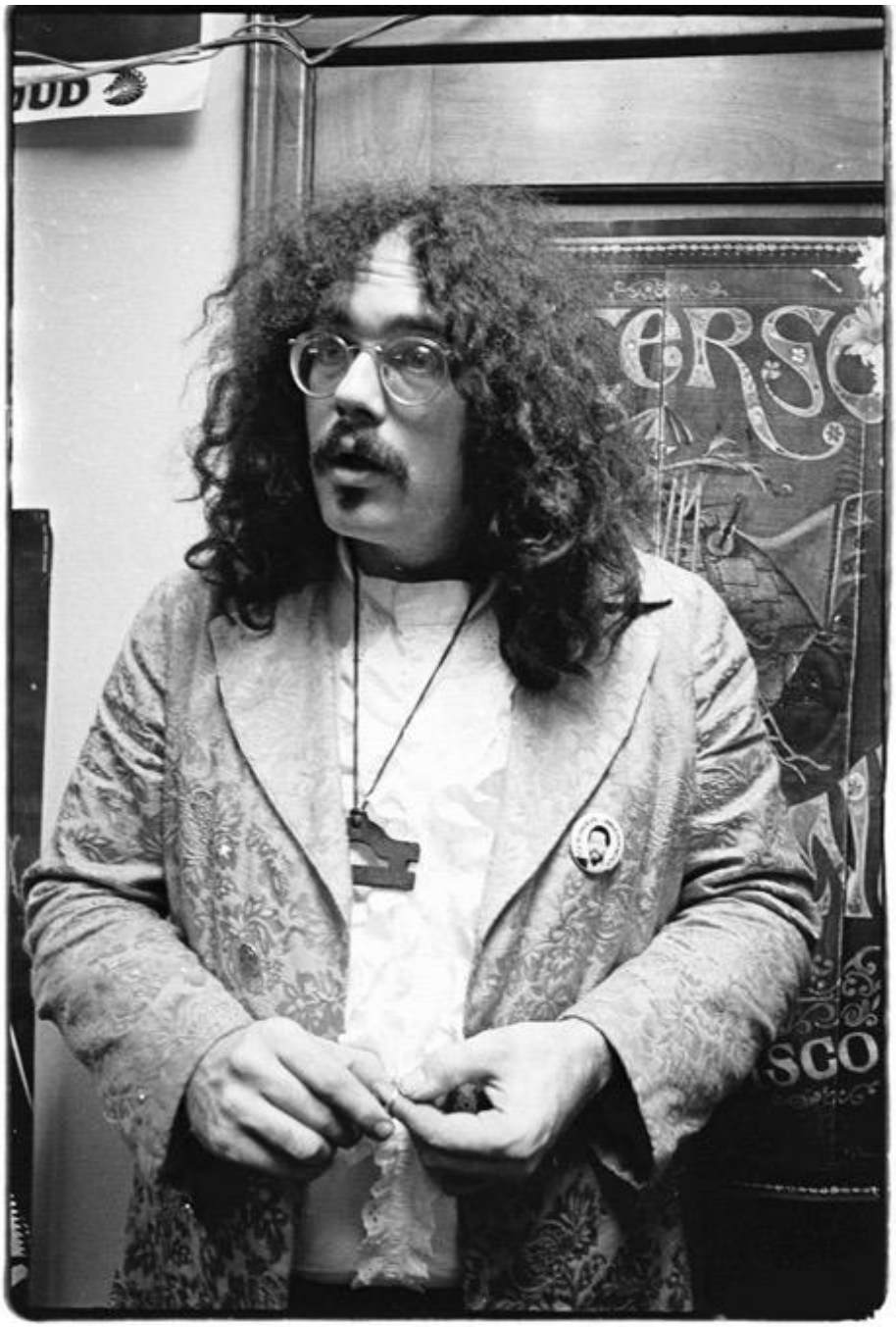
[167] Dave Miller, interview, 2019.
[168] Dave Miller, interview, 2019.

It was within this framework that music mixed with revolution and was how the band the MC5 was born out of Detroit and the times. The MC5—short for *Motor City*—was managed and led by John Sinclair. An imposing figure—in both stature and impassioned speech—Sinclair was a political activist who founded the White Panther Party (in solidarity with the Black Panther Party) and led the MC5 as though he was starting a revolution. With their driving force, anger and loud energy, the MC5 was a band that could have only hailed from Detroit and of that time. They became the house band for the Grande and it was there they recorded their debut album. At the beginning of sets—as heard on their first album from the Grande—lead singer Rob Tyner would scream, "Kick out the jams!" before going into the song with the same title. Russ Schlagbaum explained the double-entendre: "Jams are the people just hanging around, they wanted the flower power wimps off the stage so they can play some rock n' roll."[169] The Detroit concertgoer had just finished a week of hard work, perhaps at the Ford plant, and they were there for rock; they did not have time for any music from the *jams*.

The MC5 was the band with the most outward revolutionary aesthetic, due in no small part to Sinclair's influence. Relocated to Ann Arbor, Sinclair, the MC5, and White Panther Party members would travel to the Grande with their families in tow and gave the appearance of a "commune or cult."[170] For others, there was something different that resonated from within the walls of the Grande. It was not centered around alcohol or drugs—alcohol was not allowed on the premises and, though the later preferred substance was marijuana, it was not prevalent in the very early years, nor was it ever the focus of the Grande. There were no divisions, separated by

[169] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottovile, Ohio, November 15, 2020.
[170] Dave Miller, interview, 2019.

class or fashion, but rather people there to ultimately connect on a different level that was not present in the status quo culture that was part of their parents' generation outside of the Grande's walls.



John Sinclair,1968

The other key aspect of the Grande was the acoustics of the building. This was a large contributing factor to its success. As Wright recounts:

> The Grande Ballroom was like an antique Gibson guitar that is just like, perfect, you know. You hit one note and it rings for like four minutes. Without distortion and there was no echo in the Grande—there was just presence—and that sounds like a small thing, but to a band, and this was the days before monitors… bands couldn't hear what they were doing other than what they heard from the building. And you know, in the case of the Who, they would just give up, after the first note at most places just saying, "To Hell with it, I can't hear anything, you can't hear anything and we don't know if our audience can hear anything and whatever we say comes back to us in thirty seconds after it bounces off a bunch of walls …" the acoustics [at the Grande] were just perfect and so as soon as any given band, I mean, Chuck Berry or Joe Cocker, anybody I can think of, by the end of sound check, they were different people.[171]

The Grande was truly unique in almost every respect as though it was holistically designed. A perfect combination of audience, which was born out of and specific to Detroit's history and culture, geographically located between the two coasts, and the acoustics of the building all contributed to the Grande's love and connection to those who played there and those who were in attendance.

An otherwise small venue, miles from downtown Detroit in a black neighborhood, it is quite telling that the Grande was able to secure a lineup of the who's who of acts of the era: Jefferson Airplane, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, the Jeff Beck Group, the Byrds, Chuck Berry, John Lee Hooker, Steve Miller Band, Fleetwood Mac, Cream, Savoy Brown, the Stooges, Joe Cocker, the Velvet Underground, Jethro Tull, Three Dog Night, Van Morrison, Deep Purple, Ten Years After, Johnny Winter, Procol Harum, the Kinks, T. Rex, Steppenwolf, the James Gang, Moby Grape, Vanilla Fudge, Moody Blues, Buddy Guy, the Amboy Dukes, the Flying Burrito

[171] Tom Wright Interview, Leo Early.

Brothers, John Mayall, Canned Heat, the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band, Humble Pie, Big Brother & the Holding Company, Blood, Sweat & Tears, the Yardbirds, Traffic, Junior Wells, Frank Zappa, Albert King, B.B. King, Genesis, and Taj Mahal. The Grande was certainly something special and was not specific to only those in Detroit. It resonated with many who ventured through the doorway under the dimly lit marquee, and the ballroom held a place in those hearts. This is why it is so unfortunate that Wright did not photograph much during his tenure at the Grande. The principle reason Wright did not shoot much at the Grande was because he was working. Wright's obsession and compulsion for photography was only matched by his sense of drawing order from chaos. With such a chaotic place as the Grande, Wright had more than enough on which to put his attention without a camera ever entering into the equation.

Since Wright did not photograph much, what of course arises is the question of whether the memory of the Grande would have changed at all. Would it have been remembered and exist in the same collective psyche that remembers the Fillmore? Turning to the photos taken of the Grande may help.

In *Photographic Memories*, the democratization of photography in America is highlighted with the advent of the Kodak camera;"Everyone could henceforth be his or her own photographer. Press the button and Kodak would do the rest… On a mass scale, photography would henceforth allow individuals to record their own individual lives… All the way from production to consumption, photography had now entered the realm of the private and the domestic."[172] Wright, educated and trained as a photographer, was competing in a world with

[172] Rob Kroes and Donald E. Pease, *Photographic Memories: Private Pictures, Public Images, and American History* (Lebanon: Dartmouth College Press, 2007), 63.

amateur photographers, but the main point is that the Grande was not in need of photographers—at least in terms of producing historical evidence. The audience had cameras; the majority of the photographs of the Grande are from the cameras belonging to those in attendance—granted they were not skilled technicians, but the photographs sufficiently serve in the capacity of documentation and as some objective record.

The photos are not all from the audience members either. Tom Weschler was a known photographer who took many shots of the Grande and many of the iconic photos come from Leni Sinclair, John Sinclair's wife, who had access and an intimate knowledge of the music scene, quite similar to Wright. The Grande, and the music that took place, was heavily photographed and documented. The lack of photographs of the Grande taken by Wright is not an indication or explanation of why the Grande did not make it into the general consciousness of America, from coast to coast. Instead, the known photographs—that is, publicized photographs—documenting the music of the generation are ones that highlight the music and myth of Haight-Ashbury with Monterrey Pop, bands having to succumb to censorship on the Ed Sullivan show, and as for Detroit, their piece of accepted history, submitted into the annals, was Motown. A flourishing rock scene in Detroit post-Motown did not fit the mainstream narrative and media only reinforced, if not to help create, the story.

Photography, along with all forms of media, has a paradoxical quality exhibiting both truth and lie. The photograph does not visually bend reality and accurately maintains proportion.[173] In one sense, photography is verifiable and carries the weight of truth, however, photography can

[173] Note: This is in reference to photography used for documentation and not including artistic genres like surrealism or photography whose purpose is to expose the inherent contradictions of photography.

only offer verisimilitude as it only captures a brief moment. That brief moment often serves as the memory for a larger event. "Life is a movie. Death is a photograph,"[174] noted Susan Sontag. This paradoxical quality embodying the contradictions of both truth and lie goes hand-in-hand with history and memory. Channeling Siegfried Kracauer and examining one of his perspectives on photography and history, Meir Wigoder gives insight into the paradox of photography, time, and historical narrative:

> History can only be brought back through the medium of subjectivity… A person is able to condense or embellish memory, unlike the photograph that in the passage of time only appears to darken, decay and shrink in proportions. The camera is capable only of capturing a brief moment that accentuates space rather than temporality. The medium of subjective memory, however, can shatter the space-time configuration in order to piece the salvaged fragments together into a new meaningful order.[175]

By including the subjective side of Detroit's rock scene, the photography presents a more complete picture and gives context to enrich the history. From the limited photographs that were taken by Wright during that time, a more complete picture emerges that adds to a dissenting view that flies in the face of the story that was commonly accepted: Detroit had the music of Motown and then it was quiet during the proliferation of rock music during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In other words, as Kracauer observed, subjectivity gives time back to the space and completes the memory for accuracy. From this point-of-view we can observe one of Wright's photographs from his time at the Grande Ballroom: a shot of the Who performing.

From a technical perspective, the photo is blurry, underdeveloped, and flat in chromatic scale. The contrast and composition offer some interesting aspects to the photo, but overall, it is

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[174] Susan Sontag, *The Benefactor* (1963; repub., New York: Picador, 2002) 5.
[175] Meir Wigoder, "History Begins at Home: Photography and Memory in the Writings of Siegfried Kracauer and Roland Barthes," *History & Memory,* Vol. 13, No. 1 (2001): 26.

by no means a strong photograph. This is the case for the series of photographs from this set.



The Who, The Grande Ballroom, 1969

Based on this sequence of pictures it is clear that since Wright did not employ any set lighting or secondary lighting, other than ambient light from what was present in the room; the scene was either not well-suited for Wright's photographic style, or Wright did not have the correct balance of settings in his camera and development process in the darkroom. For whatever reason, the photos do not achieve the level of mastery exhibited in his great photos. This is one reason these photos have not been seen. Though Wright's work is mostly unknown, the known photos are the keepers; however, this particular set of photos from the Grande are still of importance from a historical perspective. This is the set of when and where the Who premiered

the music from their album *Tommy*, in America.

Tommy was such a highly experimental album, and it was decidedly uncertain what the reaction from the audience would be. This is something to which Townshend had to be quite sensitive, considering the hopes he had for the group's previous album, *The Who Sell Out*, and its dismal commercial response. That the Who would premiere their new, highly innovative album at the Grande is quite telling of what the venue meant to them and how they felt about the people of Detroit. They also trusted Wright, who helped persuade them to bring the album to the Grande for the first time in America. Roger Daltrey was unsure of the lyrics and was wary to test it on stage, but according to Russ Schlagbaum, Wright told them, "This is Detroit—the Grande. You guys could take a shit on stage and they'd love you."[176]

Many were jockeying to get the Who to play their respective venues, including Bill Graham for both the East and West Filmores.[177] The Who turned down all offers and debuted *Tommy* at the Grande Ballroom. The shows were a huge success; the crowd loved it. Wright not only photographed but recorded most of the show's audio. The tapes convey the appreciation of the audience and how electric and mesmerizing the Who played. The Grande was indeed the right choice for their new material and Wright's subjective memory, in conjunction with his photography and audio recordings, reinforces this claim.

In looking at collective cultural memory and the relationship with private photography in public spaces, Nerea Arruti examines the work of conceptual photographer Marcelo Brodsky and concludes that there is "a lack of a place for the articulation of memory," and that through

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[176] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottovile, Ohio, January 24, 2021.
[177] Northern Express, "The Wright Stuff — Part II: A Photographer's Rock Odyssey" Northern Express, September 10, 2003.

displaying his private photographs of himself and school classmates it works at "reconstructing both private and public spaces, and in the process, articulating memory projects not regulated by official discourse."[178] In the context of Detroit rock and the Grande, the "official discourse" is that they are not a part of it. To Arruti's point, we can look to Wright's personal photographs to reestablish a memory to add to the collective cultural memory and, furthermore, combine this with Kracauer's position that to reestablish history, subjectivity is required. One photograph from this period in Wright's life and photography is a photo of the Grande's master of ceremonies, Dave Miller.



Dave Miller, Master of Ceremonies, 1968/9

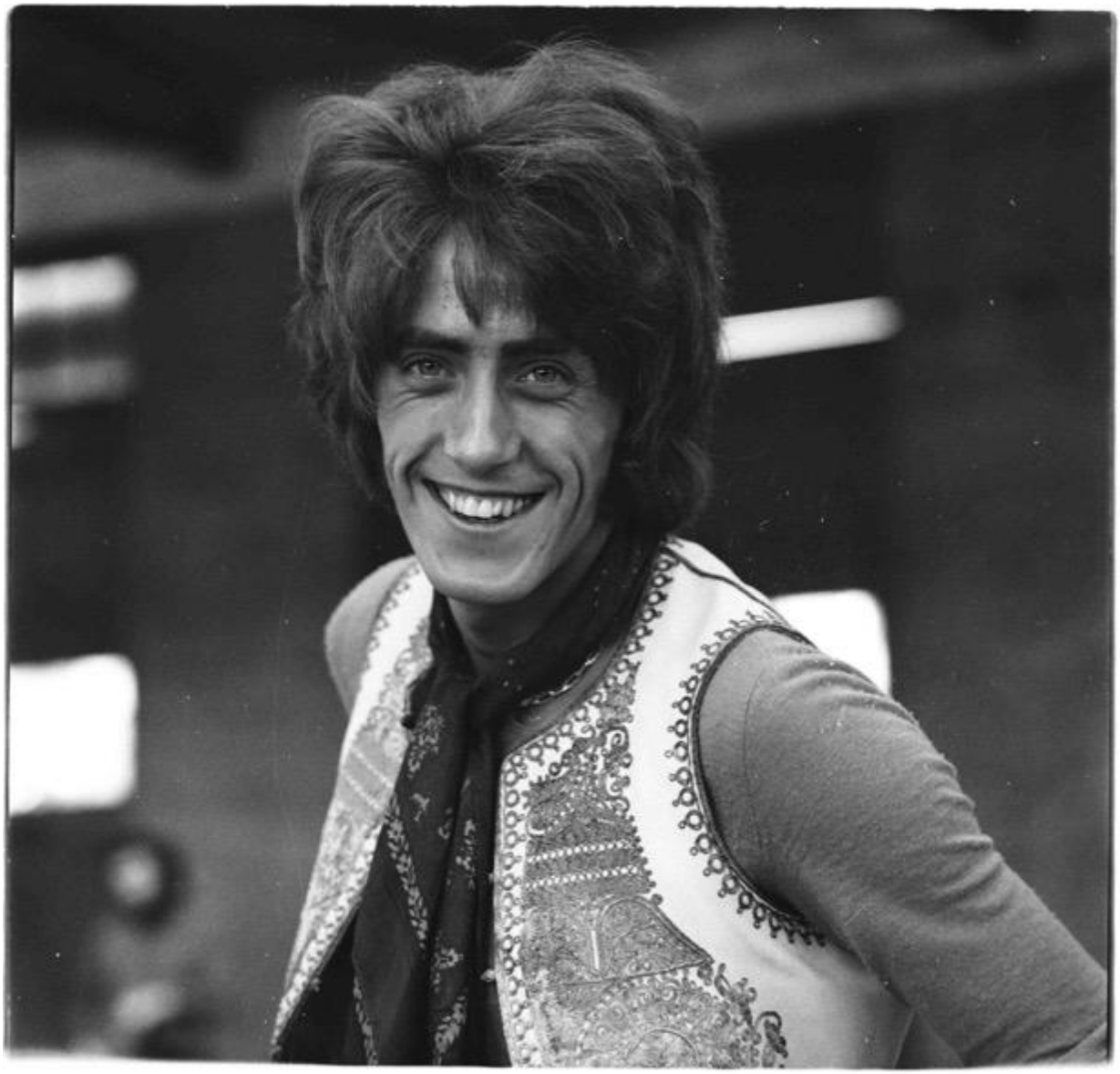
[178] Nerea Arruti, "Tracing the Past: Marcelo Brodsky's Photography as Memory Art," Paragraph, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2007): 102.

This portrait of Miller requires some subjectivity—that is, personal narrative—in order to add to the public cultural memory. Miller was interested in Native American culture and suspects he "must have been reincarnated."[179] He began painting his face, as though it were war paint, but also as part of the ethos of people being free and liberated to experiment in creative ways. In addition to the war paint of Native Americans, he started wearing animal skins. This genuine interest and experimentation became part of his stage presence and, in part of this evolution, he would often come out with a pet boa constrictor. Alice Cooper, a native of Detroit who played the Grande, adopted a similar persona with face paint and a snake on stage. With that personal knowledge, the photograph of Miller morphs and adds a different, more nuanced story to the collective memory and shifts the perspective of Alice Cooper's vaudeville inspired act slightly.

Miller had a similar influence on Roger Daltrey, and this can be seen in Wright's photographs of Daltrey as well. Dave Miller recalls the Who's first time at the Grande: "They were wearing velvet and were dandy boys—mod stuff."[180] From Wright's many photographs at that time, it can be seen that Daltrey had a short bob haircut and often wore paisley. After their first show at the Grande, and when they returned, Miller noticed that Daltrey's hair was longer and he wore a leather fringe jacket like the one Miller wore.

Aside from the public and private sphere, the photo of Miller is one of Wright's successful portraits, which generally was not the case for portraits. This is for a couple of different reasons. The photo captures Miller's stage persona, though he is off stage. Wright approached this photograph with the same modus operandi as he approached anyone off stage and was able to

[179] Dave Miller, interview, 2019.
[180] Dave Miller, interview, 2019.



Roger Daltrey, 1968



Roger Daltrey, Early 1970s

pierce through the facade and capture something hidden from within the subject. This particular photo of Miller flips this on its head because of the face paint. The face paint is a mask, which is considered to hide the private side of someone and allow them to be someone else—the whole point of a persona. The mask, however, is actually more revealing. To borrow from psychoanalytical terminology, the mask is really displaying the id, so in this sense the mask allows the person to show a part of who they really are that they cannot normally present on the outside. The face paint is a manifestation and lays bare an aspect of the inner self. It is for this reason that Wright's style, which was typically not well-suited for portraiture, was so successful for this particular photo of Miller. Joseph Campbell wrote, "Life is but a mask worn on the face of death. And is death then but another mask? How many can say, asks the Aztec poet, 'That there is, or is not, a truth beyond?'"[181]

Wright did not take many photographs during his tenure at the Grande, and like the ones he took of the Who, or the soundcheck of the Jeff Beck group, many did not achieve the same level of quality or reach the artistry of his best work. Regardless of craft, Wright's photographs from that time are still valuable for their documentation. They tell a different story of Detroit's music scene, one that has not been delved into by the mainstream, but one that tells a story from Detroit's perspective.[182]

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[181] Joseph Campbell, *The Mythic Image* (1974; reis., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) 160.

[182] See: Steve Miller, *Detroit Rock City*: The Uncensored History of Rock 'n' Roll in America's Loudest City (Boston: De Capo Press.

Goose Lake: The Forgotten Festival

The Woodstock Music Festival was billed as, "3 days of peace and music."[183] The event has grown to epic and mythic proportions; wild stories abound of the famed music festival held in the Catskill Mountains. From the brown acid to Jimi Hendrix playing the Star Spangled Banner, Woodstock is something so ubiquitous it feels impossible to add anything new. Most everyone it seems knows about Woodstock in some fashion, and of those who are familiar with the festival, it could be safely assumed that an even greater percentage take the next step of mentally tying the festival to the 1960's and the counterculture. They are synonymous; inextricably linked in the annals of history.

But like many things so obvious, subconsciously assumed, Woodstock is worth a second look. It is clear that the collective consciousness and overwhelming consensus is that Woodstock was emblematic of the times and the era. It is nearly impossible to detach the imagery of Woodstock: the once quiet country roads of upstate New York packed bumper to bumper, vans painted like the Merry Prankster's bus, people twirling in the crowds shirtless and shoeless, hoards of people with outstretched arms soaking in the music and vibes, but what if there was another festival that better fit the description, more accurately represented and embodied the anti-authoritarian feeling? What if such a festival existed, but was swept under the carpet, marginalized, only to be relegated to the footnotes? And what if for Woodstock, things did not happen exactly how it is remembered; that other things were at play that led Woodstock to its place in history?

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[183] Arnold Skolnick, 3 Days of Peace & Music, 1969. Poster, Graphic.

This *other* festival was the Goose Lake International Music Festival and was ultimately the invention of Tom Wright and, like his photography, it was not given the place in history it deserves. We will therefore look at these two specific music festivals—Woodstock and Goose Lake International Music Festival—that, on the surface, appeared so comparable, but were responded to, and ultimately remembered, so differently.

The festivals do indeed sound nearly identical. Woodstock was organized by "two young men with capital," John Roberts and Joel Rosenman;[184] was held in open farmland; the lineup consisted of popular bands that represented the time (1969); drugs flowed freely, and more people than expected showed up at the festival. Likewise, Goose Lake developed from the mind of a wealthy young man, Richard Songer; was built on open acreage; the event booked musicians that embodied the culture (1970); drugs were prevalent; and more people than planned attended the festival.

Again, this is surface understanding and all nuance is lost, which is exactly what the collective memory has relied upon and one reason why Woodstock has garnered such fame and historical standing. In reality, Woodstock was actually the less successful of the two festivals, but in order to substantiate such a claim, each part needs to be broken down and explained in order to understand what differentiates the two festivals and importantly, why Woodstock came out on top—we will see that the main reason for this is because of the commercialization and media coverage of Woodstock. The famous film urges the images of Woodstock to persist in the memory.

As pervasive and well-known as Woodstock is, it is best to first be introduced to the lesser

[184] "The 'Young Men with Capital' Who Started Woodstock," *Fresh Air* (NPR, 2009).

known festival, Goose Lake International Music Festival. The festival's name comes from where it was held, at Goose Lake in Jackson County, Michigan, outside Leoni township. It was birthed by 35 year-old Richard Songer, who had built a successful construction business. When he was a teenager he dreamt of a place where he and his friends could converge. That goal of building such a place for the youths of Michigan did not leave him. Hot on the heels of Woodstock, he purchased 390 acres in order to manifest his grand vision of a permanent concert venue. The hitch was that he didn't know anything about music festivals or concert promoting. Enter Tom Wright.

To manage logistics, Songer hired Russ Gibb and Wright. The Grande Ballroom was closing down, as the venue had become too small in comparison to larger auditoriums and arenas. Live music was big business and the Grande simply did not offer the same profit margins as other venues in the area like Cobo Hall or even the Grand Riviera. Additionally, Wright had yet again proven himself a master of organization and logistics. By almost force of will, he was able to materialize, with the aid of his ragtag and loyal band, the Hard Corps, a successful event the year prior. That was the Rock & Roll Revival, which was conceived by Gibb and held at the Michigan State Fairgrounds in Detroit. With a fraction of resources and even less time, Wright was able to snap it into shape and transform the place into a proper music event. They utilized whatever they could; for instance a surplus of camouflage tarp they had on hand was used for the stage roof and cover. Wright also employed the use of two stages side-by-side. One stage would be tearing down and setting up while the other was playing. The only downside to this method was that those in attendance had to move and shift to the other stage. With this kind of grassroots ingenuity, Wright and the Hard Corps were the true mothers of invention. With the success of the

Rock & Roll Revival, Wright was tapped to organize and ultimately make the Goose Lake Festival happen.

Conceived as a permanent venue that would hold the festival every year, along with multiple other outdoor events, with Michigan weather allowing, the festival would learn from Woodstock's mistakes to create something altogether different than its predecessor; that is to say, it would be more profitable with better equipment and held in a place that would equal the energy only found in Detroit. It was not LA, nor was it New York. It would be to Woodstock what the Grande was to the Fillmore (East and West)—a different breed of animal entirely.

Russ Gibb was the promoter, but it was Wright who was the real brainchild behind Goose Lake. Patrick Cullie, who was Joe Walsh's roommate at Kent State and occasional writing partner, took Wright's official oath—which he made everyone take while he was living in upstate Michigan—and joined the Hard Corps; Russ Schlagbaum soon followed. The Hard Corps' first step was to build a stage. Wright was always devising something or birthing a new creation. Whether he was transforming a Holiday Inn bathroom into an on-the-road developing room or reconfiguring a pig barn into habitable living space, Wright was innovating. Nothing changed when he was confronted with designing a festival stage; he approached it with the same creative intellect.

As Wright saw it, the main problem with stages is that one band plays, then there is a lengthy intermission where the equipment needs to be broken down and then the new band sets up for their show. This is further exacerbated with outdoor venues, as there needs to be more speakers, amplifiers, and more gear in general in order for the sound to reach the whole crowd and not dissipate into the atmosphere—not to mention the advent of light shows and the accompanying

equipment such a show entails. With each extended intermission between acts, the inertia, collective energy, and focus of the crowd is defused and has to be built up again. There was also the issue of maintaining and adhering to a schedule. Some bands would play far beyond their allotted time and the breaking down and setting up of gear often led to wild delays. Delays were further compounded at festivals where there are many bands, to all of which the festival has contractual obligations. This problem was particularly highlighted in Woodstock. Delays pushed some bands as much as eight hours behind schedule. This was anathema to Wright's being; he demanded order and a militaristic adherence to schedule. Wright wanted to do away with the aggravating lull time in between sets entirely and also control the musicians who wanted to play longer than their agreed upon set. This is where the ingenuity of Wright can be appreciated. His solution was simple: he concocted a circular stage, divided it in half, and made it moveable. During the planning stage, Wright and Songer spent a considerable amount of time trying to figure out how to make the stage rotate. It was Songer who came up with the idea of using a bowling ball sized ball bearing that steel I-beams could be set upon and radiate out from the center like spokes. Songer also said that he could hook it to a motor and make the whole thing electric. According to Patrick Cullie, member of the Hard Corps who worked every day beside Wright on Goose Lake, Wright was, "adamant about not having the stage electric."[185] This is no doubt from Wright's previous experience touring with the Who and witnessing the Singer Bowl's electric stage break down and how it was jammed by the Door's amplifiers. It is also no doubt where Wright got the idea for the revolving stage; however, Wright's design was done with intent and for a specific reason, whereas the Singer Bowl's stage was more of a gimmick.

