

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository

12-4-2013 12:00 AM

The Halifax Pop Explosion: Music Scenes, Sloan, And The Case For A Halifax Sound

Danielle Hamel, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Norma Coates, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in
Popular Music and Culture

© Danielle Hamel 2013

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd>



Part of the [Musicology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hamel, Danielle, "The Halifax Pop Explosion: Music Scenes, Sloan, And The Case For A Halifax Sound" (2013). *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*. 1741.
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/1741>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact wlsadmin@uwo.ca.

THE HALIFAX POP EXPLOSION:
MUSIC SCENES, SLOAN,
AND THE CASE FOR A HALIFAX SOUND

by

Danielle Hamel

Graduate Program in Popular Music And Culture

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
MA in Popular Music and Culture

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

© Danielle Hamel 2014

Abstract

In the early 1990s, the Halifax music scene was catapulted into the limelight as Canada's answer to the Seattle grunge scene. Dubbed the Halifax Pop Explosion, the surge of bands that became popular during this time came of age in an already well-established music scene with nurturing local infrastructure. At the forefront of the city's mainstream success, the band Sloan and their peers had developed a particular style of songwriting and performance that led the media and local audiences to believe that a particular 'Halifax Sound' had emerged, a notion that still reverberates in the local music scene. Using the diverse styles of Sloan's first two albums as a case study, this thesis explores, through both musicological and cultural analysis, the existence of a cohesive 'Halifax Sound' and its impact upon those who were, and still are, invested in the city's small-town status as unique, isolated, and authentically 'local'.

Keywords

Music scenes, Place, Halifax, 1990s, Sloan, Halifax Pop Explosion, Cultural identity, Popular music, Social Aspects, History and criticism, Music analysis

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance of my advisors, Professor Norma Coates and Professor Kari Veblen. I would like to thank the Popular Music and Culture faculty members that helped to make my graduate experience rewarding: Professor Jonathan Burston, Professor Jay Hodgson, Professor Keir Keightley, and Professor Robert Toft. I am indebted to my classmates for their discussions and support, especially Sam Allen, Kyle Fowle, and Ryan Johansen. This thesis also owes much to the input of audio engineer and musician Matthew Thomson, who helped guide my listening throughout my music research.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
KEYWORDS	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
LIST OF FIGURES	VI
LIST OF TABLES	VII
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW/METHODOLOGY	9
CHAPTER 3: GROWTH OF A SCENE / MYTH OF THE LOCAL	19
THE GROWING ALTERNATIVE ROCK SCENE	19
INFRASTRUCTURE	22
ISOLATED AND UNIQUE	27
CHAPTER 4: 1992 – HALIFAX IS THE NEXT SEATTLE? (A CASE STUDY OF SLOAN’S SMEARED)	38
MEDIA ATTENTION	38
THE “NEXT SEATTLE”	41
THE ‘HALIFAX SOUND’	48
ANALYSIS OF TWO SONGS FROM SMEARED	50
UNDERWHELMED	55
500 UP	60
CHAPTER 5: 1994 – “NO THANKS. I DON’T WANT TO BE GRUNGE”: A CASE STUDY OF SLOAN’S TWICE REMOVED	65
THE GRUNGE “HOUSE OF CARDS”	65

ANALYSIS OF TWO SONGS FROM TWICE REMOVED	71
COAX ME	75
PEOPLE OF THE SKY.....	79
THE HALIFAX SOUND OF SMEARED VS. TWICE REMOVED	85
<u>CHAPTER 6: REMEMBERING THE CLASSIC HALIFAX SOUND: REFLECTION AND</u>	
<u>CONCLUSION.....</u>	<u>90</u>
<u>HALIFAX SOUND TODAY.....</u>	<u>93</u>
<u>REFERENCES.....</u>	<u>98</u>
<u>APPENDIX 1: LYRICS AND TRANSCRIPTION OF MUSIC FROM SMEARED.....</u>	<u>107</u>
<u>APPENDIX 2: LYRICS AND TRANSCRIPTION OF MUSIC FROM TWICE REMOVED.....</u>	<u>111</u>
<u>CIRRICULUM VITAE.....</u>	<u>116</u>

List of Figures

FIGURE 1: SCREENSHOT OF YOUTUBE VIDEO OF SLOAN PLAYING UNDERWHELMED LIVE IN 1992. L-R: PENTLAND (FENDER TELECASTER), MURPHY (FENDER MUSTANG BASS), FERGUSON (FENDER MUSTANG).	54
FIGURE 2: MELODIC MOTIF #1 OF UNDERWHELMED (VERSE)	57
FIGURE 3: MELODIC MOTIF #2 OF UNDERWHELMED (CHORUS)	57
FIGURE 4: TRITONE HARMONY (A# AND E#) IN FINAL NOTE OF THE FIRST CHORUS ("HERS") OF UNDERWHELMED	58
FIGURE 5: TRITONE HARMONY (A# AND E#) IN VERSE 3 ("MIND") OF UNDERWHELMED	58
FIGURE 6: MAJOR SECOND HARMONY (B AND C#) IN FINAL LINE OF UNDERWHELMED	58
FIGURE 7: MELODIC MOTIF #1 OF 500 UP (VERSE)	62
FIGURE 8: MELODIC MOTIF #1 OF 500 UP (CHORUS)	62
FIGURE 9: VOCAL HARMONY IN CHORUS OF 500 UP	63
FIGURE 10: MOTIF #2 OF 500 UP (BRIDGE)	63
FIGURE 11: SCREENSHOT OF SLOAN'S VIDEO FOR COAX ME. L-R: PENTLAND (GIBSON SG), MURPHY (FENDER MUSTANG BASS), FERGUSON (FENDER TELECASTER)	73
FIGURE 12: SCREENSHOT OF SLOAN'S VIDEO FOR PEOPLE OF THE SKY. L-R: PENTLAND (FENDER MUSTANG), SCOTT (FENDER MUSTANG), FERGUSON (FENDER MUSTANG BASS)	74
FIGURE 13: MELODIC MOTIF #1 OF COAX ME (FIRST HALF OF VERSE)	77
FIGURE 14: MELODIC MOTIF #2 OF COAX ME (SECOND HALF OF VERSE)	77
FIGURE 15: MELODIC MOTIF #2 OF COAX ME (CHORUS)	77
FIGURE 16: MELODIC MOTIF #3 OF COAX ME (BRIDGE)	78
FIGURE 17: EXTENDED MELODIC MOTIF #3 OF COAX ME (BRIDGE)	78
FIGURE 18: ETHEREAL BACKUP VOCALS IN OUTRO OF COAX ME	78
FIGURE 19: MELODIC MOTIF #1 OF PEOPLE OF THE SKY (VERSE)	81
FIGURE 20: SHORTENED MELODIC MOTIF #1 OF PEOPLE OF THE SKY (CHORUS)	81
FIGURE 21: SHORTENED, SIMPLIFIED MELODIC MOTIF #1 OF PEOPLE OF THE SKY (CHORUS)	81
FIGURE 22: MELODIC MOTIF #2 OF PEOPLE OF THE SKY (CHORUS)	82
FIGURE 23: VOCAL HARMONY OF PENPALS (CHORUS)	83
FIGURE 24: VOCAL HARMONY OF PENPALS (END OF FINAL CHORUS)	83
FIGURE 25: VOCAL HARMONY OF WORRIED NOW (CHORUS)	84
FIGURE 26: VOCAL HARMONY OF WORRIED NOW (END OF FINAL CHORUS)	84

List of Tables

TABLE 1: CHORD PROGRESSION OF UNDERWHELMED	56
TABLE 2: CHORD PROGRESSION OF 500 UP	61
TABLE 3: CHORD PROGRESSION OF COAX ME	76
TABLE 4: COMPARE AND CONTRAST THE ALBUMS TWICE REMOVED AND SMEARED	87

Chapter 1: Introduction

“Back in the Halifax pop explosion days, there was definitely a Halifax sound – a lot of the bands sounded like Sloan.” - Grant Lawrence, singer of The Smugglers, CBC Radio 3 on-air personality (Corden 2004)

“Music scenes: by the time you’ve found them, they’re usually over.” - Internet blogger on the ephemerality of the Halifax Pop Explosion (Carpenter 2011)

Halifax was an exciting city in which to be a musician in the early 1990s. The music industry had suddenly taken notice of the local music scene and eager major record labels like Subpop and Geffen were signing many bands. Thanks to the success of local band Sloan and their take on the Seattle grunge sound that was exploding on the West Coast at the time, the other side of the continent was becoming known as 'the next Seattle' or 'Seattle of the North' with Sloan themselves being touted as 'Canada's Nirvana' (Macleod 1992). The East Coast music scene wasn't an exact copy of the Seattle Sound; the sounds emanating from Halifax appeared to be different – sloppier, 'poppier', and more upbeat than those of their Seattle counterparts. As such, the rise of musical exports from the city of Halifax in the early 1990s became affectionately referred to as the Halifax Pop Explosion. The music scene emerged from a complex variety of factors that acted along a continuum, having been established before the appearance of Sloan in 1992, and remaining in place after the media hype had peaked and the 'Halifax Sound' fragmented into a variety of divergent musical styles. The rise of the 1990s Halifax indie rock scene can be attributed to a particular alignment of supportive material infrastructures, including that of venues, various media outlets, audiences, and record labels. This paper will attempt to explore the implications of this scene and the bands that were invested in

Halifax's identity as a unique, geographically isolated city with a very specific musical 'sound'.

The media focused on the similarities in the music of the bands from this area and the notion of a Halifax Sound began to evolve amongst journalists, record labels, and participants within the local music scene. While the isolation of the region has been credited with providing Halifax with a unique sound, any discussion of the music's local or grassroots qualities as its distinguishing factors depends heavily on the perpetuation of the myth that music which is 'local' is inherently more authentic than music that comes from larger, less sincere, success-driven musical hubs. Nonetheless, the widely agreed upon notion of a cohesive, quantifiable Halifax Sound as it appeared in the 1990s demonstrates the importance of the Halifax Pop Explosion as a distinct moment in Canadian rock music history. The ramifications of the local music scene's investment in the existence of a specific Halifax Sound has carried over into the present music scene in Halifax as bands continue to identify their sound as carrying on in the tradition of a 'classic' Halifax Sound.

As the most well-known and commercially successful band during the Halifax Pop Explosion, Sloan became the face of the Halifax music scene and its associated sound in the early 1990s. After the success of their first album, *Smeared*, in 1992, Sloan abandoned grunge, which they feared would become a short-lived trend. They then released *Twice Removed* in 1994, which had a mature, sophisticated, British 1960s pop sound that relied less on noisy, fuzz pedal-fuelled guitars and more on open arrangements, ambitious vocal harmonies, and classic rock inspired production. Though *Twice Removed* brought an immediate downturn in the band's success (their label Geffen had severed their relationship and refused to promote the album because the band's new musical direction was not as marketable as that of the album *Smeared*), the gamble for career longevity paid off within a few years, *Twice Removed* eventually received critical success and a cult following with Canadian audiences (Chorney-Booth 2005). The insistence by the media, local bands, and audiences that a Halifax Sound existed across seemingly incongruous styles of music suggests that there is a "through line" (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2011, 499) of similarities between the music of Sloan's first two

albums, both having been released during the height of the Halifax Pop Explosion. The nature of this “through line” lends weight to the argument that specific musical traits are recognizable as a hallmark of the band's home city.

I approached this thesis topic with the simple question of asking why, as a resident of Atlantic Canada, I could often pinpoint bands that were from the East Coast by listening to their music, without knowing any of the bands' biographical information. Was there truth to the notion amongst Canadian music fans that the East Coast had a particular *sound*? There are many possibilities as to why music from the East Coast is said to have a particular sound, and more specifically, the city of Halifax is said to have a Halifax Sound. This question led to me to consider the moment in which Halifax, the largest city in the Atlantic region, had become the next 'it' city for a short period of time in the early 1990s and try to discover the motivating factors that were at work here to bring about the city's reputation for music. The answer to this question depends on which facet of the music scene is being considered, all deeply invested in perpetuating the existence of the Halifax Sound as a phenomenon. Record labels and journalists often seek to brand a music scene as being distinctive to a certain city, revealing complex processes within the music industry that work to authenticate and package local scenes for mass consumption. Local bands and audiences from small, remote cities often find a strong and proud sense of identity by building the mythology that the city's unique music scene is derived in a large part from its geographical isolation. In investigating the forces that acted on the city of Halifax during this time, I chose to concentrate on studying the characteristics of the music itself from the 1990s scene, as well as discussions by the media, local audiences, and the bands themselves about the music produced from around 1992 until 1996. This thesis does not attempt to assess all of the music from the period of the Halifax Pop Explosion. Instead, in the interest of brevity, Sloan was chosen as a case study to represent Halifax music from this era because of their mainstream popularity and critical success at the time. This thesis does not seek to definitively prove whether or not such a 'sound' existed in Halifax at the time or in the years since; instead, this research is interested in the circumstances that gave rise to this belief and continues to enable its existence.

A key word for this thesis, 'sound', can be perceived as vague and interchangeable with other words like 'style', 'genre', and 'scene' thanks to its casual use in music journalism, conversations, and even academic scholarship. In Connell and Gibson's book, *Sound Tracks*, the authors use the words 'sound', 'style', and 'scene' as if they were synonymous (2003, 90-116). In some cases, there may appear to be some overlap between the concepts when arguments are made for singular sounds and styles of music within a given local scene. In the case of Halifax during the early 1990s, bands, audiences, and the press believed that there was a specific sound emanating from the Halifax music scene, causing an overlap in the concepts that the terms were intended to describe. This practice further compounds the over-simplification of a local music scene to a fixed style or genre instead of accounting for the rich web of musical connections within a city and the global musical influences that impact it. Nevertheless, fans and critics still believe in a discernible 'Halifax Sound', so it is important to attempt to understand the processes that fuel these beliefs, a topic this thesis hopes to address.

Théberge offers a definition of the term 'sound' that closely resembles my engagement with Sloan's music as a case study. He suggests that musicians today concentrate on creating unique "sounds" with the same "attention that was once reserved only for the melody or the lyric of a pop song" (Théberge 1995, 275). He elaborates on this definition, stating that this paradigm shift is thanks to the advent of sound reproduction technology:

"Indeed, musicians today (and critics and audiences as well) often speak of having a unique and personal 'sound' in the same manner in which another generation of musicians might have spoken of having developed a particular 'style' of playing or composing. The term 'sound' has taken on a peculiar musical character that cannot be separated from either the 'music' or, more importantly, from sound recording as the dominant medium of reproduction. With regards to the latter, the idea of a 'sound' appears to be a particularly contemporary concept that could hardly have been maintained in an era that did not possess mechanical or electronic means of reproduction" (Théberge 1995, 279).

This definition appears a little dated in today's musical environment where recordings have lost their prominence as the ultimate expression of a band's artistic statement and many record labels require 360 degree deals in order to profit from tours and merchandising. However, Théberge's argument still illuminates the point that the artist's search for an individual 'sound' is just as important as their approach to 'style' or songwriting. With the conscious choice of specific details in their music, like guitars, basses, effects pedals, drums, auxiliary percussion, and recording techniques, bands today mold the sound of their instruments, their voice, and their records just as methodically as they craft their song-writing, lyrics, and arrangements. It is the sound of a band to which audiences instantly respond and make value judgments about the music's genre, style, place of origin, and even its cultural worth (Théberge 1995, 282). In this way, the study of a band's particular sound, or in the case of this paper, Sloan's contribution to the notion of a Halifax Sound, can be seen as the study of one of the ways that a band chooses to present itself, aligning or distancing itself with already established scenes, styles, and genres.

Throughout my analysis of Sloan's 'sound', many references are made to the types of effects that are used with the guitars and bass. An overview of these effects – overdrive and fuzz – will hopefully make my use of these terms clear. Overdrive generally refers to a lightly distorted effect that creates warm overtones, mimicking how a tube amplifier sounds when the volume is pushed to its limits. The term dates back to a time before the popularity of effects pedals when guitarists noticed they could distort their guitar tone by increasing the volume of their amplifiers and overdriving the tubes. Increasing the gain of the amp pushes the waveform to a clipping stage, producing the effect commonly known as overdrive. Many musicians today achieve this sound through the use of an amplifier or a guitar effects pedal that reproduces the result of an overdriven amplifier. Fuzz, on the other hand, is a guitar effects pedal that produces a much more intensely distorted sound than overdrive. Fuzz pedals tend to create more noise and feedback which, depending on the guitarist, are positive characteristics that attract players to this pedal. The end result of the fuzz pedal is reflected in its name, causing the guitar to have less definition while discernible details in the performance are lost in a wash of noise.

Another term employed in this thesis is the phrase 'Halifax Pop Explosion'. The term itself is a cheeky reference to what is known as the Halifax Explosion of 1917, an explosion caused by a burning wartime munitions ship in the Halifax harbour that leveled the North End section of the city. The music-related use of the phrase Halifax Pop Explosion has a double meaning – the buzz phrase coined by the media to describe the sudden rise to fame by Halifax bands and their brand of pop in the early 1990s and the name of the annual music festival, started in 1993 by band manager Peter Rowan and promoter Greg Clark, which continues to be a major international music event in the city (About HPX 2012). In the interest of clarity, my references to the Halifax Pop Explosion throughout this thesis will be referring to the phenomenon of Halifax bands garnering worldwide attention and not the music festival itself, unless otherwise noted.

In the chapter on scenes in *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, Shuker describes the possibilities for the scholarly study of music scenes as:

“(i) a concern with the spatial distribution of musical forms, activities, and performers; (ii) exploration of musical home locales and their extension...; (iii) the delimitation of areas that share certain musical traits, or relatedly, on the identification of the character and personality of places as gleaned from lyrics, melody, instrumentation, and the general ‘feel’ or sensory impact of the music; (iv) pertinent themes in music, such as the image of the city.” (Shuker 2008, 197)

This excerpt summarizes the perspective of the majority of scholars writing about the topic. Shuker’s third point has proven to be the most neglected area of inquiry. Studies of the actual “musical traits” associated with a music scene have been largely neglected by popular musicologists who choose to concentrate on the sociological and anthropological implications of a scene rather than exploring its homogeneity in musicological terms. This tendency follows the overall trend in popular music studies to concentrate on matters relating to cultural issues while avoiding direct contact with the music itself. I hope to bridge these seemingly disparate areas of study within this thesis.

This thesis attempts to fill the gap between musicological and sociological fields of popular music research by exploring the existence of a Halifax Sound centred around the

Nova Scotia capital during the height of the Halifax Pop Explosion from 1992, with the rising international popularity of the band Sloan and their album *Smear*, to 1994, when Sloan abandoned the grunge style with the release of *Twice Removed* but, according to critics and audiences, still exemplified this local sound. Chapter 2 of this thesis will be an overview of current popular music scholarship that pertains to my topic and an outline of the methodologies that I have borrowed from other scholars. In Chapter 3, I will explore whether or not a cohesive sound truly existed in and around Halifax during the 1990s through an examination of the geographical scope of the Halifax music scene during the Halifax Pop Explosion, its precursors, the extent of its musical infrastructure, purported similarities between the music produced within this time period, and the sense of community amongst musicians. I will also analyze how the idea of a 'local' scene can be mythologized in order to appear authentic to music consumers, resulting in an essentialization of the complex interweaving and cross-fertilization of its diverse musical styles. Next, the music of Sloan from 1992-1994 will provide a case study on the influential musical styles that sat at the forefront of the Halifax Pop Explosion. Sloan's first two full-length albums, *Smear* and *Twice Removed* will be examined in-depth in Chapters 4 and 5, respectively, in an effort to highlight the band's discernible hallmarks that can be described as "East Coast" in origin and, consequently, how the albums can be used to signify the quintessential 'Halifax Sound' as delineated throughout this paper. In addition, Chapter 4 concentrates on Halifax's status as the 'next Seattle' as record companies and the media rushed to commodify the local music scene. It also explores the similarities and differences between the music scenes of the two cities and their respective 'sounds'. Chapter 5 compares and contrasts Sloan's *Twice Removed* with *Smear* in order to highlight the ways in which a "through line" (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2011, 499) of similar 'sounds' was present throughout these seemingly incongruent albums. Lastly, in Chapter 6, the Halifax Sound of the 1990s will be explored through the retrospective lens of today's media and local bands in order to illuminate the long-term influence the era of the Halifax Pop Explosion had on the sense of local identity of contemporary artists.

The thesis will complement the extensive research on scenes of popular music by Straw, Cohen, Street, Stahl, Shuker, and Connell and Gibson by exploring the actual 'sound' of

a genre or scene, taking into account the pioneering work in this relatively new area of research by Connell, Bell, Théberge, Zak, and Hodgson. Their research provided a firm groundwork upon which to think about how a scene evolves along a fluid continuum without any clear beginnings or endings but yet, somehow, moments of distinct musical ‘sounds’ coalesce around a particular place through a complex web of outside and insular influences. These scholars have also provided a roadmap on how to dissect these ‘sounds’ and systematically classify the bands according to their songwriting, vocal, instrumental, and recording abilities.

The primary materials of study for this thesis include the early recordings of the most well-known Halifax band of the 1990s, Sloan, as well as a familiarity with its musical peers, among them Eric’s Trip, Hardship Post, Jale, and Thrush Hermit. I have gathered contemporary interviews with these artists from newspapers, television, and radio that document the scene during its peak and have also found interviews and articles that look back on this period reflectively. Of particular use for this study has been the online archive of the e-mail discussion list, Sloannet, which had provided (and now as a Yahoo! Group, it still provides) fans of the Halifax music scene with an outlet to share bands, reviews, concert listings, articles, transcriptions of radio and television appearances, and general musings upon the state of the scene between the years 1993-1997. Many of the newspaper articles written during this time, including the potentially rich resource of articles featured in the Halifax free weekly newspaper, *The Coast*, predate the widespread use of the internet and therefore do not have much of an online presence. Luckily, a substantial number of local interviews in college newspapers and *The Coast*, as well as radio stations and television appearances have been conveniently preserved in the Sloannet archive. In addition, many larger newspapers, such as *Maclean’s* and *Chart Magazine*, have an extensive archive of relevant articles from the 1990s that have proven to be very helpful in my research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review/Methodology

The intersection of music and place is a topic of growing interest in the field of popular musicology, with numerous studies on music scenes conducted in the past two decades (Straw 1991; Cohen 1991; Shank 1994; Cohen 1994; Fenster 1995; Gay Jr. 1995; Street 1995; Théberge 1995; Bell 2003; Connell and Gibson 2003; Straw 2003; Moore 2005; Cohen 2007; Stahl 2007). An entire issue of *Popular Music* was devoted to the subject in 2000 and an anthology about scenes, *Music Scenes: Local Translocal, and Virtual*, was published in 2004. These studies helped to provide the basis for thinking about how a strong sense of place affects the way people view and respond to a particular music scene. In examining the ‘sound’ of a scene, I looked to existing scholarship that has focused on the crossroads of music and place in order to account for the sociological elements that make up a music ‘scene’. Straw offers a useful roadmap for navigating the plurality of terms used when studying scenes. He gives the term ‘scene’ a broad definition in order to include within its scope “musicians, club-goers, disc jockeys, record-buyers and several classes of entrepreneurs (record-store owners, club-night promoters and so on), as well as a host of markers of local distinctiveness (such as styles of music, dress and dance)” (2003, 349). He suggests that ‘scene’ should become a direct replacement of the term ‘community’ because ‘community’ implies that collective tastes are stable and that members receive a “sense of purpose” from “contemporary musical practices” and a conception of their “musical heritage”, while a ‘scene’ allows “a range of musical practices [to] coexist” and “cross-fertiliz[e]”, creating a sense of purpose through the “building of musical alliances and the drawing of musical boundaries” (Straw 1991, 469). These two definitions are in direct conflict with one another as one emphasizes a linear sense of history and the other encourages a horizontal and decentralized approach (Straw 1991, 469). In this way, the discussion of a ‘scene’ instead of a ‘community’ allows for a plurality of styles, genres, audiences, and musicians within a given area. For Straw, it is important to chart the interactions and cross-pollination between musical

practices within and between music scenes with the ultimate goal of obliterating the idea of an isolated and insular local scene in favour of much broader concept of scene that is not limited to a geographical location (Straw 2003, 350).

When thinking about how the local scene in Halifax was unique, Connell and Gibson provided me with the framework to build it into a case study. Connell and Gibson appear to disagree with Straw's belief that there is no such thing as an isolated music scene, stating that "[i]n the contemporary popular music industry, little uniformity exists across geographical space, hence there is no cultural homogeneity that might standardize musical sounds and erase local uniqueness" (Connell and Gibson 2003, 107). Connell and Gibson believe that isolated local music scenes with a unique sound do exist and should not be overlooked in favour of a large, homogenous geographical space. While there is merit to Straw's argument that the "cosmopolitan character of certain kinds of musical activity – their attentiveness to change occurring elsewhere" causes scenes to be reproduced at a regional, national, and international level (Straw 1991, 470), there is no denying that certain musical characteristics, performance aesthetics, audiences, musicians, and specific 'sounds' are attributed to specific geographical locations by critics, fans, and the bands themselves. The simple fact that musical similarities are agreed upon by participants in any particular scene motivates my investigation into the nature of a specific scene and how it is defined, at the very least, by a physical location, and also by any inherent musical factors. This is not to say that specific 'sounds' associated with a particular place are not replicated in other cities around the world. Connell and Gibson agree that the quest for the geographical origins of 'sounds' is less logical than Straw's theory of the myth of "local uniqueness" (Connell and Gibson 2003, 108). It is through these micro and macro lenses, and with a grain of salt, that I examined the uniqueness of the Halifax scene in this paper, looking to the assertions of local bands and media who propagated the mythology of its unique homegrown talent.

