

## Stage Talk and the Localization of Bluegrass in Toronto

Marc Finch (Memorial University)



Members of Crazy Strings (from left): Max Heineman, John Showman, Andrew Collins, Chris Quinn, Chris Coole

"With the fiddle taking the lead, the fraudulent farmers set off on 'Orange Blossom Special,' then changed the pace with 'Sweet Cocaine'—dedicated said one, 'to any junkies in the audience.' [...] It was this sort of thing—hip talk with a molasses accent—that gave the Greenbriar Boys a distinctly un-hillbilly flavor."

--Hunter S. Thompson, *New York Bluegrass*, 1997

"[Stage talk] can make or break a song if it is done right or wrong."

--Chris Quinn, e-mail message to author, 2009

Each week, Crazy Strings, a collective<sup>1</sup> of some of Toronto's most well known bluegrass musicians, hosts an evening of bluegrass and old time music called "High Lonesome Wednesdays" at the Silver Dollar Room. The show has remained a popular live music event in the city for over a decade and consistently draws young undergraduate students,

neighbourhood "regulars," and country/folk music enthusiasts.<sup>2</sup> Utilizing acoustic instrumentation, minimal amplification, and drawing on a repertoire made up of a blend of bluegrass "classics" (mostly songs composed before the 1970s), old-time music, and stylistically akin original compositions, Crazy Strings performs what has come to be termed "traditional bluegrass." Lyrically, the traditional bluegrass repertoire is laden with songs about pre-modern rural life, among other themes, which are often thought of as antithetical to contemporary urban living. In this article I examine how members of Crazy Strings localize particular songs in their repertoire through the use of stage talk. Through these localizing practices the musicians not only curb the questions of authenticity that have shadowed urban bluegrass in the past but, in fact, contribute to a performance experience that involves the interplay of several authenticities and taps into the experiences of the band's urban audience.

## Stage Talk and Humour

Stage talk in bluegrass performance generally surfaces as a blend of sincerity and humour. It has become a prominent feature in live bluegrass performances, and those who are particularly apt at verbally communicating to the audience receive additional recognition that goes beyond an acknowledgment of their musical prowess.<sup>3</sup> In bluegrass, stage talk is rooted in the performances of the hillbilly bands that preceded bluegrass, who were, in turn, influenced by minstrel show conventions.<sup>4</sup> Hillbilly and minstrel “skits” were especially influential on the style of comedy used in early bluegrass<sup>5</sup> stage talk. This style of comedy put forward notions of rural “backwardness” and championed the camaraderie and familial bonds associated with country living.<sup>6</sup>

In his discourse analysis of stage talk at a bluegrass festival, John Bealle notes that, while such themes appear less often in contemporary live performance, “comedy has retained its importance in bluegrass”.<sup>7</sup> Much of the reason why the nature of stage talk comedy changed has to do with the incorporation of bluegrass into the early-1960s urban folk revival. While bluegrass groups from the American southeast found a new audience that appreciated their music in cities like New York and Boston, these audiences of mostly urban students did not always grasp the humour that surfaced between songs.<sup>8</sup> Jokes that went over well with a home audience fell flat among urban revivalists, and, at times, the new audiences laughed unexpectedly when the performers were being completely sincere.<sup>9</sup> Bealle points out, however, that “such reactions [...] did not end the use of comedy gags, but they provided a rationale for more careful management of spoken comedy.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, bluegrass stage humour was adapted to the changing audiences and, as Thomas Adler notes, the jokes and gags of a new generation of performers became characteristically “non-regional, openly urban, and mass cultural or even counter cultural”.<sup>11</sup> The need to manage stage talk based on an impression of the audience is something that the members of Crazy Strings understand well. Banjoist Chris Quinn emphasizes this, stating, “[Stage talk] is very important and it needs to differ from place to place. Inside jokes about the mayor of Toronto aren’t going to work anywhere else.”<sup>12</sup>