[185] Patrick Cullie, phone interview by author, Lyons, August 2, 2021.



The Who at Singer Bowl (on the Electric Stage), 2 August 1968

Unlike the Singer Bowl stage the Goose Lake stage was not motorized, but instead was rotated by a team of people (the Hard Corps) who would use dismantled bicycle handles—essentially because they were steel tubes with a rubber grip—to insert into the side of the stage and manually move around the semicircle. When the person at the front reached the top of the stage, they pulled out the steel tube and ran to the back to continue, and then the new person in the front would continue until they reached the top of the stage circle and the process would continue until the stage made a half-revolution. It was essentially a large turntable. In addition to the mechanical movement of the stage, it had a kill switch for the power on each side that Wright controlled, and *that* was electrified. The concept was simple and the result was effective. Wright recalls, "My revolving stage design ensured that the band changeovers went smoothly and quickly. And it also came in handy when Iggy Pop thought he'd start another song after the

Stooges had played their allotted twenty minutes. I cut his power, spun the stage, and there was Ten Years After, guitars blazing."[186] Delays from stage setup and musicians wanting to play past their time was solved with a clean and simple design. The schedule would be adhered to and would ultimately benefit the audience who came for an immersive music experience.



Richard Songer, Goose Lake Stage Under Construction, 1970

Wright's strict and unwavering faithfulness to schedule bordered on pathology. After the second night of the Goose Lake Festival, Russ Schlagbaum was in his truck at the loading dock behind the stage, trying to sleep when the backstage phone rang. It was Alice Cooper's manager, presumably Shep Gordon. They were scheduled for the next day in the afternoon and Gordon

[186] Wright and VanHecke, *Roadwork*, 144.

told Schlagbaum that they were playing in Windsor and would not be able to get to Goose Lake in time and would have to move the time to later. Schlagbaum relayed the message and recalls Wright's exact words, "He just wants to play in the dark because they have a big light show. You tell that motherfucker there's 500,000 people here and if Alice Cooper wants to play he'll be here at four o'clock or he won't go on."[187] Alice Cooper showed up the next evening and Wright refused to let them play. "That's how tight he ran the show," Schlagbaum added, "Sometimes they were five minutes ahead of schedule. It was amazing."[188]

The next logistical issue was maintaining some semblance of order and ensuring the festival attendees all paid entrance fees, which was another lesson learned from Woodstock, where the majority of the audience walked in for free. When building out Woodstock, the organizers soon realized the inherent difficulty in getting building materials to a remote area in the Catskills. Before the delays in musicians' schedules could even be experienced, delays in construction were a reality. Plagued by a logistical nightmare, they were building up to the moment the festival was to start, when they finally abandoned work and left things where they were, "The stage was almost built, but there were too many fences to be built and the turnstiles never got up. More and more people would just walk right up to a fence, lay it down and walk over it… The promoters told Tom and Wavy Gravy it was time to clear the fields and to start taking tickets. Wavy said, "Do you want a good movie or a bad movie?" The producers had a palaver [conference] and decided to make the festival free."[189] What the promoters lost in ticket sales

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[187] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottoville, Ohio, December 22, 2019.
[188] Schlagbaum, interview, December 22, 2019
[189] Kevin Hillstrom and Laurie Collier Hillstrom, *Woodstock* (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2012), 168.

they knew they would make up for with the hours of film footage that was dutifully being shot and catalogued. They were banking on the subsequent film that would be released would make them rich—and famous.

Where Woodstock failed and was forced to acquiesce to free admission as a last resort, Wright and the Hard Corps's solution was to line the grounds in cyclone fence and use lookouts on horseback to monitor the perimeter. This proved useful as they could move around the fence at a quick rate and catch anyone trying to climb the fence and skip out on admission. This also had the added benefit of a bizarre appearance at a music festival and only leant to the Hard Corps's reputation. There was also a concern of tickets being potentially forged or destroyed by the elements. In an attempt to be one step ahead of what could go wrong, Goose Lake used decommissioned casino chips and engraved the Goose Lake logo on them. This would ensure the tickets would not be forged and they were durable and easy to carry.



Goose Lake, Construction of the Stage (Handlebars in Background), Patrick Cullie, 1970

Goose Lake solved other planning issues that vexed Woodstock. Because this was also to be a permanent outdoor concert facility they constructed everything out of high quality materials with the intent that it withstand the future years of use. As Wright put it, the festival was built for:

> crowds of 400,000, with paved parking for 12,000, plus hundreds of acres of marked-grass parking… There were permanent restrooms built throughout the grounds with abundant private showers and laundry sinks. The stage and sound towers were built from bridge steel. There were playgrounds and campgrounds, picnic areas, laundry facilities, loads of water fountains and a chain link fence twelve feet high, built so well it could have circled the Smithsonian. Lifeguards were stationed every 100 feet on the lakeshore, and a medical tent that could handle anything was staffed with doctors and med students who'd jumped at the chance to volunteer their time… When kids started showing up a week before the show, Songer bought up another 300 acres across the road from the festival entrance so the would-be gatecrashers could camp out without trespassing on others' property.[190]

As for the music, Goose Lake had a lineup that rivaled Woodstock. From the original poster, musicians billed for the event: Savoy Brown, Jethro Tull, Joe Cocker, 10 Years After, Savage Grace, Mountain, Chicago, RAM, Bob Seger, John Sebastian, Alice Cooper, Litter, SRC, the James Gang, the Stooges, John Drake Shake, Flock, 3rd Power, Mighty Quick, Brownsville Station, the Flying Burrito Brothers, and Suite Charity. The MC5, Rod Stewart and Faces, and Mitch Ryder, were added later.

The festival itself went on without a hitch. No one was hurt, people had fun, and the musicians loved playing the gig. "Rod Stewart had so much fun performing Friday night that he had his road manager phone Bill Graham that he had laryngitis and had to cancel his Saturday

[190] Wright and VanHecke, *Roadwork*, 143.

night gig at the Fillmore, the most important rock venue in the nation."[191] Canceling a show at the Fillmore to stay and listen to other bands play says volumes about the quality of the show and atmosphere.

But it has not been remembered this way at all. And to understand why Goose Lake, though succesful, landed into the collective memory—if it even registers at all—as such an utter disaster that it ruined future events in that location, one needs to look at other festivals that Woodstock overshadowed as well.



Goose Lake Festival, Patrick Cullie, 1970

Based on the music alone, other concerts had much more of an impact, though it is not as clear, or at least has not been attributed to such festivals like it has been to Woodstock. For

[191] Wright and VanHecke, *Roadwork*, 144.

instance, the Monterey Pop Festival held in 1967 was more than two years earlier than Woodstock, had a lineup of bands that were taking music in different directions, the musicians played tremendously powerful sets by all accounts, and the audience was into it.

This is where the Who and Jimi Hendrix had their famous "duel," both vying to take the mantle as the band with the wildest performance and onstage antics, creating shock and awe. The Who played an incredibly energetic set caught on film and finished by demolishing their equipment and simultaneously clouding the stage in smoke bombs. Jimi Hendrix and the Experience had a following in England but were virtually unknown in America and were about to take the world by storm with their magnetic energy and distorted guitar. Taking the stage at Monterey Pop, Hendrix and the band played their best, and then, in an attempt to not be upstaged by the Who, Hendrix sprayed lighter fluid on his guitar and set it ablaze. In addition to the Who and Jimi Hendrix's battle, it is important to note that the Monterey Pop Festival was also the breakout show for Otis Redding and Janis Joplin with Big Brother and the Holding Company.[192]

In other words, these musicians played their hearts out, they had something to prove, and there was more than just a performance on the line. Some of the same bands played Woodstock, but conversely they had not played as well as they had at Monterey Pop, despite what lore has led people to believe regarding Woodstock.

The question remains: how has Woodstock taken claim as such a powerful and generation changing event? The answer lies in *Woodstock*—not the festival, the film.

The festival was filmed during the three day concert in August, 1969 and the film had its

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[192] See: *Monterey Pop*, directed by D.A. Pennebaker (1968; Monterey, CA: Leacock-Pennebaker).

theatrical release less than a year later in the US in March of 1970. Until the release of the film the festival was not regarded as anything supremely special, and is chiefly remembered because of the film. As the film's director, Michael Wadleigh noted, "What people know of Woodstock today is our film. They don't really know the reality in any other way than [how] we put it."[193] The success of the film and the subsequent altered memory of the event is an example of what Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno referred to when coining the term: the *Culture Industry.*

Woodstock became part of the cultural lexicon and in so becoming also became fodder for an industry bent on selling, persuading, coaxing, diverting attention and ultimately controlling the masses through a cultural framework. 50 years later, the mythic proportions of Woodstock, the event—not the music of Woodstock—is evidence of how it has become iconic and enshrined by mainstream media. The very thing that gave credence to the festival and solidified its place in American and 60's culture, that is, the documentary, is the same tool that hijacked the festival and manipulated it for its own capitalistic means. It created a counter culture built around music by recording a group of individuals and reproducing and transmitting the image to the masses - at once observing and creating; receiving and producing. The cameras documented the look of these people and through cutting, editing, and reproducing, they effectively repackaged the raw materials and exported it as a carefully crafted message to be consumed by the youth around the country.

The person—the hippie—and the movement—the protest culture—are created concurrently

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[193] Jill Serjeant, "How 'Woodstock' Movie Shaped Festival's Place in Counterculture," Reuters (Thomson Reuters, August 13, 2019), https://www.reuters.com/article/us-music-woodstock-documentary/how-woodstock-movie-shaped-festivals-place-in-counterculture-idUSKCN1V31HS.

in the Culture Industry, and equally lacking in depth. “The striking unity of microcosm and macrocosm presents men with a model of their culture: the false identity of the general and the particular.”[194]

The answer to both festivals, and the relationship between each festival’s success, or failure, and the public’s rememberance of them lies in the images. Woodstock (the film) immortalized the failure of Woodstock (the festival), while, ironically the lack of imagery and commercialization of the imagery at Goose Lake doomed its success in the collective memory. Furthermore, this can also be seen in another main festival during the same time as Woodstock: the Harlem Cultural Festival. Called the “Black Woodstock,” it was professionally recorded with hours of film, like Woodstock.[195] Unlike Woodstock, but like the Goose Lake Festival, the Harlem Cultural Festival was nearly forgotten. The promoters and producers for both Harlem and Goose Lake festivals had tried to document the events, but were not successful like Woodstock had been.

The documentary was the apparatus that helped spin a different story and present the festival as a success. It is worth recalling the festival from the musicians themselves. Neil Young of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young was certainly disgusted by the whole scene. “Woodstock was a bullshit gig. A piece of shit. We played fuckin’ awful. No one was into the music. I think Stephen [Stills] was way overboard into this huge crowd. Everybody was on this Hollywood trip with the fuckin’ cameras. They weren’t playin’ to the audience as much as to the cameras.”[196]

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[194] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment (New York: Continuum, 1982), 120-121

[195] *Summer of Soul (…Or, When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)*, directed by Questlove (Searchlight Pictures, 2021).

[196] James McDonough and Neil Young, *Shakey* (New York: Random House, 2002), 320.

Neil Young was so adverse to the Woodstock narrative that he refused to be on camera. Cropped out from every shot, it is why many people remember the band as Crosby, Stills & Nash. Again, the documentary supplanted the memories of the festival with the corrected and approved narrative that has become canon.

Pete Townshend has mentioned in several interviews that he hated playing Woodstock, but takes it further, saying that the song *Baba O'Riley*'s lyrics, with "we're all wasted," was meant as a cry that their generation wasted an opportunity.[197]

Young and Townshend were not the only ones who had a negative reaction to Woodstock. In a direct link to the Goose Lake Festival, John Sinclair, who aided Wright and Gibb in the Rock & Roll Revival, was arrested in a sting operation for possession of marijuana. Activist Abbie Hoffman decided to take the stage during the middle of the Who's set at Woodstock and grab the microphone. Hoffman managed to get out the gist of his thought, "I think this is a pile of shit, while John Sinclair rots in prison." He was cut short, interrupted by Townshend's guitar cracking him in the head and sending him flying off stage. The crowd cheered. Townshend would later say he agreed with Hoffman's sentiments but was not listening. He only saw Hoffman as someone trespassing on his stage which, to Townshend, was nearly sacrilegious.

Sinclair recounted that he appreciated the sentiment but his friend, Pun Plamondon, who was with Hoffman at Woodstock, told Sinclair it was supposed to happen between sets. Nevertheless, Sinclair holds the documentary in similar disdain as others: "Record companies saw there was gold and they staked their claim. Woodstock lost so much money they turned to the movie and t-

[197] Ray Waddell, "Q&A Pete Townshend," *Billboard*, February 6, 2010.

shirt sales to make it back."[198]

It is important to touch on the anti-Vietnam war sentiment of the times. At first look, it would appear that the war protest anthem of Woodstock flies in the face of what the US government and corporate America would find acceptable, and therefore would attempt to subvert and stifle. It was, however, aligning and coinciding at the right moment when, "corporate America had largely concluded that [the Vietnam War] should be liquidated."[199] In other words, the hegemonic US powers saw the writing on the wall and realized the war would not be won, that the American peoples' hearts and minds were not following along anymore. It was a pragmatic approach. This differs slightly from what Adorno wrote about the Culture Industry and adds a slight nuance that is a precursor to where the Culture Industry takes over. This is what Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman refer to as the *Propaganda Model*, which is defined as the media's, "function to amuse entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society."[200] This step occurs ahead of the Culture Industry and is exemplified in Vietnam and Woodstock. The Propaganda Model at first sought to influence and garner acceptance from American citizens using the technology of media as its best tool. This worked for a while, but once it was clear that the acceptance and backing of Americans was no longer occurring, but in fact creating a massive group of fervent protestors, corporate America and the US government (often interchangeable in this context) decided to give in to the pressures. This was not giving up,

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[198] John Sinclair, phone interview by author, Detroit, Michigan, October 4, 2019.
[199] Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 173.
[200] Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 1.

but simply re-strategizing and spinning the message. This is where the Culture Industry takes over.

The Culture Industry and the Propaganda Model did not have the same effect on Goose Lake. In fact it had the opposite. Wright and the other Goose Lake Festival organizers decided to shun the cameras and the reporters. They wanted the festival to be equal for everyone. This translated to the principle that everyone needed to pay for their admission and that no backstage passes existed. According to Tom, this upset the magazines and newspaper reporters who were used to being treated like royalty. The *Rolling Stone* did not report on it and the national publications that did write about Goose Lake focused on only the negative aspects. Accusations have made it into the texts and historical record which remain today. Had the imagery of Goose Lake been created and proliferated, the memory may be wildly different today and the event recalled in a wholly separate context.



Goose Lake, Construction of the Towers, Patrick Cullie, 1970

One book held in high regard, one of the only published on the ’60s and ‘70s Detroit music scene, is David Carson’s, *Grit, Noise, and Revolution*, and follows the accepted narrative of Goose Lake and helps propagate misrepresentations of the festival. For instance, Carson reports that there was a booth set up for drugs with “kids standing in line to shoot up meth,” and that, “75% of the youths were on drugs.”[201] This assertion is questionable. Drugs were at the festival, but intravenous drug use is not something typically done in assembly lines.

Reading through the newspapers of the time and around the area, it is clear that drugs were a highly politicized topic and one on which newly elected Governor Milliken focused. Milliken specifically targeted Goose Lake as a scapegoat and used it as a symbol of drug use getting out of hand and the threat it posed.[202]

This was all reported after the fact. National reporters and writers for music magazines did not respond favorably to Goose Lake, but before the narrative was later revised, during the event, the local press that covered Michigan lauded Goose Lake: “The state’s first massive rock festival got off to a peaceful start.”[203]

The people who attended the festival remember it differently, too. One person, Johnie K. Rains, who worked the festival and was an attendee, remembered it as going off without a hitch and also added that the music was great. Rains attested that drugs were indeed available, but

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[201] David A. Carson, *Grit, Noise, and Revolution: the Birth of Detroit Rock ’N’ Roll* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 244.

[202] Goose Lake consistently showed up in newspapers because politicians had focused on it and politicized the event, using it as an example of rampant drug use, the wanton disregard for civility, and the corruption of the youth. See: Lee Winfrey, “Issue: Levin, Milliken and How They Stand… on Education Reform … on Crime and Drugs,” Detroit Free Press, November 1, 1970.

[203] George Cantor, “State’s 1st Rock Fest Loud and Peaceful,” Detroit Free Press, August 8, 1970.

nothing like it was reported in Carson's account. He also noted that the festival was peaceful, "You have to remember, this was a time when Michigan had a terrible time with biker gangs. There was no problem from them [at Goose Lake]."[204]

Russ Schlagbaum gave further insight into the issues of the motorcycle gangs and how Wright solved the problem with what they called Biker's Acres:

> Because the Hells Angels were such a powerful group in Detroit, Tom had told Dick Songer, "Listen, rather than make the Hells Angels a problem, let's just take care of them." So they designed all these hills and bike trails so these bikers could race tracks and have their own specific area… You had to be a biker to get in this place.[205]

Biker's Acres was Wright's response to the infamous Rolling Stones concert at Altamont where the Hell's Angels were used as security. That concert was known for violence, injuries, and the death of a woman by stabbing. At Goose Lake, instead of using the bikers for security, Wright sidestepped the issue and handled it pragmatically with a level of shrewdness. One Detroit Free Press article read, "Goose Lake people should be congratulated in putting on a rarity, a somewhat peaceful rock festival."[206] Ironically, directly below the article is an advertisement for the documentary, *Woodstock*.

How Woodstock and Goose Lake have been remembered, and even treated in the immediate time span following the festivals, requires some pause for reflection to see that the Culture Industry and the Propaganda Model are alive and well.

For Woodstock there has been a general glossing over of its history, minimizing the

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[204] Johnie Kyle Rains (Goose Lake Festival worker and attendee), phone interview by author, March 26, 2019.
[205] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottoville, Ohio, January 17, 2021.
[206] Mike Gormley, "What's Sauce For Goose Lake Is Heat for Fans," *Detroit Free Press*, August 11, 1970.

inadequacies of its bold attempt. In one account, it is reported that Governor Rockefeller had to be cajoled into keeping the National Guard away, while in the next breath, the same retelling of Woodstock, they report that some people felt the food shortages were exaggerated.[207] It's this cognitive dissonance that has completely whitewashed the festival: any problem with the event is quickly supplanted with a reinterpretation or minimization.

Woodstock has become the image that has defined a generation in the general cultural narrative. Many at the time did not think of Woodstock as *the* event, but the imagery has sustained and reaffirmed that view. Culture takes over, the system co-ops, and images define the memory. Woodstock was a music festival where many gathered and experienced something that was altogether different than other generations; something that was uniquely theirs, but it is not the full truth and takes away from other festivals like Monterey Pop, Goose Lake, and the Harlem Cultural Festival.

Woodstock, the festival, is like the VW bus: both were created for different reasons, but taken over and manufactured as a commodity to be marketed to (and also helped create) hippies. Woodstock, the film, was advertising, the marketing apparatus that packaged image, sounds, look, feel and sold it wholesale as a commodity. The film at once helped sell to a culture, while simultaneously helping to create and steer that culture. It was hijacked and used, exploited by the culture industry. Philosopher Herbert Marcuse asserts that this is a result of an industrialized and capitalistic state, that the established powers will subsume the opposition, co-opting it for the

[207] Kevin Hillstrom and Laurie Collier Hillstrom, *Woodstock* (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2012) 76.

establishment's own ends.[208]

Of course there is an inherent contradiction in this conceptualization of the memory of Goose Lake and Woodstock. This paradox is embodied in media, in that it is the savior and the executioner. That the media is manipulated and used to support a mainstream point-of-view is nothing new—history books are written by the victors. The collective memory will not change, but a counterpoint would be worthwhile. This is what the 2021 documentary "Summer of Soul," about the Harlem Cultural Festival has recently accomplished. In regard to Tom Wright's photography during this time, it is unfortunate that, like his time at the Grande, most of the photographs do not exist.

While at the Grande, Wright did not photograph much because he was working to keep the show going, but the story of Goose Lake is much more devastating. Wright was working, but he took many photographs of the show: before, during, and after. Shooting roll after roll, he filled a duffel bag and he undoubtedly got some great shots. On the final night of the show, before he went to sleep, Wright left the bag backstage and to his utter shock and horror, he found the bag had been stolen.

Only a handful of Wright's photographs from Goose Lake made it. Patrick Cullie, who worked hand-in-hand with Wright during the planning, construction, and the festival itself, also took photographs documenting the Festival. Roughly a hundred photographs have so far been found in Wright's archive, which were likely taken by both Cullie and Wright. Like many of the

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[208] Herbert Marcuse. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, (1964; repub., Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

photographs of the Grande, their existence tells a story with a sad end.

The photos of the planning and schematics stage are exciting and exhibit an optimism. The shots of the grounds under construction are equally hopeful and although the work looks like back-breaking labor in miserable Midwestern heat, the excitement and camaraderie shine through. The photos document the energy and what a group of young people were doing ultimately for music. The photos are seem cursed, however, since hindsight casts a shadow over them with the knowledge that the festival was not to be repeated and its legacy besmirched. The final insult occurred after the festival, Songer was the political sacrifice for Miliken's office and was, "indicted for aiding and abetting the sale and control of heroin and marijuana."[209] Songer was found not guilty, but there was not to be another concert at Goose Lake and it seemed that the times were changing.



Tom Wright during Construction of Goose Lake, Patrick Cullie, 1970

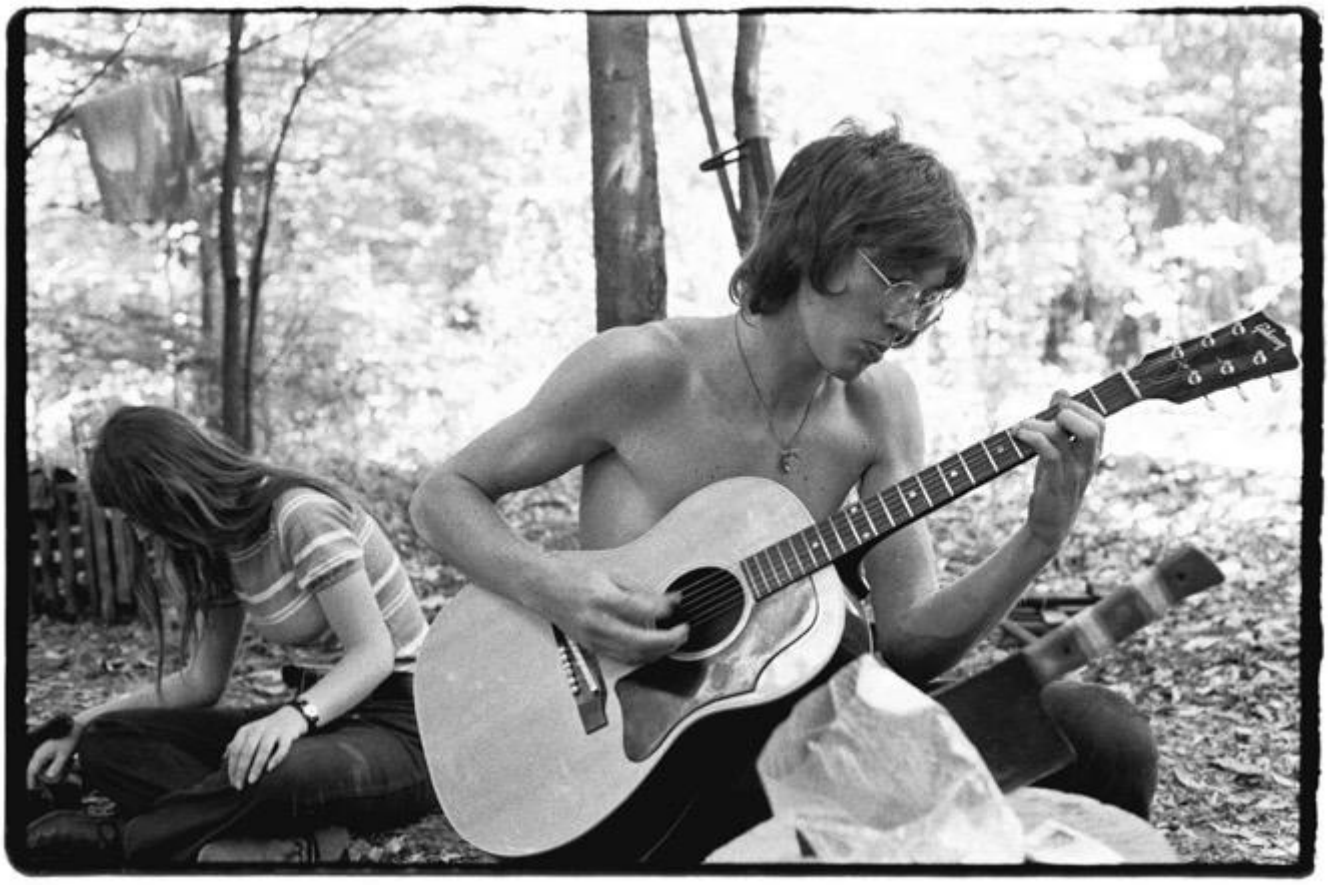
[209] Mike Minnich, "Goose Lake Trial," *Ann Arbor Sun*, November 26, 1971.

CHAPTER FIVE

ARE THE KIDS ALRIGHT?

VIETNAM, A NEW EALING IN TEXAS, AND AUTO-SELF-DESTRUCTION

The Hard Corps: 4-F and the James Gang



Patrick Cullie at the Third Power Farm, 1970

There is a specter that haunts each photograph of Tom Wright's from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. Present, but not seen, the Vietnam War envelopes each frame and contact sheet. The

threat of *the draft,* and involuntarily conscription into the United States military services, to fight in a faraway country that many had never considered or could find on a map, was hovering in the background. To many American youth falling somewhere on a gradient of rebellion, from dabbling in demonstrations and toying with notions of collectives to joining what would be termed radical groups, the Vietnam War was the extreme manifestation of their parents' generation forcing their will onto the youth of the country. As discussed earlier, music was central to this struggle, but Vietnam intensified that struggle and became the major focal point that harnessed and amplified the immediacy that things needed to change. This was not purely generational, but a class struggle, as reflected in James Fallows's well-known article, "What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?"[210] The class struggle in compulsory conscription to the Vietnam War extended to rural populations as well and is illustrated in those who were drafted. As Andrea Asoni and Tino Sanandaji point out in their research of how socioeconomics are represented in the military, "Studies of Vietnam era veterans found that recruits of high socioeconomic background were under-represented by half compared to their representation in the overall population."[211] This of course translated to rural and minority Americans drafted at a disproportionately higher rate per capita than their urban counterparts. In his research on the drafting of African Americans and institutional racism, by way of rich white youth invoking educational or occupational deferments to stave off conscription, Paul T. Murray points to the study of a Selective Service System which, "found that the group with the highest draft liability

[210] James Fallows, "What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?," Washington Monthly, February 1977, Vol. 8 edition, sec. No. 12.
[211] Andrea Asoni and Tino Sanandaji, "Rich Man's War, Poor Man's Fight? Socioeconomic Representativeness in the Modern Military," Research Institute of Industrial Economics, 2013.

is composed of 'rural, white, lower-income, non-college youths and physically and mentally acceptable Negroes.'"[212]

Wright, and those who made up the nucleus of the Hard Corps, represented the above description and were therefore constantly aware of the looming threat of the draft. The communication that one would be drafted came to the mailbox in the form of an official notice. As a New York Times retrospective piece on the Vietnam War recalled, "Few pieces of mail ever incited the same combination of panic, anticipation and resignation as a draft notice. The words struck terror in the hearts of many recipients."[213]

That letter did come to Wright, but he eventually received a 4-F deferment—unfit for military service—thanks to his previous drug arrest in London.