While the replication of scenes and sounds across geographical boundaries complicates the study of any particular city, I was also careful within this thesis to not oversimplify the music scene in Halifax as being uniform in style and remaining static over time. Pinning down a distinct set of musical characteristics for a particular scene can be

difficult since each city will feature multiple genres as well as multiple styles per band. Genres themselves are not static and performers will sometimes resist being labeled as part of a scene (Connell and Gibson 2003, 106). Connell and Gibson warn that while some movements can be initially credited to a certain city, “the actual sounds of the music emanating from these places (the notes, timbres, themes of songs) become less distinct over time as other influences intrude” (2003, 109). Keeping this in mind, I was careful to place the bands in Halifax on a fluid, evolving continuum rather than situate them in a period of time containing the ‘classic Halifax Sound’ with a specific start and end date.

Cohen and Bell's studies of the Liverpool Sound and the Seattle Sound, respectively, (Cohen 1994; Bell 2003) also inform this thesis. These short studies provided a basic starting point for my analysis, as they contain preliminary attempts within popular music scholarship to address the concept of an identifiable sound associated with a particular region. Both authors approach the subject cautiously, contending that the existence of a cohesive scene can be attributed to journalistic hype and therefore cannot be taken at face value. To compensate for this, Cohen relies on interviews with musicians, reviews of local bands, and the opinions of journalists to establish an argument for a unified Liverpool sound instead of turning to empirical evidence, the music of the bands themselves, which would make for a much more challenging study (1994, 124). When writing about the Seattle Sound, Bell outright denies that music is a unifying factor within the grunge movement, pointing instead to what he believes to be the scene's common elements: the honesty of its music and lyrics, its love of noise, and the acceptance of its bands outside Seattle before grunge enjoyed any success in the city itself (2003, 185). Unlike Bell's opinion of the Seattle grunge scene, I believe that pointing out similarities between the music produced in Seattle can be helpful when comparing the music scenes of Seattle and Halifax. Like Cohen, Bell avoids any lengthy investigation of the music produced within the Seattle scene. Clearly, there is a need within the field of popular music studies for more examples of scholarly work that deals with a scene's primary musical material.

Other studies on scenes have tended to concentrate on the importance of a local identity within a scene as defined against a national or global identity (Fenster 1995; Gay Jr. 1995; Street 1995; Shank 1994). For these scholars, the local is not confined to a physical space but is instead connected to multiple geographical scenes through social networks and transnational corporations (Fenster 1995, 83). As such, the local is posited as an “imagined local,” encompassing many interactions and communication paths (Gay Jr. 1995, 126). Street describes local scenes as playing an important role in “localizing” national trends and reminds popular musicologists that the local is usually constructed from non-local resources (1995, 257-260). In these cases, the local is packaged as having an ‘authentic’ identity which is then marketed and replicated abroad. The framework posited by these scholars informs my own exploration of local identity in Halifax.

In the last decade, the study of local identity has become increasingly popular amongst scholars. Several graduate theses and dissertations were devoted to the subject in the last few years. Most have concentrated on regional identities in specific Canadian regions, such as examining the presence of Newfoundland culture and the encroachment of Americanization in the music of the band Great Big Sea (Moore 2002), and in a similar vein, a study on Newfoundland radio and its role in enabling and preserving local identity with the help of Canadian cultural policy and Canadian Content regulations (Keough 2007). Another recent dissertation looks at Canadian cultural policy and how it contributed to the peak of the Montreal independent music scene in the mid-2000s (Battle 2009). Similar to my own research methods, the author here investigates the hype produced within the scene by observing how the city is presented in the media. Other comparable case studies on specific Canadian music niches include an inquiry on the band Broken Social Scene, focusing on nature of the relationship between its multitude of band members through original interviews (Dahlman 2009), a look at Celtic music and culture on Cape Breton Island and how it has become a transnational community thanks to global tourism (Lavengood 2008), and an analysis of the role played by an online message board in the Cape Breton music scene through an ethnography of its participants and a survey of its discussion topics (McNeil 2009). The increased number of these in-depth studies on regional music scenes in recent years demonstrates growing popularity amongst academics, particularly graduate students. What is still lacking in these inquiries,

however, is a greater engagement with the music produced within these scenes, a very integral component of regional identity that is all too often overlooked. A limited amount of scholarly writing in the past few decades engage with the musical sounds that originate from a scene.

Expanding on the concept of local identity, Bennett writes about the perpetuation of “urban mythscales”¹ within a scene as new generations of musicians and fans re-interpret, discuss, and debate what the local ‘Canterbury Sound’² meant when it was first coined in the 1960s and how it has changed since (2002, 87-88). According to his study, local musical products are shrouded in mythology and given cultural significance as “individuals routinely conceptualize places, and the cultural practices connected with those places, using mythscales as a primary form of reference” (Bennett 2002, 95). In this sense, the scene becomes what Bennett refers to as an “active audience” engaging in the act of “scene-writing” as “fans take an active role in the definition of the Canterbury Sound” (Bennett 2002, 93). The mythscale is in constant flux with “competing narratives” and “alternate ‘takes’ of the Canterbury Sound as fans read each other’s online interpretations or ‘versions’ of the scene and re-write pieces of the latter to accommodate their ‘knowledge’ of Canterbury music” which demonstrates the desire of fans to trace the origins and development of any musical style (Bennett 2002, 93). This view of a local identity as transformed by the creation of an urban mythscale is similar to Connell and Gibson’s idea of mythologizing what it means to be local (2003, 108). These concepts have informed and reinforced my own conclusions regarding the mythology of the local within the Halifax music scene, found in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

1 Bennett defines his concept of urban mythscales as a derivative of “the model of ‘scales’ originally suggested by Appadurai (1990) as a means of understanding the changing relationship between social and physical landscapes as the latter are constantly re-shaped by global flows of people, technological innovations, capital, information and ideas” (Bennett 88-89).

2 Canterbury is located in the county of Kent in Southeast England. The Canterbury Sound, according to Bennett, is “a term originally coined by music journalists during the late 1960s to describe the music of Canterbury jazz-rock group the Wilde Flowers, and groups subsequently formed by individual members of the Wilde Flowers – the most well known examples being Caravan, Hatfield and the North and Soft Machine, and a number of other groups with alleged Canterbury connections” (Bennett 87).

While perusing the popular music literature for scholarship on music scenes, in addition to the authors listed above, I also found helpful case studies in tangential topics of research. Interestingly, cultural geographers have adopted the notion of 'sound' to trace musical similarities within a given region. Many studies have been made within this area (James and Rose 1983; Warren 1993; Bell 2003; Carney 2003), including an anthology entitled *The Sounds of People and Places: A Geography of American Music from Country to Classical and Blues to Bop*, edited by Carney. This collection of articles, however, treats the term 'sound' as a general category to describe the music emanating from a particular area and, as geographers, these scholars are more concerned with mapping the extent of a scene's influence within a region rather than accounting for the musical characteristics of the scene itself.

In regards to the search for a particular Halifax Sound, this study hopes to elucidate the plethora of factors that gave rise to this notion in the early 1990s that persists today. I have chosen to do so through the following ways: a close examination of Sloan's first two albums; by sifting through reviews, interviews, and profiles on Sloan and other relevant Halifax figures; and by combing public comments made online by Sloan fans and participants in the Halifax music scene. Though most of these sources date from the early 1990s, some of them are recent and document this period in retrospect, allowing the passage of time to provide opportunities for reflection and additional perspectives.

In searching for musical qualities that inform the listener's perception of East Coast music, particularly that of Halifax while it was being touted as the 'next Seattle', I felt it was important to attempt an exhaustive musicological analysis of a cross section of music from the era. I listened to many alternative rock bands that were popular in the Maritimes during that time, many of whom were already familiar to me before undertaking this study. These bands included: Eric's Trip from Moncton; Jale from Halifax; Hardship Post from St. John's, who made Halifax their home base in the 1990s; and Thrush Hermit from Halifax. These bands fall under the umbrella term of alternative rock and all use the same basic rock instrumentation (drums, bass, guitars, and singers) but are fairly diverse in sound. Eric's Trip employs intense guitar feedback and screaming male and female vocals, contrasted with sudden drops in dynamics to soft, delicate melodic moments. Jale

and Hardship Post are pop-grunge bands with more light-hearted, upbeat songs than their Seattle counterparts. Thrush Hermit is most similar to Sloan in sound, with a loose style of guitar playing with classic rock and Beatles-esque sensibilities. The limited scope and time frame of this study did not permit me to analyze the music of each band. I chose instead to concentrate on Sloan because of the massive amount of media exposure they received in Canada and the United States after the release of their first full-length album, *Smear*, in 1992. Their second album, *Twice Removed*, released in 1994, is consistently named in top ten polls for best Canadian album of all time. In 1996, it placed at #1 in a *Chart Magazine* poll and at #3 four years later, only to return again to #1 in 2005 (Chorney-Booth 2005). Sloan acknowledges that *Twice Removed* is its most beloved album, having re-released it as a deluxe vinyl box set in 2012. For these reasons, I focused on Sloan's early recordings, selecting three songs from *Smear* and six songs from *Twice Removed*, placing more emphasis on *Twice Removed* because of its continued relevance amongst fans and the media.

I approached the analysis of these Sloan albums with the intention of uncovering every noteworthy detail of their songwriting, performance, and record production practices. In particular, I examined various qualities of the voice (breathing, phrasing, lyric pronunciation, ability to sing in key, and ornamentation, including arpeggiation and portamento), their song structures (verse/chorus/bridge format, harmonic progressions, melodic range, melodic hook placement, and recurring motifs in the voice and instruments), their choice of instruments and musical gear and how it was utilized to create their style (type of guitars, guitar pedals, amplifiers, drum set-up), and the use of recording techniques (reverb, double tracking of vocals, and stereo panning). These research methods were borrowed from scholars in musicology, popular musicology, and record production.

The framework for analyzing vocal style utilized by Robert Toft in *Hits and Misses: Crafting Top 40 Singles, 1963-1971* (2011) as well as his work on the performance practices of the *bel canto* singing style (2000), laid the groundwork for my own exploration of what constituted Sloan's vocal style, taking into account that Sloan employed multiple singers, and therefore, four separate vocal styles. The musicological

analysis undertaken by scholars such as Lloyd Whitesell (2002; 2008) and David Brackett (1995) inspired me to trust my classical theory training and find ways to put it to use in popular music through the transcription of melodies, chord progressions, and finding visual ways to condense complex aural musical data in order to identify the key components of its song structure. When examining how Sloan's sound was affected by the recording process, I looked to Albin Zak and Jay Hodgson's work for the terminology and tools needed to discuss the various sound processing executed by musicians and sound engineers in the recording studio (Zak 2001, Hodgson 2010). All of these scholars provided me with the framework to engage directly with the music of Sloan and try to extract as much material for study as I possibly could. Using the descriptive terms outlined by each author, a comprehensive list of attributes related to the recording of an album (timbre, echo, texture, ambience, stereo placement, signal processing) can augment the traditional musicological methods of categorizing sounds (melody, harmony, rhythms, performance practices). In addition to these attributes, other categories of analysis will include instrumentation, arrangements, and choice of gear (amplifiers, pedals, guitars, etc.), as well as the musicians' approach to songwriting, performance, and recording in general. An exploration of these features of recorded music in relation to the 1990s Halifax Sound, specifically, the music of Sloan, is central to this thesis. Proving that a Halifax Sound existed in the 1990s and was embodied in Sloan's music is not necessarily the goal of this study. As Zak states, the existence of specific meanings within the music do not matter as much as the fact that listeners, musicians, critics, and journalists have already acknowledged their meaning (Zak 2001, 191; Cohen 1994, 124). It seems plausible, then, that because so many musicians and fans believe in the 'sound' of a scene, the 'sound' itself must be integral to whatever meaning we attribute to any given scene. One of the central purposes of this study is to discover the nature of this meaning in relation to the Halifax scene.

The scholar Paul Théberge offers a perspective on the topic of sound as a distinctive marker of bands, as well as musical genres (1995). Théberge remarks that the concept of a "unique sound" is a recent phenomenon, thanks to the advent of recording technology that has replaced the idea of a "unique style" for demarcating genre. For example, early rap music is associated with the sound of the Roland TR-808 drum machine (1995, 279).

The sound of an artist, then, can be clearly distinguished from the style of an artist, with the former being inseparable from recordings and the latter being important in a pre-recording environment that did not benefit from the mechanical reproduction of sound (Théberge 1995, 279). His theory that the sound of an artist is intrinsically found in the recording of an album is particularly useful within the context of this study, since the primary materials for my musicological analysis are recordings of Sloan from 1992-1994.

In order to uncover a complete picture of the Halifax music scene that gave rise to Sloan, I consulted as many articles, interviews, and reviews as I could find of Sloan and their contemporaries. I hoped to examine Halifax from an interdisciplinary standpoint, similar to objective of the anthology, *She's So Fine* (2010), where contributors like Laurie Stras and Susan Fast combine gender and media studies of 1960s girl singers with a close reading of musical texts. Finding interviews with participants in the 1990s Halifax music scene allowed me to peer into this moment in history to find out what and whom the scene was comprised of and the interactions and opinions of those involved. These insights complemented my analysis of the recorded music from the same era, helping to complete the snapshot of the music scene.

For a cultural studies approach to the study of music communities, I looked to the early examples of the study of specific cities undertaken by Ruth Finnegan (1989) and her survey of amateur music-making in Milton Keynes, England and Sara Cohen (1991, 1994, 1995, 2007), who has dedicated several books to uncovering the construction of place and identity within the Liverpool music scene, hometown of the Beatles, who were responsible for creating the notion of a Liverpool sound. These scholars rely on first-hand accounts of participants in order to investigate the underpinnings of how the scene is mediated and sustained. Similar studies have since attempted to identify the local infrastructure that helped give rise to notable music scenes (Shank 1994; Diamond 2001; Moore 2002; Kruse 2003; Battle 2005; Vincent 2005; Dahlman 2009).

A third category of primary source material used in this study was the public discussion in online communities consisting largely of fans, either of Sloan in particular or East Coast music in general. Thanks to the zealous preservation efforts of some dedicated

Sloan fans, a vast resource was found in the Sloannet archive website where e-mail correspondence between the Sloannet discussion group is posted from the years 1993-1997. Fans used this forum to discuss all tenets of the East Coast music scene centred around Sloan, everything from reviews of local shows and records, to when Sloan was appearing on the radio and television (often providing transcripts for the benefit of other members), to offering opinions on up-and-coming bands and venues. This discussion group proved to be a valuable asset to my research, allowing me to have a year-by-year insight into what local participants and fans from abroad thought of the growing attention being paid to the Halifax music scene. In addition to providing an awareness of their viewpoints, Sloannet users shared invaluable magazine articles, interviews, and transcripts. Access to media stories from the early 1990s, for the most part, was limited, as many newspapers and magazines had yet to establish an online presence. While music magazines like Canada's *Chart Magazine* have published their back issues online, most media outlets have not digitized their back catalogue. Without the help of Sloannet and other Sloan fan websites, many articles and interviews would not have been available to me.

Other message boards have popped up online in the years since the pioneering days of the internet. Cape Breton Locals was started in 1997 and was the subject of a dissertation on online communities by McNeil in 2009. Halifax Locals appeared later in 2000, providing a hub for local musicians and fans to connect online (Beaumont 2012). The online comments found on these message boards offer a retrospective point of view on the 'classic' Halifax Sound. Their observations on what constituted that sound and how it has evolved over the years helped to inform the final chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 3: Growth of a Scene / Myth of the Local

The Growing Alternative Rock Scene

The wave of Halifax bands in the 1990s did not appear out of a vacuum. The East Coast of Canada has had a long tradition of music that expresses the geographical roots of its inhabitants. When asked to describe the music of the Atlantic Provinces, one would invariably think of traditional Celtic and Irish music with instruments such as the fiddle, the bodhrán drum, the button accordion, and the tin whistle. The Maritimes produced many household names in the Canadian music industry. “Songbird” Anne Murray, folk hero Stompin’ Tom Connors, fiddle virtuoso Ashley MacIsaac, singer-songwriter Sarah McLachlan, and the collective talent of the Rankin Family all have strong roots in Canada’s East Coast.

While championing a handful of famous resident musicians for decades, the Maritimes' music industry did not begin to coalesce significantly until the late 1980s and early 1990s with a focused effort to foster homegrown talent. The creation of the East Coast Music Awards in 1988 signaled that the Atlantic Canadian music industry was ready to recognize and promote its artists to a growing national and international audience. In 1991, the traditional Celtic group The Rankin Family was signed to Capitol/EMI Records and a re-release of their 1990 album, *Fare Thee Well Love*, in 1992 on Capitol/EMI sold 500,000 copies (Cosgrove 2012), an achievement which proved that an East Coast Canadian band was marketable on a national and international level. In the 2011 CBC documentary, *Life is a Highway*, the contemporary indie rock band Two Hours Traffic from Prince Edward Island regards this moment in The Rankin Family’s career to be an important turning point in the rise of East Coast music. The Halifax newspaper Daily News proclaimed in an article entitled Sounds of the East,

“1992 will be considered a breakthrough year for music from the East. With the commercial success of The Rankins, Sarah McLachlan, Roch Voisine, Holly Cole and Rita MacNeil, and the promise of more from [Sloan], Terry Kelly, Rawlins Cross, Eric's Trip and others, the future looks bright” (MacDonald 1992).

Music from the Atlantic provinces was beginning to attract much more attention across Canada and around the globe.

The alternative rock scene in Atlantic Canada began to grow in the late 1980s and was centred around Halifax, the largest city in the region. The college radio station CKDU, started at Dalhousie University in 1985, provided local bands with an outlet to have their music heard by a modest audience (Lowe 2006). The opening of the performance venue, the Flamingo, one of the first of many venues to be backed by entrepreneur Greg Clark, offered bands a space to play. Peter Arsenault of the underground band jellyfishbabies looks back on the opening of Flamingo 20 years later with *The Coast*, “All of a sudden there was a place for bands to play and things were going... There was stability on the scene for the first time” (Lowe 2006).

An early seminal moment in the formation of a viable music scene in Halifax was the release of the first compilation of Halifax underground bands, *Out of the Fog*, in 1986, later followed by *Cod Can't Hear* (1992), *Hear and Now* (1992), and *Never Mind the Molluscs* (released by Subpop Records in 1993) (Lowe 2006). *Out of the Fog* is credited as a catalyst for Halifax's credibility as a music scene, both locally and across Canada, as other college radio stations discovered the album and were duly impressed. The album was financed by the business partners of Club Flamingo, Greg Clark, Keith Tufts, and Derrick Honig and allowed local bands to record music, many for the first time (Lowe 2006). John Stevenson, a former CKDU employee, reinforced the importance of the compilation as a harbinger of Halifax music:

“With *Out of the Fog*, institutions got established... The album wasn't the only part of that, but it showed that you could make an LP and it could come out of Halifax. In that sense it was pivotal” (Lowe 2006).

Music from the East Coast was building a reputation abroad and becoming a source of pride for local musicians. A 2006 article in Halifax's *The Coast* celebrates the 20th anniversary of *Out of the Fog*:

“It gave Halifax’s alternative music sound a reputation. Before pret-a-porter grunge. Before Sloan signed to Geffen. Before Melody Maker anointed Halifax “the new Seattle” and Harper’s Bazaar wrote about the early ’90s scene that joined Halifax with “an entire constellation of hip North American cities” on par with Chapel Hill, North Carolina and Austin, Texas.” (Lowe 2006)

While the heyday of East Coast alternative rock music was the 1990s scene, with Halifax being heralded as 'the new Seattle', precursors are not hard to find. Before Sloan exploded both nationally and internationally in 1992 with the release of their first full-length album, *Smearhead*, the rock scene in Halifax was considered to be vibrant and thriving. Barry Walsh, member of the power pop group Cool Blue Halo, formed in Halifax in 1990, wrote of the “good old days, the mid-80s” in one of the first issues of the free weekly newspaper, *The Coast*, in 1993. Recognizing the massive effect that Sloan had on the local scene, Walsh divides the Halifax music continuum into “two eras – B.S. (Before Sloan) and A.S. (After Sloan).” Far from crediting Sloan for re-invigorating a dead music scene, he points to a vibrant period from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s that gave rise to a moment when Sloan could take advantage of the apex of the grunge “sickness.” During this time, according to Walsh,

“Something was happening to music. Something sick. Something wonderful. Long-haired dinosaurs experimenting with southern rock/classical fusion were exterminated by young brats who couldn’t play and didn’t care. And the sickness, like every virus worth its salt, made it to Halifax. So after a few false starts, bands become signed, venues magically appeared, and we entered the A.S. era.” (Walsh 1993).

Sloan, then, is not viewed as creating the Halifax scene; it is seen as an effect or a product of it. Thanks to the success of grunge music, a locally bred band was able to ride the

wave into the limelight. Greg Clark, manager of the venue Double Deuce, an important haven during this period, suggested to Walsh that

“[success] was bound to happen. The audience has been growing steadily, considering there’s probably a generation of people who’ve grown up with CKDU, and with the success of Sloan, other people are realizing it’s not such a pipe dream” (Walsh 1993).

As these active participants within the scene can attest, many factors contributed to the emergence of the ‘Halifax Sound’ far beyond the appearance of Sloan on the scene. Chris Murphy of Sloan admits in a 1999 interview with *Chart Magazine* that the apex of the local music scene was indebted to the scene that preceded it, bleakly stating, “We’re more a product of the ‘80s. We first started playing shows around ’85-86, and the music scene here that we really felt proud of was basically over by ’96.” (Cranston). In a 1997 interview with the Canadian entertainment news show, *E! Now*, Murphy explains, “We were part of a long running music scene there that just never really got its act together because there were no record labels there... [W]e didn’t invent anything but we were the first band with the good fortune of connecting ourselves internationally.” This admission reiterates that the Halifax music scene had been established but loosely organized prior to the early 1990s. Sloan benefitted from greater support from growing local institutions that helped them to attract attention from powerful mediators in the American music industry.

Infrastructure

Many scholars have noted the importance of a viable musical infrastructure on a local level to a thriving scene. Stahl refers to scenes as “cultural space” and “sets of practices” that depend on the existence of supportive local institutions and “material infrastructure” (Stahl 2007, 147). Connell and Gibson emphasize how local infrastructure contributes to the local scene, which inevitably leads to a semblance of “a distinct ‘local’ sound”, merely by virtue of the fact that the musicians “learn from and work with each other,

sharing bills and practice venues, and even musicians and songs, not so much as a subculture, but simply as people who enjoy the same music” (Connell and Gibson 2003, 115). For them, the local infrastructure creates both the scene and the sound of a place as “[c]ertain similarities emerg[e]”, either in the music, or the language, or lyrical content about shared spaces and experiences (Connell and Gibson 2003, 115). The authors expand upon their definition of what comprises the infrastructure of a scene by stating:

“[B]efore a ‘sound’ or ‘scene’ can develop, there should be both a ‘critical mass’ of active musicians or fans, and a set of physical infrastructures of recording, performance and listening: studios, venues (with sympathetic booking agents) – spaces that allow new musical practices – and even record companies (or alternative labels) and distribution outlets.... The most famous scenes (those responsible for distinct ‘sounds’) have all built upon local popular support... and methods of information flow and exchange” (Connell and Gibson 101-102).

As stated earlier, many of these necessary precursors have been identified as present in Halifax prior to the critical turning point of 1992 with Sloan’s first release, *Smeared*. In searching for examples of a supportive infrastructure for the indie rock scene within Halifax during the 1990s, we can turn to its proliferation of suitable venues, the support of local media (print and college radio), the demographic of its audience, and a network of local labels and distribution channels.

Several bars became anchor establishments for the burgeoning scene throughout the 1990s, including the Flamingo, Double Deuce, and Birdland. Lamenting the changes within the music scene over the past few years, an online article from a local website in 2012 compares the bar scene of the 1990s to the present day (Lee 2012). The bars of the 1990s are credited for their active participation in growing the music scene by virtue of their willingness to take risks with alternative experimental music, whereas today, DJs are more popular as they are safe bets for bringing in clientele. A connection is made between the success of Halifax as the “next Seattle” and the “family” of bars that would “help each other, book the same performers at different slots on the same nights, schedule events around other bars’ events” (Lee 2012). This is compared with the bar situation

today, as Ash MacLeod, the former manager of the venues Sea Horse and the now-defunct Marquee, explains, “there’s not that community that just goes out to see a band whether you’re a fan or not” (Lee 2012). People involved in the Halifax music scene today seem to mythologize these 'good old days' as a time when unknown bands could fill a bar and there was a greater sense of community between bands and venues. Bars that are willing to book unknown bands and audiences that are willing to see them are seen as crucial components in the success of the 90s music scene.