The festival stage talk that Bealle describes is characteristically sincere, humorous, and inoffensive. The performers talk about their hometowns, how they have traveled a long way to play the festival and how much they appreciate the warm welcome of the audience and organizers.<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, they are sure to demonstrate their respect for bluegrass traditions, historical figures, and classic songs.<sup>14</sup> This often comes out in introductions to standards like “Uncle Pen” or “Orange Blossom Special,” where a performer might give some details regarding the composer and his/her significance in bluegrass history or to the performer’s personal development as a musician. The respect for bluegrass tradition is deepened in the performer’s eagerness to play particular songs (e.g., “We’d *like* to play a song for you now by...”), and their self-doubt in being able to adequately pull off certain tunes (e.g., “We’re gonna *try* and play this song for you”; “We’re gonna do our best to play this next song”).

Sincerity, appreciation, and respect for bluegrass traditions and history all surface in Crazy Strings’ stage talk. That said, during their regular performances in Toronto, these qualities come about in different ways and for different reasons as a result of the urban performance context. This is perhaps most noticeable in the irony, cultural associations, and varying degrees of potential offensiveness that characterize some of the comedic stage talk at the urban bluegrass nights. The following vignette from the Dollar’s bluegrass night exemplifies the stage talk style of Crazy Strings vocalist Chris Coole.

\* \* \*

*“Ah, thanks very much everybody. Thanks for stickin’ around for our second set, we sure do appreciate that.”*

*After a fine rendition of “If Loving You is Killing Me”, Chris Coole quickly offers appreciation on behalf of the band. Somewhere within the lively applause and hollering of the audience, a young woman shouts in a deeply guttural voice, “I love it!” By this time in the night things have settled nicely. The band is in top form and the audience is geared up for more.*

*Coole observes that the mostly young crowd are having a good time and attempts to heighten spirits with a facetious promotional announcement:*

*“If you’ve just walked in, welcome, welcome, welcome. We’re Crazy Strings...We are the official...the official Toronto bluegrass band of the two-thousand-and-ten Winter Olympics.”*

*Before he even finishes the sentence, the crowd begins to clap, holler, and laugh at the declaration. The joke has gone over well and the applause lingers for an inordinate amount of time. On stage, Coole and some other members of the band have their own private laugh while the audience carries on cheering them. Still laughing, he turns to the microphone to introduce the next song:*

*“Folks, here’s Chris Quinn. We’re gonna feature*

*him and Max on this next one. It's an old folk song about the, er...the struggle between man and machine. For all you kids out there...before there was computers there were machines. They did most of the work that computers do now. But ah, this is about the struggle between man and machine that goes back to the dawn of machines, folks. It's called... 'John Henry's Blues'.*"

\* \* \*

In his performance, Coole, toys with folk and bluegrass stage talk conventions. Aside from a couple of departures, his stage talk abides by the customary "applause appreciation"/"song introduction" form.<sup>15</sup> Further, he utilizes some of the common themes of bluegrass festival stage talk, such as announcing, albeit jokingly, band-related notifications (e.g., "We are [...] the official Toronto bluegrass band of the [...] Winter Olympics").<sup>16/17</sup> His appreciation for the audience and welcoming of new arrivals is sincere. Moreover, his politeness and use of bluegrass and folk idioms (e.g., "We sure do appreciate that" and addressing the audience as "folks") does not come across as forced or parodic. Still, although he is actually somewhere in his mid-thirties, Coole jokingly adopts the role of a paternalistic "old folkie" ("For all you kids out there...") and offers an exaggerated take on the theme of anti-modernism in his introduction to "John Henry's Blues".