For the other two Hard Corps members, Russ Schlagbaum and Royden "Chuch" Magee, the path was not as straightforward. Like Wright and Russ Gibb, Schlagbaum and Magee managed a small music venue named the In Club in Van Wort, Ohio. They operated on a much smaller scale than Gibb and Wright, but they soon moved to organizing small outdoor shows. They heard of Hugh "Jeep" Holland, north of them in Michigan, who booked bands for Detroit, Ann Arbor and the surrounding areas. Schlagbaum and Magee were able to secure the band the Third Power, a three-piece group fashioned off the psychedelic trio, Cream.

Running a small club, organizing festivals, and booking bands was not their main focus, but rather evading the clutches of the Vietnam draft board. As the war dragged on, young men like

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[212] Paul T. Murray, "Blacks and the Draft: A History of Institutional Racism," *Journal of Black Studies,* Vol. 2, No. 1 (1971): 74-75.
[213] Amy J Rutenberg, "How the Draft Reshaped America," *The New York Times,* October 6, 2017.

Schlagbaum and Magee were caught in a perpetual state of limbo, waiting for the dreaded letter to be delivered to their mailbox, informing them to appear at the Selective Services office for induction. Upon receiving that letter, the young men of America had a decision to make: they could either go to Vietnam, refuse and be imprisoned, or refuse and flee to another country. Schlagbaum had the Bahamas staked out in case he had to leave. Regardless of the option, each choice was life-changing. Such a decision made it difficult to plan a life or have any semblance of normalcy. "We never thought beyond a few months because of Vietnam," Schlagbaum intimated. "The potential of being drafted or forced to hit the road, there was no planning that could be put in place. I think that was the same for millions of kids at that time. It was like, 'Hey, what's the point? Let's just get high, listen to some music, and try to stay alive.'"[214] The threat of the draft was ever-present and if one did not want to go to Vietnam, or be imprisoned, then one had to be nimble. Roots could not be planted since the main priority was avoiding the war and enlistment.

"It's why so many went to college."[215] Schlagbaum recounted, "Chuch [Magee] and his buddies were going to Giffin Business College to get a 2S deferment."[216] According to Schlagbaum, the college was run by a racist, provincial husband and wife team and, ironically, the college was used by many as a means to evade Vietnam—something the couple, the Giffins, would certainly not have supported.

As for Schlagbaum, he was attending Wright State College in Celina, Ohio, but only went for a year because the draft board refused to continue Schlagbaum's deferment. Schlagbaum also

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[214] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottoville, Ohio, December 20, 2020.
[215] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottoville, Ohio, January 17, 2021.
[216] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottoville, Ohio, December 22, 2019.

operated a milk route and applied for an occupational deferment (2A) prior to seeking a 2S deferment, which was also refused.

Patrick Cullie was also seeking a 2S deferment and was attending Kent State University where his roommate, Joe Walsh, had replaced a member in the band, the James Gang. An English major who wrote poetry, Cullie became a collaborator of Walsh's. Though in college, and to Cullie's horror, he was still drafted.

Cullie refused induction and was working with the Vietnam Day Committee where his counselor was Bernardine Dohrn, who would help found the Weather Underground. The FBI was actively searching for Cullie who would travel at night—the James Gang's song, "Midnight Man," was allegedly written about Cullie who would only operate at night in order to prevent the authorities from locating him.[217]

Wright had received his 4F draft deferment early on and was able to move through life, and work with the Who on the road and then manage the Grande Ballroom; however, for Schlagbaum, Magee, and Cullie, they were operating on tenterhooks with their freedom balancing precariously in a bureaucratic system that resembled something out of the mind of Kafka.

As each worried separately about the draft, they moved through their life with trepadation and knowledge that they might be forced to go to Vietnam, prison, or, if they were lucky enough to escape, to exhile. Cullie moved into adjoining rooms to Joe Walsh in a hotel under renovation, above a hippie clothing store. Cullie managed the shop and Walsh played gigs with the James Gang. After being on the road for a stint, Walsh returned and introduced Cullie to the James

[217] Patrick Cullie, phone interview by author, Lyons, July 12, 2021.

Gang's new road manager, Tom Wright.

While managing the Grande Ballroom, Wright had nearly forced the James Gang on stage. Booked for a show, only three of the five members of the James Gang showed up, Walsh among them. They told Wright they could not go on, that their lead guitarist and singer were not there, but Wright would not take no for an answer. Harkening to Wright's militaristic temperament and rigidity, he told Walsh they were booked and they were playing. It did not stop there, however, and to Wright's credit, ingenuity, and muse-like character, he had the James Gang play some songs that they could play as a three-piece. Wright worked with them and gave quick, honest feedback as to what worked and what did not sound right. The James Gang took the stage with Joe Walsh as the solo guitar and lead singer. It must have been successful because from then on the James Gang was a three-piece.

Wright and Walsh were fast friends and Wright was able to introduce Walsh to one of Walsh's idols, Pete Townshend, and a lifelong friendship was started between Townshend and Walsh as well. As for Wright's position in the James Gang, as Cullie remembers, "Tom didn't last very long as road manager."[218] Wright ended up back in Michigan, this time at 29050 Haggerty Road in Farmington, Michigan, or better known as the Third Power Farm. The Third Power was a three-piece band fashioned off the psychedelic sound and look of Cream, and was a Detroit favorite. At first living in a tipi, fashioning the walls out of the camouflage parachute material he used on the stage of the Rock & Roll Revival, Wright cleaned up the pig barn and painted the whole place. Wright proved again to be resourceful and ingenious in spatial analysis and renovated the space, transforming it into the envy of even those who had rooms in the main

[218] Patrick Cullie, phone interview by author, Lyons, December 3, 2020.

house. Wright set up a dark room in the basement of the farmhouse and word spread that the Third Power Farm was the happening place. Cullie moved out to the Farm, and it was from there that Wright and Cullie began their plans for the Goose Lake Festival.



Drew Abbott, guitarist for Third Power/Bob Seger Silver Bullet Band,
Third Power Farm, 1970

Word had spread and people were showing up at the Farm, including Bob Seger, his band, as well as Chuch Magee. After being reclassified 1A and having been through two physicals, Schlagbaum sensed his induction was impending. It was fortuitous that Magee called Schlagbaum and asked if he needed a job. Magee started working for the Third Power and they needed some more help. Magee told Schlagbaum the pay was bad, but there was one benefit: they could use the Third Power's lawyer to help them get their deferments. The band shared the

same lawyer with Bob Seger and according to Schlagbaum, the firm had, "successfully got all these bands out of the draft through the appeal system and they all got deferments."[219] Schlagbaum moved to the Third Power Farm with Magee and quickly became friends with Cullie and, like everyone it seems, were immediately drawn to Wright; as Schlagbaum referred to it, "meeting Tom was like someone blasting the barn doors off!"[220] The nexus of the Hard Corps was formed.

Schlagbaum and Magee worked tirelessly for the band, and Wright and Cullie busily planned the Goose Lake Festival. It was in the down time and pauses between and after the work that Schlagbaum and Magee saw Wright and were lured in by his charisma, energy, optimism, and experience. Wright would, of course, recount stories of England, Ibiza, Paris, as well as road managing the Who and the Grande, but just like he did with Townshend years before at the Sunnyside flat, he played songs, and parts of songs—often repeated ad nauseam—to get across a certain idea from some aspect of the song, or a specific sound, that was special to Wright's ear. Wright's enthusiasm was intoxicating and the way he spoke about the music was like nothing they had seen or heard before. "Everyone got sucked in," Schlagbaum explained, "It was almost manic."[221]

Many were drawn to the Third Power Farm, including Bob Seger and Ted Nugent. The Farm became the hangout as, like the Sunnyside flat in England, Wright made it significant and relevant.

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[219] Schlagbaum Interview, December 22, 2019.
[220] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottoville, Ohio, January 31, 2021.
[221] Schlagbaum interview, January 31, 2021.



Jim Craig, Third Power Drummer

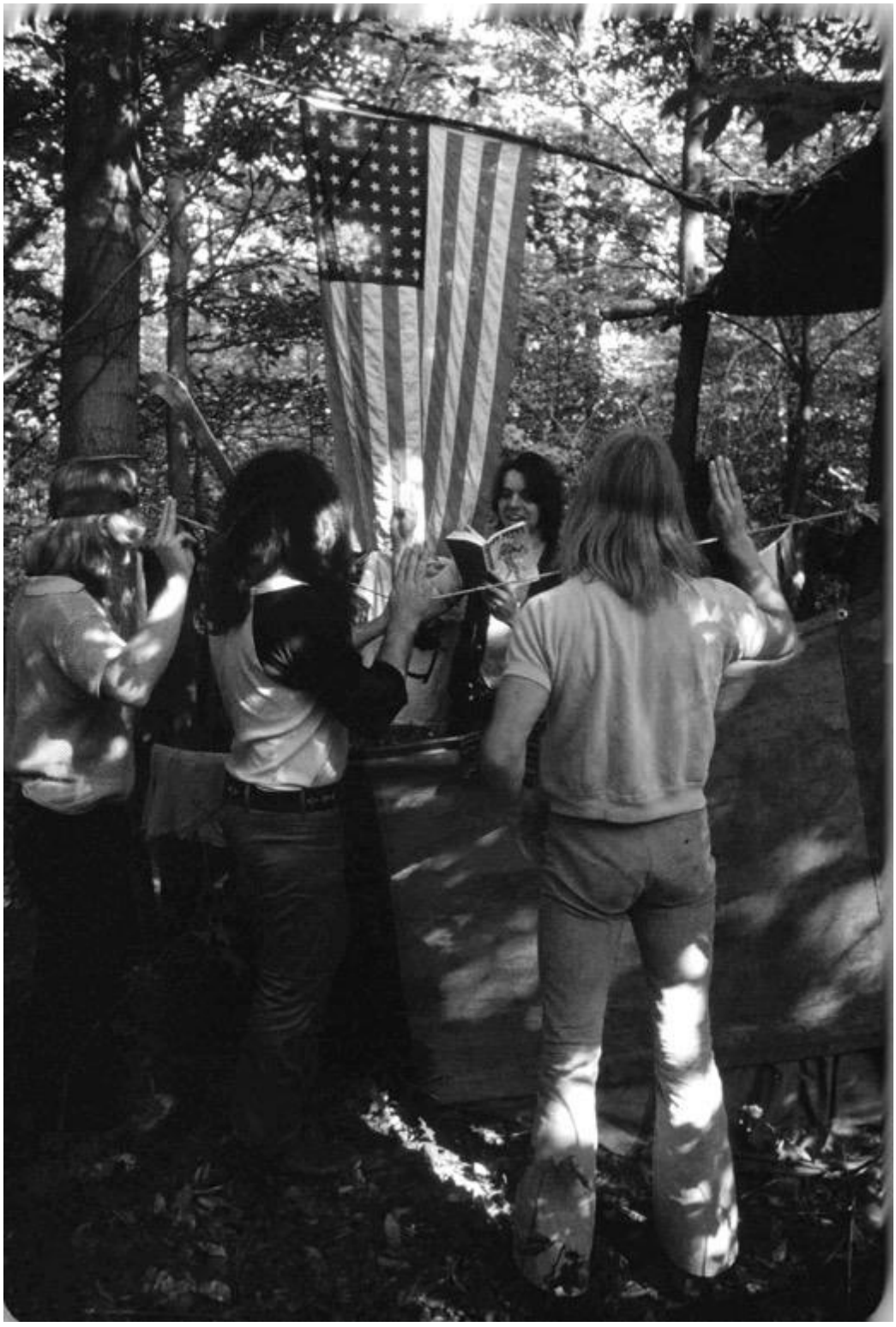
Third Power Farm, 1970

In addition to the similarity between Wright's Sunnyside flat and the Third Power Farm, another correlation can be drawn during that time in America to the early 1960s England that Wright inhabited, and it is one that resides in the power structures and the accidental effects that were produced. To clarify, Ealing Art College was a collection of misfits that normally would not have gone to college, but, because of the Post-War mentality to provide a working force to industries, they inadvertently brought all the rebels together in a place where they could conspire. This is in a similar vein to what transpired in America during Vietnam, especially in 1969 when the draft conducted a lottery for induction.[222] The lottery was implemented in order to counter the perceived prejudice and bias of the draft and who received deferments. This was a miscalculation by the establishment and ire for Vietnam only grew. Like Magee, Schlagbaum, and Cullie, many were gathering and banding together in solidarity to fight the war. In a sense, the Vietnam War, and the draft lottery, served to bring dissenting youths together and even created such resistors and so-called radicals. This echoes similar to a Marxist critique of capitalism and the exploitation of labor. As Walter Benjamin summarized Karl Marx's prediction for the future, "The result was that one could expect [capitalism] not only to exploit the proletariat with increasing intensity, but ultimately to create conditions which would make it possible to abolish capitalism itself."[223] The system exists as an embodied contradiction.

By this time, Cullie was notified in the mail that he had received a deferment, that he was mentally unfit for service. Cullie, being a few years older than Schlagbaum and Magee, his story

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[222] "Vietnam Lotteries," Selective Service System, accessed September 7, 2021, https://www.sss.gov/history-and-records/vietnam-lotteries/.
[223] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) 1.



Bob Seger Taking the “Hard Corps Oath”

Third Power Farm, 1970



Ted Nugent and the Amboy Dukes

Third Power Farm House, 1970

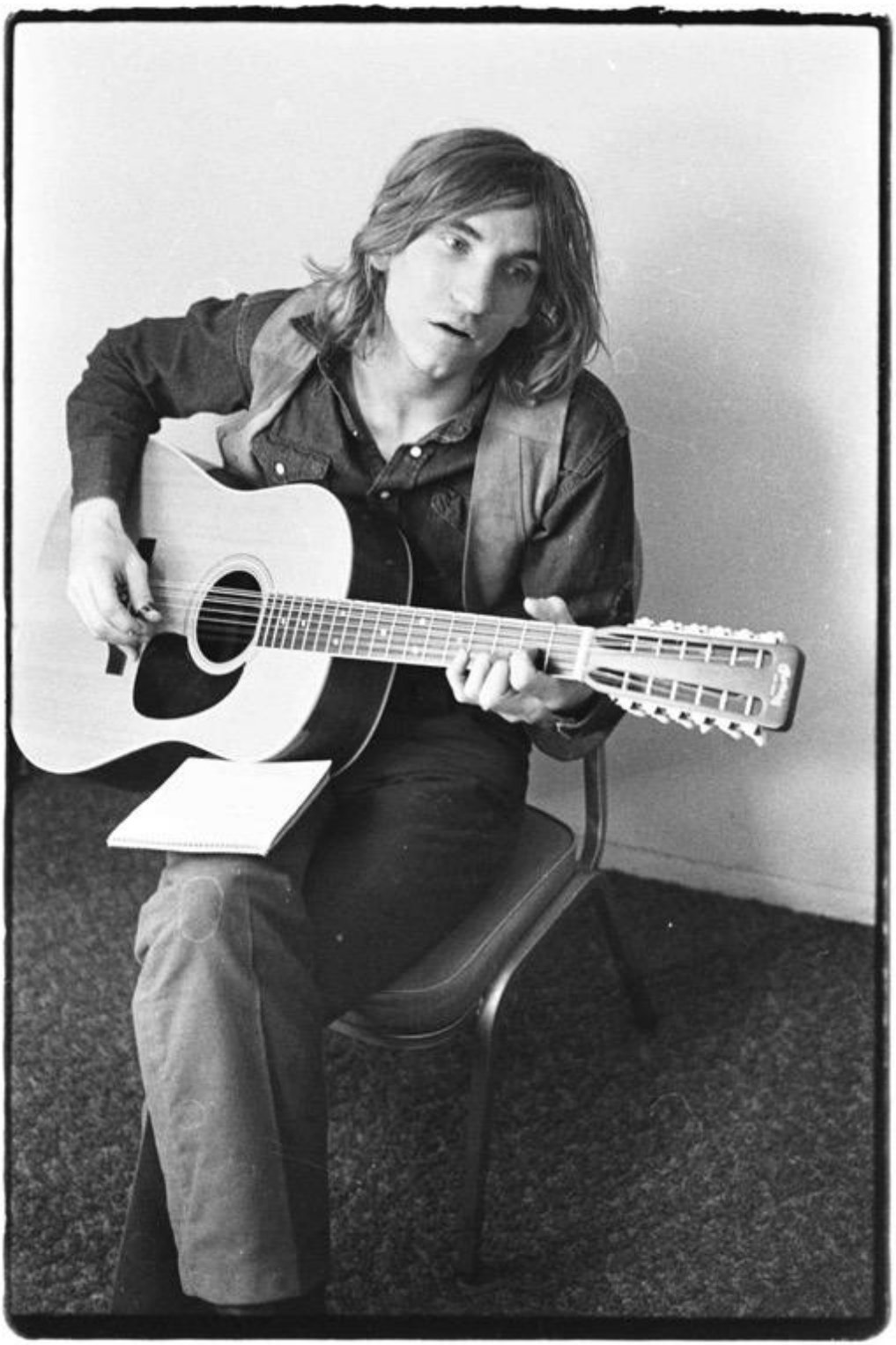
with the draft began earlier in 1965. He had been on the run for almost two years and an additional two years of refusing induction, legal proceedings, physicals, court appeals, etc. It took Schlagbaum and Magee another year of working with Seger's attorney, Donald Field of the law firm Field, Field and Rundell of Royal Oak, Michigan. Schlagbaum's salvation came in a letter dated July 29, 1970 in which, according to Schlagbaum, "the lawyer pointed out that the local draft board of Putnam County, Ohio, had broken their own laws by issuing an induction notice without due process!"[224]

The whole country felt like a powder keg, ready to explode at any moment. On May 4 of that year, that is exactly what happened when the Ohio National Guard opened fire on unarmed students during a peaceful rally on the campus of Kent State University. Four were murdered and in response, protests erupted on campuses and cities around the country. In the days following the May 4 Massacre, as the event is also known, Wright traveled to Ohio from Michigan to join Joe Walsh. Walsh had been living in an apartment on Kent State grounds and there is an account in Wright's book *Roadwork*, where Walsh, standing at the window, was playing his guitar to the mayhem of the guards and students below. Police busted in the door to Walsh's apartment and flooded in to search the place having mistook Walsh's guitar for a rifle.

Of course, not every Wright photograph of Walsh at this time is focused on Vietnam; arguably, none of the photographs have a Vietnam concentration. Vietnam, however, was so all encompassing, though, that it permeated the psyche and affected many facets of young men's lives. It is with that in mind that adds a depth to the photos Wright took of Walsh and deserves another viewing.

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[224] Russ Schlagbaum, "Lawyer," email to author, December 24, 2019.



Joe Walsh
Kent State, 1970

Joe Walsh was famously dubbed the Clown Prince for his humor, antics, and general lightheartedness. Walsh gave the impression that his whole being was comprised entirely of id and approached life similarly to Keith Moon. Like any clown, though, the makeup and smile are masks to hide sadness or something deeper. Walsh had tragedy later in his life, and a case for hidden depression with Moon could be made, but with Walsh it is in the context of Vietnam that Wright's photos of Walsh from this time period are tinted with a depth that cannot be manufactured—the heaviness was collective.

The photos of Joe Walsh around the time of the Kent State Shootings, and during the Vietnam draft in general, stand in stark contrast to another photograph—John Filo's image of the immediate aftermath of the shootings where a student lay prostrate and a fellow student crouches by his side, screaming in horror. Although the photos of Walsh and the Pulitzer Prize winning Filo photo are dramatically different, they are not opposites or even opposed; instead, the photos are two approaches to the same subject. In Filo's photograph, Mary Ann Vecchio kneels at the slain body of Jeffrey Miller. In one instant the viewer sees the senselessness of Vietnam in Vecchio's open hand as though grasping for something to pull her back to reality. The powerlessness and bewilderment is unmistakable in the expression on her face. The response to the photograph is immediate as it is in the middle of the action and visceral in its showcasing of the lack of humanity. The photograph conveys the feelings and emotion in one immediate transfer that harkens to Walter Benjamin's comments on exhibition photography and cult photography.

Benjamin defines the two in terms that could be understood as camps of public and personal. For instance, cult photography emanates from early times where art was viewed as nearly

magical.[225] Benjamin relates the cult photograph to early portraiture, "It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture."[226] In Benjamin's assessment of this theory of photographic evolution, the cult value of photography gave way to the photography of exhibit. Where the work of art, once hidden from view and available for only a select and elite few, took a turn toward exhibits, which placed the work in the realm of the public sphere for all to view. In one sense it was a leveling characteristic that democratized art, but to Benjamin the proliferation by means of reproduction also had a dulling effect of the work. Reproduction transformed the cult item into a work of art with a new set of functions.[227]

The Filo photo of the aftermath of the Kent State shootings serves as a memory for the public and the associated collective fear, anger, helplessness, etc. of the Vietnam War. Compared to Wright's photos of Walsh during this same period, and in context to these events, a different perception of the Walsh photos taken by Wright emerge.

In one photo, Walsh is seated with a guitar on his lap, in heavy concentration, mentally following lines of thought and tangents as he generates lyrics and mixes them with riffs. He was actually writing lyrics for songs on the James Gangs album, "Thirds." Some of these photographs ended up on the back of the album while Patrick Cullie earned some writing credits. From one perspective, the photo is an intimate portrait of Walsh seemingly captured by a ghost or someone with whom Walsh was so comfortable that he did not notice their presence—which was certainly the case with Wright. This is a photograph that truly exemplifies Wright's ability to

[225] Benjamin, Work of Art, 6.
[226] Benjamin, Work of Art, 7.
[227] Benjamin, Work of Art, 7.

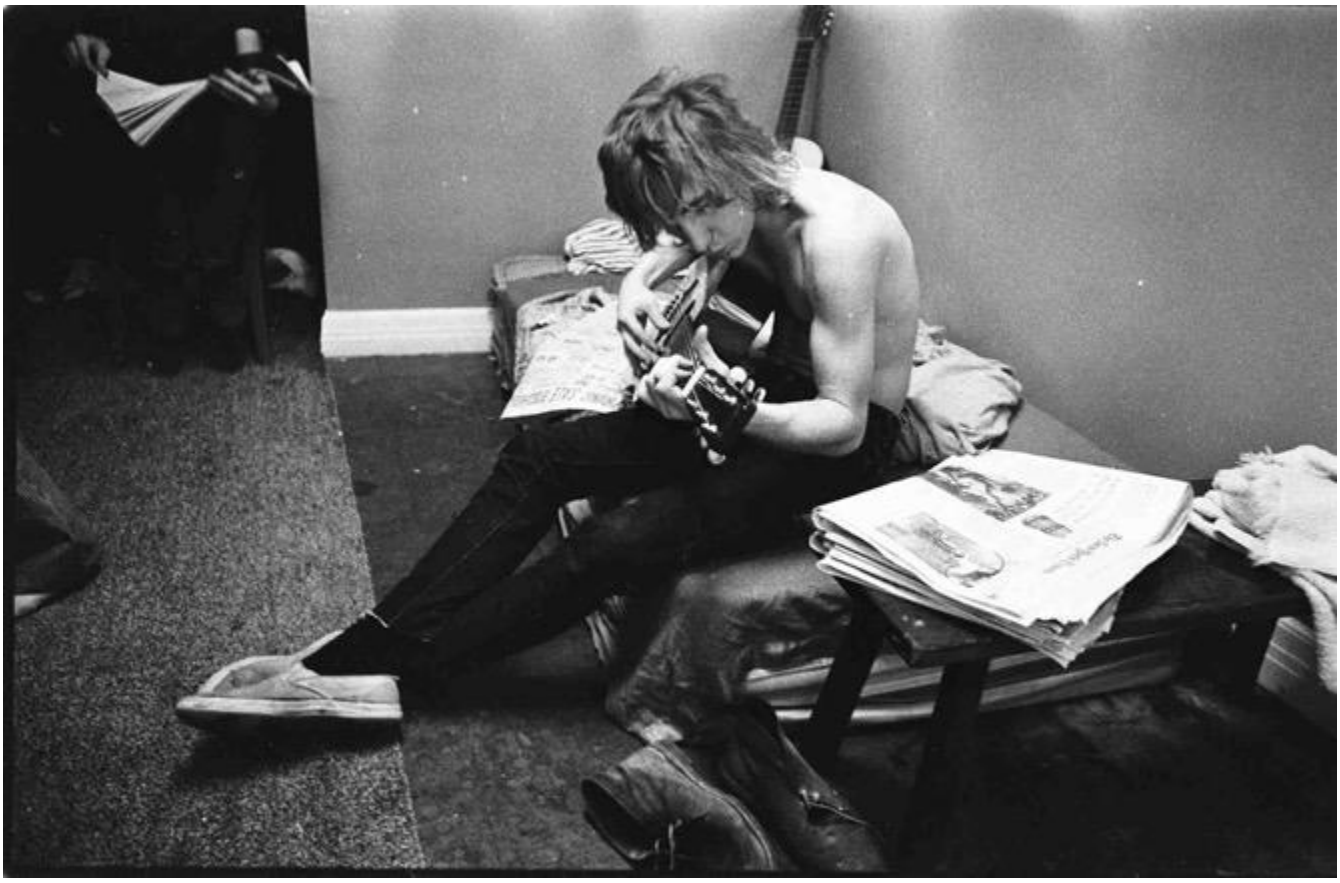
capture the true, honest person the way other photographers were not capable of doing. The other perspective, or rather layer, to the photograph is the context of the Vietnam War and that the Kent State Shootings occurred right outside the window in the grass-covered fields a few floors below. So fresh was the massacre that in that photograph, the resultant protests from the shootings were potentially occurring simultaneously. This adds a necessary dimension to the photograph. Walsh reportedly wrote the song, "Turn to Stone," about Nixon's handling of Vietnam, but it was the Kent State shootings that "traumatized him, leading him to quit school and abandon his English degree in pursuit of making music with his first group, the James Gang."[228] With this knowledge, the photo of Walsh alters again. This time Walsh is not merely writing a song—protest or otherwise: he is making a clear choice in the path of his life in direct reaction to the inhumanity of the war. He was making a conscious decision to dissent and completely opt out of the whole system. This echoes Russ Schlagbaum's attitude of not accepting a *conscientious objector* status. Schlagbaum had been introduced to some writings by Martin Luther King, Jr. and, inspired by King, he categorically refused to be part of the system and instead excised the possibility of going to Vietnam from the equation. In other words, he would have gone to prison before Vietnam.

These are defining moments, and this was certainly one for Walsh. Such events are also extremely personal, but this personal response is merged with a larger public conscious of the Vietnam War. It is in this way that the Wright taken photo of Walsh is like the Filo taken photo of Vecchio, only existing in different spheres: that is, the public and the private. The personal

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[228] Kory Grow, "Joe Walsh Reflects on Kent State Shootings: 'We Are as Divided Now as We Were Then,'" *Rolling Stone*, May 4, 2020, https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/joe-walsh-kent-state-remembered-993480/.

photo of Walsh appears in this context as not simply a rare, candid shot but is a private photo that plays into a larger historical narrative of the Kent State shootings and the protest climate of the Vietnam War in America.



Joe Walsh
Kent State Hotel, 1969

Walsh removed himself from the protests to write songs that would ultimately serve the culture of the protest movements. This is more famously understood and notable with the Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young song, “Ohio,” which was written directly about the Kent State Shootings. As for the Filo photograph, the scene of the aftermath has been etched into the American psyche and is perhaps the first thing most people think of when they recall the events. It exists in the public sphere and crosses into the personal with each person’s personal memory

of the shootings. This is similar to any major traumatic event that shakes the country, like when people reminisce about where they were when Kennedy was shot. An indelible mental scar is the result.