The material infrastructure provided by the local media played an important role in scene-building in Halifax. As already identified above, Dalhousie University’s CKDU, started in 1985, provided an outlet for bands to receive exposure through airplay and interviews (Walsh 1993). In a 1993 interview with the *Dalhousie Gazette*, Sebastian Lipka of the Hardship Post cites the radio station as having “really key people... who’ve got best intentions for the local scene at heart and do their job well” (Covey 1993). The print media is recognized as contributing to the scene, with the university papers and the free weekly newspaper, *The Coast*, “embrac[ing] alternative music” through album reviews, concert listings, and interviews with local bands while “commercial radio has proven to be a stubborn barrier” (Walsh 1993). The existence of these methods of communication within the music community is instrumental for formation of a strong and vibrant music scene.

A receptive audience cannot be overlooked as a fundamental necessity for a distinct scene to flourish. An alternative music scene needs a supportive local audience in order for bands to develop their style or sound that may subsequently become noticed on a regional, national, or international scale. Connell and Gibson point to the historical importance of port cities as hubs for distinctive ‘sounds’, such as Liverpool, Hamburg, New Orleans, and Algeria’s Oran (2003, 103). Port cities provide a particular mix of people and music as they are “important nodes of transport, meeting places for diverse migrants, residents and seamen (thus fostering venues, nightclubs and itinerant musicians), and points of distribution for imported music” (Connell and Gibson 2003, 103). Whether or not Halifax’s position as a port city influenced its ability to create a distinctive musical sound is a complex study within itself. We can conclude from Connell

and Gibson's point, however, that the nature of an audience impacts the venues and musicians and vice versa.

Connell and Gibson also point to university towns as "provid[ing] fertile ground for the growth of 'alternative' music styles with disproportionate representations of a particular demographic group", citing as examples The B-52s and R.E.M.'s connection to the student population of Athens, GA, of Ben Folds Five, Seam, and the Squirrel Nut Zippers based out of Chapel Hill, NC, and lastly, Austin, TX and Boston, MA with its disproportionately large number of indie bands (2003, 102-103). For the example of Halifax, the authors mention the Nova Scotia School of Art and Design as partly responsible for providing the appropriate demographic for its music scene. NSCAD has undoubtedly played a large role in shaping the music scene of Halifax in the 1990s. Chris Murphy and Andrew Scott of Sloan met while they were students at NSCAD and it was here that Sloan played their first show in April 1991 (McCann 1998). The school has the reputation of being an avant-garde leader in the North American art world since the 1970s, giving Halifax an "aura of hipness", as NSCAD president Ian Clark put it (DeMont 1993). In *Maclean's* 1993 feature on the booming Halifax music scene, the final four paragraphs of the article are devoted to a profile of the school, a testament to its perceived weight within the music community. The college is acknowledged for attracting an influx of a certain bohemian, artistic type of individual that changes the demographic of the city towards a young, arts-oriented crowd. The unique identity of the school was attributed to its isolation away from the major arts centres: Europe, New York, and Central Canada (DeMont 1993). Locals cite this same isolation and subsequent uniqueness as an important ingredient in producing the 'Halifax Sound', as we shall explore further on in this thesis. NSCAD is described as:

"A hotbed of avant-garde painting and sculpture and its faculty and students continue to enliven the local art scene... Without NSCAD, the city would certainly be a duller place" (DeMont 1993).

The school, along with Dalhousie University and St. Mary's University, provided an important building block in the material infrastructure that gave rise to the booming Halifax music scene of the 1990s.

Another crucial component of the infrastructure of the Halifax scene was the means by which bands could circulate and promote their albums. While big labels like Geffen and Subpop scooped up the bands that caught their attention for a short time, the development of local talent depended on smaller organizations that were willing to support endeavours that had little commercial appeal. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the 1986 compilation, *Out of the Fog*, is considered to have been a key moment in the development of a viable music scene. The establishment of two prominent local record labels provided bands with further support: Murderecords, started by Sloan in 1992 to release their first recording, *Peppermint EP*; and Cinnamon Toast Records, a singles only label also formed in 1992. Cinnamon Toast Records produced brightly coloured limited release 7" vinyl singles, including releases by Jale (1992 & 1993), Thrush Hermit (1993), Sloan/Eric's Trip (split single in 1994), and Hardship Post/Randy Bachmann (split single in 1994) (Wikipedia 2012, Cinnamon Toast Records). Murderecords has maintained the highest profile of these two labels, releasing early records by Eric's Trip, Hardship Post, and Thrush Hermit. Chris Murphy of Sloan explains the birth and early mandate of the label:

“Being signed to Geffen meant that we had some money enabling us to consider putting out more records. We couldn't put out any more of our own, but we came from a thriving music scene that we were eager to document and promote” (Murphy 2000).

Considering Sloan's elevated profile at this time, the band was able to transfer some of their fame and attention to other bands within the Halifax scene, helping to promulgate the distinctive 'Halifax Sound' to a wider audience. In a 1993 interview, Ferguson of Sloan almost assumes the role of an older brother towards up-and-coming bands, stating,

“We’ve been helping other bands put out records. We brought Thrush Hermit on tour with us this time. It’s good to be in a position to help other bands get noticed” (Richards 1993).

Bands like Hardship Post, who benefited from the support offered by both record companies, were grateful for labels that could provide them a viable outlet for their music. While praising the variety of local institutions willing to help bands out, Hardship Post's Sebastian Lippa says of Cinnamon Toast Records and Murderecords, “[T]here’s record companies for people to put out music that are good at what they do, and committed to the music” (Covey 1993).

Murderecords would become instrumental in sustaining the scene after the major labels lost interest. Sloan was dropped from Geffen in 1995 after their album *Twice Removed* had been out for a year. Their next album, *One Chord to Another*, was released in 1996 on Murderecords. The label also promoted “a new crop of bands” that carried the Halifax Sound into the middle to late 90s, including The Super Friendz, The Local Rabbits, and Kingston, Ontario’s The Inbreds (an anomaly within the context of this study, as their sound conforms to the East Coast aesthetic, though they did not relocate to Halifax until 1996) (Murphy 2000). Murphy admits to being “able to document our regional scene fairly well between 1992 and 1997”, but after this point the label could not support multiple bands, “[s]o for the time being, Murderecords represents Sloan, and the scene where [they] came from” (Murphy 2000). For Sloan and the bands that released material during the height of the scene, Murderecords embodied the DIY spirit of the era. It was an undeniable asset within the infrastructure of the Halifax scene that helped to shape the music and also provided the vehicle with which it could be distributed across Canada and the U.S.

Isolated and Unique

With Halifax’s unique musical and material infrastructure identified as a key component in its development, the question of why “Halifax of all places”? (History of the Band

1992) can be explored further. Before the success of *Smear*, bands like Sloan believed it was impossible to become famous while remaining in Halifax because it was so far away from any major urban centre. Most bands from the East Coast of Canada moved to Montreal or Toronto in order to have a chance at success. With the Halifax Pop Explosion, the tables appeared to be turned. Andrew Scott of Sloan complained in 1992 that the larger cities have “such saturated music markets that the odds [of getting noticed] were so slim.... Hopefully now bands from Halifax won’t have to go anywhere – maybe the record companies will come to them” (History of the Band 1992). A shift in the dynamic of the Canadian music industry was noticed as Sloan single-handedly “turn[ed] the Maritimes into an A&R hotbed and forever alter[ed] the Toronto-centric balance of this country’s music industry” (Ladouceur 1996). Halifax offered something that Toronto and Montreal seemed to be missing. Radio personality Doug Barron, having returned to Halifax in 1993 after working at Toronto’s alternative radio station CFNY-FM, noted that Toronto’s music scene was much more competitive, observing that “[u]p there, people are pretty serious about trying to make it. Here, it’s more like... 50 percent fun and 50 percent serious determination” (Walsh 1993). James Covey, a reporter for the *Dalhousie Gazette* and a fixture at CKDU radio, remarked that the Montreal scene appeared to lack cohesion and character compared to the Halifax scene (Covey 1993). While these observations from native inhabitants of the city in question must be weighed accordingly, Torontonians Sam Roberts offers similar sentiments. In a 2011 CBC documentary, Roberts confessed that during this period he “gravitated” towards the Halifax scene and Murderecords because, to him, it was much more interesting musically than what was happening in Toronto.

In a retrospective look at Sloan’s origins, a writer for Southwestern Ontario’s *Id Magazine* remarked in 1996, “Sloan not only came out of nowhere, they made nowhere somewhere” (Barclay 1996). Disbelief about how a band from such a small, isolated city like Halifax could attract so much media attention is a recurring theme for journalists covering Sloan at this time. There is also a degree of surprise that the East Coast of Canada could be recognized for any music that was not traditional in its roots. A 1993 *Maclean’s* article recognizes the sudden interest in the city and takes a surprised tone

when referencing the disconnection between the alternative rock that Halifax was producing and previously held assumptions about music from the region:

“Halifax would likely have remained [local residents’] little secret had it not been for the sudden burst of musical activity that focused a larger spotlight on the city. Punk, grunge, pop - rock - - the raw, dissonant music has few obvious links to the city's seagoing roots or the Celtic - oriented music that is so popular in the rest of the region” (DeMont 1993).

Other media stories found it necessary to point out the incongruous nature of a band from the Maritimes sounding like anything but Celtic music. It is a deeply entrenched association that has to be addressed and explained by journalists before discussing, or in truth, defending Sloan’s music. CBC Television’s 1993 special on Sloan, *Ear to the Ground*, instructs viewers to “prepar[e] to be surprised” because “[t]here isn’t a hint of Celtic anywhere in the music Sloan makes.” Later in the program, Sloan's Andrew Scott defends the region by saying, “It's got a pretty strong musical sensibility out here. And it's not just all traditional down-home Maritime roots either.” Part of the Halifax music scene’s growing pains, as a representative of the booming East Coast music scene as a whole, was the constant need to introduce itself to the music industry at large who never thought to look East for new musical trends.

Sloan’s answer for the discrepancy between the scene in Halifax and other larger cities was the city’s isolation; since it was so far removed from the larger music scenes, it had to foster its own independent scene. A 1993 profile of Eric’s Trip on CBC Radio’s *Brave New Waves* also referred to the isolation of the East Coast as one possible defining factor of the unique burgeoning scene. Because of its remote location, the scene was “born out of necessity” (Carpenter 2011). Sloan attributes its success to Halifax’s unique geographical position and “wouldn’t trade its hometown for anywhere. Halifax is small enough that its musical genres can’t help but cross-pollinate” (Cranston 1999). Patrick Pentland of Sloan reminisces, “We were probably exposed to a lot more music and variety here than if we lived in Toronto or something” (Cranston 1999). Murphy elaborates on this theory in a 1997 interview:

“If we had grown up in bigger cities, we might not have been exposed to each other. There would have been a club specifically designed for my musical tastes, and then one for each of the other [members of Sloan]. Here, there were only a couple of places that had live music... Everybody gravitated there, even people with very disparate musical tastes. Because the place was so small, everybody was influenced by each other” (Fleming 1997, 186).

The small, close-knit scene not only forced a variety of musicians to work together, it also compelled them to be self-reliant. Ferguson of Sloan explains that “[i]f you wanted to see a band, you had to, you know, go and start a band for yourself with your friends” (Life is a Highway 2011). Since touring bands seldom went out of their way to include the Maritimes on their tour schedule, it was necessary to, as Ferguson advises, “start your own band and start shows. Anybody can have a label – just put a tape out and you’ve got a label” (Jennings 1995). Halifax's isolation, in addition to its ample supply of material infrastructure, provided the conditions for the distinct music scene to develop in the 1990s.

These sentiments are still echoed by local musicians. A 2009 urban planning study by Dalhousie University, entitled *Why Halifax Attracts Musicians*, found musicians crediting the city with providing a romantic seclusion from the outside world. An anonymous musician exclaims in an interview with the authors,

“The reason that so many good bands per capita come from Halifax is that that song-writing and artistically speaking – we have a really high level of knowledgeable song-writing because it’s in our blood here. When you are more isolated you’re a little less distracted and you’re more focused on your art. I think we benefit from that. I think it’s a Maritime thing or an Atlantic Canadian thing that we bring to Halifax as a unit” (Grant, Morton, and Haggett 2009, 8).

The remote nature of Canada’s Atlantic Coast shapes the mindsets of its artists and defines how they view themselves and their surroundings, in direct opposition to Canada’s larger cultural hubs. The hardships of isolation are embraced and celebrated by musicians for contributing to their art, creating a uniqueness for which they are proud.

The fascination with branding a scene as being distinctive to a certain city, as prided by locals and espoused by media hype, reveal complex processes within the music industry that work to authenticate local scenes. If Halifax can be described as unique as a consequence of its isolation, the evocation of the region through music becomes an integral part of its allure. Sometimes, it is the secluded origin of production, taking place in unexpected and remote places, that lends credibility to the music created there (Connell and Gibson 2003, 93). The debut album of Bon Iver, for example, has benefitted from the mythology built up around it being recorded “over one long winter in a cabin in Wisconsin, when [Bon Iver’s Justin] Vernon was a solitary figure in bare-branched, snowy isolation, as if in a Doig painting” (Barton 2008). The music and the geographical origin become tightly intertwined as a result. The locality of the music becomes part of the brand name and part of its identity (Shuker 198). In these cases, the perception of a specific sound emanating from a grassroots cultural origin becomes fetishized, allowing it to spread to national and international audiences as an authentic product of a certain region (Connell and Gibson 2003, 110-111). On a local level, bands are not chastised for their success abroad as long as they are perceived to have paid their dues to the scene that launched their career, which problematizes the commodification that takes place at any level of success, despite any measurement of authenticity a band may claim (Connell and Gibson 2003, 111). Connell and Gibson describe how the authenticity of the local takes form within a scene that has direct parallels to the Halifax scene of the 1990s:

“[T]he activities of a few bands might lead to the growth of new venues and attract interest from record companies and the music press, and the city, town or region is entrenched in music folklore as a place of origin.” (2003, 111)

Record companies themselves are guilty of mythologizing the local in order to create niche markets and increase album sales (Connell and Gibson 2003, 113). In this way, the music industry reflects the post-industrial and post-Fordist society of today by choosing to focus on the unique characteristics of diverse local scenes instead of promoting a homogenous mass-marketed product (Connell and Gibson 2003, 113). By doing so, record companies recognize that “[t]ying music to cultural histories and a sense of ‘roots’ in place becomes an important part of strategies to locate sounds in a cultural place to

buttress authenticity and maximise sales” (Connell and Gibson 2003, 113). This can explain why record labels like Geffen and Subpop were so eager to sign many Halifax bands once their marketing potential had been realized. When speaking of a particular music scene, the ‘local’ aspect can often become emphasized and fetishized as a marker for its true merit as a distinctive sound. As such, the association of a specific ‘local’ style of music with a scene can result in “a commercially constructed strategic essentialism of place” (Connell and Gibson 2003, 112), producing a highly reductive and skewed view of the scene. The myth of the ‘local’ is a complex process perpetrated by bands, audiences, critics, major labels, and everyone else who is emotionally and financially invested in the music, resulting in an aura of authenticity surrounding the scene in question.

Exploring the Halifax scene for evidence of the fetishization of the ‘local’, we are able to pinpoint some examples. In the early days of Sloan, the band did not identify or promote themselves as a Canadian band, preferring instead the regional designation of a band from Nova Scotia (Richards 1993). Sloan’s ties to the city of Halifax were often tested in interviews with questions of whether or not they would remain living in the city now that they had garnered some mainstream success, to which Sloan would “insist that Halifax will remain their base” (DeMont 1993). For audiences and the media alike, it was important for Sloan to remain attached to the music scene that brought them forth and to which they owed their success. Sloan’s music holds a local significance, and by extension, it holds significance to listeners across Canada and the US, but only if the band stayed true to their roots and as such, were true proponents of the Halifax ‘brand’. For a time, they fulfilled this expectation, not only by calling Halifax their home, but also by promoting other local talent through Murdereords and by championing the authentic ‘Halifax Sound’ abroad. Perhaps not so coincidentally, the end of the golden age of the ‘Halifax Sound’ in the late 1990s coincided not only with Murdereords dropping all other bands from its roster in order to concentrate solely on Sloan, but also with the band moving to Toronto. In 1999, Chris Murphy commented on the move, stating,

“I’m in a constant state of ‘where should I be?’ Halifax has been such a jumping off point for the whole context of the band. We were all about not being from America or Toronto and now we’re from Toronto” (Cranston 1999).

He feared that he was erasing the context of the band and becoming just another band from Toronto, asking, “What would be special about us” (Cranston 1999)? The guilt and self-contemplation that resulted from the band’s desertion of the town which brought them meaning and credibility as a band forces Murphy to assume an apologetic stance as he speaks to his fans via the press. Murphy seems aware that a move to Toronto somehow invalidates their claim to an authenticity of the ‘local’ and is not sure how to reconcile the contradiction that has been created. The 2009 study by Dalhousie University on Halifax musicians comments on the lasting effects of Sloan’s move to Toronto on the local music scene:

“While... Sloan drew early attention to Halifax, their departure for larger centres disappointed those now working in the city. Although the independent creative edge associated with Sloan stuck to the city, the band’s relocation reinforced the message that bands had to leave Halifax to make it” (Grant, Morton, and Haggett 2009, 18)

The alternative rock band, The Inbreds, have also alluded to Sloan’s move to Toronto as coinciding with a turning point for the local scene. The Inbreds are an example of a band that was lured to Halifax because of its famed music scene. The duo moved to the city from Kingston, Ontario in 1996 but found that much of the hype and optimism present in the early 1990s was already waning. By that time, many bands that had been big names in the East Coast scene had broken up, venues were closing, and Sloan had moved to Toronto. The Inbreds’ Mike O’Neill observed in 2001, “When I came here [in 1996], it felt like there was a bit of a hangover from the attention paid to Halifax” (Shaw 2001). The cultural cachet of the Halifax ‘brand’ was losing its power in the music industry and the intense international media hype was over. Like all ‘it’ cities that have enjoyed the media spotlight for a time, the momentum could not be maintained for very long. The media and record labels eventually lost interest and Halifax returned to relative obscurity. The city would still, however, be associated with a well-respected music scene with constant comparisons to its former glory (see Chapter 6).

Other encoded markers of authenticity of the ‘local’ within the Halifax scene were evident when the 1990s scene tried to distance itself from hype and set itself up as the ‘other’ in opposition to larger music hubs like Toronto and Montreal. As explored earlier within this study, bands and audiences in Halifax imagined themselves as the antidote to these larger centres. Assigning themselves as an ‘other’ reveals a fetishization of the ‘local’ as the true authentic product, in this case, the smaller city as more pure and in touch with its roots. Eric’s Trip disavowed the hype by lamenting the constant attention they were receiving from their association with Sloan, “It’s kind of weird though, because it [the attention] makes me nervous – there’s just too much hype” (Brave New Waves 1993). True to their roots, Eric’s Trip turned down Subpop's initial courtship because they “didn’t feel ready and [their] music wasn’t very accessible”. Their interviewer concluded that it caused them to “scor[e] high on the integrity meter” (Brave New Waves 1993).

The earnestness of creating music without thought of profit is a recurring theme within the Halifax scene and helped it to define itself as an authentic local product in opposition to larger scenes. The pride of having an isolated scene is so strong amongst some East Coast musicians that larger cities are cast in a negative light for being saturated with bands and networking opportunities in pursuit of the dream of making it as a band. The members of the Halifax band Thrush Hermit, for example, praised the size of their hometown as a benefit because it is far removed from the “networking frenzy” that they were exposed to while touring Southern Ontario (Covey 1996). For Rob Benvie and Joel Plaskett of Thrush Hermit, bands from smaller towns were surrounded by an intrigue because of their fewer performance opportunities. They appear more authentic and more true to their music than bands from Toronto who try to play as many shows as possible to become well known. Benvie tells the local newspaper, *The Coast*, in 1996,

"Everytime we play [Southern Ontario] we get all these tapes chucked at us, and that's cool, but it's be kinda cooler if bands were like the Motes, from Truro, who didn't do anything, just made a tape and stayed in their houses" (Covey 1996).

Plaskett agrees,

“[The Motes] maintain a certain mystery that way. And excitement, too. I think a really important thing to keep is the excitement surrounding a band. I think, with us, it's really hard around here for people to view our band with any sort of anticipation” (Covey 1996).

The mythology of the ‘local’ as being inherently authentic is so present here that even Halifax proves to be too big of a city for ‘true’ music to exist, according to the members of Thrush Hermit. For them, it was necessary for music to be so underground and isolated that it must be created and confined to a basement in order to be pure, exciting, and mysterious. Similar assertions of authenticity of origin are found in a 1992 biography from Sloan’s official website. It raves that the band “come[s] from a place where ‘hype’ has yet to be introduced to the native vernacular, where playing a church basement can be just as much fun as a paying gig” (History of the Band 1992). Here, Halifax is portrayed as the antithesis of the commercial centres where bands only concern themselves with making music to turn a profit. This bias towards insular scenes is present elsewhere in the bio, where they describe themselves as being “from an area yet to be tainted by indie rock stardom” (History of the Band, 1992). Again, they identify themselves as the ‘other’, with Halifax portrayed as an untainted land of pure music, unencumbered by the “indie rock stardom” that has spoiled the dominant music industry. This is the brand of unique music born out of isolation that Halifax offers to the world.

The small town nature of the Halifax scene is further glamorized in a CBC TV special on Sloan in 1993 as part of their *Ear to the Ground* series. In the episode, Murphy exclaimed that he would like to convince the A&R people and the record labels from larger cities to “be courageous or be daring” and to “go to a small town and see how vibrant it is”. In countless other articles about Halifax, the words used to describe the city include “helpful”, “communal”, and “nurturing”. In 1995, *Maclean’s* interviewed an owner of a local record shop, who proclaimed,

“If Halifax was going to have a scene, it had to be homegrown. The bands help each other out. There’s a real nurturing community atmosphere” (Jennings 1995).

John Mullane of the band In-Flight Safety recently praised the city's art scene for being "super communal" (Kent 2010), showing that the sentiment is still strong in Halifax. The 2009 study by Dalhousie University, *Why Halifax Attracts Musicians*, interviews participants in the local music scene, such as musicians, venue owners, administrators, promoters, producers, and managers (Grant, Morton, and Haggett 2009). The paper finds that the recurring theme of mythologizing the 'local', the small, isolated city, is just as prominent today as it was in the Halifax Pop Explosion of the 1990s. The city is described as a "good sized scene" with lots of "opportunities to collaborate across genres", echoing the story of Sloan's formation (Grant, Morton, and Haggett 2009, 11). Everyone believes in "supporting each other" and as such, there is "a really nice openness" and a "nurturing community" with "not a lot of competition" (Grant, Morton, and Haggett 2009, 11). Musicians are able to "develop a unique style and positive attitudes" thanks to the "geographic isolation of the city" (Grant, Morton, and Haggett 2009, 11). With geographical isolation also comes the immediate access to nature with many artists affirming the romantic "attraction they felt toward the natural beauty of the region with the ocean, lakes, and countryside nearby" (Grant, Morton, and Haggett 2009, 15). Bands that move away from Halifax feel compelled to return to the region "to be nurtured... as if something in the East Coast context was seen as fundamental to the creativity of artists" (Grant, Morton, and Haggett 2009, 13). Also echoed in this study, the scene is considered unique because of the lack of concern for monetary profit that may be present in larger music industry centres like Toronto or Montreal. Musicians are regularly featured on each other's albums, helping out with whatever instruments are needed. A festival promoter recounts the following story about singer/songwriter David Myles:

"He was recording at the Sonic Temple, and the engineer kept saying, "I need someone to come in and do some slide guitar on this". He was like, "Oh that sounds cool". The next day a guy shows up: it's Joel Plaskett! Joel plays slide guitar, for no money, just because the engineer said, "Joel, I have this song and it really needs some pedal steel", or whatever, you know? And he was like, "Well, alright then, if the song needs that, it needs it". Then all of a sudden, this whole parade: Jill Barber's coming in, Matt Mays is coming in, and all these great

players are coming in. They're all doing it for nothing. We're doing it because the art is what matters (Grant, Morton, and Haggett 2009, 11-12).

Again, the invocation here of authenticity of the 'local' illustrates that the Halifax music scene benefits from its small town status by having a close-knit community of musicians who create music earnestly without thought of profit. The status of Halifax as a small town is just as integral to its allure as a scene as its reliance on the perpetuation of a distinct 'Halifax Sound'. In order to explore in-depth how the Halifax scene and the Halifax Sound evolved during the height of its popularity across Canada and the United States, we can look more closely at the music of the band that brought Halifax to the attention of the music industry – Sloan.