During this set it might appear as if a mockery is being made of bluegrass performance conventions. The performers I spoke with, however, feel otherwise, suggesting instead that they are adapting the music and the performance tradition to their own experiences as urban dwellers and directing their stage talk toward an audience who, it is assumed, has a similar cultural background. Coole in particular observes his management of stage talk, stating, "My banter is definitely way different at the Silver Dollar than it is at a bluegrass festival...I can swear at the Silver Dollar and in a way I can be more myself." Indeed, Coole's consciousness of his own cultural background informs many of his performance decisions at the Dollar. He continues: "As much as I love Lester Flatt and Carter Stanley's way of emceeing, I can't really do that because I'm not from the cultural background that they're from. And I can't act exactly the way that they act because this is fifty years later. I grew up in a city—in Toronto—they grew up rurally—in the South. We grew up in totally different worlds—we're playing in different worlds. What I wanna get across is the pride and confidence that they seem to exude in the music that they were playing. They were like the coolest guys ever. They had so much confidence in what they were doing

[...]. So I just try to get confidence and act like I would act, but present the music in a way...with no apologies. And try not to do any fake country shit."<sup>18</sup> In this comment, Coole places an emphasis on presenting his own experiences through his performances. Because the music he plays has such strong associations with rural culture, and has equally strong performance traditions, he has to balance his own desire to express himself with the musical culture and traditions he holds in high esteem.

While Coole insists that he wants to steer clear from taking on a "fake country" persona, he does adopt some of the conventions of bluegrass performance that evoke rural and folk imagery. That said, his use of a bluegrass stage talk style never conceals his urban cultural background from the audience. Rather, the performance conventions are a mechanism by which he puts forward his numerous alliances with aspects of both urban and bluegrass cultures.<sup>19</sup> Declaring Crazy Strings to be the official Toronto bluegrass band of the 2010 Winter Olympics, for instance, Coole is indirectly making a statement about the commercialism that is associated with urbanism.<sup>20</sup> The audience laughs at the ridiculousness of an official Olympic bluegrass band. At the same time, in a corporate culture teeming with sponsorship deals, and during a time in which an array of consumer products were incessantly branded in relation to the 2010 Olympics, the idea is not so far-fetched. Locating the official Olympic bluegrass band in Toronto makes the gag all the more effective, the assumption being that if somehow there was a bluegrass band with such a sponsorship deal, they would come from Canada's business hub, not a small rural community. This also plays into Canada's familiar regional politics in which Toronto is juxtaposed with cities considered to be more down to earth, like Vancouver, where the Olympics were actually being held. Through his banter, Coole identifies himself as urban—as a Torontonion—and, with the support of a cheering audience, he is unapologetic in this declaration. Nevertheless, there are undertones in the joke that are critical of big city corporate culture and commercialism.

Coole's introduction to "John Henry's Blues" has a similar effect. He exaggerates the theme of anti-modernism, suggesting that the song depicts the one-on-one struggle between "man" and "machine". There are no person-to-person interactions (e.g., the worker and the employer who develops or owns the machine) in the image Coole conjures up. Rather, "man" is in direct conflict with machine. At first, the introduction almost comes across as a disclaimer (e.g., "Bear with us, we're about to play yet another song about the evils of technology"). But again, Coole observes his urban surroundings and suggests

that the urbanites in the room—himself included—might want to consider how invested contemporary society is in technology: “For all you kids out there...before there was computers there were machines. They did most of the work that computers do now.” Though it goes unsaid, the next step suggested in this retrogressive time line deals with how machines began to do most of the work that people did. To be sure, the tone of this comment is not overly-serious or preachy. Coole’s mock paternalism (“For all you kids...”) and the exaggerated facelessness of the subjects involved (e.g., machines, computers, “man”) maintains the humour of the introduction. Nevertheless, he calls attention to what he feels is the intensifying depersonalization of contemporary life. In a big city like Toronto, which is often associated with cold, impersonal relationships and images of individuals communicating on-the-go with cell phones and texting devices, Coole’s stage talk is even more resonant.