There is another peculiar, or ironic, dialectic that exists between the Filo snapped photograph and the Wright-taken shot, and that is the inverse relationship between the celebrity of the photograph's subject and the celebrity of the photograph. To clarify, Vecchio was an unknown, anonymous student; by contrast, Joe Walsh would become a famous rock star. The celebrity of the photographs, however, do not match the subjects' celebrity. As mentioned, the Vecchio photograph is the defining image of the Kent State Shootings, while the photo of Walsh at Kent State during the upheaval is virtually unknown. For Vecchio, because the photo is so iconic, the memory has not dissipated; it is ever present and in the foreground of Vecchio's mind. As Patricia McCormack reported, quoting Vecchio, "'That picture hijacked my life,' says Mary Ann, now 65. 'And 50 years later, I still haven't really moved on.'"[229] The photograph has effectively frozen Vecchio in time. She cannot forget the event and is therefore doomed to relive the experience. A person who would otherwise be anonymous was thrust into a certain kind of celebrity, famous—or infamous—by the photograph. Walsh, on the other hand, a celebrity, sits in obscurity a block away in his apartment writing a song influenced by the Vietnam protests. It is the relationship between the two photographs that creates a cognitive dissonance and completes the picture of Vietnam in America in more totality. This also harkens back to Cartier-

[229] McCormick, Patricia. "The girl in the Kent State photo and the lifelong burden of being a national symbol." Washington Post, April 20, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/2021/04/19/girl-kent-state-photo-lifelong-burden-being-national-symbol/.

Bresson's decisive moment and Wright's similar sentiment: "The moment is always there, the question is, 'Do you see it?'"[230]

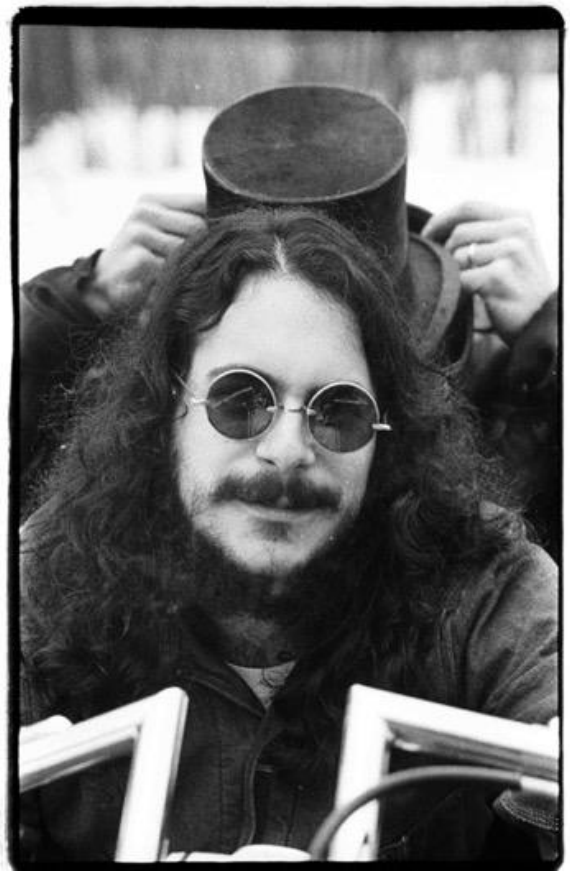
Walsh was able to move on as it gave him an impetus to focus on music and, ultimately, go on to a wildly successful solo career and to membership in another, more famous group, the Eagles. Wright continued to photograph Walsh with the James Gang, when he was solo, whether in Colorado or California, and then when he joined the Eagles. The Wright-taken shots of Walsh during the Kent State times are among his most powerful. There is a mixture of hope and optimism, that good things lie ahead, but there is simultaneously a dashing of dreams with the unknown and destructive threats from the Vietnam War.

There are other photos from that period that are more lighthearted—in fact, the jovial spirit of Walsh comes through in most of Wright's photographs of him. As only Wright could do, he pierced through manufactured, protective facades and captured a pure and honest reflection. Wright captured the mirth and genuine playfulness of Walsh, and even when the photographs were telling a lie, they were getting at an underlying truth while exercising some artistic direction. An example of this is the James Gang's impromptu, motorcycle photo shoot. A major part of the band's persona proliferated from the motorcycle images.

A large segment of the James Gang's most devoted fans were motorcycle enthusiasts. This following occurred after bikers saw the entire band in leather jackets on chopped-up bikes spread across the "The James Gang Rides Again" album. After that, the James Gang was adopted by the bikers. Fortunately, the bikers were not privy to the knowledge that none of the band knew how

[230] Tom Wright interview clip, unknown origin, mp3, The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History.

to ride a motorcycle. According to Cullie, the James Gang played a gig in New England and then ended up at a party at a group of bikers' house where they crashed. The next morning Wright had the idea that the band borrow the leather jackets and get a few photographs of them on the motorcycles. "For years the bikers were like, 'the James Gang—that's our band because they're bikers.' None of those guys had motorcycles; I never saw Walsh on a motorcycle. No way would Jimmy Fox ride a motorcycle. It created this myth that they were these biker guys who had these really cool choppers. It was just Tom's idea: 'grab these bikes, let's shoot a picture on them.'"[231]



Jim Fox, James Gang Drummer
Photos for James Gang Rides Again Album, 1970

[231] Patrick Cullie, phone interview by author, Lyons, June 09, 2021.

Michigan to Texas and the Faces

The English bands that had successfully made it to America were excited to be there. It was a dream that would not have been realized by their parents' generation, as it was barely comprehensible to those young English bands in the 1960s. As Chris Easter related, Joe Cocker played the Grande Ballroom on his first tour in America when Tom Wright was the manager. After the concert, Cocker told Wright that he did not hold out much hope for a career in playing music but was there at his mother's urging. When would a Yorkshire boy from the steel city of Sheffield ever have another opportunity to cross the Atlantic?

It appears that it was a shared aspiration among all English bands. The Faces, another band whose orbit Wright would enter—and them into his—held America on a pedestal that, as Andy Neil reported, "the prospect of finally getting to play America was mind blowing."[232] The English bands had dreamt of America and, as expected, there were cultural differences. This was the case for Townshend, as noted earlier, when he witnessed the racism in America that still persisted from slavery in the country and the subsequent Jim Crow laws. Another great divergence was the Vietnam War. The British Isles were not involved in the conflict and there was certainly no draft. The Faces keyboards and organ player, Ian McLagan, drew a connection to the disproportionate number of women in the audience at their shows to the draft, "It's only years later you realize there were so many women around because a lot of the guys were off in Vietnam."[233]

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[232] Andy Neill, Had Me a Real Good Time: Faces: Before during and After (London: Omnibus Press, 2016) 170.
[233] Neill, Had Me a Real Good Time, 173.

For the most part, the Vietnam War did not enter the minds of the English bands.[234] They did not understand it because it was not part of their worldview. The autonomous nature of music, however, made it possible for the American youth to project their own views and values onto the music. There was some crossover with shared angst and universal anxiety inherent to youth coming-of-age and it was in this way that British bands could resonate with American youth. Although their experience was not shared on a one-to-one ratio, their feelings were shared. As detailed earlier, this is how American blues was translated back to the American audience by British bands through the same blues roots.

In addition to the autonomy of music, there is also the approach and method to music. This can be seen in the two British bands that Wright photographed more than any other: The Who and the Faces. Where the Who had volume and destruction, giving the impression that things could go off the rails any minute, the Faces, on the other hand, played lively music with a groove to which the audience could dance. The Who at times would fight on-stage with one of the band members walking off during a set. The Faces got along with each other, smiling, laughing, and joking on stage; they all looked like close drinking buddies.

One band was contemplating and internalizing the serious and negative impacts on a generation caused by the death and destruction of an unthinkable war—World War II—while the other wanted to forget and have fun. These are two sides of the coin, or rather two ends of a spectrum: close, intellectual analysis and speculation, or repression and erasure. It is worth conjuring Siegfried Kracauer's approach to, and perspective, on memory. In her writings on

[234] One exception of note to this is the band Black Sabbath and their direct response to the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the impact it had on the soldiers, as displayed in their song, "Hand of Doom."

Kracauer and memory loss, Esther Leslie sums up an article Kracauer wrote, entitled "Street without Memory," in which Kracauer relates memory to the interactions in the everyday:

> …he describes Berlin's fashionable shopping street, the Kurfürstendamm, as a place voided of memory: "the embodiment of empty flowing time, where nothing persists." He relates how on visiting a café where he often ate, and where he was sure he had peeked in the night before, he found it closed, its interior emptied. A year later he found that the café's replacement, a patisserie, had suffered the same fate. Having disappeared, these spaces do not become part of memory, for "constant change purges memory." Reflecting on the lost café, he finds it difficult to recall its décor or its clientele. The patisserie that replaced it obliterated the earlier memories. "That which once was is never to be seen again, and that which is current occupies the present one hundred percent." Kracauer's city sketch is a lament for vanished memory, not just a specific memory, but also the possibility of having any memories at all.[235]

In response to such a thought, and certainly dwelling on repression, the Who, via Pete Townshend, introduced the album, *Tommy*. The central theme focuses on repression, particularly of trauma. The eponymous character's repression caused by his mother and her lover shouting at him to forget the trauma of witnessing the lover killing the boy's father—creating another trauma—causes him to suppress everything and loses the abilities of all his senses, retreating into himself.

Where Kracauer saw the world forgetting, failing to remember as history is obfuscated by the present, Townshend saw a cultural scar on the collective memory as dark undercurrents, smacking like repetitive tidal waves of continual reminders. For Townshend, his writing and thoughts on memory, as expressed in *Tommy*, are more in tune with the ruminations and analysis by that of Walter Benjamin. As Esther Leslie compares the views of Kracauer and Benjamin on

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[235] Esther Leslie, "Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin: Memory from Weimar to Hitler," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2011) 123.

memory, she notes, and paraphrases, Benjamin's stance:

> The past is not fixed but is a point of contest. The past has meaning only for us now in the present. We awaken into it as our now. In its appropriation for us in the present, it becomes a matter of memory, of subjective management, of recall from the perspective of the present. That this is an awakening speaks to Benjamin's quest for enlightenment, along the lines of Stephen Dedalus's phrase "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake."[236]

A photograph is an artifact of such a memory, and from Benjamin's stance, that memory's meaning could be viewed as fluid, or more accurately, providing context to the present and the present providing context to the past.

There is no better example of how two British bands represented these different perspectives on memory, especially in response to the horror of war, than the Faces and the Who. The view of history recurring like nightmares and congealing in the mind is practically a bespoke theory for Townshend's morose and contemplative side. On the flip side, conceptualizing history as forgotten and in the past, with the present marching lockstep toward amnesia, gives way to living for the moment with a quasi-nihilistic bent—also tailored to the Faces. No one more than Tom Wright had had a front seat to witness, capture, partake, and even aid in the development of these bands' manifest interpretations.

It has been detailed that Wright had introduced Townshend to American blues and when they reunited in America and were on the road together, Townshend's musical edification continued. When not on the bus, Wright spent hours with Townshend in the hotel rooms continuously playing records, repetitively playing and replaying parts of a song. As Chris Easter relayed the story as told to him by Wright, in the early days on the road, the band mates shared rooms to

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[236] Leslie, Siegrfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin, 135.

save costs. John Entwistle roomed with Keith Moon and Townshend and Roger Daltrey shared one. Wright played songs over and over, which no doubt irked Daltrey, but what really got under Daltrey's skin was one musician in particular, and that was Mose Allison. Daltrey did not understand Allison's particular style of blues and would leave the room in a huff. Townshend, on the other hand, agreed with Wright and gravitated to it. The Who would end up taking Allison's song, "Young Man Blues," and Who-ifying it, turning it into a staple at their live shows.

For the Faces, it was quite the opposite. They were a raucous, fun-loving group of friends with their boozing and madcap laughs. The Faces had the sound of a tight pub band, opting for fun songs that were not too heady or that which would bring down anyone's mood. When Wright was with the band, he psychologically met them where they were and adopted the same lighthearted mood as the rest of them—not that it was difficult or out of character either.

Wright's first introduction to the Faces was by way of a spur-of-the-moment con. It was during the time between the Grande temporarily closing in 1970 and the Goose Lake Festival in August of that year, when Wright was living on the Third Power farm. The Faces were in the area playing a three-night run at Eastown Theater in Detroit. As the story goes, according to Russ Schlagbaum, Patrick Cullie, and a portion from Wright's memoir, *Roadwork,* Wright and members of the Hard Corps were on a combination of alcohol, marijuana, and uppers and had the idea to have a photoshoot with Rod Stewart and the Faces. Chuch Magee posed as the driver, barely getting an old limo on the Third Power farm to fire up and not die, Patrick Cullie would write the story, and Wright would take the photos. They drove to the hotel and Magee stayed in the vehicle to keep it alive and Wright went to each of the band member's rooms and told them all separately that the others were ready for the photoshoot. The ruse worked and the Faces were

in the limo with Wright, Cullie, and Magee heading to Ann Arbor. The shots from that day remain some of the best photos of the Faces. As with so many, they instantly took a liking to Wright and the ease and comfort they felt with him is transmitted in the photos. This is no small task on that day either, as it was extraordinarily early in the morning and the band had not slept from the night before; it would have been understandable had they not been able to eke out a smile. An instant bond was formed between Wright and the band, particularly Ian McLagan and Ronnie Wood. The photoshoot proved wildly successful and the pictures were published, along with Cullie's article—albeit under someone else's name—in the July 1970 issue of *Circus Magazine.*

After the photoshoot and after the band was dropped off at the hotel, Cullie and Wright made their way back to Ohio to see Joe Walsh at Kent State. On the radio, they heard that four students had been shot on campus by the National Guard. All hell was breaking loose.



The Faces Photoshoot, Ann Arbor, 1970



Rod Stewart, The Faces Photoshoot, Ann Arbor, 1970

When Goose Lake was shut down and turned into fodder for a political campaign after being wildly successful, Wright was left with no plans. The Hard Corps were in the same boat, after the band the Third Power told them to get jobs to pay all the farm's rent so the band could focus on developing new music. Schlagbaum was particularly incensed by this modest proposal.

Wright's mother, Jan, had remarried and the new couple purchased a mansion in the Alamo Heights in San Antonio. Originally built for S.S. Kresge, founder of what would become Kmart, the house was in need of renovation. It was the perfect task for the Hard Corps. Wright, Schlagbaum, Cullie, and Magee picked up and left for San Antonio. As he had done with the Grande, the Rock & Roll Revival, the Third Power farm, and the Goose Lake Festival, Wright ran a team with discriminate and methodical organization and a natural eye for interiors and construction methods. Wright approached it with the same attitude, predicated on the thought if he wanted something badly enough, he could make it happen. Like materializing the photoshoot of the Faces, Wright felt he could make almost anything happen through force of will, and as it bore out repeatedly, he seemingly could.

If a mason showed up to build or repoint a brick wall, Wright would grab his camera and get the guy mixing the mortar, laying an English bond, and documenting step-by-step what the mason was doing. Slightly confused that they were being photographed, the workers nevertheless would get a kick out of it, relax, naturally bond with Wright, and then some often profound images were captured.



The Hard Corps, Kresge House, San Antonio, 1971





San Antonio, 1971

In viewing the body of Wright's work as a whole, many shots were of unsuspecting candidates as though they did not see him, or to the more probable reason and case in point, Wright was able to move freely and not arouse suspicion or awareness. There was complete trust in Wright and ease to how he moved around, casually capturing images. This does not mean they did not pose and show off a persona for Wright's camera either. They certainly did and this was assuredly the case for the fame hungry pop stars Wright shot, which comprises the majority of his photographs. In reviewing the photographs taken during his time with the Faces, many of the shots, if not the overwhelming majority, are of the band members posing for the camera. As mentioned many times previously, Wright's best work was through his fly-on-the-wall stealth shots. This was because he captured someting about the person, broke through a barrier and extracted an inner truth about the subject. For the Faces, however, when they posed and made goofy expressions into the lens, this was an honest side of them. According to Russ Schlagbaum, who went on to be in employment of the Faces after his time in San Antonio, the band were constantly referencing Monty Python acts and this continued so much that they named their third album, *A Nod is as Good as a Wink… to a Blind Horse*, in homage to a popular Monty Python skit. Fittingly, the cover of the album was shot by Wright and captures the crowd's connection the band and the energy that they produced.

There was fun and hi-jinks and in stark contrast to the relationships inside the Who, the Faces got on well with each other. That is not to say that there was not a private side to the band members, and that there were not serious moments. They were more than clowns and Wright captured some rather poignant moments of the band together, and of the members individually. Going back to Wright's intent and how he approached the band, Wright was soon a fast friend

and trusted confidant. It was through this honesty that they could relax around Wright and not worry he would sell his images of the band for exploitation. As with the Who, Wright toured with the band and captured some phenomenal moments of the Faces. “They were the most photogenic band,” Patrick Cullie recalls, “Tom said he couldn’t take a bad photo of them.”



The Faces, Front Cover of *A Nod is as Good as a Wink* photo series, 1971



The Faces, 1970s



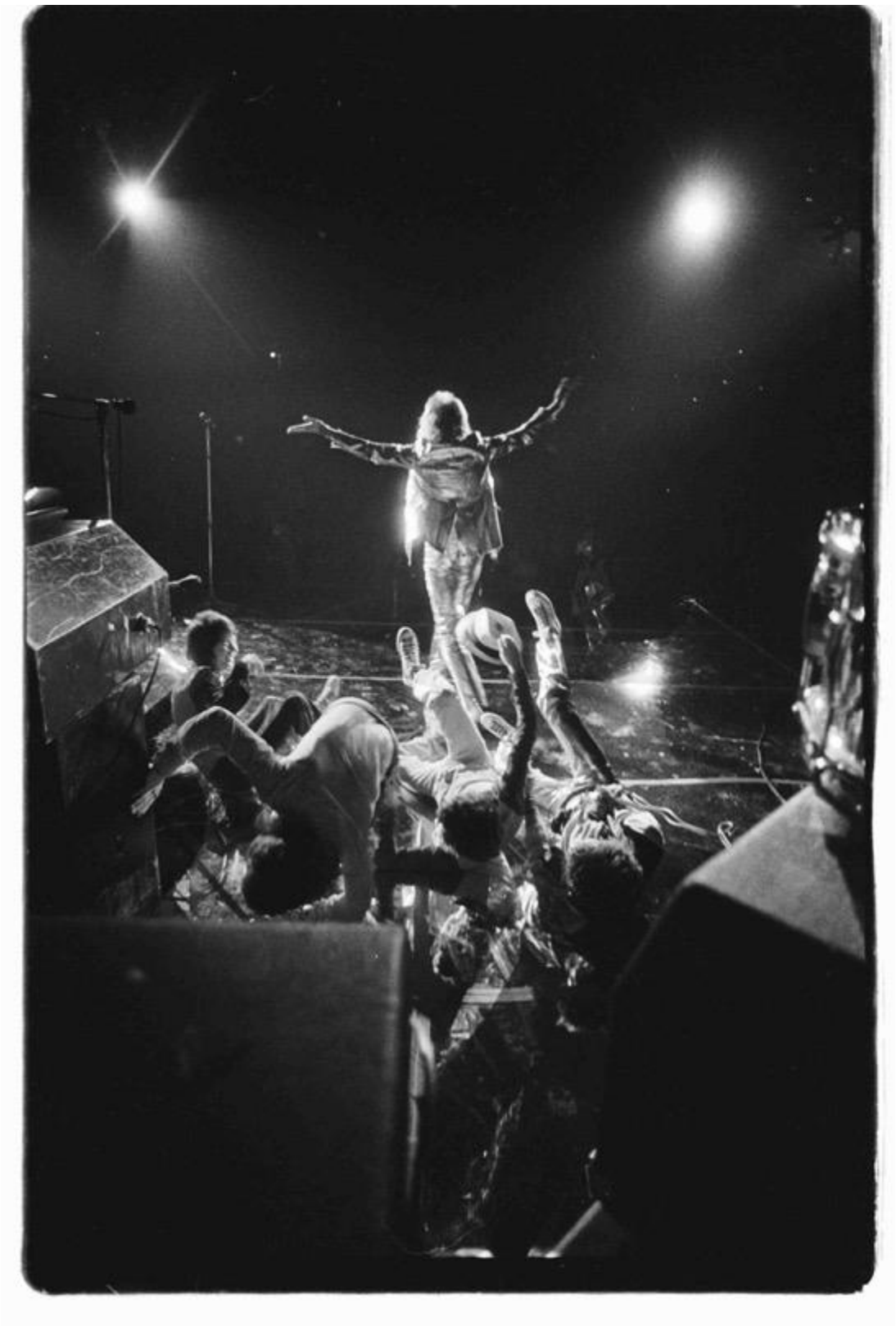
Rod Stewart and Ian McLagan, The Faces, 1970s


MEN

Ronnie Lane Backstage, 1970s

Wright captured the presence of the Faces on stage and their showmanship, being natural entertainers. Again, Wright's photos of the Faces were not strictly of them on stage—he also caught intimate moments that other photographers would not have been able to get, because they did not have access to the band in the way Wright did, nor would they have been able to break through the protective veneer of the rock star and clown persona. Wright was able to move freely and unsuspectingly among the band. To the band members, Wright's camera became invisible and was always slung around his neck, or in hand with a modified strap that wrapped around his fingers and wrist. It was an extension of Wright.

Wright's first photograph session with the Faces in Ann Arbor on 4 May 1970 produced some of the band's most iconic photographs; however, there is another photo that captures the band's personality. It transports the viewer to a behind-the-scenes look at the group with the point-of-view of the camera positioned behind the amplifiers and band, toward the crowd. Though the lens is trained in the direction of the audience, they are not in view but rather enveloped in darkness. Two monopoint spotlights are focused on Rod Stewart. The photo is of the end of the show when the band would bow and fall backward, which is what Wright was able to capture so perfectly with Ian "Mac" McLagan, Ronnie Lane, Ronnie "Woodie" Wood, and Kenney Jones dropping in mid-air and frozen in suspended animation. This shot is a prime example of Wright at his best and most brilliant.



The Faces, End of the Show 1970s

The composition of the photograph is at first what is most striking. The two spotlights float on either side, framing Rod Stewart in the center: glittering and glowing, arms outstretched and soaking up the attention, presumably with roars from the audience. The balance of bright whites to dark blacks and the high contrast that Wright's technique produced, as mentioned previously with his method of developing and rejecting secondary lighting, is what visually stands out in the photo. This of course creates a powerful composition that showcases Wright's craft at his technical best. As for the content, the photograph gets into a few different layers, with the personality of the band and the band's members, as well as a more pulled-out or macro view of the rock band turned stars.

At first look the photograph conveys the lighthearted attitude of the Faces for which they were known. Happily bowing, goofing around, and then simultaneously committing to a choreographed pratfall, the band looks like a jocular group playing around. This is certainly an aspect of the band and, as previously detailed, it captures a lot of their personality. If one digs a little deeper into the photograph, however, as well as the the politics and other dimensions of personalities of the band, the photograph turns into a revealing image and portent of what was to come. At the same time it also tells of the rock band and in a way America transitioning from the 1960s to the 1970s.

It is generally accepted that the 1960s were characterized by social and political upheaval with the youth of America responding to their parents' values and rejecting the idea that they would continue in their footsteps.[237] It has become cliché and hackneyed to call the era a time of

[237] "In the 1950s, adolescents emerged as a cultural, political, and economic force parents and other adults in and out of schools had to reckon with… Being thirty was the new end of

revolution, but, at the least, and to distill the feelings of a generation, there was a hope that an egalitarian society could begin based on a different ethic that was centered on a notion of solidarity. This is also seen as radically shifting in the 1970s, moving to a diametrically opposed system of thought which made people coin the term the "Me Decade" to describe the milieu of the decade in America. Kristen Hoerl notes:"Other events in 1969 have been remembered as the death-knell of the counterculture. The Rolling Stone's free music concert at Altamont, California, in December was intended to represent the West Coast's version of Woodstock, but ended tragically when members of the Hell's Angels biker gang murdered a concertgoer who was supposedly armed with a gun. Months earlier, Charles Manson convinced several of his followers to murder seven people in California including actress Sharon Tate."[238] Such events signalled the darkness that ushered in the 1970s and the shroud that covered the 1960s.

Wright's photograph of the Faces at the end of the show, which was taken in the 1970s, comments on these changes of the new "Me Decade." The audience is one of the biggest takeaways and clues in the photograph. Wright's photographs from the 1960s tell a completely different story of the rock music scene. The crowds were small and the venues were intimate. At some venues the stage was off the floor, but the separation between the band and the audience was not that drastic or apparent. Many times the audience members would get up on stage—this was certainly the case for the music attendees at the end of Who concerts when Wright road

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childhood, at least by the estimate of youth itself with the slogan 'don't trust anyone over thirty.'" See: Theresa Richardson, in *Historical Society 2021 Annual Meeting: Popularizing Historical Knowledge: Practice, Prospects, and Perils* (Muncie, IN: Ball State University, 2012), pp. 1-20.

[238] Kristen Hoerl, *Bad Sixties: Hollywood Memories of the Counterculture, Antiwar, and Black Power Movements* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018).

managed. Because of the size of the venues, stage, and intimacy, the audience members were in many shots, clearly in view. Often, they were a part of the composition and added to the feeling and story expressed in the photos.

In the Faces photograph in question, however, the audience is blotted out. It is understood that a large audience is there, as the scale is determined by the spotlight and Stewart's messianic stance. With Stewart dressed head to toe in shiny, golden fabric there is a metaphor not all too hidden, calling out to golden idols as attention only pop stars of that era could produce; referencing again to the new, "Me Generation." This makes visible and underlines the delineation between the audience and the band, and how dramatic the shift between the decades turned out to be. The democratic and moralist principles that were held up as a guiding star in the 1960s had quickly pivoted with a neoliberal turn and was going full speed ahead. For the Faces and other rock musicians, re-labeled 'popstars,' that meant moving from small venues to eventually the arena tours. This was the fate of the Grande Ballroom: shuttering its doors with perfect acoustic qualities to make way for the larger halls and the Cobo Arena where the acoustics were worse, but made more profit.

Another component of the photograph that coincides with the social change of the 1970s is the darker side of relationships in the band. Originally the Small Faces, the band was fronted by singer Steve Marriot. Finding some moderate success with songs like "All or Nothing" and "Itchycoo Park," the latter co-written by Ronnie Lane, Marriott left the band and formed Humble Pie with Peter Frampton. This left the Small Faces without a singer and since Marriott was the front man, they were seemingly without an identity and not many prospects. Rod Stewart and Ronnie Wood had left the Jeff Beck Group and joined Lane, McLagan, and Jones, dropping

"small" and forming the Faces with the new lineup. This was something that irritated Lane, as he felt the Faces was primarily his band and something he started. With Rod Stewart on board, Lane saw the potential for another repeat of what he had gone through with Marriott. To Lane's chagrin he saw this omen slowly come true first with venues beginning to bill them as, "Rod Stewart and the Faces," then when Stewart started a solo career.

Lane was not the only band member irritated by Stewart and his special treatment. According to Russ Schlagbaum, who worked for the Faces after his time in San Antonio with the rest of the Hard Corps, and subsequently on an almost yearlong European trip, Ian McLagan went ballistic when he found out that the Faces were paying for Stewart's suites on the road when the others had standard rooms. McLagan went to the office of Stewart's manager, Billy Gaff, and demanded an itemized cost list of the Face's tour. When EG Management failed to produce the documents, Schlagbaum laughed, "Mac destroyed the office with a hatchet."[239]

Stewart began spending more time on his own solo records, saving his best writing and songs for them, and less time with the Faces. According to Schlagbaum, Lane told McLagan and Jones that Stewart was, "going to leave them in the lurch," and that they should join him and leave Stewart."[240] McLagan and Jones were furious that Lane wanted to leave and kill the golden goose. This came to a head when Lane announced he was leaving, which prompted a fight with the rest of the band before they went on stage at Nassau Coliseum. This culminated in McLagan zinging a tambourine, frisbee style, at Lane's head at which point a full-blown fight erupted. McLagan and Jones remained with Stewart and, as Lane predicted, Stewart emerged as a pop

[239] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottoville, Ohio, March 8, 2020.
[240] Schlagbaum interview, March 8, 2020.

star of epic proportions, though reputation besmirched with songs like “Da ya think I’m Sexy?” Nevertheless, Stewart quickly shed the band. Wood joined the Rolling Stones, but the original Small Faces members, McLagan and Jones, were left with little prospects and no band with which to continue.