Chapter 4: 1992 – Halifax Is The Next Seattle? (A Case Study of Sloan’s Smear)

Media Attention

The central figure of the Halifax alternative rock scene in the 1990s, the band most responsible for drawing the eyes of the world to the Maritimes, was Sloan. Sloan self-released their first recording, *Peppermint EP*, in 1992. The album was recorded at Sound Market Studios in Halifax by producer Terry Pulliam who, as a result of this collaboration, went on to become a highly sought-after producer by local bands throughout the 1990s (Thompson 2012). The release of Sloan’s second effort and first full-length album, *Smear*, later that year by the major label Geffen Records, home of Nirvana, Cher, Joni Mitchell, and Guns ‘n’ Roses, caused a flurry of press and shone a spotlight on Halifax as an “outpost for grunge in Atlantic Canada” (DeMont 1993). The album sold more than 100,000 copies and received positive reviews in many publications, most notably *Rolling Stone* and *Spin* (DeMont 1993). Canadian media also took notice, with *Maclean’s* magazine featuring the band in an October 1993 story entitled “Read All About It: Halifax is Hip!”. Earlier that year, *Harper’s Bazaar* listed Halifax as a North American hotspot alongside Seattle, WA, Austin, TX, and Chapel Hill, NC. Articles in *Billboard* and the British magazine *Melody Maker* also helped to spread the hype (DeMont 1993). The attention fostered the belief that a unique ‘sound’ was being bred in Halifax. As delineated earlier in this thesis, the record industry began to take interest and sent A&R scouts to discover other talent within this newfound epicentre, the ‘Seattle of the North’. The presenter on CBC Radio’s *Brave New Waves*’ profile of the East Coast band, Eric’s Trip, commented on the media attention in 1993, stating, “the chunk of geography called the Maritimes suddenly seemed for sale”. Subpop Records was particularly interested in staking a claim, releasing a compilation in 1993 entitled *Never Mind the Molluscs*, which featured tracks by Sloan, Eric’s Trip, Jale, and Idee du Nord.

The idea of showcasing talent from Halifax and the rest of the Maritime provinces (after all, Eric's Trip was from Moncton, New Brunswick) at a time when all eyes were on this emerging scene was interpreted as a strategic move for Subpop, who seemed to be "marking out its territory" (*Brave New Waves* 1993). Eric's Trip, after declining an initial offer, enjoyed the distinction of becoming the first Canadian band to be signed to Subpop, followed soon after by Jale and Hardship Post, a group originally from Newfoundland that had relocated to the Nova Scotia capital. With all of the media buzz and attention from major labels, many Halifax bands hoped to become the next Sloan and record companies hoped to sign the band that could repeat their success.

All eyes seemed to be on the East Coast while its local music scene captured the attention of the music industry across Canada and the United States. Everyone seemed to be asking why "Halifax of all places" (History of the Band 1992) was becoming the next 'it' city. Halifax was at the tip of everyone's tongues while local bands, like Thrush Hermit, were being bombarded while on tour with questions of what Halifax is like (Kyle 2001). No one had paid it any attention before, and now the music world was intrigued with curiosity about the music scene there.

Of course, no media hype comes without a level of skepticism. In a 1993 profile of Eric's Trip on the CBC Radio show *Brave New Waves*, the host, Brent Bambury, both acknowledges and questions the level of hype surrounding East Coast music:

"A big music "it" has happened to Canada, and we can lay part of the blame on Moncton's Eric's Trip. The Maritimes is alive with bands emerging bravely into the light of day thanks to Sloan and Sub Pop and Cinnamon Toast [local record label], a phenomenon which proves that a little attention goes a long way. Journalists are flown in and mythologies abound, which leads us to the question, is something happening somewhere only because someone says it is?" (*Brave New Waves* 1993)

Bambury appears to be trying to tone down the level of enthusiasm pointed at the East Coast music scene and attempting to assess the merit of the scene objectively. Local participants in the Halifax scene appear to notice the hype backlash from large music

centres like Toronto and accept both the attention and criticism with a sense of pride and self-awareness. Jay Ferguson of Sloan spoke to *EQ Magazine* in 1993,

“Nobody outside of Halifax noticed Halifax bands before and now you get all these Toronto bands... complaining, who are going, "Who are these brats?" Well, you never paid any notice to us before and now we're getting our chance.”

Ferguson was intent on proving that Halifax bands are as deserving of attention as bands from cities that are accustomed to media saturation. Sebastian Lippa of Hardship Post, in an interview with *Dalhousie Gazette* that same year, also proudly insists that the hype is merited and raves about the local scene, as well as addressing the conflation of the entire East Coast scene with the scene in the city of Halifax:

“James Covey [interviewer]: I wasn't going to ask much about what you think of the whole "Halifax phenomenon" that they're talking about, 'cause, I don't know, from here it just seems like a lot of talk...”

Sebastian Lippa: No, it's not, really, it's not. I think that for anyone around here to say that is really selling the town short 'cause there's a really good thing going here. We'll say for now the Atlantics, I guess. 'Cause I mean, Eric's Trip are a big part of what's happening, and they're not from here. I like to think that we're part of it, too, a little bit, and we're not full-blown Halifax people” (Covey 1993).

Lippa, who believed that the burgeoning local music scene was being carried by the backbone of its superb local infrastructure, welcomed the media spotlight. For Lippa, to deny the “Halifax phenomenon” is to deny that Halifax, or the Atlantic region at large, has a competent group of musicians and a pool of talented people. Other locals saw the media attention as good for the scene, but unlikely to last. Greg Clark, owner of the Flamingo, manager of the Double Deuce, and affiliated with many other Halifax venues dating from the 1980s to the present day, explained to *Dalhousie Gazette* his take on the Halifax Pop Explosion being hyped as the “new Seattle”,

“None of us are really taking it really very seriously... You know it's going to pass, but you know only positive can come out of it all... This whole “new

Seattle” thing is gonna stop... I think there's a little bit of the attitude that the whole thing has been totally overblown” (Furlong 1993).

Clark’s realism is infused with a sense of optimism about the long-term future of the scene after the record labels stop trying to snatch up the latest trends.

“But the point is, how is Halifax going to be known then? It's going to be known as a city that's a cool place to go to, that a band from out of town can come here and get a good gig, and that there's good bands from there. We're a little bit more on the map” (Furlong 1993).

Members of the Halifax music scene approached the media scrutiny with a healthy balance of skepticism and optimism while expressing great pride in the quality of their music scene, which they believed deserved a boost into the music industry ‘big leagues’.

The “Next Seattle”

Drawing comparisons between Halifax and Seattle was a popular story angle for the media when writing about the Halifax scene, and Sloan in particular. A 1992 *Montreal Gazette* article about Sloan’s record deal with Geffen, Nirvana’s record label, for example, is entitled “The next Nirvana from Halifax? Grunge band Sloan hits big time with Geffen deal” (Macleod 1992). In *Macleod’s* 1993 article on Sloan, the journalist writes, “The four members look the very model of the Seattle-style grunge-rock bands to which they are often compared” (DeMont). For him, similarities in the two scenes’ dress code signify an affinity between the grunge of Seattle and Halifax

Regardless of the perceived similarities and actual differences between the two cities in terms of music scenes, Sloan acknowledged their debt to Seattle early in their rise to fame. In 1992, Jay Ferguson, Sloan’s guitarist, admitted to *Chart Magazine*, “[the attention] wouldn’t have happened this fast if it wasn’t for Nirvana” (Kelly 1992). Journalists posed the question of whether Sloan was “the real thing or the product of an A&R scramble to find the Nirvana II,” and because of their impeccable timing, they

noted “it would be hard to imagine Sloan being the most talked about Can-indie band in any but the post-Nirvana age” (Kelly 1992). In a 1999 interview, Murphy alludes to the myriad of factors that caused Sloan to become known as the “Nirvana of the North”. He states, “We definitely came out of the box as Canada’s Nirvana... I think that’s partly us, and partly a product of the times, and partly you, man – it’s the media” (Cranston 1999). Murphy recognizes that the media plays a huge role in how their band is mediated and portrayed to audiences.

The emergence of Seattle's grunge scene has many similarities to the documented beginnings of its East Coast offspring. Like Halifax, Seattle is described as a university town that benefitted from a supportive “network of college radio, fanzines and indie distributors that sprang up in the wake of punk rock” (Azerrad 1992). The successful independent music label Sub Pop Records became a strong backbone within the infrastructure of Seattle's music industry (Bell 2003). This is comparable to the network of music infrastructure credited for strengthening the Halifax music scene, taking into account the roles played by its own college radio station, CKDU, its independent media, the newspaper *The Coast*, its status as a college town, home to NASCAD and several universities, and its open-minded and hard-working local record labels, Murderecords and Cinnamon Toast, and venues, like Birdland and the Double Deuce.

Similar to the way the city of Halifax regards its own geographical isolation, Seattle also attributes the inventiveness of its music scene to its relative isolation in the Northwestern United States. Mark Arm of Mudhoney, one of the early flag-bearers of Seattle grunge, credits the city's “two i's: isolation and inbreeding” (Azerrad 1992). With nothing to do except drink beer, sip coffee, and endure the rain for which Seattle is known, everybody in the music scene within the small city of half a million knew one another and, in the words of Arm, were “busy being really inbred and ripping off each other's ideas” (Azerrad 1992). Referring back to Chapter 3 of this thesis, Halifax musicians have always been very proud of being removed from the large music centres, citing their geographical isolation as an important part of their identity.

For the Seattle music scene, the result of its isolation, its supportive infrastructure, and its own rich musical heritage (Jimi Hendrix, garage rock, and the punk music of the Pacific Northwest, for example) was the birth of a new 'sound' in the early 1990s: grunge. One journalist, writing about this phenomenon during its peak in 1992, characterizes grunge using the words of some of its key players:

“The music hailed Seventies bands like Black Sabbath and Kiss, as well as proto-punks such as the Stooges, the MC5 and Blue Cheer. [Jack] Endino [producer and Skin Yard Guitarist] calls grunge "Seventies-influenced, slowed-down punk music," while Kim Thayil [of Soundgarden] says it's "sloppy, smeary, staggering, drunken music." [Sub-Pop co-founder Jonathan] Poneman calls it "a backwoods yeti stomp."

"You gotta understand Seattle," says native Duff McKagan, now bassist for Guns n' Roses. "It's grungy. People are into rock & roll and into noise, and they're building airplanes all the time, and there's a lot of noise, and there's rain and musty garages. Musty garages create a certain noise"” (Azerrad 1992).

Another reporter reflects in 2011 upon the early '90s Seattle scene with similar sentiments,

“Three-and-a-half hours from just about everything, Seattle, full of creatives with cabin fever, developed a sound—a dark, frothy mashup of punk, metal and rock—all its own” (Letkemann 2011).

Some scholars, in reference to Seattle bands, bring up the high decibel of noise in the music.

“All Seattle bands seem to have discovered the gain knob on their guitars, the distortion pedal at their feet used to “fuzzify” a sound that is then amplified to ear-bleeding proportions by large amplifiers complete with obligatory screeches of feedback” (Bell 2003, 185).

The hallmarks of the Seattle grunge 'sound', according to the media, local musicians, and scholars like Bell can thus be summarized as dark, dirty, noisy, and raw with fuzzed out, overdriven guitars and melancholy vocals filled with angst. As we will discover later in this chapter, with the replacement of the teenage angst-ridden vocals for playful, thoughtful lyrics and ear-pleasing vocal harmonies, these are the sounds adopted by Sloan on their album *Smear* which invited many comparisons to the Seattle scene. *Smear* borrowed from Seattle's grunge scene its noisy, feedback ridden, fuzzed out guitars but forwent the dark, melancholy overtones in the vocals.

Another characteristic of the Seattle grunge scene pointed out in academic scholarship and in the media is the perceived lack of showmanship, both live and in the studio. In a cultural geographical study on the Seattle scene, Thomas Bell rejects the notion of a cohesive Seattle 'sound' but does agree that there is a commonality between the 'honesty' of the bands' live performances and in their lyrics (2003, 185). Bell believes that Seattle grunge bands chose a simpler approach to recording albums, partly because of their humble garage beginnings and limited budgets, and partly because by doing so, "the honesty of the music comes through" when "what you hear on CD or tape is essentially what you hear in concert as well" (2003, 186). The music is played "in a straight-ahead manner without artifice, gimmickry, or showiness" (Bell 2003, 187). For Seattle bands, the refusal to hide behind studio techniques, like overdubs and reverb, creates music that is closer to a band's 'true' nature – that of the live show. Though this is certainly not true for all Seattle grunge bands, and certainly not specific to grunge music itself, Sloan's *Smear* does conform to this recording aesthetic, as we will see in the next section. *Smear* fits this description by being recorded in their recording engineer's living room with sparing use of reverb, overdubs, and similar studio techniques.

In the same manner, Seattle bands are also generalized as writing lyrics that are "brutalizingly honest" and demonstrate a sense of place and identity. Bell believes this reflects the internalized notions of isolation mentioned earlier, which, as quoted in a 1993 book by Aldin and Gilbert,

“in a perverse, uniquely Northwest way, translates into artistic freedom. If there is no risk of success there is also no risk of failure, so you may as well do what you please. Seattle is not Los Angeles or New York. It is not a place where things happen and the world notices. It's at the far edge of an enormous country hemmed in on all sides by mountains and water. It is beautiful, remote, claustrophobic” (quoted in Bell 2003, 187).

The imagery and artistic temperament evoked here is reminiscent of how Halifax was described by local musicians. For example, Thrush Hermit praised the Truro, Nova Scotia band The Motes for being untainted by the desire for success. Using the same rhetoric employed in Bell's article about the Seattle grunge scene, the Halifax music scene during the early 1990s also valued honesty, purity, and a strong connection to the city. The similarities between the music scenes of the two cities go beyond their shared moment as the world's 'it' cities for music; it also extends to the way each city expresses its identity. While they have remote and insular music scenes, both cities proudly turn what could have been seen as a limiting factor, their geographical isolation, into its most celebrated and most marketable quality.

The poster child for Seattle grunge was Nirvana. The band's second album, *Nevermind*, released in 1991, garnered worldwide attention and spent over four years on the Billboard Top 200, peaking at number 1 in the week of January 11, 1992 (Montgomery 2011). *Nevermind* quickly sold out of its original production run of just under 50,000 and was certified platinum in the United States nine weeks after its release, selling one million copies in this short period of time (Montgomery 2011). Ironically, the album that is most synonymous with the Seattle music scene does not adhere to the hallmarks of the Seattle Sound as delineated by its own musicians. While Nirvana's first album, *Bleach*, released in 1989, conforms to Seattle's trademark simple and honest approach to record making, *Nevermind* turns the DIY model on its heels. Referring to the single, “Smells Like Teen Spirit”, Soundgarden's Kim Thayil offers his opinion:

“It sounded pretty produced – it was definitely a very 'wet' record. A lot of reverbs and delays – whereas *Bleach* seemed punchy and dry. I know people like to think

of *Nevermind* as being all punk rock and raw. Anyone who doubts that should put their headphones on and listen to it – it's a very wet, slick, polished record” (Prato 2009, 279).

Mudhoney's Steve Turner agrees that Nirvana had abandoned Seattle's signature lo-fi aesthetic:

“I thought they had overproduced it... I was a bit disappointed with the sound of *Nevermind*. It sounds like a really big, almost '80s hard rock record, the sheen that's on it” (Prato 2009, 279).

Nirvana's Kirk Cobain even admitted to a 1993 biographer that the album didn't meet his own expectations.

“Looking back on the production of *Nevermind*, I'm embarrassed by it now. It's closer to a Mötley Crüe record than it is a punk rock record” (Azerrad 1993, 179-180).

The album production that Cobain is coveting likely has the same characteristics prized by his peers – a raw, dirty quality, not smoothed by EQ or reverb, representing the loud, imperfect, distortion-fuelled live experience of the band. These album characteristics make generalizations such as the 'Seattle Sound' difficult to analyze. As Connell and Gibson suggests, a multiplicity of genres, or in this case, the produced sound of a band, within a given area does complicate the assertion that a unified sound can be associated with a specific place (2003, 106). If Sloan is borrowing from the 'Seattle Sound', it is necessary to ask which version of the 'sound' are they referencing? One narrative of the Seattle Sound highlights the humble beginnings of grunge, authentically recorded in a garage without compromising their raw, brutally honest music for the sake of success. Many mainstream grunge albums at the time wished to evoke this narrative in order to appear authentic to audiences. Like the example of *Nevermind*, access to larger recording studios and subjection to the control of major record labels force a polished version of grunge that is still marketed as raw, dirty, and authentically organic in its origin. How can we reconcile the over-produced sound of *Nevermind* with grunge's vogue for unrefined

noisy rock? Both narratives arrive at the same goal: the branding of grunge for mass consumption. The act of situating albums like *Nevermind* amongst the agreed-upon commonalities of a particular scene allows for insights into how strongly entrenched these value judgments are. With Cobain's disappointed response about *Nevermind's* lack of 'raw' and 'dirty' sound, for example, we are able to identify what passes and what is unacceptable for an authentic grunge record. Perhaps, in the case of *Nevermind*, the markers of grunge reflected more of a marketing phenomenon than a grassroots movement. Sloan would later take the raw qualities of the Seattle Sound and use them to their advantage, jumpstarting their career by aligning themselves with a trending sound (dirty, distortion) but adding their own twist (British-inspired pop vocals).

With the Seattle scene reaching its peak in 1992, the media was looking for another city to which it could symbolically pass the music torch. Subpop's Jonathan Poneman prophetically spoke of another music scene that would soon rise into prominence:

“Some say that what happened in Seattle was just dumb luck. But the thing that's wonderful about dumb luck is that it will happen again. Right now, there's a new scene being born somewhere” (Azerrad 1992).

The media pointed fingers at San Diego, Chicago, and finally Halifax as heir to the Seattle throne (Tough 1993). While Seattle became a household name for grunge, the cities to follow were doomed to be touted as lesser copies, which at first glance, could conceivably have become the fate of Halifax's now-reputable music scene and Sloan's career. In a 1994 interview with Nirvana by the infamous and colourful Nardwuar of the British Columbia-based band, The Evaporators, Kirk Cobain was asked about Sloan being quoted in the Nirvana biography, *Come As You Are*, to which Cobain replied, “I don't know who they are” (Nardwuar 1994). In the big picture, Halifax music was being disseminated at a smaller scale than that of Seattle and because of this, was in danger of becoming judged too quickly by a wider music audience as a lesser copy of the Seattle scene.

The 'Halifax Sound'

While touted as the 'next Seattle', the 'sound' of the Halifax scene did not resemble that of its 'predecessor'. To dismiss the Halifax scene as a mere replication of Seattle would be an oversimplification of the factors that brought this East Coast scene to fruition. One journalist notes sophistication in Halifax music, calling it college rock:

“Neither was Halifax, Seattle. They didn't look the same, and more importantly, they didn't sound the same. Contemporary Seattle sounds had been built around heavy, washed-out guitar, heavy downbeats and, in the middle of it all, heavy choruses. Halifax grunge was a different breed: the ‘60s Merseybeat³ pop influence was prevalent in the vocals, which stood out among the distorted guitar lines. This music wasn't the blues rock aggression of the American West: it was college music, first and foremost. And it was about making something new rather than something loud.” (Carpenter 2011)

A 1995 Globe and Mail review of the Murderecordz' (a record label run by members of Sloan) release *Mock Up, Scale Down* by The Super Friendz also points out a unique approach to pop in the Halifax Sound:

“At the risk of speaking of a Halifax Sound, let's just say that strange things happen to pop songs in the capital of Nova Scotia. Like fellow Haligonians Sloan and Hardship Post, The Super Friendz make engagingly and unabashedly melodic pop records and then toss in something that shifts the context just enough to turn your head” (Dafoe 1995).

The reviewer gives an example of this “strange”-ness, recalling a “sugary bit of bittersweet pop... interrupted by a chattering bit of discordant guitar” (Dafoe 1995). As we will see in the in-depth analysis of Sloan's songs in Chapter 4 and 5, this set-up of a sweetly performed pop moment interjected with a jarring dissonance is a common

3 Merseybeat is a term that refers to the 1960s pop music that originated in Liverpool, England, most notably, the music of the Beatles.

occurrence throughout Sloan's first two albums, identified by music listeners as part of the Halifax Sound.

An online discussion on the Halifax Locals message board offers some music listeners' opinions about what constituted the Halifax Sound during the height of grunge. In an online posting dated December 18, 2006, Robert Bruce wrote,

“Halifax Sound' makes me think of the way many bands sounded circa '92-'93, when the hype about Halifax was at its peak. So I think over-use of overdrive/fuzz/distortion, sparing use of dissonant chords, mid-tempo, sloppy, poppy, unique vocal harmonies, much emphasis placed on making the lyrics interesting” (Bruce 2006).

Recurring descriptors that distinguish the Halifax Sound are its pop sensibilities (often attributed to British pop), playful 'tongue-in-cheek' lyrics, and persistent use of vocal harmonies. East Coast bands like Eric's Trip, Sloan, Jale, and Hardship Post featured noise, dissonance, and heavy guitar distortion on their early 1990s albums but there was an emphasis on accessible melodies, catchy songwriting, and harmonies within the vocals, often pairing male and female vocalists.

These qualities that appear to set Halifax music apart are present in the album *Smeared*, by Sloan, along with many of the established markers of grunge that were fashionable at the time. As a journalist notes, *Smeared* showed Sloan's “potential to combine pop prowess with the noisy rage that was all the rage on the charts in the grimy wake of Nirvana's success” (Patch 2012). The album embodies the moment in time when Halifax was thrust into the limelight with the help of the grunge 'bandwagon' and it reveals that the city, and Sloan in particular, had unique qualities and were not derivative of Nirvana or Seattle grunge. *Smeared* (and to a larger extent, the album, *Twice Removed*, which I shall discuss in the next chapter) adds weight to the delicate argument for a unique Halifax Sound, insofar as it can be pigeon-holed to represent the sounds heard on *Smeared* and broadened to include other East Coast bands from this period. *Smeared* displays qualities that are recognized by audiences to be part of the Halifax Sound – a unique balance of accessible pop melodies and unusual, sometimes dissonant, vocal

harmonies, clever wordplay, and a ‘slacker’ approach to performance. The claim for a shared sound can also be supported, as we will see in the final chapter, by Halifax bands today that proudly align themselves as carrying on in the tradition of the Halifax Pop Explosion of the early 1990s, labeling themselves and labeled by the media as perpetuators of the ‘classic Halifax Sound’. The defining qualities of what makes the city believe its own brand of pop is unique (as discussed in Chapter 3) are what Haligonian Joel Plaskett refers to as a “through line”, a connecting thread of Halifax identity that remains throughout the years of the Halifax Pop Explosion to the present day. He explains,

“There was a sonic bent to a lot of those bands [from Halifax], but songs have always been at the core of that. Lyricism has always been a big part of that scene. Sloan changed their sonics by the second record; they ditched My Bloody Valentine and headed straight to the Beatles. The through line was the peculiarity of their words and their approach to singing.... The centre was always the songs. The through line is the insular nature of what people in Halifax write about” (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2011, 499).

Smeared may have been written and recorded as a response to the Seattle grunge trend and other noisy, feedback-ridden bands popular at the time, like My Bloody Valentine, but Sloan's preference for pop over melancholy rock, their playful treatment of lyrics, and their tuneful approach to melodies and harmonies set them apart and allow them to be recognized by the media and music audiences as having a distinct Halifax Sound.

Analysis of two Songs from Smeared

At first listen, Sloan's 1991 album *Smeared* could be dismissed as a dated product of its time. The guitar tones, production quality, and liberal use of fuzz pedals, distortion and reverb betray its adherence to the early '90s grunge trend and to leftover vestiges of the excesses of digital effects used in recordings from the 1980s. Given the public's appetite for grunge, it is not surprising that the album was able to garner so much attention from

major record labels. However, if the band had not shed their grunge influences with their second album, as well as that of other influential noise-rock bands at the time, like My Bloody Valentine, it is likely they would have remained in derivative grunge-rock obscurity. When comparing *Smeared* to Sloan's second album, *Twice Removed*, one columnist points out that

“*Smeared* was a dissonant pastiche of various indie-rock influences, one which both belied the band's inexperience and hinted at real song-writing skill submerged under the layers of fashionable fuzz” (Patch 2012).

Smeared demonstrated how the band could hold its own on a world stage as a grunge or punk rock band and also showed their potential for a unique song-writing style that would not be fully explored until later in their career.

I have chosen its first and second singles, Underwhelmed and 500 Up, as representative of the album. After a brief overview of the record production and instruments used on the album, I examine each of the songs in terms of recording (signal processing, stereo placement, techniques), performance (instruments and gear used, styles, vocal delivery), and songwriting (chord progressions, song structure, use of motifs, vocal melodies and harmonies). As each member of Sloan, Chris Murphy, Jay Ferguson, Patrick Pentland, and Andrew Scott, takes turns with song-writing and singing duties as well as who plays what instrument, the songs have a certain degree of variety, further complicating the search for any definitive identifiers within their music. Throughout these analyses, however, I hope to get to the heart of Sloan's contribution to the seemingly tenuous Halifax Sound and to discover whether or not the music of Sloan demonstrates that something unique was emanating from the East Coast during this time that conforms to the description, as outlined earlier in this thesis, of the Halifax Sound made by the media, other bands, and music fans. As we will see, *Smeared* does borrow many of the hallmarks of grunge, but has many qualities that set it apart, allowing it to be labeled as having a distinctive Halifax Sound.