**Chris Coole**

In his stage talk, Coole draws on subjects, such as commercialism and modernism, that are common in bluegrass culture and often associated with urbanism. In doing so, however, he does not present himself as somehow detached from urban life. While

he sometimes adopts the character of a paternalistic Luddite, the role is never complete. Beverly Diamond notes how a musician's language and dialect choices “[position] them with a specific group of other people”.<sup>21</sup> The ironic tone of Coole’s humour is a reminder that he is engaged in a performance, but it also serves as an “alliance making activity”<sup>22</sup> that reveals his affiliation with the band’s urban audience. Still, his urban cultural alliances are not necessarily in opposition with his more obvious bluegrass cultural alliances. Rather the two alliances co-exist. While some criticism of the commercialism and modernism associated with urbanism surfaces in his stage talk, he recognizes that his urban surroundings and experiences are a defining facet of his cultural background and makes little effort to conceal this.

Coole’s alliances with urban and bluegrass culture co-exist *in the moment of performance*. At the same time that he draws on the conventions of bluegrass stage talk and the stereotypes of a bluegrass/folk emcee, he is paying homage to the “coolness,” “confidence,” and “unapologetic” style of the bluegrass musicians he admires.<sup>23</sup> That said, his stage talk differs quite a bit from performers like Lester Flatt and Carter Stanley. After all, recognizing that he cannot convincingly say the type of things they do because of his dissimilar cultural and generational background, he aims to tap into their confidence and simply be himself on stage. For Coole, much of this confidence—the “coolness”—has to do with not appearing scripted while speaking to the audience. He articulates this concern, stating, “A lot of the bluegrass bands these days, I don’t find the emcees are as good as [Flatt and Stanley]. They either don’t say anything, or it’s all worked...it just seems so contrived.”<sup>24</sup> To be sure, Coole recycles some of his “routines” at different shows. But, there is certainly an improvised quality in his delivery. Coole’s stage talk has an “emergent quality”<sup>25</sup> that lies somewhere between being completely rehearsed and completely improvised. As an emergent text, his stage talk is malleable; it can be adjusted in the moment based on the demands of the performance situation (e.g., audience response, performer's mood, time constraints, etc.).<sup>26</sup> Below, mandolinist Andrew Collins elaborates on this characteristic, suggesting that the emergent quality of Crazy Strings’ stage talk contributes to the “honesty” of their show: “I say we all developed the sort of stuff that we might say to introduce songs and might use that stuff all the time...repeatedly, but it’s also not like a scripted thing. So, [...] there’s a lot of honesty in the moment of our show. And we’ve all developed enough experience that we’re comfortable doing that, and have enough experience that we have something to say between songs if we need to.”<sup>27</sup>

Andrew's comment speaks to the control that performers have over how their stage talk develops over time as well as in the moment of performance. Richard Bauman, however, reminds us that the audience is also implicated—albeit indirectly—in the formation of stage talk (or more broadly in his terms, “verbal art”). That is, performers can add or omit details, make a verbal performance longer or shorter as dictated by the demands and patience of the audience.<sup>28</sup> I now want to take a moment to emphasize the influence of the local audience on the performers' stage talk.

### Localizing Bluegrass

Often stage talk is viewed as secondary to the performance, the emphasis being on the actual musical performance instead. Stage talk, however, is fundamental in how we understand and interpret the performance of a song. It can reframe a song, leaving room for different or new meanings to emerge and allowing other themes to fall by the wayside. In the example above, Coole exaggerated the themes of “John Henry's Blues” in a way that simultaneously maintained the classic bluegrass/folk music concerns with modernism, but also produced a sense of irony and self-awareness of the urban context. Performers can also use stage talk to localize songs by altering the meaning of the lyrics. This is precisely what Coole did during one performance of the song “Ain't Going to Work Tomorrow”. Some context will be helpful before examining this performance.