The Wright photograph of the Faces bowing and falling backward at the end of the show displays the laughter and fun the band had on stage but serves as an accurate looking glass into the future. Stewart soaking in the glory with the spotlights trained on him alone while the rest of the band laugh, falling to the ground. The band was cast off with smiles, merriment, and a personal jocular affection that masked the other side and allowed for cruelty in respectable fashion. It conjures the old phrase, ‘*nothing personal, it is just business*,’ that is, following in the 1970s zeitgeist, what the music had become: the music business.

San Antonio and the Craft Center: The Beginning of the End

After Wright and the Hard Corps renovated the Kresge mansion in the Alamo Heights, they all went to Europe. Wright talked them into traveling by sea, booking passage on a commercial freight liner. Wright had been terrified of airplanes ever since his days working with the Who when a farmer chased the plane down the tarmac, shooting at the plane’s fuselage trying to get Keith Moon in retaliation for sleeping with his daughter. In addition, there was another traumatizing airplane incident in which Wright took LSD and the height of the effects took hold when the plane encountered adverse weather and went into sudden freefall. What is more, Wright had forgotten it was Halloween and much of the people in the cabin were dressed in costume. The combination of grotesque figures, lysergic acid, and the plane’s terrifying nose

dive made Wright think he was literally in hell. Wright was not a theist, though it is safe to say he made promises that night to any god who would listen, for a safe landing. Suffice it to say, Wright did not view an airplane the same way again.

The Hard Corps landed for a brief stint in Amsterdam and settled in France on an egg farm. The environment was idyllic, but proved hard work and divisions and resentments grew within the close knit team. Having enough of collecting eggs and living on small rations of bread and cheese, Chuch Magee went to London to find his girlfriend, Nicki. With Wright's help, Nicki had secured a scholarship to Ealing Art College. She was attending classes and living in West London at the time the Hard Corps was in France. With the small amount of money Magee had managed to save, he made it to England and a taxi dropped him off at Nicki's doorstep. He discovered Nicki was not at her dorm and that the taxi had driven off with his luggage still in the trunk. With no clothes or belongings, and literally the last of his change, Magee called the only other number he had, and that was the phone number to Ronnie Wood. Wood answered and Magee stayed with him and became one of the first employees of the Faces. According to Schlagbaum in Andy Neill's definitive book on the Faces, *Had Me a Real Good Time*, "Chuch was among those road guys who invented the term 'guitar tech' – before that with most guitarists they didn't have guys tuning their instruments; they did it themselves backstage."[241]

Cullie soon followed and left France to join Joe Walsh in Colorado. Wright was the next to leave and returned to San Antonio to put the pieces together for the next chapter of his life. Schlagbaum was the final holdout. He loved living in France, but was barely able to make enough money to live. Just like his earlier migration from Ohio to Michigan, a phone call from

[241] Neill, Had Me a Real Good Time, 279-280.

Magee precipitated his departure. The Faces were looking for someone to work on Kenney Jones's drums and Ronnie Lane's bass guitar. Schlagbaum took the offer and moved to London.

Back in the States, Wright returned to the Austin/San Antonio area where his mother and new stepfather were living, as well as his half-sister, Ginni Laumer, who had opened a vegetarian restaurant. Wright had no direction, but characteristically for him, that did not remain for long. As the story goes—it is difficult to extract fact from myth—Wright came across an old Ursuline Convent in disrepair. The grouping of buildings was in poor condition, but the bones were good and Wright began cleaning them up. It was a Tom Sawyer moment, as others saw what he was doing and they joined in on the renovation. Again, that is the story told by Wright. This sounds a bit fantastical and hints at the simplification of events for ease of storytelling, but whatever the truth may be, the reality is that Wright began working on a collection of buildings in San Antonio that would become the Southwest Craft Center, and subsequently the Southwest School of Art & Craft. In *School by the River*, a book written as the historical record of the school, it offers the following account of Wright's initial appearance, "Photographer Tom Wright moved to the old Ursuline in 1972, built the center's first darkroom, and taught classes while supervising construction workers hired to renovate the old buildings. It was a time of creative quid pro quo when Craft Center volunteers and artists alike depended on one another as they simultaneously developed the school facilities and its curriculum."[242]

Peter Leighton, who was initially hired as the janitor and caretaker of the buildings, paints a more complete picture of how the events unfolded. Leighton recalls the power that was linked to

[242] Maria Watson Pfeiffer, School by the River: Ursuline Academy to Southwest School of Art and Craft, 1851-2001 (San Antonio: Maverick Publishing, 2001) 185-186.

what in today's parlance would be called non-profit organizations. Such groups, Leighton said, were run by women and housewives of means and were seats of power. At the time, Leighton also notes that the San Antonio Conservation Society was at the top of the pecking order, which was important in an area, and state, known for power brokers and chicanery. It is no coincidence that in the venn diagrams of these circles of power, the Texas politician who exemplifies the Texas political power machine, Lyndon Baines Johnson, is tangentially linked to the San Antonio Conservation Society and the Board of the Craft Center. The president of the board was Nancy Brown Negley, daughter of Houston entrepreneur and the man who helped prop up LBJ's political career, George Brown of Brown & Root, one of the largest construction companies in the world.

Leighton was an introverted twenty-two-year-old from a small, conservative town in north Texas and, like so many before him, things changed when Wright stepped into his life. They met at Wright's half-sister Ginni's vegetarian restaurant, not far from the Craft Center. She introduced them and Leighton was impressed with Wright's photographs and intrigued by Wright's stories of his time with the Who and at the Grande, though he was not into music. "I wasn't a rock and roller. I didn't own a record player or any records and didn't listen to the radio. What I responded to was Tom's passion for life, especially as it was expressed in his images."[243] Leighton gravitated to Wright and soon fell in love with photography. Leighton was so impressed by Wright that he introduced Wright to the women in charge of turning the Craft Center into a functioning reality. Their response was fairly immediate. They hired him to create a photography department at the Center almost on the spot. Wright had mesmerized the women of

[243] Peter B. Leighton, "All About Tom Wright," email to author, March 9, 2022.

the Center's board with his charm and endeared himself to them. Leighton provided his perspective:

> Tom's powers of persuasion were unmatched. He simply overpowered you and then kept on moving. Upon his arrival at the Craft Center his seduction of the ladies-in-charge was a foregone conclusion. Tom would have been in his late 20's then, most of the ladies several years older, bound by traditional, 1950's style marriages. His presence, consequently, seemed to provoke in them a sort of mass submission to his virility. He could do no wrong. There were rumors amongst those of us around at that time that he had even bedded one of the board members, a rumor never proven one way or the other, but such was the power of his personality over them that we could all believe it was possible.[244]

The board of the Craft Center was working diligently and following every letter of the law. They were adhering to the proper processes, finding the correct forms, and attempting to navigate the bureaucratic labyrinth of historical renovation. Of course, this did not jibe with Wright's brand of attacking a problem head on with total disregard for rules, customs, or norms. Wright told the board they were moving too slow, so he began renovating. In his nearly militaristic fashion, Wright assembled a crew and organized it into a proper construction project. The rehabilitation and renovation had begun and Wright was barking orders and the board was seeing progress of the convent like they had not seen before. Wright told Leighton that, "that was how he did the Grande, Goose Lake, the San Antonio house," Leighton recalled, channeling Wright, "'*This is the spirt of rock and that's how we're going to do the Craft Center.*"'[245]

Wright and a group of new recruits went to work sanding the floors, taking out walls, plastering, renovating the place. He repeatedly told everyone that the Craft Center was going to

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[244] Peter B. Leighton, phone interview by author, Lampasas, Texas, April 28, 2020 and Leighton, "All About Tom Wright," email, March 9, 2022.
[245] Leighton interview, April 28, 2020.

be a center of excellence in art, "a firecracker from a little place in Texas."[246] It was at this time that Wright received a National Endowment Grant, which was quite prestigious and difficult to obtain. Nancy Brown Negley had worked to get it for Wright, presumably falling under Wright's spell and after witnessing the massive progress he was able to achieve in such little time.



Members of the Craft Center Board,
Ursuline Convent Buildings, 1971

[246] Leighton interview, April 28, 2020.



Members of the Craft Center Board,
Ursuline Convent Buildings, 1971



Ursuline Convent Buildings, 1971



Renovating the Ursuline Convent,
R-L: Tom Wright, Karen Gavin, Karen's sister, Mark Patterson (James Gang Roadie), 1971



Ursuline Convent Chapel Under Renovation, 1971



Ursuline Convent Chapel After Renovation, 1971

The photographs of the Craft Center, before, during, and after construction tell an impactful and interesting story and serves as a historical record for what would become the Southwest School of Art. This is a pretty straightforward narrative, or at least a pretty straightforward narrative can be gleaned from the photographs. It is a heartwarming tale of a rundown building going through a metamorphosis and transforming into someting that is profoundly beneficial to the area; the phoenix that rose from the ashes. The story is so archetypal it could practically serve as a guide for a fairy tale. Another side of the photographs, and relating to Wright's style and modus operandi more directly, is how the photos relate Wright's rock shots.

The first aspect of the Craft Center photographs that come into focus are that of the buildings

themselves. Wright snapped the before photos. The before photos are quite reminiscent to that of the Rock & Roll Revival when it was just a dusty race track, or the Goose Lake Festival when it was just a field in Jackson Township. Instead of photographing a venue that would hold rock n' rollers and an audience of fans, Wright was capturing the before picture of a dilapidated convent. It was Wright's tabula rasa, or as close as he would ever come to finding one, as there was always something he needed to fix, change, or completely transform. The before picture was the canvas he needed to rework.

Wright then went about documenting the process—the same with Goose Lake, the Grande Ballroom, and the Third Power Farm. This was Wright's way of showing the manifestation of an idea—the ideal form made reality. In the Craft Center shots, Wright shows his penchant for interiors again, having painted the walls and floors in bright white, harkening to purist modern ideals. Chris Easter commented that Wright had a thought—what was strikingly similar to that of Eero Saarinen and his design of the famous Miller House in Columbus, Indiana—that everything should be, "painted white. Tom said the color will come from the stuff in the room."[247]

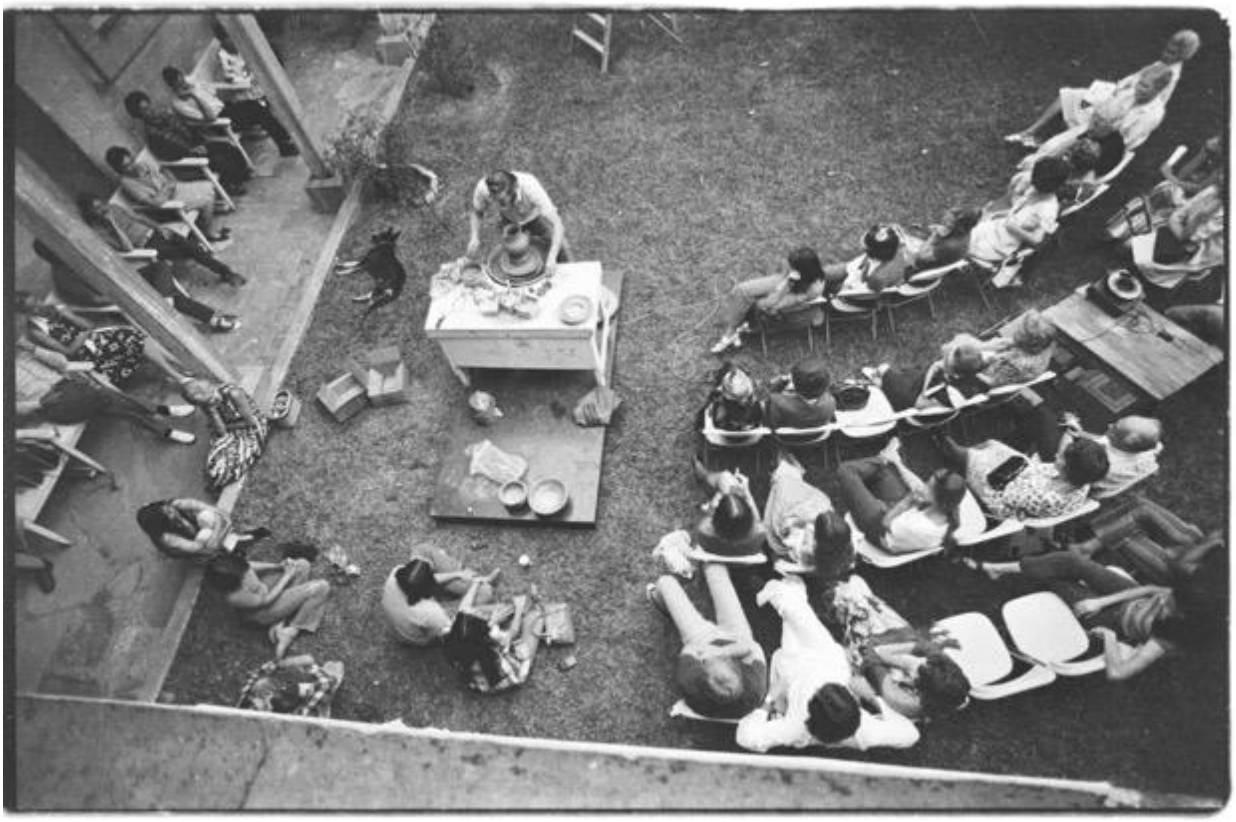
The other characteristic of the Craft Center pictures that are most pronounced and offer the most salient linkages to his rock n' roll imagery is that of the people at the Craft Center. They are not Pete Townshend, Keith Moon, Joe Walsh, Rod Stewart, or Ronnie Lane, but they are people who are important—the stars—of the venue, the Craft Center. Wright successfully took the aim off the rockers and pop ,stars backstage and turned the lens to weavers, potters, metal workers, artists in ceramics, administrators, financial backers, and the monied women of the San Antonio Conservation Society. Making close friends and gaining their absolute trust, Wright was able to

[247] Chris Easter, in conversation with the author, Austin, Texas, September 20, 2019.

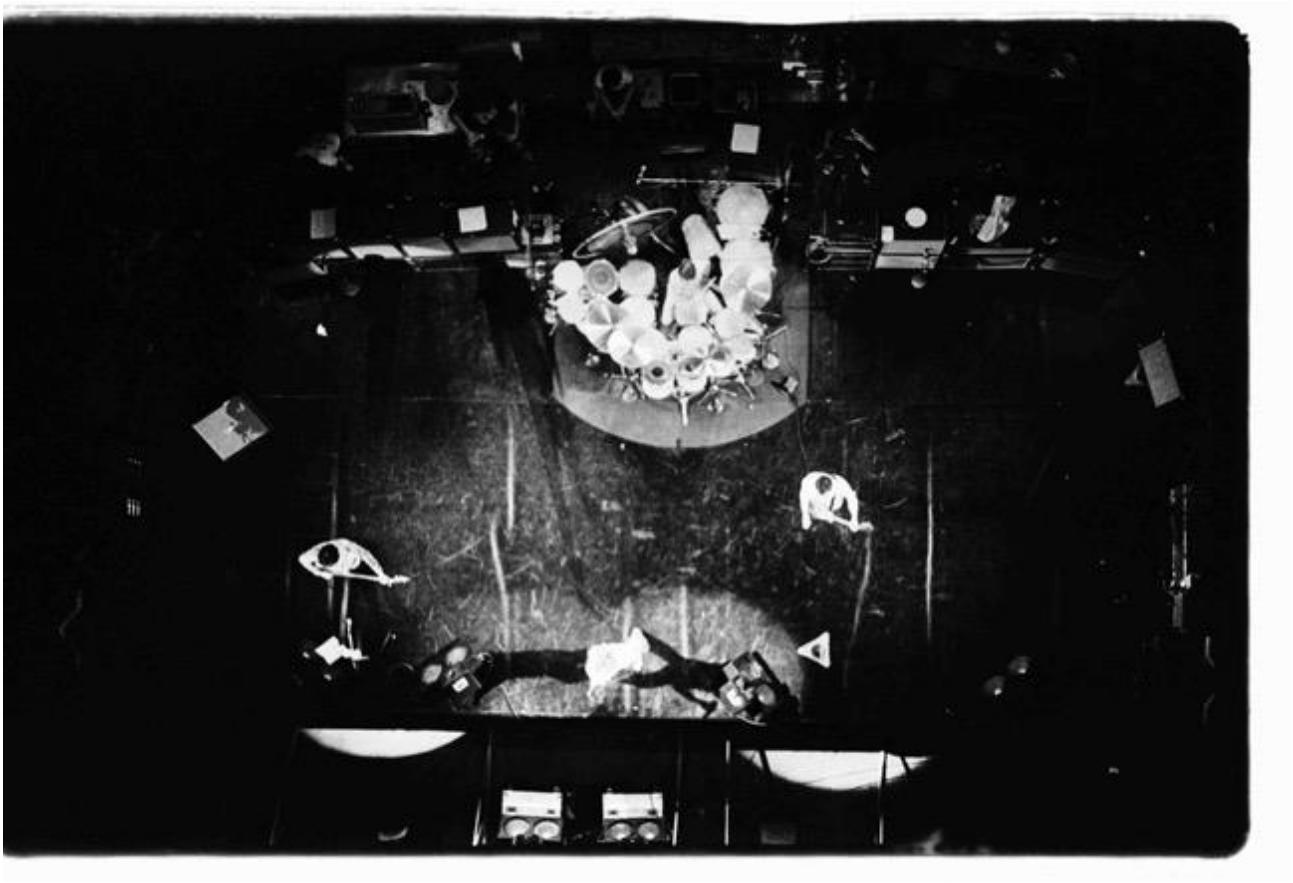
move freely with camera in hand, clicking away unnoticed. It was through these acts that he was able to pierce through the persona, and, though they were not famous, there were still personas to smash through. Wright successfully captured the people's inner self, their personalities, and turned them into his camera's subjects.



Steve Humphrey, Craft Center, 1971



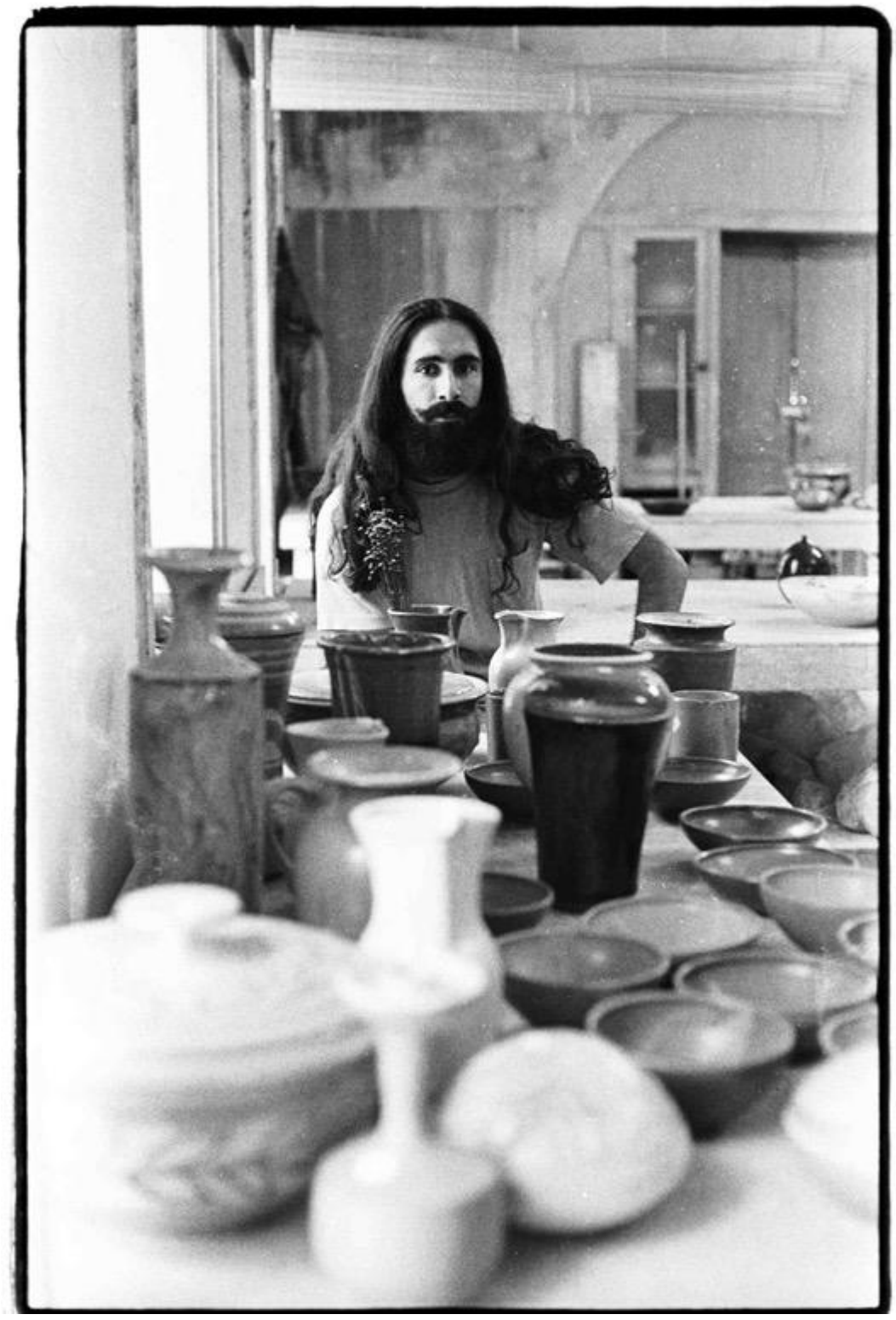
Bird’s-Eye Shot, Craft Center, 1971



Bird’s-Eye Shot, The Who, 1970s



Craft Center, 1971



Pottery Teacher, Craft Center, 1971



Weaving Teacher, Craft Center, 1971



Arnold Hyman, Jewelry Teacher, Craft Center, 1971

At that time another person showed up on the scene, Steve Humphrey. Fresh from Madison, Wisconsin, where he had been completing graduate work in ceramics, Humphrey had received an artist in residency grant and was hired to teach ceramics at the Craft Center. Like virtually everyone before him, he was immediately drawn to Wright and the two became fast friends. Humphrey aided in the renovation of the convent buildings and he and Wright spent a lot of time together. Humphrey found Wright to be an almost unbelievable character. "The stories were so outlandish that I had a hard time believing them," Humphrey recalls, "He told me about all the musicians and all the things he did with them."[248] The stories were confirmed when the Craft Center was running and rock stars showed up in the evenings. By day it was a school and by night it turned into a hangout to party. Just as he had set up a cot in the back of the Grande, Wright continued in the same vein and lived at the Craft Center.

Wright built a darkroom with oversized developing trays and Peter Leighton became his darkroom assistant.Wright, Leighton, and Humphrey, along with others in weaving, printmaking, and ceramics, formed a cadre that would serve as the backbone of the art school and from where the curriculum was developed. Wright's dream of creating what he had been part of in England—Ealing Art College—had been seemingly willed into existence and he had the opportunity to pick up where he had left off when he was deported more than a decade earlier. Wright was following a pedagogy that through experience had been passed down from Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus, with the foundation course, to Roy Ascott at Ealing, with "Groundcourse." Wright was poised to create the "firecracker in the small Texas town" that he had threatened to do.

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[248] Steve Humphrey, phone interview by author, Bradenton, Florida, July 25, 2021.



Tom Wright in the Darkroom, Craft Center, 1971



Tom Wright, Craft Center, 1971

The rock n' roll style attitude that persists in the photographs that Wright took at the Craft Center and during that time convey the feeling of the 1960s era but the 1970s also creep into the frame. There is an optimism that is felt in the photographs documenting the renovation, all working in hand to create something for the community, for students, for a cause larger than each of them individually. Again, this was that communal mindset of the 1960s that allowed for so many grassroots campaigns and fueled social change, especially at a policy level. The 1970s had a maddeningly different ethos, however, and this is exhibited in almost every facet of American life; neither the Craft Center, nor Tom Wright, were immune. If the 1960s was communal with a focus on society, the 1970s was conversely individualistic and tailored to the fixation of self, which can most succinctly be summed up and categorized as 'neoliberalism.'

David Harvey provides an appropriate and articulate defintion of Neoliberalism through the theory's summation of beliefs, that:

> …human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.[249]

In other words, money and business were deemed paramount and given priority to the well-being of the workers' class, which is more in order with the tenets of a Keynesian model. The outlook on private property went beyond classical liberalism and went screaming past anything imagined in John Locke's theory on private property.

Such a radical shift did not occur overnight, nor did it happen by accident, but was a premeditated and extremely calculated plan that large business injected into the framework of

[249] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 2.

government. They espoused the extreme, freemarket ideals most notably of Milton Friedman. As part of the proliferation and mass takeover of Neoliberal thought during the 1970s, the business elites of the country adopted the look and certain trappings of the counterculture, but discarded the substance and integrated it into their neoliberal framework. Thomas Frank's *the Conquest of Cool*, a study on the co-optation of counterculture, shows that this began in the 1960s, but it was the 1970s when it was amplified. [250]

It was during this radical turn from a Keynesian point-of-view to a Neoliberal gaze, and the co-opting of a countercultural image, that the Craft Center came into existence. As the 1970s began to reveal a dark undercurrent of America, shifting from a communal mindset to that of the individual and what could benefit oneself, so too was the darkness of rock n' roll surfacing—allowing for its grotesque side to feel safe to emerge. The clearest example of this is the misogyny embedded in rock culture at the time. The music in the 1960s was a countercultural device that carried a message of dissent and united a disparate group of people who felt alienated and stifled by their parents' generation. The sexualized aspect of the music and culture was always a component. In the 1960s, however, the sexualized aspect that the decade was known by was "free love." This had an inherently empowering quality by aiming to put men and women on an equal plane. By the 1970s, however, the term "groupies" emerged into the lexicon and it seems free love turned into a one-sided equation with men striking dominance and women left objectified. Wright was no stranger to this, either, and his camera captured these attitudes in black-and-white.

[250] Thomas Frank, The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

"Tom is one of the last profligates," said Steve Humphrey, who spent a lot of time with Wright and was more than a colleague, but a close friend, "He was very self-centered. He had a dark side."[251] In Wright's photo archive, along with the music photography, the early European images, and travel photos are a vast collection of women in various stages of undress. Some of the shots have artistic merit and are tasteful, while others border on voyeurism.



Unknown, 1970s

[251] Humphrey, interview, July 25, 2021.