Like the mythologized garage origins of Seattle grunge, *Smeared* was recorded with similarly humble circumstances. For the meager sum of \$2,500 for a two-week session,

Sloan recorded all of the songs that would become their *Peppermint EP* and *Smear* (both were self-released in 1992) at the house of their engineer, Terry Pulliam, known as Sound Market Studio (MacDonald 1992). Murphy recalls the session in their biography on the band's official website:

"We recorded it in a house in Halifax with a friend of ours, Terry Pulliam, basically on a whim. We were practicing one Monday and we said, 'we should record all of this stuff,' and then we went in on Friday and did it. We wanted to record a few songs, maybe sell a tape around town or even try for some indie distribution with hopes of making our money back. There was absolutely no pressure when we recorded *Smear* because we recorded it ourselves" (History of the Band 2012).

Even when the album *Smear* was picked up by Geffen, it was not re-recorded; the label spent \$30,000 fly the band and an engineer from Vancouver, Dave Ogilvie, to Los Angeles to remix the songs (MacDonald 1992). Most of the album's 'sound' and marketability came from the "abrasiveness" of recording it with gear that was less than professional, so it was not in the label's or the band's best interests to destroy this 'sound' by re-recording it. As Scott recalls,

"Nothing was compromised in any way for *Smear*. Songs for *Smear* were all remixed in Los Angeles. We didn't lose any abrasiveness - songs were just refined and brightened. Everything is much more audible."

The modest recording quality of *Smear*, with its raw guitars and fuzz distortion, was exactly the sound Geffen that was seeking to whet the music listener's appetite in the wake of Seattle grunge.

Smear's production is characteristic of many of the albums made in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Like grunge albums from Seattle, it features noisy, fuzzed out, overdriven guitars, cymbal-heavy drums, and unpolished vocals without too much reverb and other studio 'gimmickry'. The drums on the album are very 'produced', a term used by sound engineers to denote a heavily processed sound, and compressed so that each hit of the

snare sounds almost identical. There is very little effort on the album to mimic a natural room tone. Instead, the kick and snare drum sound like they have been recorded with a close-mic technique, giving the engineer a tight sound without much depth that can then be tweaked to sound punchy and up front in the stereo mix with a short digital room reverb. This drum sound is similar to that of other bands at the turn of the decade, like the Pixies on their albums *Doolittle*, *Bossanova*, and *Trompe le Monde*, as well as grunge albums, like Nirvana's *Nevermind*, which Sloan and their producer, Terry Pulliam, was likely to be aware of, if not directly referencing. The kick drum, in particular, has a 'click' sound attached to it that is reminiscent of early 1990s heavy metal music, in which the kick drum is equalized to have an identically loud impact regardless of the force used by the drummer. The resulting drum sound throughout the album is processed in what can be seen as a very controlled and deliberate attempt to mimic the drum sound of other popular bands at the time.

The style of drumming on *Smeared*, supplied by Andrew Scott, is very loud and 'in-your-face' with a lot of fills and a constant 'wash' of cymbals, all while keeping a steady beat. The set-up of the drum kit is very minimal and basic, consisting of only four pieces – a snare, kick, tom and floor tom – and a few cymbals – a hi-hat, crash, and ride cymbal. This is a popular drum set-up used by countless rock and punk outfits, as well as other East Coast bands from the '90s, like Thursh Hermit, Superfriendz, and The Flashing Lights. The simple set-up keeps with the 'music without artifice' mantra of the Seattle scene.

By listening to the sound of the guitars throughout the album with a tuned ear, by watching their music videos, and by examining pictures of the band playing live and in the studio, the guitars used on *Smeared* can be identified as Fender Mustangs and Telecasters that use a bright-sounding single-coil pick-up. (Although it may be more likely a coincidence rather than a direct influence or assimilation of style, Nirvana's Kirk Cobain also used a Fender Mustang guitar).



Figure 1: Screenshot of YouTube video of Sloan playing Underwhelmed live in 1992. L-R: Pentland (Fender Telecaster), Murphy (Fender Mustang bass), Ferguson (Fender Mustang).

The most prevalent guitar pedal used on the album has the characteristics of a Big Muff Electro-Harmonix overdrive fuzz pedal. The choice of guitar pedals, especially the occasional inclusion of a chorus or phase effect pedal, often give the guitars a swishing, phase-like character. The bass guitar tone, though it is relatively clean because of the decision to play with a pick instead of plucking with their fingers, is also often processed to be out-of-phase and punchy, similar to the effect achieved by the drums. The resulting guitar and bass tones have a production quality that is very specific to this time period, linking them to noisy, distortion-filled bands like Dinosaur Jr., My Bloody Valentine, Sonic Youth, and Smashing Pumpkins.

Underwhelmed

Underwhelmed, written by Chris Murphy, opens with guitar feedback playing an open drone while Murphy sings the first two verses. Because the guitar is being heavily overdriven with a fuzz pedal, the resulting feedback sounds as if it is going in and out of phase. Another guitar enters in the second verse, and like the first guitar, it has a twangy sound characteristic of the bridge pickup of a Fender single-coil guitar. The chorus gives us the introduction of a third guitar playing the rhythm with a tremolo effect. During the choruses, the lead and rhythm guitars are panned hard left and right in the stereo mix, helping to differentiate the two guitar lines. A fourth guitar enters at the solo/outro of the song playing the same chord progression as the others, but is much more fuzzed out and distorted, giving the ending of the song a noisy, hectic, 'rock-out' section that would translate as very entertaining on stage with each of the band members playing as loudly as they could. In this outro, Sloan is showing their punk rock/heavy rock influences, as opposed to songs on *Twice Removed* in which the guitar solos often give the impression of calculated melodic sophistication. The tremolo guitar in the outro has been shifted to the centre of the mix while the other two guitars are given stereo space to the left and right. Throughout the song, the guitars and bass are very dry without much reverb. The bass guitar is also heavily overdriven, most clearly heard in the fifth verse when the guitars drop out, leaving only the vocals, the bass, and the drums. The vocals are double tracked, a technique used for many numbers of reasons, sometimes to mask the imperfections of the singer, to make the vocals sound more prominent in the mix, or simply for aesthetic purposes. Other than the double-tracked vocals, the song is recorded in a way that the band could easily reproduce it in a live setting.

The chord progression of Underwhelmed is simple and repetitive. In the key of F# Major, the intro verses simply employ an F# (I) drone, while the remainder of the verses repeats a F#-A-B (I- \flat III-IV) pattern. The chorus has two phrases of A-E-F# (\flat III- \flat VII-I) except for the third and final chorus which repeats four phrases before the outro, a reiteration the verse progression.

Underwhelmed (Key of F#)	Chords	Roman Numeral Analysis
Verse	F#-A-B	I- \flat III-IV
Chorus	A-E-F#	\flat III- \flat VII-I

Table 1: Chord Progression of Underwhelmed

The song structure is also straightforward with an ABAB format. The structure and progression is simple and unambitious, but effective for a pop single. It is in the sound of the instruments and the vocal delivery where the interest for the song lies, so it is not surprising that the structure is repetitive and to the point.

As we will discover in most of Sloan's songs, the entire melody is built around two main motifs, one during the verse and the other in the chorus. The first verse features eight bars of a disjointed melody centred on the notes F# - E \flat - B - C#. Because of the weak placement of F# and B, they are heard as passing notes or leading tones pulling towards the main notes of the motif, E \flat and C#, a third apart (See Figure 2). The next eight bars state the same melody with a few modifications (as will the rest of the verses to accommodate the lyrics and to add variation) but it ends differently with a descending third on a single syllable ("young"), C# - B - A#, instead of holding the C# like the previous phrase. This hints at the descending third of motif #2 we will hear next in the chorus. The chorus is built entirely around this descending third motif (E \flat - D - C#) on a single syllable in the lyrics ("her") followed by the leading tone (like the verse, but this time in the opposite direction) E \flat - F# (See Figure 3). At the end of the chorus, the chord progression returns to the home key, F#, but Chris Murphy's melody does not follow through on the leading tone, choosing instead to hold the E \flat note for almost two bars. If this decision to leave an unresolved leading tone against the prevailing harmony wasn't jarring enough, the back-up vocal harmony, which has been present in the song since verse 3, holds an A# note for the same two measures, creating a prolonged clashing tritone with the E \flat (see Figure 4). This bold dissonance between the main melody and

the harmony is not limited to the first chorus. In verse 3, the final syllable of “never mind” ends with a tritone between the two voices (see Figure 5). In the next line, “beautiful eyes” are only a major second apart (B and C#) in the same register. The same grating harmony can be heard in the same part of verse 10 with the words “beautiful Rs”. Not enough, Murphy decides to end the song with the same major second clash (B and C#) with the words “Hey mister” (see Figure 6). This blatant use of jarring harmonies is the most surprising element of a song that is otherwise relatively unremarkable in its songwriting and structure. It is also worth noting of how prevalent the harmony vocals are featured in this song. With the exception of the first two verses, verse 5 (after the first chorus), and verse 8 and 9 (after the second chorus), the main melody is continuously accompanied by a note-for-note harmony. As we will see, this is a common tactic and recognizable trademark of Sloan.

Figure 2 shows the main vocals for Verse 1 of "Underwhelmed". The tempo is 130 bpm, and there is an F# drone. The melody is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are "She was un-der - whelmed if that's a word. ___".

Figure 2: Melodic motif #1 of Underwhelmed (Verse)

Figure 3 shows the main vocals and harmony for the Chorus of "Underwhelmed". The melody is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are "But not in h-e - rs. ___ But not in hers. ___". The harmony is a note-for-note accompaniment of the main melody. Chords B, A, E, and F# are indicated above the melody.

Figure 3: Melodic motif #2 of Underwhelmed (Chorus)

39 E F# A B
Interlude

Main Vocals
— But not in hers. —

Harmony
— But not in hers. —

Figure 4: Tritone harmony (A# and E \flat) in final note of the first chorus (“hers”) of Underwhelmed

21 B F# A

Main Vocals
— you" and I — said "ne - ver mi - nd". —

Harmony
— you" and I — said "ne - ver mi - nd". —

Figure 5: Tritone harmony (A# and E \flat) in Verse 3 (“mind”) of Underwhelmed

132 F# A
Solo/Outro

Main Vocals
— Hey mis - ter. —

Harmony
— Hey mis - ter. —

Figure 6: Major Second harmony (B and C#) in final line of Underwhelmed

The lyrics of Underwhelmed are playful and innocuous. They document the interactions between the subject and a girl in school who does not return his infatuation for her. The lyricist, Murphy, plays with the words “underwhelmed” and “overwhelmed” to describe their feelings towards one another. To continue with the school theme, he comments on her poor grammar, her “atrocious” spelling, and how “she skips her classes and gets good

grades”. Meanwhile, he sings, “All I really wanna know is what she thinks of me”. It is a classic storyline of young, unrequited love. The playful lyrics demonstrate one of the characteristics noticed by the media and audiences as something that is distinct to music in Halifax during this period.

Murphy's vocal delivery is particularly revealing within the context of this study. In studying his vocal style in *Underwhelmed*, I noted extensive use of appoggiaturas and sliding notes. For example, the words “when I was young” in verse 2 slide up and down so much it almost momentarily reaches a falsetto register. At the end of verse 5, Murphy sings, “I felt like I just ate my young” with lots of attitude thanks to his use of vocal slides. The music stops at this point in the song so that this line can be delivered solo and once it has been delivered, it is quickly followed by a bombastic return of the guitars. The impression given here is of someone who exudes 'cool' (the trail-off on the word “young” and the music cutting out and back in again is a great 'rock star' moment) but is also somewhat of a slacker (the words do not have to be sung perfectly). This sloppy, imperfect, but yet confident performance quality is seen through the songs on *Smeared*, and as pointed out earlier in this thesis, is purported to be a common trait in Halifax music around this time.

A rather obvious sign of the band's East Coast roots is found in Murphy's pronunciation of words. The Canadian East Coast has long been derided for their hard Rs. (Interestingly, in *Underwhelmed*, Murphy sings about he loves to hear his crush “roll her Rs, her beautiful Rs”.) We can hear instances of hard Rs throughout *Underwhelmed*, particularly the word “heart” in verse 4 (it is accentuated by the over-articulation of the letter 't' afterwards, another hallmark of the East Coast vernacular), followed by the word “hers” in the same verse and repeated throughout the first chorus. Other words that stand out for their peculiar pronunciation is the 'o' sound in the word “school” in verses 1 and 2, and the 'a' in “talking” in verse 5. In searching for signifiers for a Halifax Sound, it is possible that something as simple as a regional accent belies the band's East Coast

origins. While not a marker of the Halifax Sound in itself, it does give the listener audible clues to help them connect the music to a specific region.⁴

500 Up

500 Up is the second single to be released with a music video from *Smeared*. Andrew Scott, who can usually be found behind the drum kit, writes the lyrics. The single features Patrick Pentland as a primary vocalist with Chris Murphy singing back-up vocals and harmony. Scott takes a minor singing role, supplying only the vocals in the two bridge sections. Pentland and Scott's vocals are single-tracked while Murphy's vocals are again double-tracked, like in *Underwhelmed*. All of the vocals feature only light amounts of reverb. The drumbeat of 500 Up is very upbeat and driving, similar to another song on the album, *I Am The Cancer*. In the music video for this song, Pentland is playing a Fender Mustang guitar and Murphy is playing a Fender Mustang bass, which is consistent with the single-coil guitar and bass tones heard on this song and all of *Smeared*. However, in the video, Ferguson is pictured with a Gibson SG guitar that, after listening to the song with an attuned ear, is clearly not the guitar used on the recording. The guitar that is heard on the recording sounds like a single-coil Fender guitar, similar to what is used on the rest of the album. Throughout the song, two guitars are panned hard left and right in the stereo mix. The guitar to the left sounds as though it is being played through its bridge pick-up, shrill and thin in its sound, and supplies the song with simple, single strums while the guitar panned to the right differentiates itself by using the neck pick-up, sounding more mellow and full. Both guitars are heavily overdriven and have a fairly dry reverb sound. A third guitar is heard during the interlude sections before and after each of the bridge sections. The bass guitar plays with a very clean sound in a straightforward manner. It is characterized by an out-of-phase quality that is likely the result of both guitar pick-ups being switched on (neck and bridge). The fuzzed out guitars and modest use of reverb is similar in philosophy to that of Seattle's grunge sound.

⁴ For a complete analysis of *Underwhelmed*, please see Appendix 1.

The chord progression of 500 Up is markedly static with minute changes in the voicing of a chord counting for much of the harmonic movement. In the key of A major, the verses oscillate between Am^{6-9} and A (i^{6-9} -I). The guitar in the left speaker strums each chord once, letting us hear the subtle change between the minor and major colour of the same chord. The chorus offers even less variety, featuring only a sustained D chord (IV) for four measures before returning to the chord progression of the verse. The first bridge gives us an A-D change in the harmony (I-IV) while the following interlude uses the same chord progression as the chorus of Underwhelmed with the chords C-G-A (\flat III- \flat VII-I). The second bridge adds a small change to the same progression, playing C-G-D-A (\flat III- \flat VII-IV-I). Overall, like Underwhelmed, the song does not push any harmonic boundaries and relies on a repetitive harmonic motion on which to build a pop tune. The song structure is not nearly as straightforward as Underwhelmed, however, having multiple bridges, interludes, and shortened reiterations of both the verse and chorus. Its layout loosely meanders through an AABCA'CAB structure with each A indicating a verse and chorus, each B representing a bridge section, and the C reflects each instance of the interlude. The constant change and variation within and between sections keeps the song interesting for the listener.

500 Up (Key of A)	Chords	Roman Numeral Analysis
Verse	Am^{6-9} -A	i^{6-9} -I
Chorus	D	IV
Interlude #1	A	I
Bridge #1	A-D	I-IV
Interlude #2	C-G-A	\flat III- \flat VII-I
Bridge #2	C-G-D-A	\flat III- \flat VII-IV-I

Table 2: Chord Progression of 500 Up

Like Underwhelmed, the melody of 500 Up can be simplified into two main motifs, or melodic hooks, one which is heard during the verse and chorus, and the other in the bridge. The first hook is a repeated E note that constantly jumps back and forth to C# in the verses to the point of redundancy. This concentration on E makes up almost the entirety of each of the verses and short accompanying choruses, both of which are sung by Pentland (see Figures 7 and 8). The chorus introduces Murphy's back-up vocals with a short pick-up line before singing two different harmonies against the E motif in the main voice and resolving to an A6-9 chord, as C# is heard in Pentland's melody (see Figure 9). The lyricist, Andrew Scott, pipes in during the bridge, his short vocal debut on the Sloan album, with motif #2, a stepwise movement up and down an A chord (see Figure 10). It is the first time a new melodic idea is introduced into the song, and the mood of the entire song changes here, thanks to a subdued moment in the music and Scott's sheepish baritone voice that sounds closer to speaking than singing. It is a talking/singing hybrid that is similar to Rick White's vocal style in the band, Eric's Trip. This bridge section is indicative of the 'slacker', or sloppy, quality that others have recognized in Sloan's early music. It is not necessary for Scott to try to sing; in fact, it makes more of a statement that he does not try. This 'slacker' singing, coupled with the ambitious three-part harmony of the chorus, is the most note-worthy aspect of 500 Up in the area of songwriting.

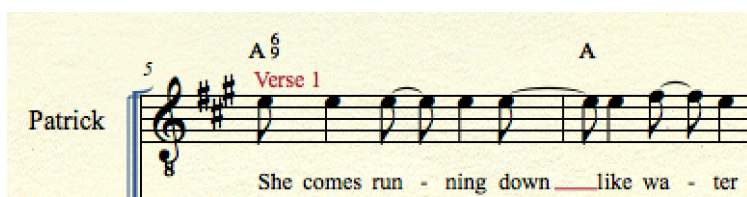


Figure 7: Melodic motif #1 of 500 Up (Verse)

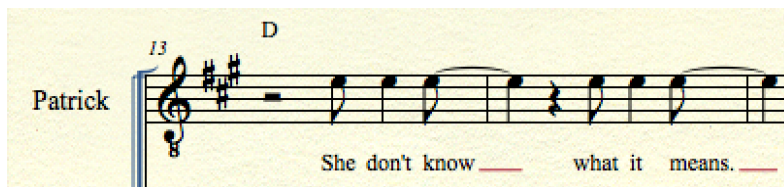


Figure 8: Melodic motif #1 of 500 Up (Chorus)

Figure 9: Vocal harmony in chorus of 500 Up

Figure 10: Motif #2 of 500 Up (Bridge)

Like *Underwhelmed*, the pronunciation of some words in *500 Up* may betray the band's geographical origins. Scott is most guilty of having noticeably hard Rs, thanks in part to his declamatory style of singing. It is especially obvious since the last word in every one of his lines ends with the letter R (“faster”, “corner”, “laughter”, and “her” during the bridge; “ladder” during the truncated third chorus). We can also hear hard R sounds during Pentland's vocal contributions with words like “care” and “hair” in the second and fourth verse. Other pronunciations that stand out as unusual are the “au” vowel sounds in Pentland's delivery of “taught” and “daughter” in the first verse, similar to the “a” of “water” and “ar” of “farmer's” in that same verse. Like in *Underwhelmed*, these pronunciations belie their East Coast origins and could work to tip music listeners about Sloan's home city.⁵

These singles from *Smeared* show a similarity to the music of the Seattle grunge scene, but offer very distinct differences as well, most notably in the categories of lyric topics, mood, and clever wordplay, pop sensibilities in the music and melodies, extensive and sometimes unusual use of vocal harmonies, and a particular manipulation of word pronunciation that all help to distinguish the music of Sloan as originating from the East Coast of Canada during a moment when this brand of pop was exploding in popularity.

⁵ For a complete analysis of *500 Up*, please see Appendix 1.

The Halifax Pop Explosion was not simply 'grunge-light'; Sloan and their peers had much more to offer.

Chapter 5: 1994 – “No Thanks. I don't want to be grunge”: A Case Study of Sloan’s Twice Removed

The Grunge “House of Cards”

“No thanks, I don't want to be grunge” (Mitz 1994), says Scott in 1994, not long after the release of *Twice Removed*. If Sloan's *Smear* was alternative rock at a time when alternative music was a mainstream commercial success, their second album, *Twice Removed*, was non-conformist in the way that it countered musical trends at the time. As one journalist puts it, “It was clean, back when 'clean' was a dirty word” (Patch 2012). The band abandoned its use of “fashionable fuzz” (Patch 2012) in exchange for a sophisticated college rock sound⁶, all while retaining the “through line” of clever lyrics, accessible pop melodies, and unique vocal harmonies (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2011, 499). Strangely, even though the sound of Sloan changed, it still seemed to embody the Halifax Sound as defined by the local music scene and its onlookers. No longer emulating Seattle grunge, Sloan kept the aspects of their style which set them apart as having a distinct Halifax Sound. Their insistence upon personal musical fulfillment instead of continuing to ride the grunge bandwagon reinforces the notion that the Halifax music scene does foster a unique calibre of artist that prizes honesty and earnestness instead of the “networking frenzy” (Covey 1996) of larger music centres (See Chapter 3).

Twice Removed enjoys the most longevity of any Sloan album, having been named one of the top Canadian albums of all time as late as 2005 by *Chart Magazine* (Chorney-Booth 2005), as well as recently being re-issued as a deluxe vinyl box set in 2012 and supported

⁶ College rock music refers to the independent, early alternative bands that became popular in the 1980s (for example, R.E.M., The Smiths, The Replacements, Dinosaur Jr., and Sonic Youth). These bands were able to find niche audiences through the airwaves of college radio stations which were much more receptive towards “lesser-known and more adventurous music” (Reed 2013).

by a *Twice Removed* tour that same year. Keeping this popularity in mind as well as its continued relevance to the Halifax music scene, this is the album that most comes to mind when Sloan fans think of the Halifax Pop Explosion of the 1990s. Even more so than *Smeared*, it is the best place to find evidence of why the media claims a unique Halifax Sound from this era because of its bold move away from a style of music that was trendy at the time.

Released in 1994, *Twice Removed* was a clear and calculated departure from the Seattle Sound of *Smeared*. The songs were more “down, melancholic”, “raw” and “weren't hiding behind any fuzzy blanket of sound”, as Pentland claims (Lepage 1994). The band felt that grunge had quickly run its course and it was time to get off the 'bandwagon'. Looking back on this time in 2012, Murphy describes the decision to change the band's direction and displays some reservations about being known as a “poor man's Nirvana” (Patch 2012),

“When we started *Twice Removed*, I felt that the expiry date for grunge was over. Even when ‘Underwhelmed’ came out, grunge was over for me. In Halifax, we were kind of copying things that these American bands like Nirvana and [English band] My Bloody Valentine were doing, and when it was put on a world stage, it just seemed really behind the times. So we just wanted to set ourselves apart and make a pop record... I think that it was a kind of beacon for sensitive kids. They had Nirvana’s *Nevermind*, sure, but we kind of created an alternative to the alternative with this pop record” (Smellie 2012).

Sloan became distrustful of the unstable, over-saturated “house of cards” that the grunge scene had become (Patch 2012). Ferguson expresses this sentiment in the liner notes for the *Twice Removed* 2012 reissue:

“Once there's an explosion, then there's always bandwagon jumpers. It just felt like, post-Nirvana post-My Bloody Valentine post-Teenage Fanclub, everybody was just playing with distorted guitars and it was just everywhere” (Sloan 2012, 3).

Pentland conveys the same concerns about the grunge movement and its artistic and career limitations, even if it meant forgoing a quick and easy ride to fame.

“...[B]asically we wanted to sort of get away from that [loud rock guitar style] and try to break out of that so that we would have some longevity with our career... I think we felt pressure not to let this record deal escape from us but also we felt pressure to move away from what was rapidly becoming a completely watered-down, boring music scene” (Sloan 2012, 3-4).

Sloan made a conscious decision with *Twice Removed* to make music that better reflected their aesthetics as musicians, even if it meant risking fame and financial success. Like Pentland, Ferguson believes that perhaps they could have achieved mainstream fame had they made the follow-up grunge record that their label wanted them to make.

“Maybe we should have followed up *Smear* with a record that was similarly noisy even though that was sort of the climate at the time. Based on the quality of our songs maybe we could have just risen to the top” (Sloan 2012, 4).

Sloan's insistence on keeping their artistic integrity at all costs supports the assertions made earlier in this thesis by members of the Halifax music scene that their city is relatively free from the distractions of major label trappings. In Murphy's own words,

“We took a certain amount of pride in the fact that we were on a major [label] but continued to live outside the industry. The fact that we didn't leave Halifax was a big part of our story” (Sloan 2012, 20).

The band encapsulates here the romantic notion espoused by Haligonians that the city's artists ought to prize uniqueness over conformity and find their identity in isolation.

However, the initial reception of *Twice Removed* was less than warm. Their record label, Geffen, did not approve of the band's new musical direction. Having spent a lot of money promoting them as Canada's answer to Nirvana, they did not appreciate being handed a record that did not fit the description of the band into which they thought

they had invested (Sloan 2012, 14). Ferguson elaborates on the label's less than favourable response,

“Geffen basically wanted *Smear* 2. They wanted something that would stand up next to the new Smashing Pumpkins record. We didn't deliver that record and it really frustrated them” (Grand 1995).