When I was doing research in the summer of 2009, Toronto was in the midst of what turned out to be a month long municipal public sector strike that essentially put a halt on all public services in the city. Municipal offices were closed, swimming pools were shut down (which is a big deal during Southern Ontario's hot summers). Perhaps most significant, garbage collection was put on hold. As the garbage piled up around curbside waste bins and in neighbourhood parks and green spaces, residents became increasingly frustrated, and a certain level of tension could be felt in the city. Everybody seemed to be talking about and debating the strike in bars, at work, on the bus, and on local talk radio stations.

One evening during all of this I was sitting in the Silver Dollar waiting for Crazy Strings to play. On this night the band had a delayed start because Chris Coole and fiddler John Showman were late arriving to the gig. When they finally did show up, the two rushed on stage, quickly unpacked their instruments and the band immediately launched into an energetic instrumental number, letting the audience know that the show had begun. After this number, Coole took to the mike and apologized for the late arrival, joking to

the audience: “Sorry for the late start tonight. Me and John Showman were trying to solve the garbage strike. We didn't have any luck...but we tried. And that's why we're late.” The audience laughed and played along, thanking them for at least trying to put an end to the strike. Showman continued, introducing the next song: “Alright, here's a song that hopefully some of you can relate to. It's called, ‘Ain't Going to Work Tomorrow’.” One member of the audience responded enthusiastically, declaring, “I ain't going to work tomorrow!” A few others offered cheers. Responding to Showman, Coole took the stage talk further, stating: “I was readin' in the Star...I think we can send this one out to 9.8 percent of Toronto. Terrible, ain't it?” With this the banjo started up and the song rolled along with driving intensity, inspiring an already exuberant crowd.

In “Ain't Going to Work Tomorrow,” the song's character sings about burying his enemy, celebrating the kill and the earnings, and finally, having to face the repercussions (see Appendix). The chorus has a celebratory quality as the singer declares, “I ain't gonna work tomorrow / I ain't gonna work the next day[...].” But despite the spirited feel, his reason for not working is bleak, if not entirely clear: “[...] I ain't gonna work tomorrow / For it might be a rainy day.” Whether the rainy day is a metaphor for the consequences that are bound to catch up with him, his coming days spent in prison, or his demise after a shootout (“[...] go get me my gun / I ain't no man for trouble / But I'll die before I run”) is secondary.<sup>29</sup> In fact, it is only the title lyric, which has been framed in relation to a local strike, that stands out during this particular performance.<sup>30</sup>

While most in attendance could relate to the underlying theme of committing a wrong and bearing the consequences, it is unlikely that the narrative of this song reflects the experiences of anybody in the audience or the band. Yet, the crowd seemed particularly moved by this performance. Of course, much of the positive response was a result of the music itself—the fast, driving tempo and the fiery instrumental solos. What I want to emphasize here is that the juxtaposition between the content of the lyrics and the (assumed) reality of the musicians' biography did not interfere with the performance experience. That is, the band, who otherwise do not attempt to come across as threatening, were not called into question for taking on the voice of the fugitive in this song of murder and justice.<sup>31</sup> This is, in part, because stage talk conventions remind audiences of the performative nature of what is being said, in turn allowing audience members to indulge in the fantastical moment.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps more important, however, is that through their stage talk, Showman and Coole recontextualized “Ain't Going to Work

Tomorrow” so that it might invigorate the local audience. Showman sent the song out to those who had the following day off, and hoped that there were some in the audience who could relate to its title lyric—an experience that is shared to a much greater extent than the criminal narrative that unfolds throughout the song’s verses. Coole brings the song even closer to home by referencing the garbage strike and quantifying just how many people in Toronto can relate to the title lyric.<sup>33</sup> Through this interpretive framework, the song now becomes localized and topical, requiring a smaller imaginative leap on behalf of the audience. Indeed, they could just as easily be the protagonist singing “I ain’t gonna work tomorrow”.