Unknown, 1970s



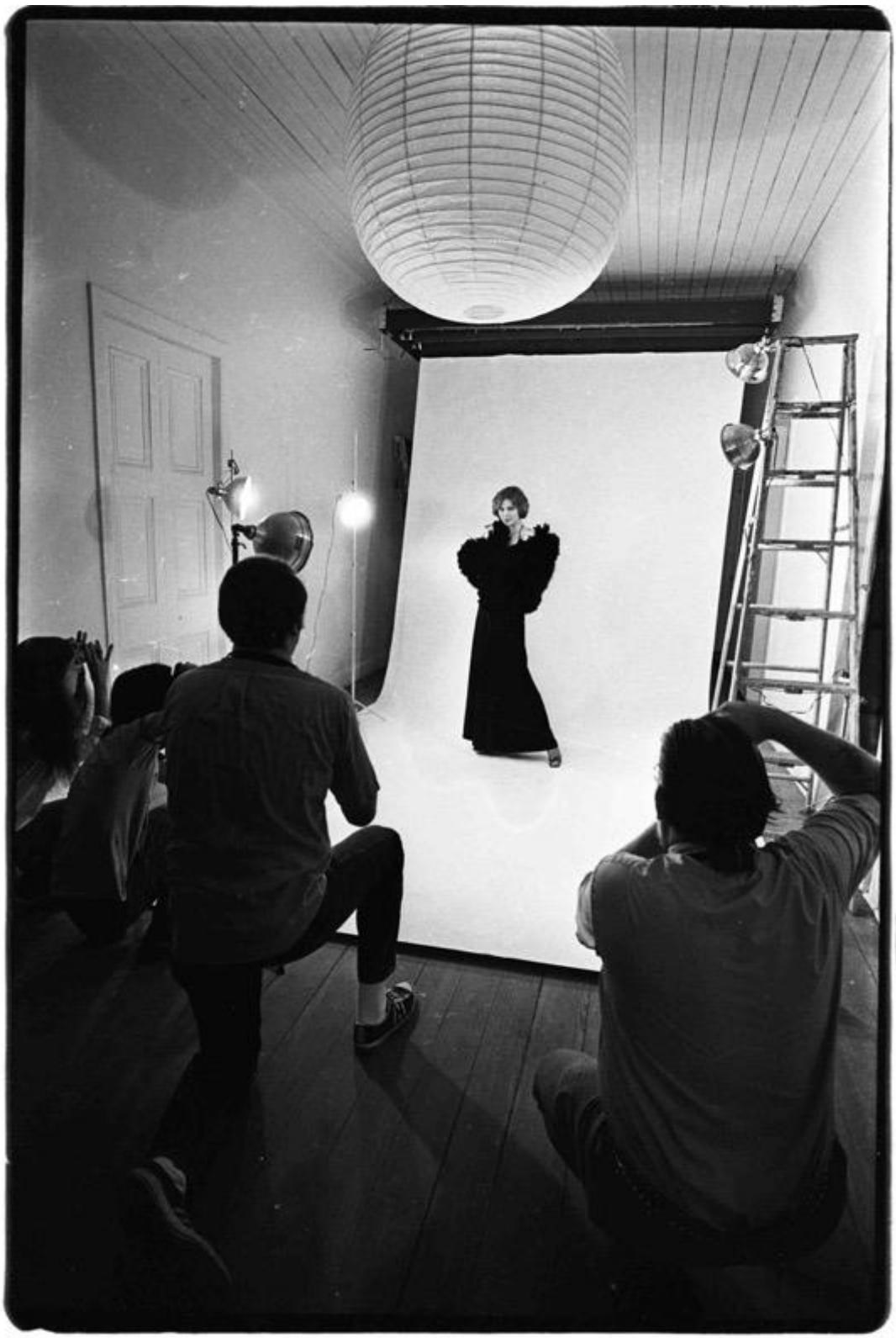
Unknown, 1970s

During the early years of the Craft Center, the cracks began to show: Wright had begun to drink and do drugs to excess. Leighton recalls, "There was more than one time when Tom was too messed up to teach and I would cover for him."[252] Wright's so-called "spirit of rock" attitude was still working for him, though, with completing the renovation of the Craft Center and having a functioning art school. It also paid dividends when he was hired by the luxury department store, Frost Brothers, for a fashion shoot to show their new styles.

According to Leighton, Wright's camera was in the shop being fixed and he had nothing with which to shoot. Having no equipment did not deter Wright. Instead he turned to what was accessible and thought of the introduction class he was teaching. In the first year foundational course, the students were provided with Instamatic cameras. They were inexpensive, easy to reload, and were a democratic solution to providing cameras to the masses. In no way were they ever intended to serve in a professional capacity. Wright, nevertheless, showed up to the shoot for Frost Brothers and when he failed to set up any lights and instead brought out a collection of Instamatic cameras, they were furious. Wright was almost fired on the spot, but somehow—no doubt talking his way around it—he conducted the shoot with the Instamatics. As Leighton describes it, Wright developed the film and devised a technique to pull out certain colors with an effect that gave the fashion models an ethereal quality. Leighton observed Wright developing the shots and was stunned by the quality Wright produced from the Instamatics. The Frost Brothers were equally blown away, ecstatic that they had such photos of their fashion shoot. "He was that kind of guy," Leighton says of the shoot, "Nothing was going to stop him."[253]

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[252] Leighton interview, April 28, 2020 and Leighton, "All About Tom Wright," email, March 9, 2022.
[253] Leighton interview, April 28, 2020.



Craft Center Photoshoot, 1971/2

Leighton's words, that nothing would stop Wright, is in one sense the quality of Wright that allowed him to be as successful as he was,and what granted him the unbelievable experiences he had witnessed and of which he had been a part. The other side of this quality—the inability to be stopped by anything—is the same quality that was his major snag in life. Everyone interviewed understands this duality of Wright. He possessed an unbelievable level of charisma and had an unstoppable will of force, but that quality also translates to self-centeredness that disregards the thoughts and feelings of others. This all returned full circle to Ealing through the work and theory of Gustav Metzger, the auto-destructive artist that Wright may have encountered at Ealing, but certainly encountered through Townshend. "He would talk about rock n' roll as a pure destructive energy. That came from his id," as Leighton interprets, "but he would give it weight by saying that Gustav Metzger espoused the idea that destruction is reality. But Tom didn't have a formal thought process. Generalities were enough for him. He gave himself permission to do the things he did, because destruction is the ultimate end anyway. So everything is chaos."[254]

Wright's drinking increased and Leighton covered for him, teaching Wright's classes more frequently. When Wright finally left the Craft Center, issues were starting to present themselves regarding the renovation. It turned out that Wright had moved too quickly, not securing the proper permits with the City nor receiving approval from the various preservation boards and historic agencies. Where Wright was initially seen as a savior he quickly fell out of favor with the Craft Center board and the Conservation Society. Wright left the school and there were unanswered questions as to what remediation had to be done to satisfy the City and boards.

[254] Leighton interview, April 28, 2020.

Wright had not given them an opportunity to banish him, but rather abdicated prior to the failings coming to light.

Wright's photography continued sporadically and he did positively capture some amazing work while touring with the Eagles, the Rolling Stones, and again, the Faces. There was also a stint where he toured with Elvis Costello, who he met by way of his half-sister, Antoinette "Tony" Laumer who married Elvis Costello's manager and founder of Stiff Records, Jake Riviera. There was also a dark period during 1982 when Wright traveled with Townshend on the Who tour, which went so badly for Townshend that during which he announced it was actually the band's farewell tour. 1989 would prove to be their next farewell tour, which Wright photographed as well and in some ways it was an appropriate way to bookend Wright's photography career: beginning in Ealing in the early 1960s with Townshend and ending with Townshend, wiser although weather-worn.

Regardless of how Wright's career ended, the point at which he left the Craft Center, and San Antonio, was a clear demarcation that served as a watershed moment. From then on, Wright's photography generally did not continue with the same quality.

One Wright photograph in particular comes to mind that best illustrates the time of Wright having left the Craft Center, signaling a further spiral downward. It is a shot Wright captured of friend and potter, Steve Humphrey, with whom he remained close friends for many years after his time in San Antonio. The photo depicts Humphrey standing at a window of a high-rise. He presumably stares at the gridwork of pavement, vehicles, and pedestrians below in the concrete metropolis of downtown Dallas. Humphrey's arms are outstretched, pressing against either side of the window jambs. Across the street the word "Life" is displayed on the building, visible

under Humphrey's left arm. His pose smacks of strong symbolism with Jesus and the crucifixion, with a somber attitude and head drooped slightly. Humphrey, however, is the stand-in for Wright—the subject acting as the substitute for the photographer. In such context the symbolism is less about the crucifixion and instead harkens to Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. The sobriety of mood, sorrow, and hopelessness that is conveyed in the image is about the betrayal, but for Wright the real betrayal was not from anyone else, but from within.

There is a great level of sadness and frustration that Wright did not go on to do more with his photography and life. There is a frustration for what could have been, frustration with Wright for standing in his own way, frustration that he seemingly turned his back on his own destiny. It seems fitting that it can be summed up by a line in a song: "I fought with my twin, that enemy within…[255]"

[255] Bob Dylan. "Where Are You Tonight? (Journey Through Dark Heat)," *Street-Legal*, Columbia Records, 1978.



Steve Humphrey, Dallas, 1973

CHAPTER SIX

THE CINDER BLOCK WALL SERIES:

TOM WRIGHT'S PLACE IN PHOTOGRAPHY

"The more scrupulously [the photographer] has respected the independence and autonomy of his subject, and the closer he has gone towards it instead of bringing it nearer to himself, the more completely his own personality has become incorporated into his pictures."[256]

-Brassaï

The limitation of Tom Wright's legacy and general exposure to his photography was caused by a confluence of events and circumstances: bad timing, lack of promotion, media, and ultimately, his own actions. Regardless of the reasons, and speculating the myriad explanations, the end result is the same: Wright is virtually unknown; however, his photography and his own personal rock n' roll story, deserve attention and recognition. Wright should be placed in the constellation of photographers—specifically rock photographers—and not simply as a variation, but set apart and unique in his own right.

Categorizing Wright's photography begins with his Anglo-American influence on the medium, combining European and American sensibilities and points-of-view from both cultures. One of the main distinctions between the two cultures, especially as it relates to artists and creatives, is the continual question of *America* itself. Being British, Sam Cutler, tour manager first to the Rolling Stones and then the Grateful Dead, observed a unique quality found in

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[256] Peter Galassi, Brassaï: Exposition Fundación Mapfre, Barcelona, 20.02-13.05, 2018, Fundación Mapfre, Madrid, 31.05-02.09, 2018, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 17.11, 2018-17.02, 2019 (Madrid: Fundación MAPFRE, 2018) 101.

America through observing the Grateful Dead:

> They were attempting to redefine, as every generation of American artist does, what it means to be an American artist, what, in fact, it means to be an American. Artists in America constantly struggle with this. They want to define what America is. They want to discover what America is. They want to find some clue to what it means to be American. Americans have got this very, very strange, and interesting preoccupation with the discovery of what constitutes America. What it is. In America, people leave home and go out in search of America. People in England don't set out and leave home and go in search of England. That would be quite preposterous.[257]

This notion of discovering and finding America does continually reappear and is expressed in the refrain of "America" by Simon & Garfunkel: "I've gone to look for America," which by the end of the song morphs into, "They've all come to look for America."[258] To underscore Cutler's observation that the desire to discover America is ingrained in every "generation of American artist"; that is, not only musicians, but critics like John Szarkowski locate this in American photography as well. Utilizing American historian Frederick Jackson Turner, Szarkowski posits Turner's thesis that, "the character of American civilization had been profoundly influenced, over the period of a quarter millennium, by the existence of an open frontier."[259] This desire to search for America, in order to understand America, is mythic and archetypal. In terms of photography, this is of course not a literal interpretation of photographing the prairie, but applies to modern times and persists in the American psyche.

The search for America, endlessly trapesing back-and-forth across the country, can be seen in Wright himself and in his photography. Touring rock bands led the quintessential nomadic life

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[257] Long Strange Trip, "Act II – This is Now," *Amazon Studios* docuseries, 43:00, June 2, 2017, https://www.amazon.com/Long-Strange-Trip-Season-1/dp/B086HWFW72.
[258] Paul Simon. "America," Bookends, recorded by Simon & Garfunkel. Columbia Records, 1972.
[259] John Szarkowski, "Photography and America," in *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, Vol. 10, 1983) 237.

and are primarily what Wright documented and captured. This does not only apply to rock photographers, but again, like Cutler pointed out, applies to all American artists. One such photographer, who also embodies Wright's European/American combination of cultural sensibilities having emigrated to America after World War II, is Robert Frank. Frank's most notable book, *The Americans,* is a collection of photographs taken all over America in the late 1950s. The photographs highlight an America that is not as glossy and slick as was shown in advertising and media. The pictures are straightforward and of the commonplace; the power occurs when the photos are seen in their totality. "After seeing these pictures you end up finally not knowing any more whether a jukebox is sadder than a coffin," Jack Kerouac writes in the introduction, "The humor, the sadness, the EVERYTHING-ness and American-ness of these pictures!"[260] Wright's photographs do not have the same politically charged overtones like those of Frank's, but Wright's photos do have a similar look. This could come from the ability of intimately understanding another culture and having a somewhat outsider's perspective, or it could be that their methods and approach were similar. For instance, Frank's images are powerful because they question the common held beliefs, myths, and overarching understanding of America. The photos of America are almost un-American, the way Tom Wright's backstage rock 'n roll photos seemed rather un-rock. Both Frank and Wright sought to strip the celebrity and simply lay bare the reality, warts and all.

This leads to another characteristic of American photography, and that is unaltered documentation. Katherine Grant Sterne points to Alfred Stieglitz as the archetypal American photographer, and that, "by his respect for human character, emotion and feeling, for sex and the

[260] Robert Frank and Jack Kerouac, *The Americans* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2008).

great crises of life, has shown the way toward a more true and comprehensive objectivity."[261] Sterne observes evidence of such objectivity, or authenticity, in American photography as a result of the American photographer working, "within the limitations of the camera obscura."[262] Wright and Stieglitz are completely different photographers, but like Stieglitz, Wright aimed at objectivity and authenticity, only in a different way, or rather, with a different interpretation. Where Stieglitz's photographs show a gifted technician who excelled at solving technical problems of the camera, Wright was not as interested in such perfection. The majority of Wright's work finds its objectivity through an intimate knowledge of his subject and trying to capture the true essence. Philosophically, it can be argued that objectivity and truth do not exist, however, Wright *did* believe this and this is expressed in his photography. The photograph of Rod Stewart seemingly gliding across the floor, shown previously is a prime example of this. This again hearkens to Cartier-Bresson's concept of the "decisive moment," and as Wright shows, that decisive moment came from Wright's close connection to Stewart. In one sense it is objective, especially since Wright did not use flash or lights in order to capture the moment as it was experienced and to bring the viewer into the moment. The subjectivity, which is arguably unavoidable at some level, comes from Wright's connection to the band. As Chris Easter describes the photograph of Rod Stewart running on stage, "no one else could have gotten that photograph," even though there were thousands in attendance at that concert.[263]

Wright diverged from his American counterparts in various ways and this is probably owed

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[261] Katherine Grant Sterne, "American vs. European Photography," *Parnassus,* Vol. 4, No. 3 (1932) 18.
[262] Sterne, "American vs. European Photography," 16.
[263] Chris Easter, phone interview by author, Austin, Texas, January 6, 2022.

to his European education and some formidable years spent in France and Spain. In his search for capturing the moment, Wright drew on European's inwardness and the use of artistic tools that confront the limits of the medium. As Sterne points out, "Scissor, paste and the complicated cookery of the dark room are not, for the most part, in the American photographer's bag of tricks."[264] They were part of Wright's arsenal, however. Russ Schlagbaum would occasionally serve as Wright's defacto darkroom assistant, mainly out of curiousity and, of course, with Wright's charisma, he made anything sound fun. Schlagbaum, with Wright guiding him on the phone, was actually the one who developed the photographs of Joe Walsh and the rest of the James Gang, which appeared on the back of *Thirds* album. "He would cut pieces of the negative sleeves made of wax paper and stick them in the enlarger." Schlagbaum recalled, having intimate knowledge of Wright's methods in the darkroom, "He wanted to be a sketch artist, but didn't have the knack for it and he used all these texture techniques."[265]

With Wright's penchant for darkroom editing to achieve a certain feel and his lack of purity toward objectivity, Wright in many ways is more akin to the methods and aesthetic of European photographers. James Fitzsimmons makes a rather intriguing connection to European photography. In reviewing a post-war European photography exhibit, Fitzsimmons relates the photography to another medium: "the meaning of [the photographer's] work is of a kind we find in poetry more often than in painting."[266] This could be said of many photographers; however, it is a sentiment that strikes at the heart of Wright's work. There is visual poetry in Wright's

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[264] Sterne, "American vs. European Photography," 18.
[265] Russ Schlagbaum, phone interview by author, Ottoville, Ohio, January 9, 2022.
[266] James Fitzsimmons, "Post-War European Photography," *Aperture*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1953): 44.

photographs that Fitzsimmons describes in European photography; this is perhaps from Wright's European influence.

As discussed in the first chapter, Wright has his most direct connections to the work of Brassaï. The similarities between each of their photographs have been covered; however, the comparisons between Brassaï and Wright do not end with their photography but also extend to their personalities. Wright was legendary in his ability to embellish stories for effect, to the point that some of the stories were mashups and at times, questionable at best. This was also the case for Brassaï:

> On the circumstances and decisions that led him to become a photographer, Brassaï's memory is as unreliable as the testimony he provided in some of his letters. Sometimes he says that photography struck him as the artistic form that best accorded with the real world and with the present. More often, he displays an ambivalence that neither the years nor the gradual reassurance and rewards of success were able to dispel.[267]

Both unreliable narrators, Wright and Brassaï were similarly unable to exist in one function, namely as a photographer. Instead of following one track, they were so-called renaissance men. With the spirit of P.T. Barnum, Wright turned to entrepreneurial ingenuity to necessitate and birth fantastic creations like the Grande Ballroom, the Goose Lake Festival, and the Southwest Craft Center. As for Brassaï, he turned his artistic gaze from photography to other arts he deemed more refined and worthy of a true artist. In bouncing around, from one project to the next, Wright always felt he had failed and that his true calling had been in art or music. What really irked Wright, however, was his deportation from England way back in the early 1960s, ironically

[267] Peter Galassi and Antonio Muñoz Molina, "Brassaï and the Literary Spirit of Photography," in *Brassaï: Exposition Fundación Mapfre, Barcelona, 20.02-13.05, 2018, Fundación Mapfre, Madrid, 31.05-02.09, 2018, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 17.11, 2018-17.02, 2019* (Madrid: Fundación MAPFRE, 2018) 90.

before the bulk of his photography and experiences would take place. Brassaï had a similar feeling, and this led his close friend, Picasso, to comment on Brassaï to, "Françoise Gilot that 'dentists and photographers are never satisfied with their work. Dentists want to be doctors and photographers want to be painters.'"[268]

Wright no doubt grew tired of projects and moved on—this is certainly part of the equation for many of his quick departures. This inability to persevere through boredom and have the discipline that it requires to forge ahead when excitement has waned is another shared trait of Brassaï's. As Antonio Muńoz Molina notes:

> …we find in Brassaï a remorse or perhaps even a fear that through a lack of true persistence he may have squandered his talent as an artist. This reflects the restless unease of a man who allowed himself to be swayed by diverse interests and was never fully able to focus on any one of them in particular. He had a mistrust of specialization, of the exclusive pursuit of one talent that by devotion to a single objective would lead to the loss of the vitality and the capacity for excitement that lie behind all acts of original creation.[269]

It is also noted that such a response is perhaps justification for a lack of discipline, which is required to follow one path. This comment seems a rather myopic view, considering Brassaï is known as one of the pioneers of interwar European photographers. Universally accepted among the masters of photography, it seems foolish to belittle Brassaï for not following photography to the exclusion of his other interests. Suggesting failure in photography resulting from a lack of discipline could be easier said for Wright, but that does not seem accurate either. Wright is simply remembered differently.

Brassaï is remembered as a master, but Wright's name is virtually unknown. This is not

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[268] Molina, "Literary Spirit of Photography," 90.
[269] Molina, "Literary Spirit of Photography," 90.

because Wright's photography does not warrant acclaim; it is perhaps because Wright did not attract the right publisher or garner attention at the right time and, ultimately, did not have the luck. Whatever string of events or circumstances that happened, or did not happen, Wright is not held in the same category as many of his contemporaries. Part of this is because of Wright's desire for what today's parlance would be called "editorial control." John Szarkowski notes the paradoxical relationship freedom and control in the technology of the handheld camera. The photographer is able to:

> Cover the story (and himself) from all possible angles,… This freedom and flexibility of response has produced many magnificent and startling images beyond the reach of the deliberate procedures of the large camera photographer. It has also diluted the photographer's role in defining the story's meaning and increased the authority of the editor, who has assumed much of the critical burden that was once the photographer's.[270]

The relationship did not prove to be paradoxical for Wright; he simply extricated himself from the equation and only rarely did he work on assignment. Most photographers, however, have to work on assignment, especially in the beginning of their careers. This is seen with some notable photographers who got their start in fashion photography. "A case in point is Diane Arbus, the photographer widely known for her disquieting portraits, who worked as a fashion photographer with her husband Allan Arbus for ten years before she turned to portraiture and developed her special confrontational style," writes Bettina Friedl, and describes Robert Frank and Garry Winogrand as, "Occasional fashion photographers."[271] Wright refused such work, except on occasion, and maintained what could be thought of as a purity, which was almost

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[270] John Szarkowski, "Photography and the Mass Media," *Aperture,* Vol. 13, No. 3, (1967): 1.
[271] Bettina Friedl, "The Hybrid Art of Fashion Photography: American Photographers in Post-World War II Europe," *American Studies,* Vol. 52, No. 1 (2007): 48.

certainly a cause for his obscurity. Correcting this oversight is ultimately the aim of this chapter: to reframe Wright's photography to be accepted into the annals of photography.

To place Wright's work in context and fully develop the unique and special qualities that comprise his body of images, it is necessary to look at the photos which distinguish Wright's work from that of his contemporaries. The overarching and recurring theme that differentiates Wright's photography is *intent.*

It has been discussed throughout the previous four chapters, but it bears repeating and underscoring, that Wright approached things in a natural and genuine way. He never faltered from this and it is conveyed in his photography, "There is a mise-en-scène of Tom's work," says Cullie. "Tom's work is difficult to put your finger on. There is a naturalness." [272] Differentiating Wright's work in a less abstract way, Cullie made the brilliant observation that astutely and rather precisely captures Wright's photography: "So many of his photos are of all this backstage stuff in auditoriums and arenas…I suggested a show called the "Cinder Block Wall."[273]

Curating these backstage photos, where the background is often a cinder block wall, illustrates what sets Wright's photography apart from that of other photographers, why his work matters, and what makes it distinctive and exceptional. To help tap into, and explain, his photographs, we can look at the photographs of other rock photographers—Jim Marshall, Ken Regan, Terry O'Neill, Baron Wolman, and Annie Leibovitz—in conjunction with the writings specifically from three notable, but different, writers of photography and memory: Susan Sontag, Walter Benjamin, and Siegfried Kracauer.

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[272] Patrick Cullie, phone interview by author, Lyons, CO, January 13, 2021.
[273] Cullie, interview, January 13, 2021.



Pete Townshend, Edmonton, Canada 1967

Beginning with whom it all started, Pete Townshend, on the Who's first North American tour, is photographed in stage garb, replete with ruffles, and is an example that touches on several points. The layers of meanings, interpretations, and perspectives in which to understand this photograph is typical of Wright's images. Susan Sontag notes this critical aspect of all photography in her set of essays, *On Photography*:

> Any photograph has multiple meanings; indeed, to see something in the form of a photograph is to encounter a potential object of fascination. The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: "There is the surface. Now think—or rather feel, intuit — what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way." Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy. Photography implies that we know about the world if we accept it as the camera records it.[274]

The deductions employed in this first photo initially appear to be quite straightforward. It is a photo of a young Pete Townshend in his stage attire, pointing at the camera. From these four points (age, who it is, attire, action) more questions are provoked than solutions presented. Not satisfied with such a cursory view of the photograph, the viewer internalizes the debate and can almost instantly make a few further observations.

Combining the first two points, a viewer may realize that the photograph is Pete Townshend, but not just any form of Pete Townshend; he is quite amazingly young and baby-faced. This aspect relies on some prior knowledge—referencing Sontag's implication that the viewer has such knowledge of the world—of who Pete Townshend is and his celebrity.

The next aspect of the photo—Townshend's attire—is immediately incongruous with the surroundings. Like all of these behind-the-scenes photos, this is one of the musician out of the public's context. The stage is the musician's natural habitat. The incongruity of Townshend not

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[274] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (1977; repub., London: Penguin, 2008) 24-25.

on stage is further compounded by Townshend being in his stage clothes and not in his streetwear. Wright is effectively doing to rock photography what Bertolt Brecht did to theatre, and that is breaking through the fourth wall. By puncturing this diegetic seal, Wright is communicating to the viewer that the stage is not real and the musicians are equally comfortable behind the curtain. The resultant image is jarring and creates a cognitive dissonance.

Finally, Townshend's action, pointing at the camera, is done in a comical way, as understood in his facial expression. Townshend is playing, more than he is posing, and Wright was able to capture the mood, tone, and feelings of their shared experience. That experience had a definite aspect of excitement, but the real attitude was anxiety and fear. The photograph is not of Townshend the rockstar he would become; this is a photograph of an English kid in America who was embarking on a journey with odds not necessarily in his favor.

This photo was taken before the Who played as a supportive act to Herman's Hermits in Edmonton, Canada, and at that time the Who's future was far from solidified. "It was one of the oddest pairing of bands to be thrown together on tour. The only thing weirder was that it was the seminal Who (and The Blues Magoos) opening for pop mop-tops, Herman's Hermits," as reported in 2014 in a retrospective article in the *Edmonton Journal*, noting that the Journal's music critic Barry Westgate, "gave kudos to The Who for smashing their instruments at the end of their performance — their signature move — as 'the kids cheered wildly,' since obviously 'groups like Herman's Hermits will be around long after the likes of The Who and The Blues Magoos.'"[275]

[275] Chris Zdeb, "August 21, 1967: The Who Open for Herman's Hermits at the Gardens," *Edmonton Journal*, August 21, 2014, https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/august-21-1967-the-who-open-for-hermans-hermits-at-the-gardens

The observations and predictions of the reporter are of course humorous, viewed from the context of today, since the Who is one of the most successful rock groups of all time. The outlook at that time, however, was not as solid. To many, it appeared like the Who was along for the ride on the fame of the British Wave and that they would be done with and back in England as the interest in English groups waned in America. All of these thoughts, feelings, and emotions were balled into an incongruous jumble and it was in that extreme time of uncertainty that the above photo of Townshend was taken by Wright. In addition to the anxiety and fear that was internalized in Townshend—also considering the writing of the band's songs rested solely on his shoulders—was also felt by Wright. Wright was equally on unsound footing and his future was as much in question.

The picture also shows the fun they were having, since it was not all dark premonitions and anxiety producing. It is the combination of opposites and a mixture of freedom and fear that is exuded in the image. The false bravado expressed in gesture and expression, combined with dress, is only part facade, while some of it was truly genuine.

The other aspect of this photograph is, again, quite straightforward, requiring little analysis, and is summed up by Chris Easter: "There are a trillion photos of all these guys on stage - but when do you see a photo of Pete Townshend in his stage outfit, pointing at Tom on a balcony, horsing around before they even went to the show?"[276] Wright's access was unparalleled and those whom he photographed trusted him implicitly.

The next photograph is a shot of three members of the Faces: Ian McLagan, Ronnie Wood, and Rod Stewart. Taken backstage, striking a look of surprise simultaneously and unprompted.

[276] Easter, Interview, January 6, 2022.



Ian McLagan, Ronnie Wood, Rod Stewart, 1970s

As most of Wright's work is unprompted and unposed, this photograph, like the first photograph of Townshend in Edmonton, balances between the two worlds of candid and posed. In one sense, the photographs reveal an environment in which they are at ease, though they are preparing to be the entertainers that their job requires of them. Wright never waited for those he was photographing to be unaware of his camera, as to catch them by surprise. Wright rather waited until the people he photographed were comfortable with his camera; since the camera was nearly an extension of Wright; it was really the subjects being comfortable with Wright. Those who were photographed by Wright of course knew he was taking photographs and sometimes they would notice and strike a pose. This pose was usually humorous, and in the case of the Faces, who were all incredibly funny people, the mirth is genuine and taps into a prominent side of the band.

Another correlation can be made between Brassaï and Wright, being multi-faceted, their photographs were not always about the "decisive moment." Sontag notes this characteristic between Brassaï and Diane Arbus, though it could be said the same for Wright:

> Brassaï denounced photographers who try to trap their subjects off-guard, in the erroneous belief that something special will be revealed about them. In the world colonized by Arbus, subjects are always revealing themselves. There is no decisive moment. Arbus's view that self-revelation is a continuous, evenly distributed process is another way of maintaining the Whitmanesque imperative: treat all moments as of equal consequence. Like Brassaï, Arbus wanted her subjects to be as fully conscious as possible, aware of the act in which they were participating. Instead of trying to coax her subjects into a natural or typical position, they are encouraged to be awkward—that is, to pose. (Thereby, the revelation of self gets identified with what is strange, odd, askew.) Standing or sitting stiffly makes them seem like images of themselves.[277]

Where Arbus desired poses, Wright opted for a natural effect. He may have guided, coaxed, or mused—as in the case of the James Gang photo shoot on motorcycles as detailed previously—but Wright ultimately let his subjects make the decision of how to present themselves on their own. Again, this is not to say that all the photos Wright took were simply natural in the sense that they were completely unaware of the camera—far from it. The case in point is this photograph of McLagan, Wood, and Stewart posing backstage for Wright's camera. Many times, Wright put them at ease and they would forget about the camera. "He was so transparent that you didn't even know he was taking pictures. And that's why we all look natural and unposed," Joe Walsh recalls, "Tom was just there and you didn't even know there was a camera on you. He was able to get all of us being ourselves."[278]

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[277] Sontag, On Photography, 36-37.