Geffen was contractually obligated to release the album that Sloan had recorded using money advanced from the label but they did not make any effort to promote it (Sloan 2012, 14). The subsequent tour of the United States to push the album was loosely organized with very little audience turnout or press opportunities. The band felt as though they had been abandoned by their label who did not have the time or interest to promote it (Sloan 2012, 16-17). The band was even left to fund their own music video to promote their second single that year from *Twice Removed*, People of the Sky (Ladouceur 1996). Meanwhile, record sales did not measure up to the relative commercial success of *Smear*; it had sold 40,000 copies in its first year while *Twice Removed* had sold only 9,000 (Smellie 2012). It would not be until 1998 that the *Twice Removed* would become certified gold in Canada (Covey 2010). The initial stress and disappointment of this perceived failure, coupled with mounting tensions within the band over finding time to practice and record because of Scott's move from Halifax to Toronto in 1993, caused the band to take a hiatus for a period of about one year in 1995, coinciding with a mutual agreement to terminate their relationship with Geffen (Sloan 2012, 20).

Press reviews for *Twice Removed* were mixed. Spin named the album one of the “Ten Best Albums You Didn't Hear” in 1994 (McCann 1998). Rolling Stone complained it was no *Smear* and gave it 3 1/2 stars (Bliss 1997). *The Trouser Press Guide to '90s Rock* writes fondly of the album, describing it as “mature, pensive and eclectic” without the “dense skeins of squalling noise and specific sonic citations” of *Smear*. For the author, *Twice Removed* instead featured “carefully intertwined, spaciously electric arrangements, evanescent '60s harmonies and trickier rhythms” (Robbins 1997). With this album, the band self-admittedly began displaying their British '60s pop influences more prominently in their vocals and arrangements, looking to the songwriting and more specifically, the

album production of The Beatles, The Who, and The Kinks (Ladouceur 1998). Looking back on this album, a Halifax journalist points out how it manages to sound “of the '90s” but outside of its trends, attributing its timelessness to its overt disregard of grunge:

“*Twice Removed* stands now as one of the most timeless records of the '90s, an album that evokes the decade without representing any of its commercially successful trends” (Covey 2010).

Sloan paid a steep short-term price for their experiment to play the style of music they wanted to make – an ‘alternative’ to alternative music. In the immediate fallout to going against the current trend, they saw their relationship with their label deteriorate, a downturn in record sales, a less than stellar turnout for their *Twice Removed* American tour, the possible end of a chance to be a mainstream success in the United States, and the breaking up of the band for the foreseeable future. However, in the long term, in their home country and especially in their home city, what seemed like their ruination eventually became one of their best qualities and marketable features as a band – their integrity as musicians. The gamble for career longevity seems to have paid off for Sloan on the Canadian music circuit, as evidenced by their continued placement in top 10 Canadian music lists, their long-standing influential status as a local Halifax institution (explored further in Chapter 6), and the recent resurgence of attention towards the album with a deluxe re-issue and Canadian tour in support of *Twice Removed*.

However, to claim *Twice Removed* as a great achievement in Halifax indie music can be problematic because of the fact that, unlike *Smear*, it was not recorded in Halifax. As Pentland comments on the album,

“It tends to be championed as this great Canadian indie record, which it isn't in any way. It was a major label record recorded with major label money with a producer in New York” (Chorney-Booth 2005)

However, he downplays the role played by their producer, Jim Rondinelli, in the recording process and highlights the band's autonomy in songwriting and arrangements.

“Although if you listen to the demos we made for the record and the actual record, they're pretty much the same. The producer didn't have a lot of suggestions in terms of arrangements, it was mostly just sounds that he was able to get because he was an engineer as well” (Chorney-Booth 2005).

Twice Removed was recorded over seven weeks at Lenny Kravitz's Waterfront Studios in Hoboken, New Jersey and Axis Studio in Manhattan (Sloan 2012, 7). Working with Rondinelli, there were many clashes of personality, which the band blames on the attitude and demeanour of the producer (Sloan 2012, 7). While they appreciated him for his engineering abilities, Sloan was reluctant to hand over control of how the songs were going to sound. Scott reminisces about this aspect of the recording process,

“Well, I know that as a group once we started working with Jim, we quickly realized if we let this guy take full reigns as producer then we will lose control and that's always been such a huge part of how we did things” (Sloan 2012, 8).

Rondinelli's talents, according to the band, was in achieving the 'sound' of the record, another point which is potentially problematic when equating the sound of *Twice Removed* with the Halifax Sound. How can an American producer working out of New York create a Halifax Sound? Murphy recalls that Rondinelli was solely responsible for the 'sound' of the album:

“I love the sound of the record and that was all Jim. We had some wonderful old gear, Jim knew how to use it and our record benefited greatly from that” (Sloan 2012, 9).

Murphy's use of the word 'sound' seems to refer strictly to the quality of the recording. Sloan is adamant in pointing out that they were in control of producing their own sound for *Twice Removed* (guitar tones, arrangements, performance) and that Rondinelli's role was merely to skillfully capture that sound on tape. In a 2005 interview, Scott praises the technical strengths of Rondinelli and reiterates the band's creative authority over the direction of the album.

“His strong points were as a microphone placer and a recorder — he really captured some really great sounds on tape. But as far as his actual production of the record, most of his ideas were just vetoed right off the bat and we just kind of carried on with the song structures we'd developed on our own. So really, we produced the record ourselves” (Chorney-Booth 2005).

If Sloan's own assertions are to be believed, the sound of the album, to the extent of the quality of the sounds recorded, can be attributed to their producer, Jim Rondinelli. The band claims to have orchestrated the songwriting decisions, arrangements, choice of gear, and performance themselves. This claim can be ratified by listening to the demos for the album recorded in Sloan's practice space in Halifax and released as a bonus LP with the *Twice Removed* deluxe vinyl box set in 2012. The demos mostly feature all of the same song structures and arrangements with less polished performances in the instruments and rather off-key vocal takes. Many of the songs, like Bells On, are less dramatic with less ambitious climaxes. There are also fewer instances of instruments dropping out, allowing sparse arrangements and taking advantage of the dramatic effect of momentary silence. These key sections were probably brainstormed during the recording process, likely thanks to their producer, Rondinelli. There is a major difference, however, in the arrangements for the demo of People in the Sky, which is played entirely on an acoustic guitar in almost the same manner as the opening verse and chorus of the album version. The Beatlesque backup vocals that sing “ba ba ba da ba” in the final version are merely performed on guitar, suggesting that the demo for this song was a work in progress.

Analysis of two Songs from Twice Removed

According to Sloan and the press, *Twice Removed* represents a movement away from Seattle grunge into a mature, sophisticated college rock sound with a timeless throwback to classic 1960s British pop, complete with natural, warm analog guitar, bass, and drum tones, lightly overdriven guitars, three part harmonies, and single syllable backing vocals (for example, “ooooh”, “aaaaah”, etc.), all while purporting to retain their trademark

Halifax Sound. We can draw our own conclusions by listening to *Twice Removed* and analyzing what we hear. In examining the two singles from the album, I will use the same criteria that I used with *Smeared* in Chapter 4 to analyze them. By doing so, I hope to prove that although *Twice Removed* is dramatically different from *Smeared* in terms of style, many of the same songwriting choices, approach to lyrics, performance style, choice of gear, and vocal delivery and harmonies are still present and are part of what Joel Plaskett refers to as a “through line” between the two albums (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2011, 499). The resulting similarities will hopefully provide an insight into what qualities make Sloan's 'sound' unique and, by extension of their celebrated role as central to the Halifax Sound in the early 1990s, provide an insight into what makes the Halifax Sound from this period unique.

The overall production of *Twice Removed* has a more natural, organic and less processed sound than *Smeared*. The drums are recorded to sound more like they are in a big open room with more space to reverberate; they are less 'produced' than the dated 1980s/early 1990s 'over-produced' drum sound on *Smeared*. Instead, the natural treatment of the guitars, bass, and drums allows the record to appear timeless, not time stamped with a specific period in time like their previous album. The drums are not likely recorded with the close-mic technique of *Smeared*. Instead, it sounds like Rondinelli relied more on room microphones, looking for a more natural representation of the drum kit. In this sense, the album is referencing the drum sound of '60s and '70s pop and not the popular 1980s recording practice of isolating the sound of each drum (like the 'click' sound of the bass drum in *Smeared*, for example) and processing it separately. Every instrument on *Twice Removed* has more room to 'breathe' because they are given more space within the stereo placement and frequency spectrum; they are not muddled in fuzz like they were on *Smeared*. The guitars have a warm analog sound that is reminiscent of classic rock bands because the tones achieved are consistent with that of old tube amplifiers that are just lightly overdriven. Overdrive guitar pedals are given a preference on this album over fuzz, which is rampantly heard on their first album. Their producer for *Twice Removed*, Rondinelli, is undoubtedly responsible for master-minding these well-rounded, natural, and less processed sound of the instruments that are influenced by '60s and '70s pop music, giving *Twice Removed* the perception of a classic and timeless sound for which it

is celebrated. These tones were likely to be at the request of Sloan, who made no secret of their love for the Beatles (Ladouceur 1998). Sloan often said in their interviews that they admired the production quality of '60s albums like those by the Beatles.

Like the *Smear* era, pictures of Sloan from *Twice Removed* often show members of the band using Fender single-coil pick-up guitars like Telecasters and Mustangs, known for their bright, staccato sounds, showing little change in their choice of guitars across the two albums. Pentland, however, is often shown with a Gibson SG or Les Paul guitar in pictures from this time and in music videos from this album. This change in preference away from the bright single-coil pick-ups of Fenders towards Gibson guitars with a mellow, smooth, and less bright sounding humbucker pick-up shows a clear movement away from Pentland's plunkier, shrill guitar tones on *Smear*, which is consistent with *Twice Removed's* leanings toward pop and away from grunge.



Figure 11: Screenshot of Sloan's video for *Coax Me*. L-R: Pentland (Gibson SG), Murphy (Fender Mustang bass), Ferguson (Fender Telecaster)



Figure 12: Screenshot of Sloan's video for People of the Sky. L-R: Pentland (Fender Mustang), Scott (Fender Mustang), Ferguson (Fender Mustang bass)

The style of playing on *Twice Removed* is different than *Smeared*; it is more practiced, tighter in performance, and much more thought out in terms of its progressions, arrangements, and performance. On this album, Sloan use stripped down and sparse guitar parts in place of *Smeared's* tendency to drown its guitar lines in a wave of distortion and fuzz. This maturation of performance style is likely due to Sloan's improvement as a band after playing together for several years. However, it could also be as a result of Rondinelli's input during a rigorous recording process in a professional studio. The lacklustre performances heard on the *Twice Removed* demos suggest that the band's performance abilities were tightened up during the recording.

Coax Me

Coax Me, penned by Murphy, was the first single released from *Twice Removed* and given a video (the only one to be financed by Geffen). It features a set of contrasting guitars, one panned to the right, a clean, plucking guitar, and one panned to the left, a sharp, jangly guitar playing abrasive notes. The drums are played with off-beat tom hits during the verses, keeping the rhythm of the song feeling stagnant before moving to a straight 4/4 beat during the chorus and bridge which picks the song up and drives it forward. The bass follows the kick drum throughout the song, a standard practice in pop and rock songs, with very little embellishment. It is played very reservedly with a palm mute technique and is very percussive in nature thanks to Murphy's use of a guitar pick instead of playing with his fingers. The use of auxiliary percussion, like tambourines and shakers, during upbeat parts of the song, such as the chorus, bridge, and outro, give a sense of momentum similar to how they are used on recordings by the Beatles and other 1960s pop songs. This is a sophisticated approach to instrumental arrangements that is not as apparent on *Smeared*. These attributes align with characteristics of the Halifax Sound identified by music listeners earlier in this paper as “college music” that was “something new rather than something loud” (Carpenter 2011). With Coax Me, Sloan emphasized an attention to detail in the arrangements that set Halifax bands apart.

The chord progression of Coax Me follows a very limited range of chords that climb up and down between the first and third scale degree. In the key of E Major, the verse rotates back and forth from an E^{sus4} and G#m progression (I^{sus4}-iii) while the chorus follows F#-E^{sus4} (II-I^{sus4}) for the first line and G#m-F#-E^{sus4} (iii-II-I^{sus4}) for the second line. The bridge mirrors the progression of the verse but in the first two lines it flattens the third scale degree of E Major, turning the G#m chord into a G Major chord. When this is heard with Murphy's falsetto and lyrics about death, the sudden switch to a major chord not native to the prevailing harmony sounds like it was chosen to evoke a lofty, heavenly moment in the bridge, not unlike the Picardy third when used in sacred classical music. After two repetitions of this E-G progression (I-♭III) in the bridge, it is followed by the same progression as the verse for the final two lines, E^{sus4}-G#m (I^{sus4}-iii). Curiously,

again, as if to end on a positive note, the song ends on a Major chord modification in the progression. We are left hearing a G# Major chord instead of a G# minor chord, another creative use of chord progressions that plays with the audience's expectations. This is orchestrated against a standard AABA song structure that does not push any boundaries but acts as a base of familiarity on which to experiment with subtle, clever songwriting devices.

Coax Me (Key of E)	Chords	Roman Numeral Analysis
Verse	E ^{sus4} -G#m	I ^{sus4} -iii
Chorus	F#-E ^{sus4}	II-I ^{sus4}
	G#m-F#-E ^{sus4}	iii-II-I ^{sus4}
Bridge	E-G (x2)	I-b III (x2)
	E ^{sus4} -G#m (x2)	I ^{sus4} -iii (x2)

Table 3: Chord progression of Coax Me

Like the songs on *Smeared*, the melody writing on this album can also usually be reduced to one motif during the verse and a second one during the chorus, with a third motif sometimes appearing in the bridge. In the case of Coax Me, however, this can be further reduced to a single prominent motif of falling thirds, mostly from D#-B but sometimes with a B-G# section added, throughout the second half of the verse and each chorus (motif #2, see Figures 14 and 15). This somewhat limited melodic idea is recycled throughout the song with the exception of the first two lines of each verse, which features a short melodic idea centred on C# and B (motif #1, see Figure 13), and the bridge. The melody in the bridge stands out, just as surprising as the chord progression outlined above, with a falsetto voice singing long, eerie, and ethereal high notes following a G#-A# pattern followed by a G#-B-A#-G# motion, mostly stepwise in character (motif #3, see Figures 16 and 17). The outro keeps with this airy quality, singing “Ooo” in a

repeating E-D# melody in a falsetto voice that we had heard previously as background vocals in the bridge (see Figure 18). These syllabic backing vocals are reminiscent of the simple, 'doo-wop' backing vocals of '60s pop songs.⁷ These falsetto moments are the most striking parts of the song from a melodic standpoint and proof of Sloan's unique approach to singing. This unique take on vocals exemplifies the Halifax Sound that has been said to have a “sonic bent” of clever lyrics, accessible pop melodies, and unique vocal harmonies (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2011, 499).

Figure 13: Melodic motif #1 of Coax Me (First half of Verse)

Figure 14: Melodic motif #2 of Coax Me (Second half of Verse)

Figure 15: Melodic motif #2 of Coax Me (Chorus)

⁷ The 1960's influence is also overtly displayed in Sloan's video for Coax Me, which features the three guitarists standing side by side in a manner reminiscent of television appearances by pop bands in the '60s (see Figure 11).

Figure 16: Melodic motif #3 of Coax Me (Bridge)

Figure 17: Extended melodic motif #3 of Coax Me (Bridge)

Figure 18: Ethereal backup vocals in outro of Coax Me

Coax Me displays Murphy's same penchant for puns and nonsensical lyrics as heard on *Smear'd's* Underwhelmed. He sings about the merits of concentrated and consolidated orange juice and becoming “perverted” by three cans of water. This verse has no apparent link to the widow he speaks of in the remaining verses and bridge and less still with the chorus which repeats “Coax me, cajole me”. The absurd imagery of the orange juice can makes for a lighthearted twist to an otherwise mature and skillfully written song about a seemingly dark subject matter (a widow dealing with death). Coax me is a prime example of what Plaskett refers to as Sloan's peculiar approach to lyrics (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2011, 499), a celebrated part of the Halifax Sound.⁸

⁸ For a complete analysis of Coax Me, see Appendix 2.

People of the Sky

People of the Sky, written and sung by Scott, is the second and final single to be released from *Twice Removed*. In a shake-up of their usual roles, Scott emerges from the drum kit to play rhythm guitar while Murphy takes over on drums, Ferguson moves to the bass, and Pentland remains on lead guitar. It opens with a pseudo small radio effect on Scott's voice and solo acoustic guitar accompaniment. The high and low frequencies have been cut out so that we are only left with the middle of the spectrum. This intro is mixed very quietly so that when the rest of the band finally kicks in after a few lines of the verse, it catches the listener's attention because of the increase in amplitude and frequency range of the song as the radio effect is removed and the acoustic guitar is replaced with electric guitars for the remainder of the song. Up to three electric guitars are heard at once throughout the song, all using single-coil pick-ups, like in previously analyzed songs, and all making use of the mellow sound of a neck pick-up. The voicings of the chords throughout are very open and spacious and are allowed to ring out with thick and crunchy tones. The bass is also thick and punchy, yet clean in its sound, owing some of its clarity to the use of a guitar pick. The sparse and open quality of the guitars and bass here is poignantly different than the distorted wall of guitars on *Smeared*. The drums, however, are much more crass-sounding and take on more of a constant driving force behind the song. They are heavily compressed, allowing the constant use of cymbals to swell into a wash of noise, almost as a throwback to the harsh discord of *Smeared*. The main vocals are single-tracked with a small amount of reverb, similar to the vocal treatment of their first album. The harmonized backing vocals are pushed behind in the mix, are not given much reverb and, thanks to their harmonized syllabic setting, they give the impression of a '60s pop song. The entire song has the same 'slacker' quality of Scott's 500 Up on *Smeared*, a quality that has been identified by fans as part of the Halifax Sound. Reminiscent of the college rock band, Pavement, whose first and second albums coincided with the release of *Smeared* and *Twice Removed* respectively, Scott's vocal style can be described as lazy, singing once again in an almost talking voice. The openness of the guitars, how they are allowed to ring out between strums instead of strumming constantly, can also be described as having a 'slacker' quality, a laid-back,

deliberate sloppiness that comes from a band that does not take itself so seriously, a hallmark of the Halifax Sound.

The chord progression of *People of the Sky* shows that not much has changed in this aspect of songwriting between *Smear'd* and *Twice Removed*. The song is not only in the exact key as Scott's *500 Up* on *Smear'd*, it also uses the same four chords as a base for the entire song, albeit, in a different order and with the addition of sus4 chords. Each verse follows an A-C-G⁷-A (I-♭III-♭VII⁷-I) progression while the chorus repeats twice the chords C-D^{sus4}-A^{sus4} (♭III-IV^{sus4}-I^{sus4}). There is no bridge section in this song; outside of the quiet radio effect at the beginning and the guitar solo at the end of the song, it simply repeats five verses in rapid succession with a chorus between each one, offering very little in terms of song development or contrasting sections. The sophistication of *Twice Removed* is obviously not found in its straightforward song structure; it is heard more in its skillful instrumental arrangements (the guitars are played sparsely so as to help create the mellow, laid-back mood of the song) and vocal harmonies.

People of the Sky (Key of A)	Chords	Roman Numeral Analysis
Verse	A-C-G ⁷ -A	I-♭III-♭VII ⁷ -I
Chorus	C-D ^{sus4} -A ^{sus4} (x 2)	(♭III-IV ^{sus4} -I ^{sus4}) (x2)

Table 4: Chord progression of *People of the Sky*

There is not much variation in the melodic material of the song. Scott's melody is repetitive with a quick rhythmic pattern that resembles the rhythm of the speech, which is the style he seems to be most comfortable with as a singer. The verse consists of mostly repeating eighth notes outlining an A-G♭-G♭-E pattern with some neighbouring and passing tones (see Figure 19). The same idea is heard in the chorus, keeping the same rhythmic pattern but using a melody that is even less ambitious in its range, outlining A-E for one line (see Figure 20) and simply the note E for the second (see Figure 21). The

only other motif in the song is the background vocals, which sing “Ba ba ba da ba” in the chorus (see Figure 22). The jump of a Perfect Fifth between the last two notes of this background vocal motif, with the final note being held against two different chords in the progression, make this a significant break in the monotony of the melody throughout the song. From the second chorus onwards, the voicing of the two-part harmony during the end of this second motif is clever; the note A is sung, a common note between the D^{sus4} and A^{sus4} chords during this section, while the other background vocal sings two different notes against it (F#-E) (see Figure 22). Here, the background singers are supporting the song in a way that is reminiscent of The Beatles’ early albums and other pop music of the 1960s that use single syllables as background vocals. These lines are a simple song element that stands out as very characteristic of Sloan's style throughout this album – upbeat, poppy, and cleverly arranged with lots of use of vocal harmonies. Like Coax Me, this unique approach to vocals and harmonies is closely entwined with the Halifax Sound that was purported by the media to be present at this time.

Figure 19: Melodic motif #1 of People of the Sky (Verse)

Figure 20: Shortened melodic motif #1 of People of the Sky (Chorus)

Figure 21: Shortened, simplified melodic motif #1 of People of the Sky (Chorus)

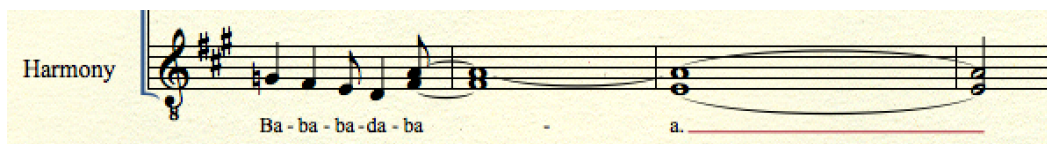


Figure 22: Melodic motif #2 of *People of the Sky* (Chorus)

As it did on *500 Up*, Scott's East Coast accent while singing *People of the Sky* betrays his home city. We hear an over-pronounced “t” sound in the word “tight” in Verse 1 and “sight” and “plight” in the first chorus. There are several instances of an “h” being prolonged and over-emphasized throughout the song, another exaggerated sound that is common the East Coast accent. It is heard in the word “plight” in the first chorus and the words “touch”, “crutch”, and “such” in the second verse and chorus. While it is a seemingly minor component of the song, the way in which these words are sung has the power to suggest to the listener which music scene the singer is affiliated.

Other songs on *Twice Removed*, without diving into too much detailed analysis, show a clear link to the song-writing style of *Smeared*, specifically Sloan's peculiar approach to vocal harmony. While the vocal harmonies of *Coax Me* and *People of the Sky* consist mainly of consonant sonorities – Major and minor 3rds and 6ths and Perfect 4ths and 5ths, other songs on the album play with the dissonance heard on *Smeared's* *Underwhelmed*. In *Twice Removed's* first song, *Penpals*, Murphy is momentarily harmonized with a grating minor second in several places in each chorus and a prolonged instance of a Major second harmony as the final chorus transitions to the outro. In the first chorus, during each second repetition of the line “I'm a girl”, Murphy sings a D \natural , a non-chord tone in the prevailing B chord in the music, while the harmony sings D \sharp . The clashing D \natural anticipates the D \natural chordal harmony of the next bar (\flat III in the key of B Major), but being heard pre-maturely against the note D \sharp has a jarring effect (see Figure 23). This is also heard in the second chorus with the line “I like you”. The final chorus ends with some vocal maneuvering around a D chord, causing some relatively long pauses in the two voices that are a Major 2nd apart before settling on a consonant minor 3rd harmony in the final note (see Figure 24). This is tame compared to *Underwhelmed*, which decided to end with the voices singing notes that are a Major 2nd apart, but is still

remarkably dissonant. As discussed earlier in this thesis, music listeners recognize frequent use of unusually dissonant vocal harmonies as a hallmark of the Halifax Sound.

26

A B E F# B D

Chorus

Main Vocals

My first name is ___ A - ma - l and I'm a girl. ___ I'm a girl, ___

Harmony

I'm a girl. ___ I'm a girl. ___

Figure 23: Vocal harmony of Penpals (Chorus)

98

D E B E/B B

Main Vocals

- ial, I li-ke ___ yo - o ___ o ___ ou. ___

Harmony

- ial, I like ___ yo - - - ou. ___

Figure 24: Vocal harmony of Penpals (End of Final Chorus)

An example on *Twice Removed* that better matches the level of dissonance on Underwhelmed is the song *Worried Now*. The word “now” at the end of the line repeated twice during each chorus, “when you told me not to worry, I’m worried now”, features a Major second harmony once again between the main and backing vocals (see Figure 25). The singer, Pentland, ends the line with a non-chord tone, D, against the chord C in the music, the tonic of which is being sung by the harmony. Without exception, each line of the chorus, and ultimately, the final note sung at the end of the song, features a Major second dissonance (D and E) (see Figure 26). Sloan uses this unusual choice of harmony often enough that it cannot be considered an unintentional accident. The band must be aware of the clashing effect of these Major and minor second harmonies, and even tritones (heard in *Underwhelmed*), and are purposely seeking out this bittersweet vocal effect in their songs. If harmonizing vocals is to be used incessantly by Sloan, they seem

to want to make sure that it is not too overly sweet-sounding so that the songs retain a certain amount of edginess throughout *Smear* and *Twice Removed*.