Coole lends added support to the interpretive framework by recasting the song’s character as an ordinary Torontonion. This shift begins before the song introduction, when he jokes about his unsuccessful attempt to solve the garbage strike. He then quotes a statistic about the strike that he read in the Toronto Star, and finally, he offers a very brief opinion on the situation (e.g., “Terrible, ain’t it?”). Once again, he is expressing an alliance with other residents by suggesting that he too is eagerly awaiting the end of the strike. This alliance imbues the performance of the song, and now the protagonist singing “I ain’t gonna work tomorrow” is not a fugitive, but a much more relatable, everyday Torontonion.

Three outcomes surface from Coole and Showman’s stage talk. First, it makes the performance more relatable for the urban audience. Lyrics about cabin homes, manual labour, and small town crime are reframed so as to resonate with the experiences and attitudes of the audience. This reframing expands the interpretative possibilities of the band’s repertoire. Second, it becomes a way for the performers to partake in a performance tradition they appreciate. This is especially so for Coole. While at times his stage talk might seem unconventional, the practice situates him in lineage with the performers he values. These first two functions of stage talk demonstrate, once again, how alliances are established with both the urban audience and a musical tradition that evokes visions of a pre-modern, rural lifestyle, a lifestyle that has been continuously placed in juxtaposition with urbanism.

The third outcome has to do with the authenticity of the performance. By drawing on his immediate urban surroundings in his stage talk, Coole takes some control of how the song will be interpreted. Coole’s stage talk recasts the protagonist singing “Ain’t Going To Work Tomorrow” as an everyday Torontonion (as opposed to a fugitive). Moreover, through stage talk he is able to influence

his own projected self-image. Coole does not come across as an urban dweller who longs for an imagined pre-modern way of life. Instead, he presents himself as an urbanite who simply enjoys performing this style of country music without feeling the need to be apologetic of or conceal his own urban cultural background.

Through stage talk, the members of Crazy Strings ease “the tension between an implied story (content: the singer in the song) and the real one (form: the singer on the stage)”.<sup>34</sup> They do this by choosing not to present themselves as rural, by subtly calling attention to the fact that many of the themes of the music they perform do not reflect their own experiences. They further ease the tension between the implied and the real story by melding the two narratives. That is, the singer in the song is linked more closely to the experience of the singer on stage (if only momentarily, e.g., for a single lyric). A result of easing this tension is that questions of authenticity fall to the wayside. This is because, for one, they are not concealing their urban cultural backgrounds. In their performances they draw upon the traditional bluegrass repertoire and some of the conventions of bluegrass stage talk, but their presentation of the music is informed by their own urban cultural backgrounds. Their rendering of common stage talk themes like anti-modernism, faith, sin, and exile is often exaggerated or takes on a comic tone—the result of a self-awareness that, culturally, the music they are passionate about does not always reflect their own attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. At other times the band is bold and decidedly unconventional. During their performances, the musicians are both unapologetic for their urban backgrounds and their love of traditional bluegrass music. Indeed, the brand of bluegrass they impart is a product of these two affinities: it is old, raw, acoustic music; it is “traditional,” but not over-serious or self-righteous; it is innocent, but scabrous fun; it is good-natured and simple, hip and cool—rural and urban.

## Appendix

### Lyrics – Ain’t Gonna Work Tomorrow (Traditional)

Dig a hole, dig a hole in the meadow.  
Dig it deep in the cold, cold ground.  
Dig a hole, dig a hole in the meadow,  
While I let this ol’ rounder go down.

### Chorus:

I ain’t gonna work tomorrow.  
I ain’t gonna work the next day.  
I ain’t gonna work tomorrow,  
For it might be a rainy day.

Can't you see that banjo ringin'.  
Can't you hear that lonesome sound.  
Can't you see those pretty girls dancin'.  
I said dancin' on the cold, cold ground.

(Chorus)

Wake up, wake up my darlin'.  
What makes you sleep so sound.  
Highway robbers are a-comin'.  
Gonna tear your playhouse down.