[278] Joe Walsh, "A Special Event Celebrating the Center for American History's Tom Wright Photograph Collection," Dolph Briscoe Center, Headliner's Club, filmed March 16, 2007, video of speech.

Wright's musician friends he photographed were also cognizant at times that Wright was present and photographing them. In this context, Wright's work is quite exemplary of Arbus's belief, as Sontag noted, that all moments are equal. It is for this reason that Wright always took pictures of his rockstar friends, regardless of where they were or what they were doing. This was of course an observation and commentary on celebrity, but it was mainly Wright calling out the importance of the backstage being as equal, if not more telling, than the typical shots of the rockstars on stage.

For Wright, his best images were natural, candid shots and his weakest were when choreographed and posed. The photoshoot of the Who in Jackson, Mississippi, comes to mind. Wright gathered them together out in a field to take some publicity shots at the behest of Chris Stamp, half of the Who's management team. Wright threw smoke bombs and had them pose in clever ways—like jumping in the air simultaneously so they would all appear to be floating. The result was never as good as when everyone was relaxed. This can be seen in the backstage photos of the Who. One great photo that shows the power of Wright's photography with the Who—how he could pull out nuances and truth—is a snapshot of Keith Moon and Roger Daltrey backstage on the first North American tour.

The infighting among the bandmates in the Who has been discussed publicly, from Daltrey punching Townshend in the face and Moon and John Entwistle planning to leave the group in the 1960s. On their first tour in America, the band would split costs by sharing rooms. Moon and Entwistle shared one room while Daltrey and Townshend shared another. With Wright on the tour, that meant that Townshend and Wright spent many hours together listening to music in the hotel room. Not partaking in drugs, nor a partier, Daltrey was already the odd man out. Perhaps

the starkest contrast between all of the members in the band was in that of Daltrey and Moon. Daltrey viewed Moon as an alien from another planet, more concerned with pranks and antics than with the band. Daltrey fought to keep the band together. Before being part of the Who, he worked in a metal scrap yard and had little or no prospects on the horizon. The band was all he had and, if it had failed, metal working was what remained. With this insight, it is understandable that Daltrey was at odds with Moon. Conversely, Moon thought Daltrey was a bully who took himself way too seriously. For god sakes, they were on the road in America touring as popstars, Keith Moon had to think, of course he was going to make the most out of it for it might not happen again. The photograph of Daltrey and Moon captures the disparity between the two bandmates' personalities and dispositions.



Keith Moon and Roger Daltrey, 1967

In the three previous photographs, Wright successfully captured the personal images of musicians backstage with these subjects either posing or not, but conveys a natural feeling. This is what Siegfried Kracauer would refer to as *unstaged reality*.

In the field of portraiture, it is true, photographers frequently interfere with the given conditions. But the boundaries between staged and unstaged reality are very fluid in this field; and a portraitist who provides a special setting or asks his model to lower the head a bit may well be trying to bring out the typical features of the client before his lens. What counts is his desire to picture nature at its most characteristic so that his portraits look like casual self-revelations, "instinct with the illusion of life." [279]

Wright was no stranger to the concept of staged and unstaged reality, as Kracauer calls it. This was seen in the case of the James Gang photoshoot with the borrowed motorcycles. Wright's most effective work, however, at least in regard to the play between staged and unstaged reality, is when the staged aspect was subtle. Kracauer observes the balance between staged and unstaged as well:

> If, on the other hand, the expressive artist in him gets the better of the imaginative reader or curious explorer, his portraits inevitably turn into those ambiguous borderline cases… They give you the impression of being overcomposed in terms of lighting and/or subject matter; they no longer catch reality in its flux, you feel, but arrange its elements into a pattern reminiscent of painting.[280]

It is for these reasons that Wright's least successful work is in his staged, group shots which he was generally asked to execute. The results, even when skillfully executed, always ended up being flat in some characteristic that is difficult to articulate. Again, Kracauer touches on this

[279] Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 19.
[280] Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 19.

notion:

> Through this concern with unstaged reality, photography tends to stress the fortuitous. Random events are the very meat of snapshots. "We want to seize, in passing, upon all that may present itself unexpectedly to our view and interest us in some respect," said a Frenchman about instantaneous photography nearly ten years before the first films appeared.[281]

An effective use of the balance between staged and unstaged reality, and how Wright skillfully employed such tactics, can be seen in a photo of the Faces backstage at a concert. The guitars are lined up on a folding table in an ordered but perhaps unrealistic manner, and the rest of the backstage scene is occurring au naturel. Faces' roadies are sprinkled throughout, drinking and commiserating, and although his back is to the camera, a recognizable and shirtless Rod Stewart stands in the foreground. A woman has a hand on his back and it looks like they are pre, mid, or post-kiss. Incongruous to the scene, a young child stands staring up at the pair.



[281] Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 19.

The Faces, Los Angeles, 1970s

Three main areas of the photograph stand out above the rest: all of the people in the photograph have the back to their camera, save the woman and the child; the guitars are lined up on the table; and there is a child that does not fit in the backstage sex, drugs, and rock n'roll scene. To look at this using Kracauer's staged and unstaged vocabulary, the photograph can be divided into these two parts. Although not necessarily using Kracauer's terms, Susan Sontag touches on these two aspects of photography:

> A fake photograph (one which has been retouched or tampered with, or whose caption is false) falsifies reality. The history of photography could be recapitulated as the struggle between two different imperatives: beautification, which comes from the fine arts, and truth-telling, which is measured not only by a notion of value-free truth, a legacy from the sciences, but by a moralized ideal of truth-telling, adapted from nineteenth-century literary models and from the (then) new profession of independent journalism. Like the post-romantic novelist and the reporter, the photographer was supposed to unmask hypocrisy and combat ignorance.[282]

It would be a stretch to call any of Wright's photographs fake, though to borrow from Kracauer's lexicon, he did stage occasionally, but only when it was to reveal something true. Separating the photo into the categories of staged and unstaged, the resultant components reveal the skilled and adroitness in Wright's sensitivity and discipline in employing staged tactics. When examined and studied closer, it is surprising that the staged component of the photograph is the placement of the guitars and the unstaged aspect is everything else. Everyone naturally had their backs to the camera, with the exception of the woman and the child. By placing the guitars in a line, following the perspective and working with the vanishing lines from the camera's

[282] Sontag, *On Photography*, 86.

point-of-view, there is a statement that Wright is underlining about the women waiting in the wings backstage, either wives, girlfriends, lovers, or groupies. The child standing nearby shakes the scene from fantasty to reality—that is that there is a real life outside of this realm. The photograph's meaning can further change and alter only if someone has a certain amount of knowledge or is familiar with the people in the photograph—that is to say if the viewer has a specific context. That context is specific to the child, because the child is not just any child but in fact the son of Bill Graham. Graham was a concert promoter famous for owning and operating the Fillmore Auditoriums, both East and West. This therefore transforms the interpretation and turns it on its head. The view shifts from a critique or observation of groupies as mothers and instead, relieved of the misogynistic gaze, looks to the capacity of the rockstars, promoters, roadies, and others in the entertainment business as part of a family unit in this peculiar world.



Rod Stewart, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1970s



The Faces, 1970s



Rod Stewart, 1970s



Ronnie Lane, 1972

As expressed previously and noted by Cullie, the Faces were an incredibly photogenic band. Reviewing Wright's photographs of the Faces, this comment is reaffirmed. Like the rest of Wright's photographs, the shots of them offstage, or rather backstage, serve as examples of Wright's craft and how he was able to capture the band.

In each shot the humor is expressed through the band, either in a facial gesture or, especially in the case of the images of the faces, there is movement. In one photo Rod Stewart carries Ronnie Wood and is in motion. The brilliance of Wright's photo is that he matched the cameras speed to the movement of Stewart and Wood. The result was that everything surrounding Stewart and Wood, who were moving, is blurred leaving the subjects static. It is a useful effect and Wood's expression, making eye contact with the camera/Wright, is cleverly and perfectly captured.



Ronnie Wood and Rod Stewart, 1972

To understand Wright's photography it is necessary to recognize Wright's intent. As Cullie concludes in all of Wright's imagery, "There's no pretense to the technology whatsoever. It's a beat-to-shit Nikon with a 50 millimeter lens, with Tri-X pushed to 1600, developed in Diafine."[283] There is no pretense in Wright's work because he approached everything naturally and on instinct. This carries throughout all facets of his life, from driving to a London airport with his friend Tim Bartlett while still a teenager, to renovating the Craft Center. Wright had an honest approach to everything he did; it was innate to his being. This honesty was most visible in his photography, because he was a friend before he was a photographer. Relationships built his photography, and his photography helped build friendships. At Wright's photograph collection event in 2007, held by Dr. Don Carleton of the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, friend and Faces keyboardist Ian McLagan told the attendees that Wright's room was where everyone wanted to go to after a show.[284] Wright would be developing photos in the bathtub from pictures taken that night. Wright did not turn his hotel bathroom into a darkroom to get people to come after the show, he was doing it out of necessity because he was interested in seeing the results. He did not have access to a professional lab while on the road, so through ingenuity and persistence, he figured out how to create a makeshift lab; "You give Tom a couple hundred bucks and anywhere you are," says Joe Walsh, "he will, in a couple hours, be back with a bunch of stuff and it will be a darkroom."[285] In creating a darkroom, the band members wanted to see the photographs as well and turned up at Wright's room to see what he was developing.

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[283] Cullie, interview, December 09, 2020.
[284] Ian McLagan, "A Special Event Celebrating the Center for American History's Tom Wright Photograph Collection," Dolph Briscoe Center, Headliner's Club, filmed March 16, 2007, video of speech.
[285] Walsh, "Special Event," March 16, 2007.



Tom Wright and Ronnie Wood, Hotel Bathroom, Early 1970s



Joe Walsh and the James Gang, 1970



Glenn Frey, Joe Walsh, and Don Felder, Eagles Tour, 1970s



Timothy B. Schmidt, Joe Walsh, and Smokey Wendell, Long Run Tour, Dallas, 1980



Glenn Frey, Don Henley, Don Felder, and Timothy B. Schmidt, 1980

"Tom had a darkroom in the basement of the Third Power Farm," Schlagbaum recalls of his time with Wright in Ypsilanti, Michigan, "Tom brought Rod Stewart down to show him the pictures he took that night. Rod was still in his stage outfit. The sweat on the photos wasn't even dry yet and he could see the developed photographs immediately."[286] With the rockstars being witness to Wright's work—the photos of themselves—being developed before their eyes, the subjects were no doubt acutely aware of their image. Tom knew that the subjects' interest had much to do with an assuredly outsized dose of narcissism, which is certainly one reason the band members were so keen to see the photos. Had Wright been developing celluloid strips of landscapes and still lifes from that day, it is doubtful that Rod Stewart would have wanted to perch on the toilet in anticipation and watch the images appear on the enlarging paper. This is also echoed by Sontag:

> Many people are anxious when they're about to be photographed: not because they fear, as primitives do, being violated but because they fear the camera's disapproval. People want the idealized image: a photograph of themselves looking their best. They feel rebuked when the camera doesn't return an image of themselves as more attractive than they really are. But few are lucky enough to be "photogenic"—that is, to look better in photographs (even when not made up or flattered by the lighting) than in real life.[287]

Anxious is perhaps too strong a word to describe how the subjects Wright was photographing were feeling; however, there is an aspect of truth to it. Again, this is explained by them eagerly sitting in a bathroom after a concert, ostensibly in lieu of attending some after party and whatever else, in order to see their visages on paper. The other part of this, and again the key aspect of Wright's photography, is that Wright was a close friend to these guys. Wright was not hired to be there; he was simply casually taking photos of his friends. As Cullie remarks, "He

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[286] Schlagbaum, Interview by author, January 9, 2022.
[287] Sontag, *On Photography*, 85-86.

wasn't an Ethan Russell or Annie Leibovitz who came in with a staged shot; he was just there because he was cool enough to be there."[288]

This is the reason for the natural feeling that is transmitted through Wright's photographs: he was just there as part of the band. To add to the casual feeling, Wright was not there maniacally snapping away—he was prolific but not obnoxious. This could be accounted for by the analog age when rolls of film were expensive, as Hari Kunzru explains in his article, "Easy Chair." With the amount of film Wright shot, this does not seem to be accurate, but rather goes back, again, to Cartier-Bresson's notion of the "decisive moment." Kunzru's description of the decisive moment reads like he is describing Wright as, "the photographer as gunslinger, recognizing fleeting perfection… and instantaneously pulling the trigger."[289]

Wright's photography is born out of his relationship to the subjects he was photographing, but it was also because he was not on assignment. Wright never worked *for Rolling Stone Magazine*, nor did he shoot for *Creem* when he was in Michigan. Wright was always doing something else like road managing, or he was with the band as a friend. They all knew he was photographing and that he produced amazing images, but it was not the main component of Wright. Cullie further highlights this:

> That photograph of the Rolling Stones at breakfast: that was taken at a restaurant in San Antonio that Tom's stepfather owned and Tom was managing it, the Red Derby. Tom wasn't on assignment for Rolling Stone when he took that photograph, he wasn't working for Warner Bros. He was there and they were in town and they hung out and they came back to the restaurant at three o'clock in the morning. There was that insider thing that Tom had. Woodie's making a face, but everyone else is just eating breakfast. Nobody's posing.[290]

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[288] Cullie, interview, December 09, 2020.
[289] Hari Kunzru, "Easy Chair: Rich Image, Poor Image," *Harper's Magazine*, November 2021, 6.
[290] Cullie, interview, January 13, 2021.



Ronnie Wood and Keith Richards, Rolling Stones at Breakfast, San Antonio, 1975

Such intimate photos of different bands were captured by Wright in a way that could only have been captured by him. It is worth looking at the work of other rock photographers to better understand this point and to see the similarities and differences. Beginning with one of the most notable contemporaries of Wright's, Jim Marshall is a photographer who exhibits some of Wright's qualities.. Marshall had a guiding moral principle and had a similar ethical code toward the people he photographed. For Marshall, this translated, in his words, as: "I'll only photograph people I like. You couldn't pay me enough to photograph someone I didn't like or an event I didn't want to go to."[291] Wright would not phrase his sentiments in such language since he would

[291] Jim Marshall and Amelia Davis, *Jim Marshall: Show Me the Picture: Images and Stories from a Photography Legend*(San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2019) 110.

not be getting paid in the first place. Wright completely extricated himself from that dialogue, whereas with Marshall, his life is detailed with financial valleys and mountains; the question of business and photography seemed to be always on his mind. This notion is shown in a seminar he discussed proposing:

> What I would like to do in a one-day seminar is to show my work from various aspects of my career, discuss the photographs… discuss ethics and values, personal trust, not the business but how one can apply all their skills to the commercial world. Not to compromise when people allow you into their lives with a camera.[292]

As for Marshall's photographs standing on their own merit, they are skillfully and technically brilliant. They are crisp, the composition flawless, and are the photos many would immediately think of when contemplating "rock photography." Marshall's photos of Johnny Cash are some of his most iconic—think Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison giving the middle finger: that is Jim Marshall's work. There is a connection to Wright here as well, in that Cash was a close friend of Marshall's. In the photographs of Cash, Marshall tapped into the same spirit as upon what Wright solely relied. The connection and intimacy is transmitted in Marshall's photographs the way Wright's photographs of Townshend do. Wright's and Marshall's photographs were more different than similar, however, and this is not to take away anything from either of the two photographers.

Wright's photos were not crisp like Marshall's. Wright did not want them to be. As discussed previously, he was after texture and feeling; punch over beauty. Where Wright did not compete with Marshall's clarity of image, Marshall could not compete with Wright's ability to capture the decisive moment. This can best be seen in Marshall's photograph of The Who playing at the

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[292] Marshall, *Jim Marshall*, 260.

Monterey Pop Festival in 1967. Marshall's point-of-view is from the side of the stage—a perspective that looks like it could have come from Wright's camera. The photograph is predictably at the end of the show in which Townshend initiates "auto-destruction." A cymbal is already knocked over and it appears as though Townshend has already smashed the guitar on the ground once and is in process of bringing it back up before launching another attack. Townshend's hair is in motion and Keith Moon is still striking his left ride cymbal. The whole image reads as a little flat. Perhaps this is because there is the knowledge that smoke bombs are about to be set off, Moon is going to thrash his drumset, and people will have to jump out of the way to miss Townshend's guitar.[293] Had Wright been at the Monterey Pop Festival (the festival was in June and Wright would not join The Who until August), he would have captured a different moment. It could have been when Townshend first smashed the guitar into the stage, or when the smoke was obscuring the band and Daltrey was hitting the cymbals with the microphone, or even after the mayhem when the crowd was looking at each other wondering what they had just witnessed.

A rock photographer who is further apart from Wright is Terry O'Neill. His shots consist primarily of staged shots and portraits, or in other words, the complete opposite of Wright's modus operandi. In viewing O'Neill's body of work, it can be surmised that the majority, if not all, of the published photographs are commissions. Terry O'Neill's photograph of Alice Cooper is a proper example of how much his style differed from Wright's. Alice Cooper is pretending to be passed out on a bed next to liquor bottles and a golden revolver. It is obviously posed, but it is

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[293] *Monterey Pop*, directed by D.A. Pennebaker (1968; Monterey, CA: Leacock-Pennebaker).

certainly not pretending to deceive the viewer into thinking it is a candid shot; instead, it is a posed candid shot. The photograph is attempting to play off celebrity and how rockstars are envisioned, but the result is nevertheless kitsch.

O'Neill's photographs are not all posed in a similar manner like the shot of Cooper, but the intent remains the same. For instance, O'Neill describes a commissioned photoshoot he had with the Animals and his description is illuminating:

> When I met the Animals at the station they were wearing working-men's clothes. They were just working-class lads from a town famous for coal and ship-building. The first thing I did was to take them shopping… I took them shopping first, then to a studio, because they didn't look the business. They looked like labourers.[294]

Such a thing was anathema to Wright, who wanted to capture the band as the way they were. Of course it could be recalled that Wright had the James Gang pose with motorcycles, when they in fact did not know how to ride the machines. This was an exception to the rule and was not done to be deceptive. The band had happened to crash the night with a motorcycle gang and since the bikes were there, they had some fun. The difference, again, boils down to intent. O'Neill's body of work is not deceptive, but he was playing on the image of celebrity in a way that was tongue-in-cheek. Wright was too serious for such business.

The rock photographer Ken Regan was quite similar to Wright in approach and was friends with his subjects, particularly the Rolling Stones. Like Marshall's photographs of Johnny Cash and Kris Kristofferson, Regan's Rolling Stones photographs transmit an easiness and relaxed feeling. This unpretentious, unobnoxious approach without any pretense is the same quality Joe Walsh described in Wright. The photographs are similar, too. There is one photograph backstage

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[294] Terry O'Neill, *Terry O'Neill's Rock 'n' Roll Album*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: ACC Art Books, 2020).

of the Rolling Stones in which Chuch Magee is present. Not only was Chuch introduced to the Rolling Stones by Wright, but the photograph looks almost identical to something Wright would have shot.

Like the others, a critical difference between Regan and Wright was that Wright was not on assignment. Regan, however, was known for his discretion, being allowed access into the inner sanctum of certain musicians and celebrities, and Regan offers a parallel universe for what could be imagined would have occurred with Wright had Wright been on commission. For Mick Jagger at least, the relationship with Regan was clear: "Though Ken and I enjoy both a professional and personal relationship, in all the years we've worked together he has never blurred those boundaries."[295] This would certainly be said of Wright by the Who, the Faces, Joe Walsh, the Rolling Stones, etc.

Another rock photographer who bears mentioning, in relation to Wright, is Baron Wolman. Wolman's photographs of the Who, at least the shots of the band recording the album "Tommy" at IBC Studios, look the most similar to Wright's. This could be that the band was excited to be recording the album, which caused their meteoric rise and secured their place in the annals of rock history. It could also be in Wolman's approach, which has a natural feeling similar to Wright's. Rather than exploring Wolman's photographs of the Who, turning to another series of shots offers a more pertinent connection to Wright.

Wright approached everyone in the same manner, whether it was Keith Richards or a worker at the drycleaners. Wright's photography archive contains a staggering collection of roadies and

[295] Ken Regan et al., *All Access: The Rock 'n' Roll Photography of Ken Regan* (San Rafael, CA: Insight Editions, 2011) 15.

women, which appear to be haphazardly curated and from his years touring the continent. Wolman had a collection of shots commissioned by *The Rolling Stone* of women who followed the music groups.[296] This set ofhotographs is quite comparable to Wright's photographs of many of the women he photographed and adds another dimension to backstage—including everyone that surrounded the band, not just the band members themselves. The vast majority of the shots—nearly all of them—that Wolman took were on a set and posed. Although Wright did not generally use a set, most of the women he photographed were posing in some manner and not strictly off-the-cuff. From this standpoint the images produced from the two photographers share many attributes. Two main difference emerge, however, with the first being aesthetic and lighting. Since most of Wolman's photos were shot on a set, staged lighting was used, which provides a certain effect that Wright simply did not have, nor did he choose to employ. The second main difference returns to Wright's relationship with whom he was photographing. Wright knew the women he was photographing, and based on what the photographs imply, was intimately linked to them. Both Wolman and Wright were looking at the entire culture and treating all with the same respect they showed the stars in the band. What sets Wright apart from Wolman and the rest was his intent, which both informed and was influenced by his access to the band.

Having personally known or worked with Ken Regan, Neil Zlozower, and Henry Diltz, Patrick Cullie intimately spots the differences in their work relative to Wright's. He elaborates on this further in another photo Wright took of Townshend in a hotel bedroom, on the telephone,

[296] Baron Wolman, *Groupies and Other Electric Ladies: The Original 1969 Rolling Stone Photographs by Baron Wolman* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 2016).

in the 1980s:

> You wouldn't get into Pete's hotel room at that hour of the day for Pete when he woke up and be allowed to take a picture of him in bed if you weren't a friend of his for 30, 40 years and he didn't even notice the camera was there. That's the difference about Tom. There's no way Pete would have let Ken Regan or Annie Leibovitz take that photo.[297]



Pete Townshend, Houston, 1980

[297] Cullie, interview, January 13, 2021.

Pete Townshend also corroborates this view of Wright and has commented on the difference between Wright and other photographers who were in his assessment, aggressive. In a recorded conversation, Townshend recounted an experience he had with Annie Leibovitz, calling her "pushy":

> That picture, center spread of the *Rolling Stone*, she set that up after a gig. Like the last thing in the tour, she kept on coming up to me and saying, "How about these pictures of you smashing a guitar?" And you say, "Fuck off," you know, "I think you're a shady photographer and I don't want to do it. It's a crappy idea," you know, just trying to bring her down, to send her away, but she just wouldn't take no for an answer. And in the end I said, "Oh, well, maybe I'll think about it," and she got so excited. I said, "What are you getting excited about?" and she said, "Well, I just knew that you would say yes today." So I said, "Well, O.K… so what?" She said, "Well, I've just— come around the corner and see." So, I went around the corner from the dressing room and there was a whole fucking studio that she'd set up in the back of the gig with a roll of paper, lights, flash boxes, computer flash, the whole thing. Five cameras in a row. Well, then it was all over in about five seconds. She said, "That's it."[298]

The story continues and recognizing the difference in approach between Leibovitz and Wright is only one aspect that separates the two. Adding another dimension to the stark contrast between them, Townshend remarks on the reception of the stereotypical and contrived shot for Leibovitz, saying that the publisher did not like it, calling it an "obvious idea." Townshend continued:

> So she went on and on and on and on and on and on and including putting some of her own money into merchandising the poster in full color to get it out on the street… that's the kind of lengths people go to get pictures and I mean, your pictures are different, in that they don't have that kind of severe pressure.[299]

With that pressure removed from Wright's photography, a nuanced view can be gleaned from

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[298] Oral history cassette tape, "Townshend about pictures," with transcription, Box 2X46, Tom Wright Papers 1964-1994, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, United States.
[299] Townshend, Oral history cassette.

his shots. It is only through an extensive knowledge and close relationship with someone or something that subtlety can be noticed and even more so expressed. Another example of this is a photograph taken on an airport tarmac by Wright.



The Who Tour, 1982

Not technically a backstage shot with a cinder block wall, the concept is nevertheless the same, and the tarmac has a similar CMU feel. The photograph is from 1982 and the seeming banality belies its importance, and interest. The image is clear: a series of limos are parked on an airport tarmac not exactly haphazardly, but certainly not in any meaningful or careful order.

This photograph can begin to be accessed with a concise thought from Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*: "The photograph becomes 'surprising' when we do not know why it's been taken; what motive and what interest is there in photographing a backlighted nude in a doorway, the front of an old car in the grass, a freighter at the dock," or a collection of limos waiting on the

runway. [300]

One views the photograph, understands the basic elements, and the first question that arises is: "*Why are we looking at this?*" Almost immediately the internal self-response is that the photographer is saying something. If the photographer was not saying something then the photograph would have to stand purely on craft, composition, execution, etc. The photograph's banality, however, is telling — this is not a landscape, a monument, or anything that is typically photographed that would serve as a postcard (equal in its own banality). Something is being said.

So what is so important about these limos waiting to cart away the passengers? The answer is simple: the photograph was taken on the Who's tour to promote the aptly named album, *It's Hard*, but was then later announced that it was their last tour. Keith Moon had died four years prior, the band had struggled with Kenney Jones filling the space, all were sapped of musical creativity, Pete Townshend was on a destructive downward spiral accompanied by drugs and alcohol, and none of the band was getting along. They refused to talk to each other and the only time they were next to one another was when they were on stage. They all took separate limos, to their separate hotels, with their separate entourage. The photograph encapsulates this in one poignant shot, that on the surface is quite pedestrian.

This is the duality of the rock n' roll success story and Wright's photograph captures it perfectly. To use W.J.T. Mitchell's concept of the *pictorial turn*, this is almost a reversal of the idea.[301] Mitchell argued that words turned to imagery, but in this case, Wright's photograph uses

[300] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1981; New York: Hill and Wang, 2010) 34.
[301] W.J.T. Mitchell, Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

an image to smash the rock n'roll iconography that one imagines when thinking of rock and words are needed.

If you were to use words to describe the Who at that time, it would sound and appear like the most rock n'roll story of the ages, and it is: a supergroup flying on private jets, playing stadiums to thousands of adoring fans, being plyed with drugs and alcohol and experiencing stereotypical differences within the band. But the big shift is the reality of what these words mean and something that could only be captured by someone from within, in this case, Wright.

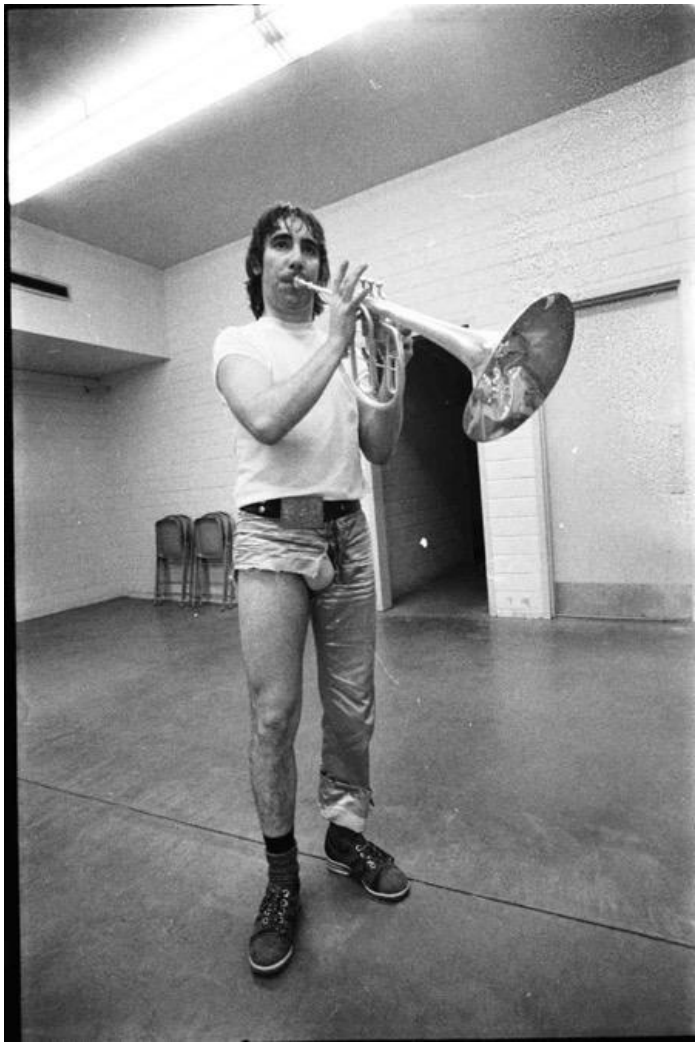
The reality was that Townshend was killing himself with substances; the promoters and managers had taken over and pushed for sold out arenas, which are notoriously horrible for acoustics, so therefore clearly not about the music; and the bandmates all existed separate from one another when the music was what originally brought them — and others — together. The reality of rock n'roll is captured in the photo of the limousines on the tarmac — poignant in its banality.