22

Bm C

Main Vocals

— when you told — me not to wor-ry. I'm wor-ried now. —

Harmony

told — me not to wor-ry. I'm wor-ried now. —

Figure 25: Vocal harmony of Worried Now (Chorus)

83

C Δ

Main Vocals

I'm wor-ried no - ow. —

Harmony

I'm wor-ried no - ow. —

Figure 26: Vocal harmony of Worried Now (End of Final Chorus)

The Beatles' influence is heard on many of the tracks, as well. This claim is supported by the band's discussion of the tracks on *Twice Removed* in the liner notes for the 2012 deluxe vinyl re-issue. On the song *I Hate My Generation*, for example, Ferguson states that he likes when bands have “multiple singers on one song” and the duet between him and Murphy in the verses was meant to sound like the Beatles' vocals on *We Can Work It Out* (Sloan 2012, 25). Even when referencing Nirvana on this song, Ferguson believes he hears a Beatles influence in the Seattle grunge band:

“Even though I wanted to turn my back on the current musical climate, the opening chords, which is a Dm and a B7 was basically me trying to write a “Serve The Servants” by Nirvana, which was the first song on *In Utero* and it blew me

away... Kurt Cobain was sort of exposing a love of The Beatles, which I thought was a nice addition to their dimension” (Sloan 2012, 25).

On the second single from the album, *People of the Sky*, Murphy states that the song borrowed the guitar part and a bass run from *The Word* from the Beatles album *Rubber Soul* (Sloan 2012, 26). The bass line from *Bells On* was also lifted out of the Beatles song *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds*, according to Murphy (Sloan 2012, 27). The Beatles were obviously a huge influence on Sloan that was able to become more apparent on *Twice Removed*, overtaking their previous fascination with grunge.

The Halifax Sound of *Smeared* vs. *Twice Removed*

Overall, the songs on *Twice Removed* demonstrates a break from *Smeared* in its organic, less processed, '60s-inspired production quality, its preference for overdrive instead of fuzz guitar pedals, and its sparse, well-balanced music arrangements. The drum tones on *Twice Removed* take advantage of a natural room reverberation instead of *Smeared*'s over-produced, punchy drum sound that does not have much depth in its sonority. The guitar tones on *Twice Removed* are warm, likely played through tube amplifiers that are lightly overdriven and also played through overdrive guitar pedals instead of the fuzz pedals that were used excessively throughout *Smeared*. As such, the production of the instruments on *Twice Removed* is a nostalgic reference to the classic 1960's pop recording sound. The vocals on *Twice Removed* also attempt to capture this '60s pop sound in its performance. While the use of multiple harmonies in the backing vocals is nothing new for Sloan, there is a higher level of sophistication, ease, and deliberated execution of harmonies on *People of the Sky*, *Coax Me*, and *Twice Removed* in general, with its overly happy-sounding, syllabic background vocals and its buried placement in the stereo mix causing it to sound like a throwback to '60s pop. In a nod to college rock, Sloan became much more adept at song arrangements on *Twice Removed*. The instruments are allowed to breathe as every guitar line has a well-placed function within the arrangement of the song. The guitars are not simply jumbled together in order to create a wall of noise for the

purpose of 'rocking out'. With *Twice Removed*, Sloan managed to completely shed the trappings of Seattle grunge that were on its way to becoming outdated in its sound (production and effects) and limited in its songwriting possibilities (instrument and vocal arrangements). Instead, Sloan looked to the past for inspiration to write songs that were “an alternative to alternative [music]” (Roman 1994). These factors that worked to distinguish Sloan from their Seattle counterparts are also indicative of the Halifax Sound at this time, which, as stated earlier, often featured sophisticated ‘college rock’ arrangements.

Song elements which have carried over from *Smeared* to *Twice Removed* include the choice of guitars used on each album, their simple song structures and chord progressions, the clever use of puns in their often playful lyrics, a similar penchant for vocal harmonies (often dissonant), a distinct 'slacker' quality in the instruments and vocals, and the continued presence of a regional accent. Although the production of the guitars and the effects pedals that were used had changed with Sloan's second album, their preference for guitars remained almost the same. Both albums feature prominent use of Fender Mustang and Telecaster single coil guitars, known for their bright, plunky, twangy qualities. The limited range of chords in *Twice Removed* and *Smeared* are not necessarily a critique of the group's songwriting abilities. Like all pop-influenced rock songs, they rely on familiarity and subtle manipulation of the pop format to get the listener's attention. Sloan's fascinations with absurd lyrics, play-on-words, and clever lyrics are well-respected aspects of their music and it does not diminish in their transition from grunge to pop. The guitars and vocals of *Twice Removed* exemplify the same 'slacker' banner that was present on *Smeared* in which sloppy, over-simplified guitar playing and singing is seen as a defining style choice instead of ineptitude as a musician. Although a marked improvement is heard on *Twice Removed*, the proliferation of vocal harmonies also remains central to Sloan's music. As for their pronunciation of consonants like “h”, “t” and “r”, the members of Sloan are unintentionally adding an additional layer of character to their music; an audible clue to the origin of their sound.

Same qualities	Different qualities
Choice of guitars	Organic, less 'produced' sound
Song structures	British '60s inspired pop sound in instruments, harmonies
Chord progressions	Sophisticated, well-crafted instrument arrangements
Clever puns, playful lyrics	Preference of overdrive guitar pedals over fuzz guitar pedals
Abundant use of vocal harmonies (often dissonant)	
'Slacker' performance	
Pronunciation of words in vocals	

Table 4: Compare and contrast the albums *Twice Removed* and *Smear*

After gaining an better understanding of Sloan's first two full-length recordings, a pair of albums that are central to the phenomenon of the Halifax Pop Explosion in the 1990s, it is possible to reconcile this knowledge with the description of the Halifax Sound discussed in Chapter 4 in order to determine if Sloan truly fulfills the role of a harbinger of the Halifax Sound. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Joel Plaskett hypothesized that throughout Sloan's changes in style, their treatment of the voice and lyrics, or to put it more vaguely, the *songs* were always at the core of the Halifax Sound.

“There was a sonic bent to a lot of those bands [from Halifax], but songs have always been at the core of that. Lyricism has always been a big part of that scene. Sloan changed their sonics by the second record; they ditched *My Bloody Valentine* and headed straight to the Beatles. The through line was the peculiarity of their words and their approach to singing.... The centre was always the songs. The through line is the insular nature of what people in Halifax write about” (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2011, 499).

Plaskett's contention that lyricism, the peculiarity of their words, and their approach to singing are important hallmarks of Sloan's early albums, and by extension, the Halifax Sound, have been given some merit throughout the analysis of this chapter. Other tenets of the Halifax Sound brought up in Chapter 4 include the descriptions “'60s Merseybeat pop influence... in the vocals”, “college music”, and music that was “something new rather than something loud” (Carpenter 2011). Sloan's debt to '60s British pop is very apparent in the above analysis of *Twice Removed*, as did their push for a mature and sophisticated style of music that went against the grain of loud, noisy, guitar-driven rock that was trendy at the time. For example, Pentland writes about the increased difficulty of the song I Hate My Generation from *Twice Removed*:

“It was the most Beatlesly song.... That was a challenge for me to play that song... *Smear*ed was just all power chords and then we started to get into more intricate arrangements” Pentland. (Sloan 2012, 25)

If this description of the Halifax Sound were to be taken as a definitive guide, *Twice Removed* would seem to be the better candidate as representative of the Halifax Sound. Other sources of opinions, however, point out characteristics that apply to both of Sloan's full-lengths. To reiterate a music listener's opinion from Chapter 4, the Halifax Sound is an “over-use of overdrive/fuzz/distortion, sparing use of dissonant chords, mid-tempo, sloppy, poppy, unique vocal harmonies, [and] much emphasis placed on making the lyrics interesting” (Bruce 2006). While the over-use of fuzz and distortion certainly applies to *Smear*ed (as well as other bands in the Halifax scene that are beyond the scope of my analysis, for example, Eric's Trip), the remainder of this checklist has been demonstrated above to be present in Sloan's *Smear*ed and *Twice Removed*, hinting that both albums are likely embodiments of the Halifax Sound.

Twice Removed, in particular, embodies the independent spirit of the Halifax scene in the way that the band abandoned the grunge formula, an almost guaranteed meteoric rise to short-lived fame, in order to make a '60s-inspired pop album that better reflected their influences as musicians. As quoted by Ferguson earlier in this chapter, “maybe [they] could have just risen to the top” (Sloan 2012, 4) had Sloan released another grunge album

similar to *Smear*, satisfying their record label, Geffen, and opening up the door to potentially successful international tours, radio airplay, and album sales. Taking the 'road less travelled' with *Twice Removed*, Sloan exemplifies the unique type of musician that those in the local music scene believe become molded by the geographical isolation of the city. An anonymous musician captured this sentiment in a 2009 interview, quoted previous in Chapter 3:

“When you are more isolated you’re a little less distracted and you’re more focused on your art. I think we benefit from that. I think it’s a Maritime thing or an Atlantic Canadian thing that we bring to Halifax as a unit” (Grant, Morton, and Haggett 2009, 8).

In this same way, Sloan was not distracted by the allures of fame and remained very grounded and connected to the local music scene in Halifax, as demonstrated by their insistence upon being known as a Halifax band operating “outside the [music] industry” (Sloan 2012, 20). This is also apparent in the lyrics from the song *Coax Me* from *Twice Removed* which Murphy admits is about valuing musical integrity over money, a concept that seems to come natural to Maritimers:

“This is a song about feeling the difference between doing something because you love it and doing it for the money. Before we, and seemingly everyone we knew signed a record deal, it was clear that we were doing it because we loved it. Being from the Maritimes, there was no prospect of making any money. Certainly not before Nirvana broke” (Sloan 2012, 26).

If Halifax has been mythologized as a place that fosters a unique talent, Sloan fulfilled this expectation by creating an album for the sake of art, not for profit. As a case study for the mechanisms that drive the local Halifax music scene and substantiate the existence of a Halifax Sound, Sloan is a titillating subject that illuminates the ways in which the city defines its music scene and its sound and how it is mythologized by its participants, the media, and the music industry.

Chapter 6: Remembering The Classic Halifax Sound: Reflection and Conclusion

The Halifax Pop Explosion of the early 1990s was a period when the Halifax rock music scene was momentarily catapulted into international stardom with the help of attention from major record labels and various media outlets. The local music scene, however, was not a creation of this attention; it was already rich with talented musicians and had a growing infrastructure of venues, labels, audiences, and local media that helped bands build the connections necessary for a thriving, supportive local music scene. The band Sloan, whose success invited the music industry to investigate what was happening in Canada's East Coast, came of age in this nurturing musical environment as a product of a well-established local scene. Sloan also benefitted from initially playing a readily marketable style of music from a geographically isolated city that satisfied the music industry's vogue for mythologizing obscure, small-town, inherently 'authentic' local music scenes. By appropriating the grunge “sickness” (Walsh 1993) that was becoming known as the Seattle Sound, the group's first full-length album, *Smear*, in 1992 was almost single-handedly responsible for Halifax becoming known in the media as the possible 'next Seattle' (Macleod 1992). However, instead of becoming branded as an exact copy of the Seattle grunge sound, music from Halifax began to be touted in the media as having a distinct 'Halifax Sound' (Dafoe 1995), a sloppy, upbeat, pop version of Seattle grunge with a unique approach to lyrics and vocal harmonies (see Chapter 4). As such, Sloan represented the Halifax music scene and the associated Halifax Sound as music from the region become known across Canada and the United States in the early 1990s.

Sloan embodies how the Halifax music scene believes that their city is isolated and unique. Because Halifax is so small and so far removed from Canada's larger musical hubs, Montreal and Toronto, musicians with “disparate musical tastes” (Fleming 1997,

186) were able to work together. The pride of being from such an isolated city was seared into the band's identity to the point where they believed leaving Halifax would destroy “the whole context of the band” (Cranston 1999). During this period of international attention, Sloan also represented to the city of Halifax the 'dream of success' and the 'lure of attainable glory'. Thanks to Sloan, countless other hopeful musicians across Atlantic Canada picked up their guitars and started playing in bands because they realized it was “not such a pipe dream” (Walsh 1993) for an East Coast Canadian band to get a record deal. In this sense, Sloan became a catalyst for Halifax's boom in musical creativity during this period. This boom lasted until major record labels and media interest in the city faded. As locals noted as early as 1996, there was “a bit of a hangover from the attention paid to Halifax” (Shaw 2001). Sloan's Chris Murphy lamented,

“There was a brief minute where we were part of new music. It didn't last that long. Now we're just a working band. We're without a context. We don't live in Halifax. We're not hanging out with Eric's Trip or Hardship Post or any of these bands that have gone away. ” (Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2011, 455).

In the few short years following the release of *Smear* in 1992, Sloan demonstrated that a unique music scene arose in Halifax *because* of the nature of the city. The small-town status of Halifax defined the identity of the city's unique music scene just as much as it defined the identity of Sloan.

After the successful release of Sloan's *Smear* on the label Geffen in 1992, record labels began “marking out its territory” as “the chunk of geography called the Maritimes suddenly seemed for sale” (*Brave New Waves* 1993). An in-depth look into all of the possible motivating factors behind the music industry rush to turn Halifax into the 'next Seattle' is an intriguing study that could not be fully addressed in this thesis. Why did the music industry rush to push the Halifax music scene into the spotlight and why were they so invested in making Halifax the 'next Seattle'? In addition to seeking out new bands to satisfy the grunge craze, there are a number of reasons that could have brought record labels and the media to Halifax. Perhaps they recognized the public's current

vogue for isolated cities and wished to capitalize on the small-town status of Halifax since it was similar to the remote nature of Seattle. In an effort to repeat Seattle's success, music from Halifax could easily be packaged and sold as an authentic product of an isolated and unique region. Further justification for propping up grunge, which was a huge money-making trend in rock music at the time, it is also likely that music labels were defending their business model against the encroachment of rap, dance, and other styles of music that were threatening rock's longstanding hegemony in the early 1990s. After all, the major record labels depended on blockbuster rock albums that had provided them with huge profits throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The dominance of stadium rock, however, was beginning to wane in the early 1990s and a once relatively homogenous audience was splintering off into niche markets making it harder to produce platinum-selling records, a trend which would continue unabated throughout the 1990s and 2000s into the present. Creating hype around the grunge scene in Halifax was a way of keeping the genre fresh in the public eye and ensuring the continued mass consumption of the grunge style.

Then, in a surprise twist away from grunge, Sloan released a '60s British pop-inspired album in 1994 entitled *Twice Removed* that severed all ties to the genre that had brought them fame. A sophisticated album with well-thought out arrangements, Sloan set the bar high for themselves with *Twice Removed*, hoping to ensure career longevity as a band, and continue to evolve as musicians. By writing music that reflected their influences as musicians without thought of profit, Sloan continued to represent the narrative of Halifax as an isolated and unique city. The unique song-writing perspective that Sloan had brought to their appropriation of Seattle grunge was even more pronounced in *Twice Removed*, helping the album to attain a cult-like status in Canadian music history (Chorney-Booth 2005). The decision to follow their musical instincts almost became the band's undoing in the album's immediate aftermath (failed tours, mediocre album sales, splitting with Geffen, a year-long hiatus as a band), but in the end, it provided the band with the album that is most celebrated by their fans and critics to date (Patch 2012). It is on this album that the musical characteristics hailed by audiences and the media as part of the Halifax Sound (an honour shared by Sloan's peers - Eric's Trip, Hardship Post, and Jale, amongst others) would become honed and more apparent, ripe for imitation and

appropriation by other local bands who cite Sloan as an influence. The extent to which the musical characteristics of the Halifax Sound discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 were found in other bands within Halifax at this time would make for a fascinating musicological and sociological study that this thesis was unable to meaningfully address. Even with the wide variety of bands that were popular in Halifax during the early to mid-1990s, it is intriguing that the notion of a singular, cohesive Halifax Sound is referred to when speaking of bands from this era, both at the time and in retrospect by audiences and the media.

Halifax Sound Today

Although discussed as a phenomenon during the height of the Halifax Pop Explosion (Dafoe 1995), the concept of a Halifax Sound has increased in popularity over the years. The continued relevance of this notion is a testament to the impact that the 1990s scene had upon the minds of musicians who have internalized the mythology of the ‘glory days’. In observing how the term is discussed amongst local musicians and journalists today, two different opinions emerge: one believes that the ‘classic’ Halifax Sound of the early 1990s is still prevalent today, with many examples of bands that directly reference it, the other believes that the ‘classic’ Halifax Sound no longer exists in any recognizable form in the local music scene because bands are simply too diverse to find a thread which joins them all. John Mullane of the band In-Flight Safety, currently based out of Halifax, commented that the scene today is a “great place to create art” that is “super communal” and easy for bands who wish to be part of the community (Kent 2010), sentiments that echo artists’ feelings about the scene during the 1990s. As for the Halifax Sound, Mullane falls in the second category of opinions, pointing to a continuum between the 1990s and the 2000s where in the last decade “things [have] just exploded in terms of stylistically everyone’s doing something different” (Kent 2010). The acknowledgement of a Halifax Sound is there, but he admits that it has changed over the years. Paul Hammond of the punk band Cold Warps, on the other hand, believes that the original spirit of the Halifax Sound remains today. He recently told *Exclaim* magazine,

“There seems to be a lot of bands right now doing what I think Halifax has always been kind of good at, which is taking sounds that are somewhat popular, but kind of filtering them through that Halifax sound... taking that garage-y pop sound and doing it the way a bunch of weird East Coast people who love math rock would do it: making it more complicated than it needs to be” (Villeneuve 2012).

Hammond reveals a reverence of the bands in Halifax that have preceded him and perceives his contemporaries to be carrying on in their footsteps. There is a proud sense of history and continuity with the past within this statement, taking pride that bands today are carrying on in the tradition of the Halifax Sound.

Other contemporary Halifax bands are depicted as part of the longstanding scene that still perpetuates the 'classic' sound, though in some cases it has been admittedly modified and updated. In online promotional material for Dog Day's 2007 album, *Night Group*, the album is described as having a “modern Halifax sound” (Pigeon Row). York Redoubt, also from Halifax, is given comparable feedback by the media. “There's no mistaking its Halifax sound,” writes a journalist from the local free weekly paper, *The Coast* (Kenins 2009). Similarly, The Super Fantastics' recording *Choose Your Destination*, released in 2008, is assessed as having the sound of the Halifax Pop Explosion as a direct influence. A journalist writes of the opening song, Turn On Me, “The alternating boy-girl vocals⁹ on the hook are perfectly timed, this one just has a classic Halifax sound to it” (Naedoo 2008). A review of Bad Vibrations self-titled 2010 album praises its lack of synthesizers and welcomes a throwback to the “three piece power-pop” (Goddard 2010). The review continues, “Eschewing any kind of overt studio trickery, the members of Bad Vibrations have put together a crisp sounding record that subtly recalls that classic 90s Halifax sound” (Goddard 2010). Just like Sloan's *Twice Removed*, Bad Vibrations is praised for its reproduction of 'natural' sounding instruments exactly as the band would sound live without any “overt studio trickery”. This also recalls the rhetoric of Seattle grunge, which

9 Although not analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis, Sloan has regularly written songs featuring male and female duets. Jennifer Pierce of Jale sings backup harmonies on *Smeared's* I Am The Cancer with Chris Murphy and on *Twice Removed's* I Can Feel It with Patrick Pentland.

asked bands to perform “in a straight-ahead manner without artifice, gimmickry, or showiness” (Bell 2003, 187).

Other press snippets about Halifax bands agree with Mullane of In-Flight Safety that the term Halifax Sound is no longer relevant in describing what is happening in the local music scene today or that the term has changed from its original meaning in the 1990s, suggesting that it has a fluid definition, taking on a life of its own with a new generation of musicians. A writer for Halifax-based blog *Hero Hill* gripes about the relevance of the phrase 'Halifax Sound' today while simultaneously contradicting himself, stating that sometimes, like in the case of Halifax artist Doug Mason, music from the city is still made with “fuzzy guitars” and “lighthearted lyrics”:

“I don't think there's any question that the term 'the Halifax Sound', as a descriptor for the music scene in our fair city ceased being useful ages and ages ago... However, there are still songs and albums I hear occasionally that bring that term back to mind. Case in point: Doug Mason's new album, *Fox Pirate*” (Naedoo 2009).

Other bands are described as having a new Halifax Sound that diverges from its 1990s incarnation, indicating that the term is not always strictly identified with that era and its corresponding definition. A 2011 compilation of various Halifax artists released by a non-profit artist-run centre known as The Khyber received a glowing review by one website which noted the presence of a “new Halifax sound”:

“For those who haven't been paying attention to Halifax's music scene since Sloan was underwhelmed, the city formerly known as 'The Next Seattle' is doing more than fine. In the last couple of years a new sound has emerged: noisier, dirtier and darker than its pop predecessors. The new Halifax sound is more likely to appear on blogs like weirdcanada.com than on mainstream radio” (Flinn 2011).

Another review of a Halifax band reiterates the presence of this same noisier, less accessible sound that they believe has come to define the city's music scene:

“...Bird World [is] another band embracing the lo-fi sounding, sun-kissed guitar sound that is starting to define the Halifax sound these days. Bird World relies on contrast... and that battle between sludge, noise and melody...” (Acker 2011).

These opinions add yet another possible definition to the recent use of the term Halifax Sound suggesting that just as the Halifax music scene is said to have splintered into many different genres since the 1990s, so have the many different interpretations of the concept of a Halifax Sound, including a contrarian opinion that it no longer exists. A director of the well-attended music festival known as the Halifax Pop Explosion surveyed the local music scene for *The Coast* in 2010, and denied the current existence of any Halifax Sound:

“I think that there won't be any one genre that will dominate, no 'Halifax sound' again, thank god, but metal, punk, indie rock are all in the mix.” (Johns 2010).

For some residents of the city, the Halifax Sound is a relic of its past, a phenomenon not likely to be reproduced in today's diverse musical environment.

Regardless of the differing views today on the nature of the Halifax Sound, the prevalence of this term years after the 1990s Halifax Pop Explosion had descended from its peak demonstrates its endurance as a yardstick to which Halifax bands, past and present, are compared. The evocation of this label is more than just a convenient marking of genre. It seeks to align the bands that use it with the legacy, the infrastructure, and the authenticity of the ‘local’ that was associated with the Halifax scene of the 1990s. Just as bands in the 1990s fielded questions about the nature of the Halifax scene and its associated sound, bands today continue to situate themselves within the memory of this scene.

In addition to the enduring dialogue about the nature of the Halifax Sound, the Halifax Pop Explosion of the early 1990s left a rich legacy. Bands and artists like The Heavy Blinkers, Joel Plaskett, Matt Mays, Wintersleep, Dog Day, Buck 65, Rich Aucoin, and Jill Barber all began their career or continue to be based in the city. The music festival Halifax Pop Explosion, which started in 1993 with 19 bands, has grown to

showcase 180 bands in 20 venues for an audience of 22,000 in 2012 (About HPX 2012). During the peak of Halifax's international attention in the 1990s, participants in the music scene were optimistic about its lasting positive effects. Greg Clark, owner of multiple venues in the city over the past two decades, expressed hope in 1993 that the Halifax music scene was going to become known as a world-class city for music in the immediate future:

“It's going to be known as a city that's a cool place to go to, that a band from out of town can come here and get a good gig, and that there's good bands from there. We're a little bit more on the map” (Furlong 1993).

The heritage left behind by Sloan and their peers throughout the 1990s grunge craze and throughout Sloan's subsequent search for a musical style that was more befitting of such a uniquely situated music scene seems to have indeed fulfilled this wish with a lasting legacy for the city of Halifax. As musician Joel Plaskett proudly rhapsodizes,

“I think the legacy is what it is. [The Halifax Pop Explosion] was a moment in time. Because of the unity of sound and personality that crop of bands had, you can't sustain that forever... The legacy is the fact that we have recording studios; we have access to Canada and the world. We have an understanding of where we fit in, whether we're successful or not” (Plaskett, quoted in Barclay, Jack, and Schneider 2011, 499).