(Chorus)

Wake up, wake up my darlin',  
And go get me my gun.  
I ain't no man for trouble,  
But I'll die before I run.

(Chorus)

Source: Personal performance recordings.  
FHB.SDR.July.15.09.2 (22.56 – 26.01).

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#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Aside from Marc Roy (guitar/vocals), the core group of Crazy Strings is made up of members from the well known Canadian bluegrass group the Foggy Hogtown Boys: Andrew Collins (mandolin/fiddle), Chris Coole (guitar/banjo/vocals), Max Heineman (bass/vocals), Chris Quinn (banjo/vocals), and John Showman (fiddle/vocals).

<sup>2</sup> High Lonesome Wednesdays is one of several weekly bluegrass/old time nights that the members of Crazy Strings participate in throughout Toronto. I comment on how bluegrass is localized during some of these performance events in a version of this paper presented at the 2011 conference of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music.

<sup>3</sup> In particular, Lester Flatt and Carter Stanley's emceeing skills came up a number of times during my interviews with musicians. Chris Coole of Crazy Strings went as far as saying, "I'd listen to them emcee as much as I'd listen to them sing" (Coole 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Bealle, John. "Self Involvement in Musical Performance: Stage Talk and Interpretive Control at a Bluegrass Festival", *Ethnomusicology* 37 (1993), p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> By "early bluegrass" I'm referring to the period between the late 1930s through to the 1950s (Adler 1982, 17; Rosenberg [1985] 2005).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*; Adler, Thomas A. "The Uses of Humor by Bluegrass Musicians", *Mid-America Folklore*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1982), p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Bealle 1993, p. 66.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*; Adler 1982, 19.

<sup>9</sup> Bealle 1993, p. 66; Rosenberg, Neil. *Bluegrass: A History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005. Second edition, pp. 156-157.

<sup>10</sup> Bealle 1993, p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> Adler 1982, p. 25.

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<sup>12</sup> Quinn, Chris. Interview with the author, July 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Bealle 1993, p. 72.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-77.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-74.

<sup>17</sup> Other notifications are made throughout the night regarding upcoming shows and CDs that can be purchased from the band.

<sup>18</sup> Coole, Chris. Interview with the author, July 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, what is thought of as bluegrass culture is not entirely distinct from urban culture. As Rosenberg notes, much of the commercial country music that has developed over the past century, including bluegrass, emerged from the experience of rural migrants who gathered in an urban social context (2005, 9 and 18; 1986).

<sup>20</sup> See Malone, Bill C. *Country Music, U.S.A.: A Fifty Year History*, 1968. Austin and London: University of Texas Press, p. 334.

<sup>21</sup> Diamond, Beverley. "The Music of Modern Indigeneity: From Identity to Alliance Studies", *European Seminar in Ethnomusicology*, 12. Ed. Marin Marian-Balasa (2006), p. 178.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Coole, Chris. Interview with the author, July 2009.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Bauman, Richard. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Rowley: Newbury House Publishers, 1977, p. 40.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>27</sup> Collins, Andrew. Interview with the author, July 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Bauman 1977, p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> It is unclear whether the police or another band of fugitives are in pursuit of the protagonist.

<sup>30</sup> The pride expressed in the final verse (e.g., "I'll die before I run") could certainly be interpreted as an expression of the union's strength, but the details of each verse are overshadowed by the title lyric, which is repeated ten times throughout the song.

<sup>31</sup> Of course, any questioning of the band's authenticity would likely be done privately, within an audience member's own thoughts or among friends. Based on the crowds overwhelmingly positive response, such incredulity was scarce.

<sup>32</sup> Bauman 1977, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> It seems that the 9.8 percent figure that Coole offers actually represents a general unemployment rate for Toronto in 2009 (City of Toronto 2009). While the strike certainly made an impact on the city's labour force, I did not come across any quantitative data indicating a percentage of residents absent from work because of the strike.

<sup>34</sup> Frith, Simon. *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 209.