Through these photos, an act of remembering is conducted. The memory is not strictly limited to the subjects of the image, but the substance of the image, in its totality, includes the photographer. The memory of Tom Wright, therefore, exists in the photographs. In "A Proof that I Did Exist," Ivane Mortelette writes; "Considering Barthes's definition of a photograph as a 'certificate of presence' attesting that 'what I see has indeed existed', it can also be argued that they reinforce the author's autobiographical pact by giving evidence of what is being told."[302] Wright's photography satisfies this notion that he did indeed exist, but more importantly, he is

[302] Ivane Mortelette, "A Proof That I Did Exist: Janet Frame and Photography," *Journal of New Zealand Literature* No. 24, Part 1 (2006): 95.

providing evidence of an alternative, or parallel, memory of the rockstars which he photographed.

At an event celebrating Wright's photography, Pete Townshend commented on a photograph of Keith Moon taken backstage at the Who's concert in Dallas. Townshend joked about the subject matter and that Wright's photography was being archived: "How could the world go on turning without this?"[303]



Keith Moon, Dallas, 1973

[303] Townshend, "Special Event," March 16, 2007.

Townshend's jest was merely friendly teasing with a close friend, Wright, and commentary on the legendary antics of Moon. Townshend's words shifted from playful sarcasm to conveying an honest appreciation of Wright's photography and that the collection does matter:

> I think it's remarkable really. It needed a very acute documentarian eye to capture that moment. And that's not at all posed, it's just something that just happened to be happening. He didn't tear his trouser leg off and reveal his left testicle with a French horn in his hand because he knew Tom was taking a picture. This was just a constant, evolving thing… and this archive will make sure they're all properly looked over, examined, and any more gems like this will be pulled out and used to warn future generations of Americans that this Baby Boomer thing that happened must never ever happen again.[304]

Townshend softens the blow a bit with his wit, but touching on the post-World War II aspect strikes at the heart of the music and Wright's photography, and especially, why Wright's photography matters.

Viewing Wright's photography under any discernible lens one wishes to use, it will always lead to the conclusion that the photographs are valid. This is to say that Wright's work is *important*. To take this a step further, and what should vehemently be argued, is that Wright's work is on equal footing with any other rock photographer and belongs in the constellation of such photographers.

Wright's approach to photography was both natural and trained, based on feeling and craft. The most critical aspect of Wright's work, however, is that he employed a very humanist view. With his camera, Wright treated everyone in the rock scene with the same respect: from Rod Stewart to the person cleaning up after the show. Furthermore, Wright was a friend to these stars, as he was friends with the roadies and everyday people in general. That was his true point-of-view and why he saw no difference between anyone based on their status. To Wright, Pete

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[304] Townshend, "Special Event," March 16, 2007.

Townshend was not an ultra famous popstar with world recognition, but rather a shy kid from Shepherd's Bush learning guitar at art school.

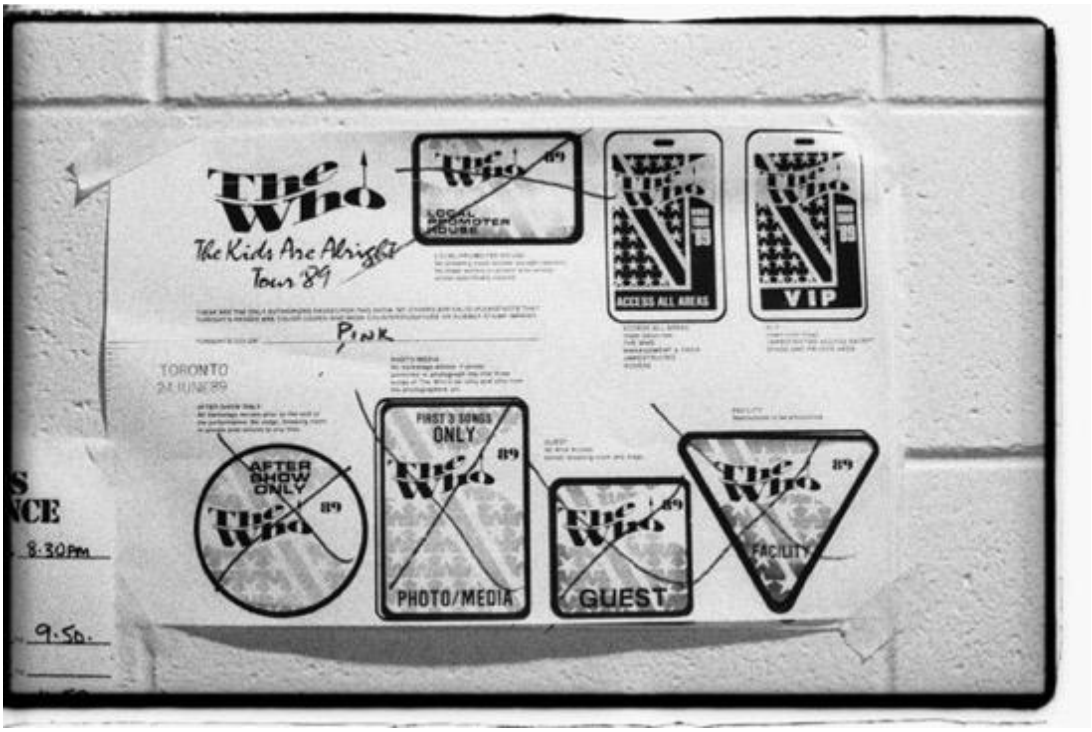
Wright's Cinder Block Wall series is a curated collection that provides critical understanding of Wright's work. Seeing the images of Pete Townshend, Joe Walsh, Ian McLagan, Rod Stewart, and Ronnie Wood not as they are typically viewed—on stage—but rather behind the stage presents another perspective not normally witnessed. That view could not come from Ken Regan, Annie Leibovitz, or Jim Marshall, but only only from Tom Wright.



Russ Gibb, Late 1960s



Keith Moon, Late 1960s



The Who Backstage Passes Areas, Toronto, 1989

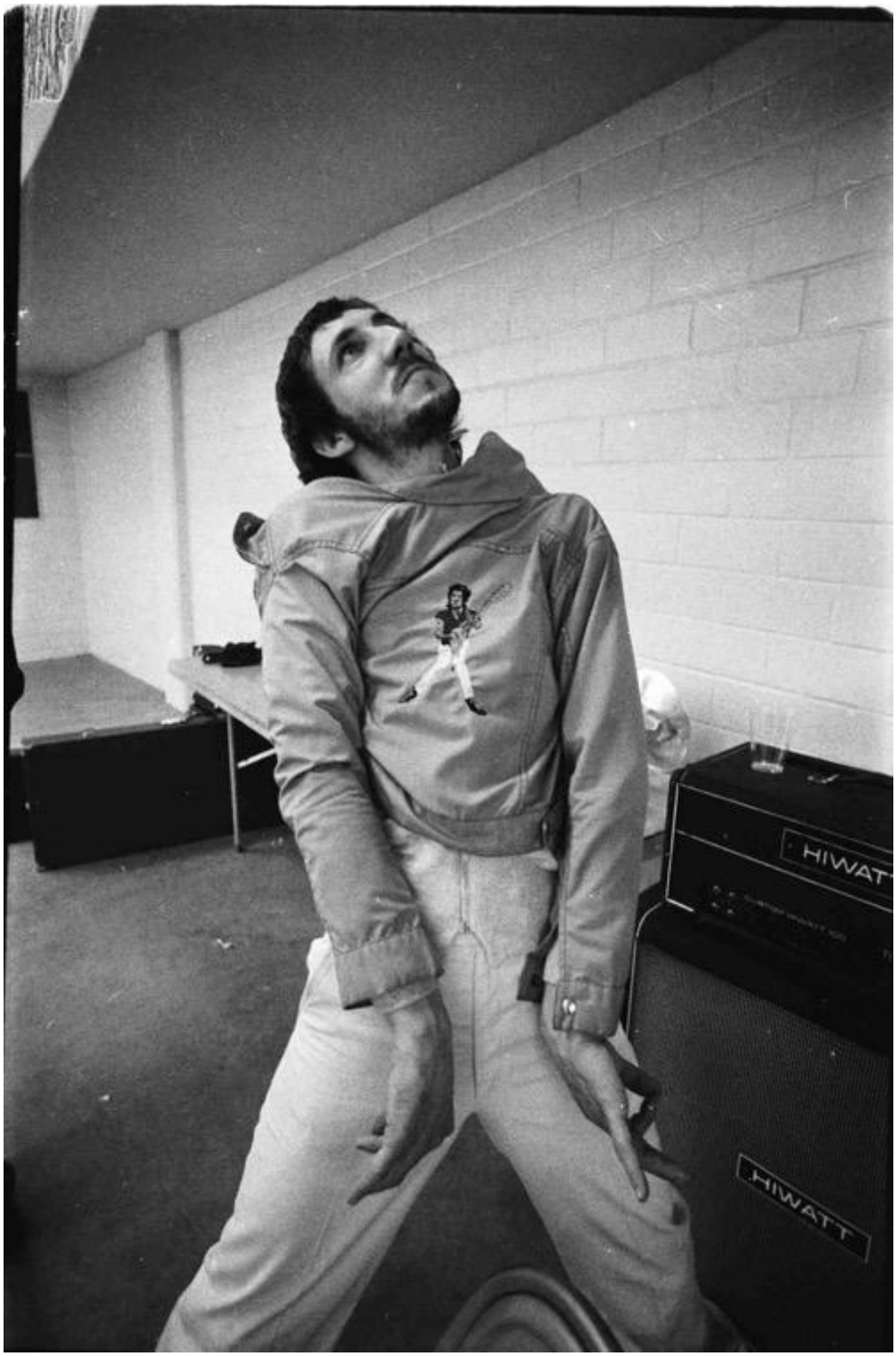
These photos underscore and highlight the unique and extraordinary nature of Wright and his connection to the subjects of his camera's lens. All of Wright's photography, but the Cinder Block Wall photos particularly, reveal his craft as a natural act. The photography was based on a unique access to his friends, who happened to be rock stars of the highest echelon, and was honed over years of working on his craft, obsessively photographing and developing prints in the dark room. Born in America and educated in England, it was also natural that he mixed the sensibilities that related to the two places. This all equated to a sincerity and uncontrived behavior that is inherent in everything he did, including all of his photography.

The feeling in Wright's photographs is genuine and what he captured was raw. It may not have been as polished as a Leibovitz image, but what it lacked in material richness was more than made up for in content. This is not to say his craft was without care or poor in any respect — it certainly was not — but it varied from the glamorized style of mainstream photographers. It is this rawness that captured the rock star and the common person in a similar way. At a time when rock musicians were deified, a premonition of what was to intensify in the future, Wright shot photos of them with the same care and intensity as he did with laborers, grocery store clerks, office workers, and so on.

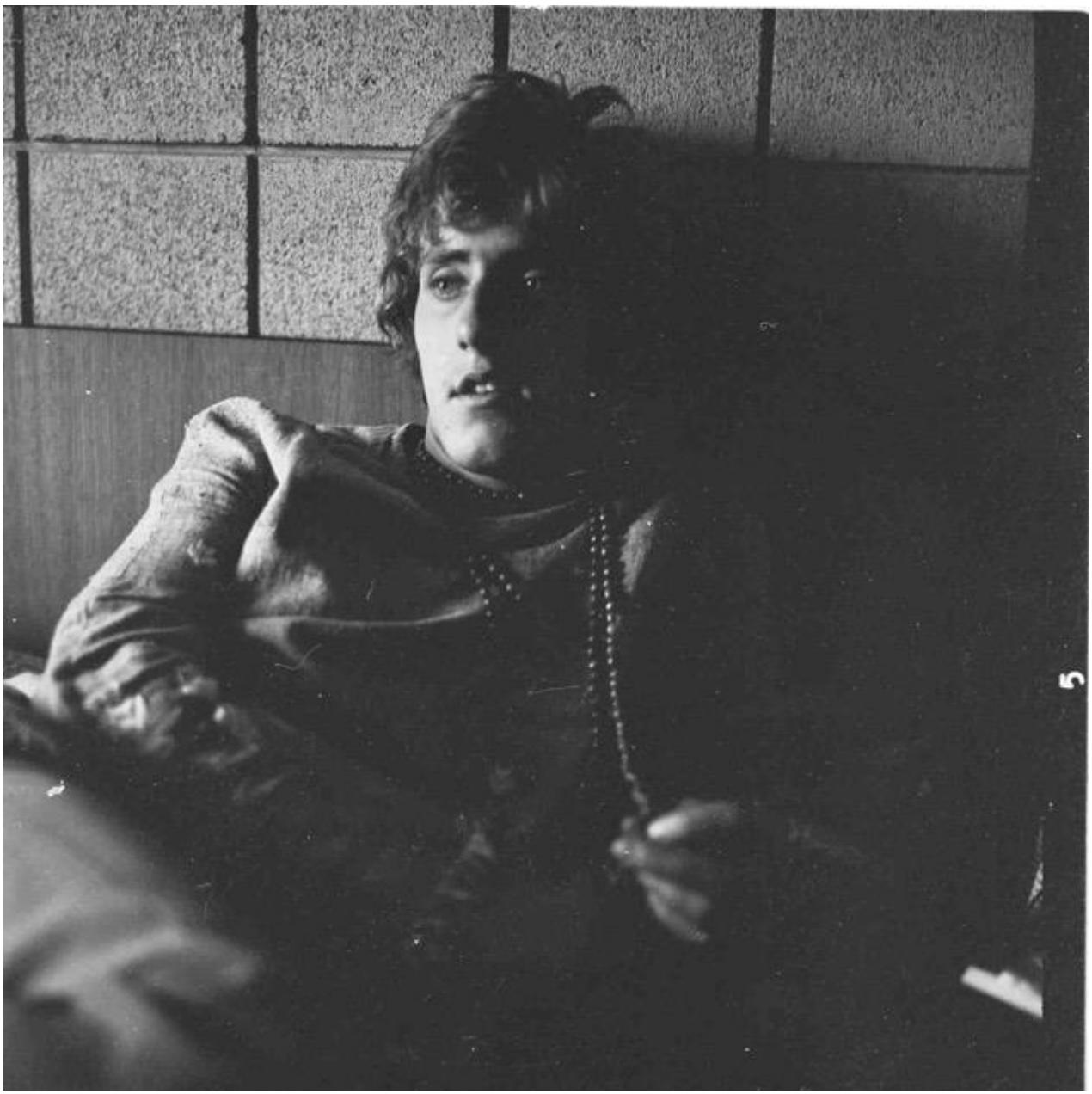
Aside from the content, which is a focus on celebrity musicians, Wright offered a completely different angle into these people's lives and that remind the viewer that these glorified stars are not gods but mere mortals who were a mouthpiece for a new generation. Whether it was political unrest, teen angst, social critique, expanding the mind, or whatever else that came up in the era, they were singing about it. The opposite occurs when musicians become isolated from their audience, detached by wealth and fame, when their music descends into self-aggrandizement,

arrogance, and lacks connection with anything or anyone outside themselves. This artifice of glamour would prove to be the beginning of a new frontier of commercial acquisition and exploitation that ultimately created the rapacious marketing machine that grinds on today.

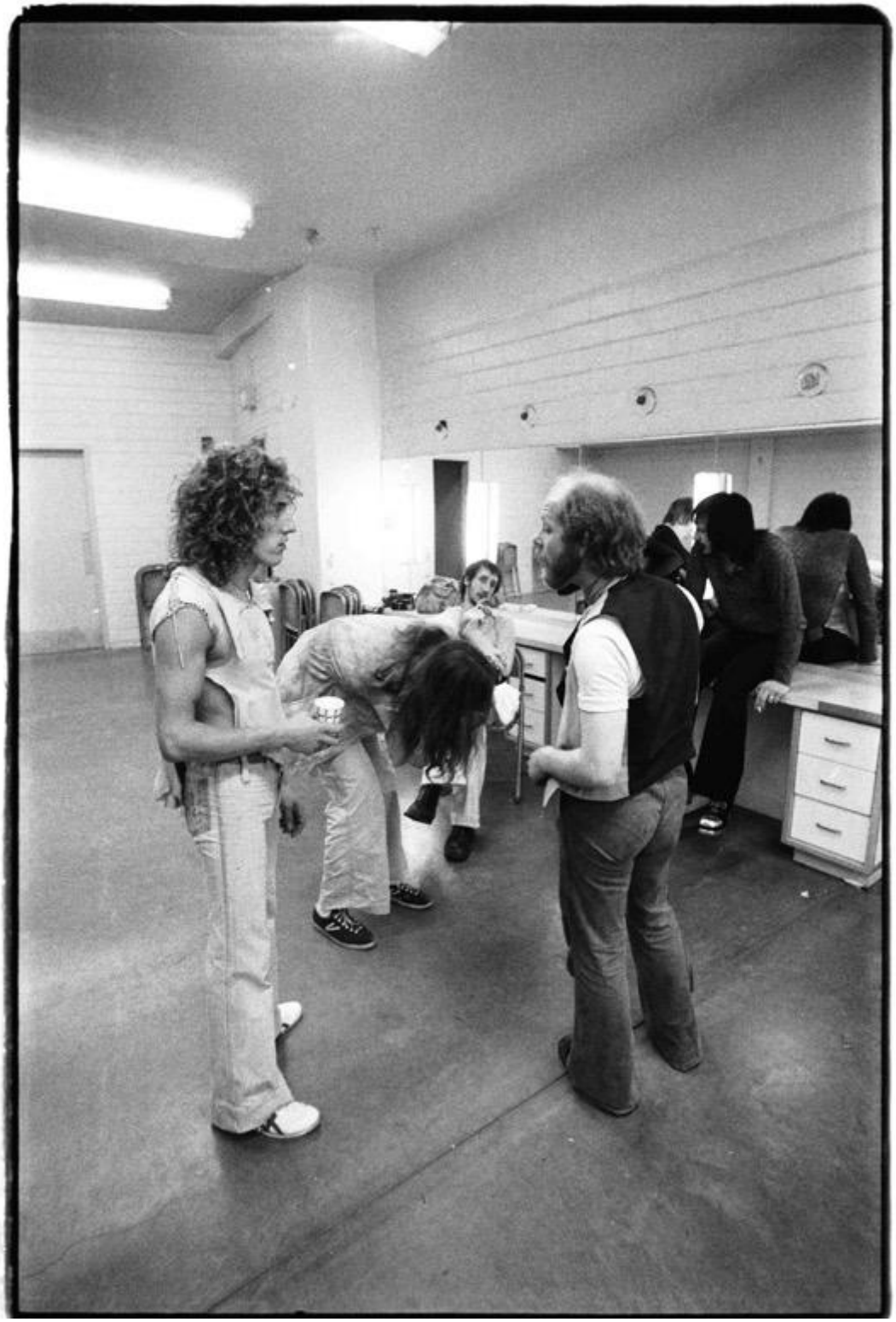
Wright's photography was the connection and Wright the iconoclast; cracking open the glamorous veneer and instead seeing these rock musicians as *of* the people. In this sense, Wright's raw and humanist photography has more to offer an era that has been proclaimed and seen as a protest generation than any other photographer of his time that simply perpetuated the rock star myth and glamorized these musicians. Wright pushed aside that commonly accepted view and instead saw these people from his intimate and personal point-of-view.



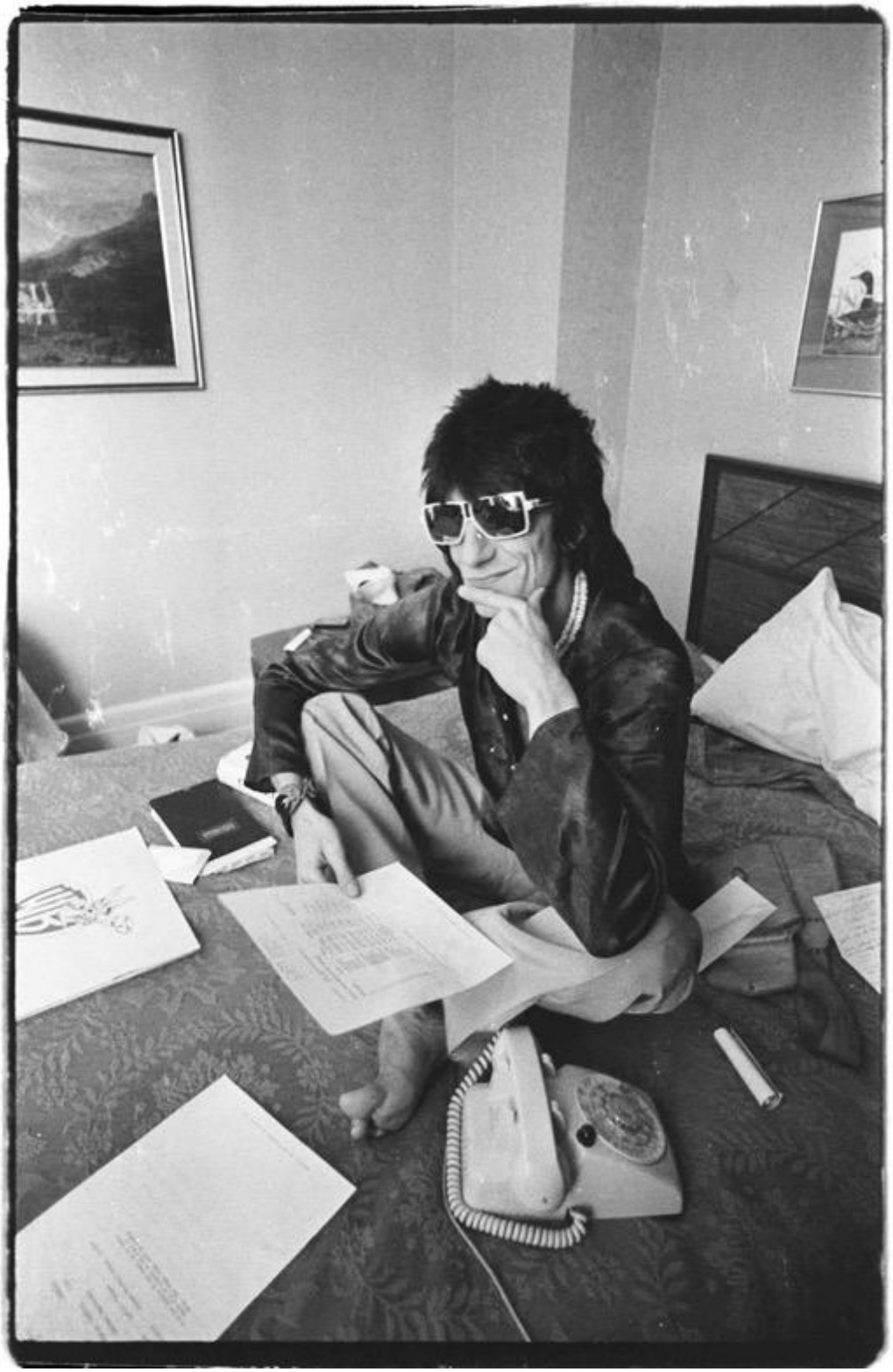
Pete Townshend (Jacket Designed by Wright's half-sister, Antoinette "Tony" Laumer), Dallas, 1973



Roger Daltrey, 1967/8



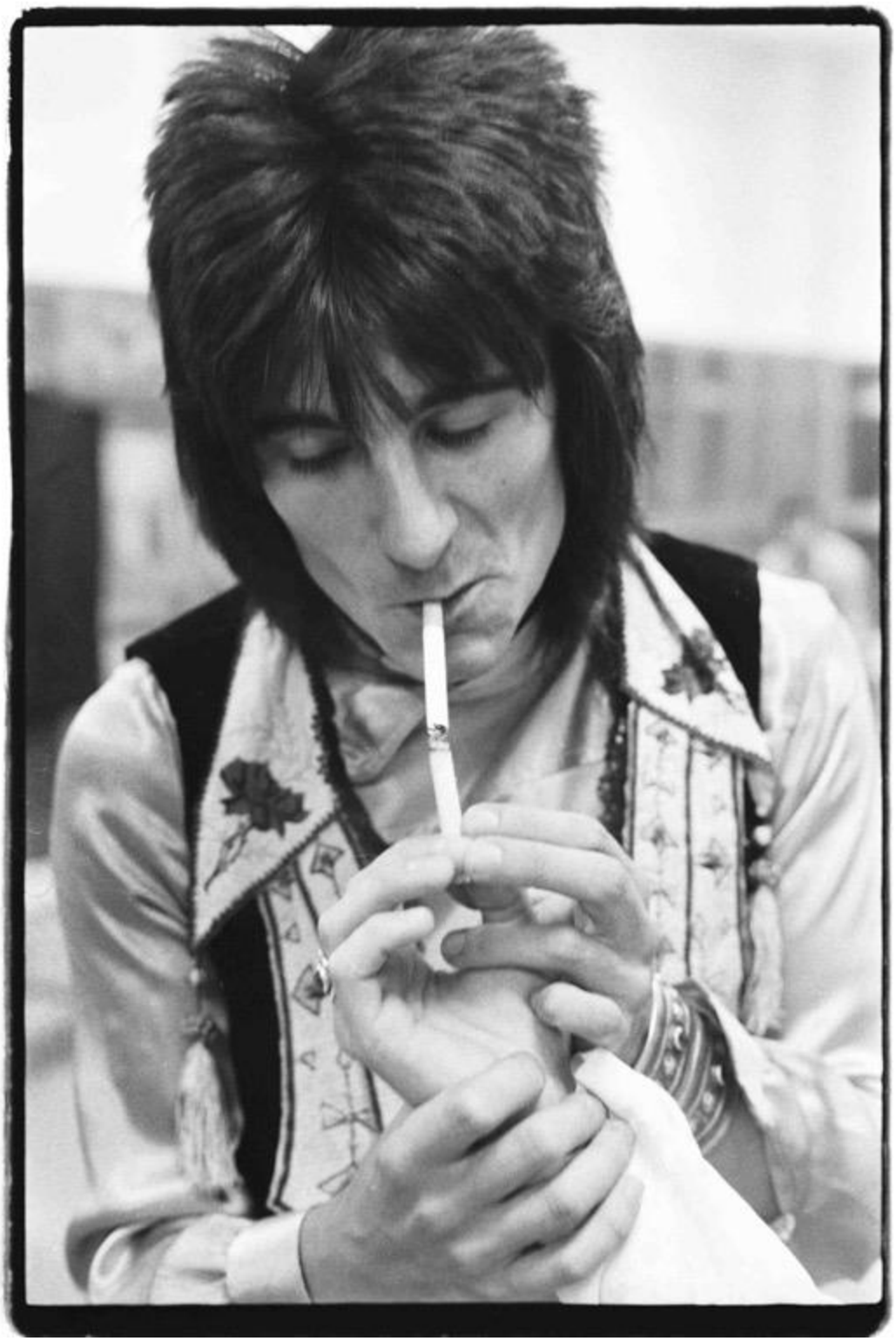
Roger Daltrey, Annie Leibovitz, Pete Townshend, Bob Pridden, and John Entwistle, 1970s



Ronnie Wood, 1970s



Joe Walsh, Eagles Tour, 1980



Ronnie Wood, 1970s



Pete Townshend, Herman's Hermits Tour (First Tour with Tom Wright), 1967

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