REFERENCES

- About HPX: Halifax Pop Explosion. 2012. March 30.
<http://halifaxpopexplosion.com/about-us/about-hpx/> [accessed September 12, 2013]
- Acker, Bryan. 2011. Dog Day, Apollo Ghosts, Bird World @ The Seahorse. *Hero Hill*. August 2. <http://www.herohill.com/2011/08/contest-win-2tix-to-dog-day-apollo-ghosts-bird-world-the-seahorse.htm> [accessed October 22, 2013]
- Alden, Grant and Jeff Gilbert. 1993. Seattle: Everything You Always Wanted to Know. *Guitar World* 1: 10-12.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1990. Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalisation and Modernity*, ed M. Featherstone, 295–310. London: Sage.
- Azerrad, Michael. 1992. Grunge City: The Seattle Scene. *Rolling Stone*. April 16.
<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/grunge-city-the-seattle-scene-19920416> [accessed June 28, 2013]
- Azerrad, Michael. 1993. *Come As You Are: The Story of Nirvana*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Barclay, Micheal. 1996. Interview with Sloan. *Id Magazine*. July. Transcribed by James Rocchi. <http://sloannet.yupislyr.com/msg04/msg04510.html> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Barclay, Michael, Ian A. D. Jack, and Jason Schneider. 2011. *Have Not Been the Same: The Canrock Renaissance 1985-1995*. Toronto: ECW Press.
- Barton, Laura. 2008. Cabin Fever. *The Guardian*. May 14.
<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2008/may/14/popandrock.boniver> [accessed September 12, 2013]
- Battle, Shevaughn. 2009. *"The Beginning After the End": Independent Music, Canadian Cultural Policy and the Montreal Indie Music Scene*. Master's thesis, Concordia University, Montreal. (ProQuest MR63287).
- Beaumont, Hilary. 2012. Halifax Locals Message Board to Cease. *The Chronicle Herald*. November 20. <http://thechronicleherald.ca/metro/182350-halifax-locals-message-board-to-cease> [accessed May 26, 2013]

- Bell, Thomas L. 2003. Why Seattle? An Examination of an Alternative Rock Culture Hearth. *The Sounds of People and Places: A Geography of American Music from Country to Classical and Blues to Bop*, ed George O. Carney, 183-194. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Bennett, Andy. 2002. Music, Media and Urban Mythscapes: A Study of the 'Canterbury Sound'. *Media Culture Society* 24, no. 1: 87-100.
- Bennett, Andy and Richard A. Peterson, ed. 2004. *Music Scenes: Local Translocal, and Virtual*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Bliss, Karen. 1997. Sloan Anxious to Tour Japan. *Toronto Sun*. April 29.
http://www.tranquileye.com/fog/sloan/index_.html [accessed October 5, 2013]
- Brackett, David. 1995. *Interpreting Popular Music*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bruce, Robert. 2006. *Halifax Locals* (message board), December 18.
<http://media.locals.ca/localsconf/viewtopic.php?f=4&t=84497&view=previous>
 [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Carney, George C. 2003. Music and Place. *The Sounds of People and Places: A Geography of American Music from Country to Classical and Blues to Bop*, ed George O. Carney, 203-216. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Carney, George C. 2003. Urban Blues: The Sound of the Windy City. *The Sounds of People and Places: A Geography of American Music from Country to Classical and Blues to Bop*, ed George O. Carney, 241-254. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Carpenter, Kyle. 2011. Historic Canadian Music Scenes: The 1990s Halifax grunge explosion. *Dailyxy.com*. September 9. <http://www.dailyxy.com/yblog/historic-canadian-music-scenes> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Chorney-Booth, Elizabeth. 2005. Sloan's Twice Removed Named Top Canadian Album Of All Time. *Chart Magazine*. March 1.
<http://www.chartattack.com/news/2005/03/01/sloans-twice-removed-named-top-canadian-album-of-all-time/> [accessed May 2, 2013]
- Cohen, Sara. 1991. *Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the Making*. Gloucestershire, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Cohen Sara. 1994. Mapping the sound: Identity, Place and the Liverpool Sound. In *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: the Musical Construction of Place*, ed. M. Stokes, 117-134. Oxford: Berg.

- Cohen, Sara. 1995. Localizing Sound. *Popular Music: Style and Identity*, proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of the International Conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, ed. Will Straw, Stacey Johnson, Rebecca Sullivan and Paul Friedlander, 61-67. Montreal: Centre for Research on Cultural Industries and Institutions.
- Cohen, Sara. 2007. *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond the Beatles*. Hampshire, England: Ashgate.
- Connell, John and Chris Gibson. 2003. *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place*. New York: Routledge.
- Corden, Elaine. 2004. In Search of the Quintessential Canadian Indie-Sound. *The Vancouver Sun*. January 10.
- Cosgrove, Colleen. 2012. Raylene's Departing Song. *The Chronicle Herald*. September 30. <http://thechronicleherald.ca/artslife/141924-raylenes-departing-song> [accessed May 26, 2013]
- Covey, James. 1993. Interview with Sebastian Lippa, Hardship Post. *Dalhousie Gazette*, transcribed by James Covey. October 19. <http://sloannet.yupislyr.com/msg00/msg00086.html> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Covey, James. 2010. HPX Spotlight: Sloan performs 'Twice Removed'. *The Coast*. October 21. <http://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/hpx-spotlight-sloan-performs-twice-removed/Content?oid=1946784> [accessed October 6, 2013]
- Cranston, Marla. 1999. Sloan Return Home. *Chart Magazine*. November 1. <http://www.chartattack.com/features/2011/may/13/sloan-return-home> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Curtis, James R., and Richard F. Rose. 1983. The Miami Sound: A Contemporary Latin Form of Place-Specific Music. *Journal of Cultural Geography* 4: 110-118.
- Dafoe, Chris. 1995. Review of The Super Friendz – Mock Up, Scale Down. *The Globe and Mail*. July 29.
- Dahlman, Ian. 2009. *"A Big, Beautiful Mess": Collectivity, Capitalism, Arts & Crafts and Broken Social Scene*. Master's thesis, Ryerson University, Toronto. (ProQuest MR59032).
- DeMont, John. 1993. Read All About It: Halifax is Hip! *Maclean's* 106, no. 43. October 25: 50.
- Diamond, Beverly. 2001. Re-placing Performance: A Case study of the Yukon Music Scene in the Canadian North. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 22, no. 2: 211-224.

- Eric's Trip, hosted by Lane Dunlop, *Brave New Waves*, CBC Radio, transcribed by James Covey, June 2, 1993. <http://sloannet.yupislyr.com/msg00/msg00030.html> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Eric's Trip, hosted by Brent Bambury, *Brave New Waves*, CBC Radio, transcribed by James Covey, January 24, 1993. <http://sloannet.yupislyr.com/msg00/msg00194.html> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Fenster, Mark. 1995. Two Stories: Where Exactly is the Local?. *Popular Music: Style and Identity*, proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, ed. Will Straw, Stacey Johnson, Rebecca Sullivan and Paul Friedlander, 83-87. Montreal: Centre for Research on Cultural Industries and Institutions.
- Finnegan, Ruth. 1989. *The Hidden Musicians: Music-making in an English Town*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fleming, Lee, ed. 1997. Sloan – All About Making Records [Interview with Chris Murphy]. *Rock, Rhythm and Reels: Canada's East Coast Musicians on Stage*. Charlottetown, PEI: Ragweed Press.
- Flinn, Sue Carter. 2011. The Khyber by Khyber Compilation. *Akimbo*. February 10. <http://www.akimbo.ca/hitlist/?id=110> [accessed October 22, 2013]
- Furlong, Leslie. 1993. Interview with Greg Clark. *Dalhousie Gazette*, transcribed by James Covey. December. http://www.tranquileye.com/fog/greg_clark_interview_1993/greg_clark_interview_1993.html [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Gay Jr., Leslie C. 1995. Rockin' the Imagined Local: New York Rock in a Reterritorialized World. *Popular Music: Style and Identity*, proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, ed. Will Straw, Stacey Johnson, Rebecca Sullivan and Paul Friedlander, 123-126. Montreal: Centre for Research on Cultural Industries and Institutions.
- Gill, Warren G. 1993. Region, Agency, and Popular Music: The Northwest Sound, 1958-1966. *The Canadian Geographer* 37: 120-131.
- Goddard, James. 2010. Review of Bad Vibrations – Bad Vibrations. *Weird Canada*. March 3. <http://weirdcanada.com/2010/03/review-bad-vibrations-bad-vibrations/> [accessed October 22, 2013]
- Grant, Jill L., Jesse Morton, and Jeff Haggett. 2009. Why Halifax Attracts Musicians: Perspectives from participants in the Halifax music scene. Working paper from Innovation Systems Research Network Conference. May 23.

http://theoryandpractice.planning.dal.ca/pdf/creative_halifax/isrn/halifax_perspectives.pdf [accessed February 25, 2012]

Grant, Kieran. 1995. Sloan's Last Stand: Alt-Pop Band Kinda Calls it Quits. *Toronto Sun*. August 1. http://www.tranquileye.com/fog/sloan/index_.html [accessed October 6, 2013]

The History of the Band – Sloan. 1992. October.
<http://www.sloanmusic.com/about/thehistoryofthe> [accessed April 1, 2012]

Hodgson, Jay. 2010. *Understanding Records: A Field Guide to Recording Practice*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Jennings, Nicholas. 1995. Canadian Rock Music Explodes. *Maclean's*. March 27.
http://www.nicholasjennings.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=336:canadian-rock-music-explodes&catid=62:1995&Itemid=60 [accessed October 22, 2012]

Johns, Stephanie. 2010. Halifax Cognoscenti Talk About Genres/Bands They're Excited to See in Halifax These Days. *The Coast*. January 1.
<http://www.thecoast.ca/SceneAndHeard/archives/2010/01/01/halifax-cognoscenti-talk-about-genresbands-theyre-excited-to-see-in-halifax-these-days> [accessed October 22, 2013]

Kelly, Paul. 1992. Sloan: Some Bands Get All The Breaks. *Chart Magazine*. July 1.
<http://www.chartattack.com/features/2011/may/09/sloan-some-bands-get-all-the-breaks> [accessed April 1, 2012]

Kenins, Laura. 2009. York Redoubt on Fire. *The Coast*. September 3.
<http://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/york-redoubt-on-fire/Content?oid=1247165> [accessed Oct 21, 2013]

Kent, Kristin. 2010. Interview: In-Flight Safety. *Indie TO Blog*. March 27.
<http://blogs.canoe.ca/indieto/general/interview-in-flight-safety/> [accessed April 1, 2012]

Kruse, Holly. 2003. *Site and Sound: Understanding Independent Music Scenes*. New York: Peter Lang.

Ladouceur, Liisa. 1996. Sloan: Alive and Kicking. *Chart Magazine*. July 1.
<http://www.chartattack.com/features/2011/may/09/sloan-alive-and-kicking> [accessed April 1, 2012]

Ladouceur, Liisa. 1998. Fantastic 4: Sloan – Jay Ferguson. *Chart Magazine*. May 1.
<http://www.chartattack.com/features/2011/may/10/fantastic-4-sloan-%E2%80%94-jay-ferguson> [accessed April 1, 2012]

- Lee, Adrian. 2012. Raising the Bar, Part 3: Are We Choking Out the Last of the Music Scene? *OpenFile.ca*. January 26. <http://halifax.openfile.ca/halifax/text/raising-bar-part-3-are-we-choking-out-last-music-scene> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Letkemann, Jessica. 2011. The Age of Innocents. *Billboard* 123, no. 33: 14-16. September 17.
- Lepage, Mar. 1994. Sloan's movin' on; There is life after Nirvana for Halifax band. *Montreal Gazette*. September 22.
- Life is a Highway*. CBC, September 15, 2011. <http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/episode/life-is-a-highway.html> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Lowe, Lezlie. 2006. Making a Scene - Out of the Fog Compilation is 20 Years Old. *The Coast*. March 30. <http://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/making-a-scene/Content?oid=958862> [accessed November 13, 2012]
- MacDonald, Sandy. 1992. Much Abuzz About Sloan. *The Daily News Halifax*. October 16: 23.
- MacDonald, Sandy. 1992. Sound of the East: The Year in Music. *The Daily News Halifax*. December 24: 29.
- Macleod, Steve. 1992. The next Nirvana from Halifax? Grunge band Sloan hits big time with Geffen deal. *Montreal Gazette*. October 14.
- McCann, Mike. 1998. One Chord To Another: A Brief History Of Sloan (1991-1998). *Chart Magazine*. May 1. <http://www.chartattack.com/features/2011/may/10/one-chord-to-another-a-brief-history-of-sloan-1991-1998> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Mitz, Roman. 1994. An Alternative to Alternative. *Access Magazine* 1, no. 4. November. Transcribed by Carol Nishitoba, November 16, 1994. <http://sloannet.yupislyr.com/msg00/msg00453.html> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Montgomery, James. 2011. Nirvana's *Nevermind*, by the Numbers. *MTV.com*. September 24. <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1671298/nevermind-nirvana-album.jhtml> [accessed September 17, 2013]
- Moore, Ryan. 2005. Alternative to What? Subcultural Capital and the Commercialization of a Music Scene. *Deviant Behavior* 26, no. 3: 229-252.
- Moore, Sarah Janette. 2002. *Re-articulating Canadian Popular Music through a Local Lens: Examining "Great Big Sea" and Issues of Locality, Regionalism and Nationalism*. Master's thesis, Carleton University, Ottawa. (ProQuest MQ72054).

- Murphy, Chris. 2000. Murder Records – Sloan.
<http://www.sloanmusic.com/murderecords/murderecords> [accessed April 15, 2012]
- Naedoo. 2008. Review of The Super Fantastics – Choose Your Destination. February 12.
<http://www.herohill.com/2008/02/reviews-superfantastics-choose-your.htm>
 [accessed October 22, 2013]
- Patch, Nick. 2012. Sloan Celebrate 'Twice Removed', Once Shunned. *Metro News*.
 September 4. <http://metronews.ca/scene/357542/sloan-celebrate-twice-removed-once-shunned/> [accessed September 24, 2013]
- Pigeon Row: Dog Day. <http://pigeonrow.com/dog-day> [accessed April 1, 2012]
2000. *Popular Music* 19, no. 1 [Place issue]. January.
- Prato, Greg. 2009. *Grunge is Dead: The Oral History of the Seattle Rock Music*. Toronto: ECW Press.
- Reed, Bryan C. 2013. As Duke's WXDU Turns 30, The Area's College Rock Outlets Fight For Relevance Amid Online Competition. *Indyweek*. November 6.
<http://www.indyweek.com/indyweek/as-dukes-wxdu-turns-30-the-areas-college-rock-outlets-fight-for-relevance-amid-online-competition/Content?oid=3760550>
 [accessed November 11, 2013]
- Richards, Will. 1993. Sloan: Contract Envy and How to Deal with it. *EQ Magazine*, transcribed by James Covey. *Fall*.
<http://sloannet.yupislyr.com/msg00/msg00157.html> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Robbins, Ira. 1997. *The Trouser Press Guide to '90s Rock*. New York: Fireside.
- Shank, Barry. 1994. *Dissonant Identities: The Rock and Roll Scene in Austin, Texas*. Hanover: University Press of New England.
- Shaw, Kyle. 2001. After grunge, a rock 'n' roll rebound. *Globe and Mail*. March 13.
- Shuker, Roy. 2008. *Understanding Popular Music Culture*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Sloan. 1992. *Smear*. David Geffen Company DGBBD-24498, compact disc.
- Sloan. 1992. *Underwhelmed*. YouTube video, 4:42. Posted by “CanadianMusic”, June 21, 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkN_qkN5JLQ
- Sloan. 1992. *Underwhelmed (live)*. YouTube video, 5:31. Posted by “Mike Kay”, August 28, 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4VfIghw4-I>

- Sloan. 1992. *500 Up*. YouTube video, 4:08. Posted by “badtracking”, May 27, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGBKGd0ma5Q>
- Sloan. 1993. *Ear to the Ground*, CBC, transcribed by James Covey, June 29. <http://sloannet.yupislyr.com/msg00/msg00046.html> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Sloan. 1994. *Twice Removed*. Murderecords MURMD11, compact disc.
- Sloan. 1994. *Coax Me*. YouTube video, 3:23. Posted by “ROCKVIDEOMONTHLY”, May 2, 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uj6d-CQNJ-c>
- Sloan. 1994. *People Of The Sky*. YouTube video, 3:39. Posted by “CanadianMusic”, June 21, 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vHk_IOxGnc
- Sloan. 1997. *E! Now*, transcribed by Elaine Hsu, April 26. <http://www.angelfire.com/on/onthehorizon/entnow.html> [accessed October 27, 2012]
- Sloan. 2012. *Twice Removed – Deluxe Edition*. Murderecords MUR 054, vinyl.
- Smellie, Sarah. 2012. Sloan Revisits 'Twice Removed' Tonight. *The Telegram*. October 5. <http://www.thetelegram.com/Living/2012-10-05/article-3093458/Sloan-revisits-&lsquo%3BTwice-Removed&rsquo%3B-tonight/1> [accessed October 4, 2013]
- Stahl, Geoff. 2007. Musicmaking and the City: Making Sense of the Montreal Scene. *Beiträge zur Populärmusikforschung: Sound and the City. Populäre Musik im urbanen Kontext*, vol. 35: 141-159.
- Stras, Laurie, ed. 2010. *She's So Fine: Reflections on Whiteness, Femininity, Adolescence and Class in 1960s Music*. Farnham, Surrey (U.K): Ashgate.
- Straw, Will. 1991. Communities and Scenes in Popular Music. *The Subcultures Reader*, ed. Ken Gelder, 469-478. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Straw, Will. 2003. Scene (Location). *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*, vol 1, ed. John Shepherd, David Horn, David Laing, Paul Oliver, and Peter Wicke, 349-350. New York: Continuum.
- Street, John. 1995. (Dis)located? Rhetoric, Politics, Meaning and the Locality. *Popular Music: Style and Identity*, proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of the International Conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, ed. Will Straw, Stacey Johnson, Rebecca Sullivan and Paul Friedlander, 255-263. Montreal: Centre for Research on Cultural Industries and Institutions.

- Théberge, Paul. 1995. What's That Sound? Listening to Popular Music, Revisited. *Popular Music: Style and Identity*, proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, ed. Will Straw, Stacey Johnson, Rebecca Sullivan and Paul Friedlander, 275-283. Montreal: Centre for Research on Cultural Industries and Institutions.
- Thompson, Ashley. 2012. Producer Moves with the Music. *The Hants Journal*. January 25. <http://www.hantsjournal.ca/Arts/2012-01-25/article-2873614/Producer-moves-with-the-music/1> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Toft, Robert. 2000. *Heart to Heart: Expressive Singing in England, 1780-1830*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Toft, Robert. 2011. *Hits and Misses: Crafting Top 40 Singles, 1963-1971*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Villeneuve, Nicole. 2012. Cold Warps - Endless Bummer. *Exclaim*. Jan 17. http://exclaim.ca/Reviews/Punk/cold_warps-endless_bummer [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Vincent, Andrew. 2005. *Making Scenes: Studying Local Independent Music in Canada*. Dissertation, Carleton University, Ottawa. (Proquest MR06782).
- Walsh, Barry. 1993. High Tides & Low Downs. *The Coast* 1, no. 2, transcribed by James Covey. <http://sloannet.yupislyr.com/msg00/msg00042.html> [accessed April 1, 2012]
- Wikipedia. 2012. Cinnamon Toast Records. February 8. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinnamon_Toast_Records [accessed April 15, 2012]
- Whitesell, Lloyd. 2002. Similar music analysis: Harmonic palette in early Joni Mitchell. *Popular Music* 21, no. 2: 173-193.
- Whitesell, Lloyd. 2008. *The Music of Joni Mitchell*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yardley, William and Sean Patrick Farrell. 2011. Post-Grunge, Seattle Rocks On. *New York Times*. September 16. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/16/us/post-grunge-seattle-still-rocks-20-years-after-nirvanas-nevermind.html?_r=1& [accessed September 21, 2013]
- Zak III, Albin J. 2001. *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Appendix 1: Lyrics and Transcription of Music from Smearled

Sloan – *Smearled* (1992) **Underwhelmed** (C. Murphy/Sloan)

Verse 1 She was underwhelmed, if that's a word
I know it's not, 'cause I looked it up
That's one of those skills that I learned in my school

Verse 2 I was overwhelmed, and I'm sure of that one
'Cause I learned it back in grade school
When I was young

Verse 3 She said, "You is funny", I said, "You are funny"
She said, "Thank you" and I said, "Never mind"
She rolled her eyes, her beautiful eyes

Verse 4 The point is not the grammar, it's the feeling
That is certainly in my heart
But not in hers

Chorus But not in hers, but not in hers
But not in hers, but not in hers

Verse 5 We were talking about people that eat meat
I felt like an ass 'cause I was one
She said it's okay, but I felt like I just ate my young

Verse 6 She is obviously a person with a cause
I told her that I don't smoke or drink
She told me to loosen up on her way to the L.C.

Verse 7 She skips her classes and gets good grades
 I go to my courses rain or shine
 She's passing her classes while I attend mine

Chorus While I attend mine, while I attend mine
 While I attend mine, while I attend

Verse 8 She wrote out a story about her life
 I think it included something about me
 I'm not sure of that, but I'm sure of one thing
 Her spelling's atrocious

Verse 9 She told me to read between the lines
 And tell her exactly what I got out of it
 I told her affection had two Fs
 Especially when you're dealing with me

Verse 10 I usually notice all the little things
 Once I was proud of it, she says it's annoying
 She cursed me up and down and rolled her Rs, her beautiful Rs

Verse 11 She says I'm caught up in triviality
 All I really wanna know is what she thinks of me
 I think my love for her makes me miss the point

Chorus I miss the point, I miss the point
 I miss the point, I miss the point
 I miss the point, I miss the point
 I miss the point, hey mister

Sloan – *Smearred* (1992)**500 Up**

(A. Scott/Sloan)

Verse 1 She comes running down like water
 To splash around with the ones that taught her
 She's just like that farmer's daughter
 Everybody laughs at the joke

Chorus And we're laughing
 She don't know what it means
 She just knows that it's not what it seems

Verse 2 Everybody knows that she's going nowhere
 Everybody always tells her how much they care
 But all they really care about is growing their hair
 And getting it cut

Chorus And we're laughing
 She don't know what it means
 She just knows that it's not what it seems

Bridge She's running down much faster
 Home base is around the corner
 All she can hear is laughter
 And that's all that's in store for her

Verse 3 Sliding downwards, you're the batter
 That's what they say

Chorus 500 up on the ladder

Verse 4 She comes running down like water

Chorus She comes running down

Verse 5 Everybody knows that she's going nowhere
Everybody always tells her how much they care
But all they really care about is cutting their hair
And letting it grow

Chorus And we're laughing
She don't know what it means
She just knows that it's not what it seems

Bridge She's running down much faster
Home base is around the corner
All she can hear is laughter
And that's all that's in store for her

Appendix 2: Lyrics and Transcription of Music from Twice Removed

Sloan – *Twice Removed* (1994) **Coax Me** (C. Murphy/Sloan)

Verse 1 It all seemed to happen so fast
 Will you ever believe the way he passed away
 I saw his widow speak on her fortune
 She was feelin' pretty apathetic

Chorus Coax me, cajole me
 Coax me, cajole me

Verse 2 If I drink concentrated OJ
 Can I think Consolidated's okay?
 It's not the band I hate, it's their fans
 Three cans of water perverts me

Chorus Coax me, cajole me
 Coax me, cajole me
 Coax me, cajole me

Bridge And after he died
 By rights she'd have cried
 I gave mine away
 I gave mine away

Verse 3 I saw a widow's peak on her forehead
 It was full of lines and sinkers

Chorus Coax me, cajole me
 Coax me, cajole me
 Coax me, cajole me

Sloan – *Twice Removed* (1994) **People of the Sky** (A. Scott/Sloan)

Verse 1 I once knew a pair
 That used to fit very tight
 But now a man's standing tall
 In the wake of this night

Chorus Na na na na na
 His eyes are watering in anger
 At the thought of her sight
 Na na na na na
 The scene of adultery
 Sets the stage for his plight

Verse 2 On an innocent trip
 How can one ruin so much
 A belief in a soul, in a beauty
 Or in a touch

Chorus Ba ba ba da ba
 It's like a three-legged dog
 In search of a crutch
 Ba ba ba da ba
 Dissecting in past
 All the motives of such

Verse 3 She once loved this person in a trial
 Out of sight
 Disposing of the present situation
 It felt right

Chorus Ba ba ba da ba

Two winters and summers
Passed over like a sound
Ba ba ba da ba
And now the two of them are lost
In a screaming battleground

Verse 4 With support all around him
Like a fence or a drink
He realizes in sadness
That now he must begin to think

Chorus Ba ba ba da ba
To filter his energy
Upon losses and fame
Ba ba ba da ba
She'll think of the restful, the peaceful
Or the gain

Verse 5 His sister's a friend
She's like a relative to both
Obliged to her brother
Under silhouetted oath

Chorus Ba ba ba da ba
But she's there for the two
With her bias undone
Ba ba ba da ba
And she'll help see it through
Under moonlight or sun

Verse 6 But today they've still yet
To look each other in the eye
And in a second he manages to dip
To the other side

Chorus Ba ba ba da ba
 Up to the people of the sky
 Ba ba ba da ba
 And now he'll never die

Cirriculum Vitae

Name: Danielle Hamel

Post-secondary Education and Degrees: Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada
2002-2006 B.F.A.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2011-2014 M.A.

Honours and Awards: Golden Key International Honour Society
Concordia University Chapter
2006

Related Work Experience Teaching Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2011-2012