

Documenting Destruction: An Examination of the Nashville Hardcore Punk Scene

by

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A thesis presented to the Honors College of Middle Tennessee State University in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the University Honors  
College

Fall 2019

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**Abstract:**

While known mainly for country music, Nashville house a thriving hardcore punk scene. This thesis serves as an exploration of both hardcore as a genre and the Nashville scene itself. It explores the venues, record labels, producers, and some of the most important bands of the Nashville scene. It is the sister work to a photo book created by the author. The photos were taken over the course of a year, from October 2018 to October 2019, utilizing both film and digital photography as well as a variety of techniques. It is meant to document the current state of Nashville's hardcore scene, with its reader base consisting mainly of members of the scene.

**I. Introduction:**

Nashville is known around the world as a Mecca for country music, but if one ventures a few miles away from the bright lights of Broadway one will find an entirely different type of music; hidden in dive bars and dingy basements is one of the most thriving hardcore punk scenes in the country. Ranging from straightforward hardcore punk to heavy metal influenced metalcore, the bands of Nashville play a plethora of styles. Ideologies range from devotedly straight edge to "party hardcore." Some musicians are vegan, others are not. The musicians that make up these bands come from a variety of backgrounds as well; men, women, Caucasians, African Americans, and the LGBT community are all represented in this diverse scene. These differing backgrounds and beliefs all serve as testimony for one thing: Nashville hardcore accepts everyone who seeks it out. It serves as a safe haven for all of society's outcasts and rejects. Everyone shares the fact that they do not fit in with the standard that society expects.

The Nashville hardcore scene has slowly been gaining national recognition in recent years, with labels such as Pure Noise, Unbeaten, and Delayed Gratification snatching up Nashville acts left and right. The local scene has a sound unique to itself.

Bands from around the country come here to record with the engineers and producers that have helped shape this unique sound to try a recreate its magic. Many Nashville hardcore acts draw influence from heavy metal, lending it a much more dissonant sound than traditional hardcore punk bands. The harshly abrasive vocal delivery serves to convey the pain of the lyrical content these bands write about. The songs serve as a testament to the ability of Nashville musicians.

Nashville acts have been on nationwide tours, and individual members of the scene have joined bands that have garnered international attention. One of the most successful bands in hardcore now in 2019 is Counterparts from Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, but two members of the band, Blake Hardman and Tyler Williams, were recruited from the Nashville act On Point. Knocked Loose, the largest band in the genre currently, has toured with Nashville act Orthodox as well as performing a guest spot on their song “In the Dark,” and they share a label with local darlings Chamber. Another one of the most successful hardcore acts out right now, Gideon from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, has also drafted a Nashville musician, Tyler Riley who also came from On Point. Chamber has performed at LDB Fest in Louisville, Kentucky, one of the fastest growing music festivals in the South East. Thirty Nights of Violence has toured the nation, playing festivals in Texas and South Carolina. Within less than a year of their formation, both Chamber and Thirty Nights of Violence signed record deals. The country is starting to notice that Nashville is currently a hotbed for hardcore.

## **II. Background:**

Hardcore punk originated in the eighties as an angrier, more visceral mutation of punk rock. “If The Ramones’ music was a subversive articulation of a discontent that was smoldering under the idyllic surface of suburban American life, then hardcore was its eruption” (Ambrosch 224). In the eighties, punk rock reached a crossroads and bands went one of two ways; the more commercially viable and artistic post-punk, and the more

ferocious and stripped-down hardcore punk. Hardcore came about in response to what many in the punk community saw as a commercialization of their culture. They were proud of the underground aspect of their subculture, and in response to this perceived commercialization made music that was even angrier and less commercially viable. They felt that it was important to make their art for art's sake and did not really care if they made money with it or not. They viewed their work as more authentic than other genres of music, and this idea of authenticity remains ingrained in the hardcore community to this day. Today, hardcore has drawn lots of influences from heavy metal; downtuned guitars, double kick rolls, and screamed vocals have now become commonplace in the genre. While many outside of the scene view screamed vocals as just talentless noise, those with the scene recognize "screaming vocals likewise have served as signs of a singer's genuine emotional and physical investment" (Wood 341). This abrasive vocal delivery serves as a more authentic presentation of the lyrical themes consistently found in this aggressive music, themes such as mental illness, loss, and rage.

Along with this harsher sound came newfound social philosophies. Washington D.C. hardcore legends Minor Threat created and popularized the concept of straight edge hardcore, a philosophy that actively avoids and speaks out against drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Straight edge came about as a protest to what was currently going on in the punk scene; namely, a sense of hedonistic, drug fueled nihilism. It is a mission to fight against your situation, rather than give in and attempt to numb yourself to it. This philosophy quickly took root and found an accepting audience in the hardcore scene and is carried on to this day by acts like Orthodox. In the United States, adherents of the straight edge lifestyle are typically "white, middle class, male, and young (typically 16 – 23)" (Haenfler 787). Straight edge adherents typically will adorn themselves with the image of the movement (either a single "x" or "xxx") on their clothing, tattooed on their body, or drawn on their hands with a marker. Straight edge retains the ethos of punk

individualism, while also going against the grain of what was popular in the scene at the time of its creation.

Veganism also found an enthusiastic audience in the hardcore community. Veganism is a more extreme form of vegetarianism, that goes on to include abstinence from all animal products including dairy, eggs, and clothing made from animals and animal byproducts. Many within the hardcore community view the eating of animal products as unethical, and as such refuse to participate in “the bondage and murder of animals” (Clark 24). Members of Nashville acts Thirty Nights of Violence and Cloverfield are active adherents of the vegan lifestyle.

Another common aspect found in hardcore scenes across the globe is the prevalence of a strong do it yourself ethos. This DIY ethos comes in a large part from punk and hardcore’s roots in the working class. The people that started this scene recognized that if they wanted to do anything with their music, they would have to do it themselves. No one was going to help them with music that flew directly in the face of society. An important way that this DIY ethos is realized is in the form of house venues. People open up their houses and allow the community in for a show. There needs to be a certain level of respect in the community for house venues to continue operating. Most house venues operate on an “ask a punk” basis, meaning that the address of the venue is not public knowledge. One needs to know the right people in order to get the address for the show. This does have the downside of it being hard to get introduced to the venue, but at the same time it is a necessary evil. If house show addresses were public, then there is an increased chance of police presence at these underground shows, as multiple laws are typically broken at these house shows. House shows typically violate noise ordinances, and the amount of people crammed into these rooms is certainly a violation of fire codes. “Members of the basement scene are committed to the mindful use of both online and offline communication tools in the service of a collective need for keeping secrets” (Lingel 73). Bands and fans take care not to destroy the house they are in with aggressive

moshing. Thanks to this respect that members of the hardcore community have, more and more people are opening up their basements to house shows.

A common element of a hardcore show is the mosh pit. Moshing is an aggressive form of dancing, allowing audience members an emotional outlet. For many, moshing is a form of rebellion; a perversion of dance they use to express themselves. "Slam dancing allows punks to present the threat of chaos while still maintaining unity among themselves within the pit" (Tsitsos 407). Moshing allows individuals the opportunity to expend pent up aggression and emotion within the confines of an accepting, like-minded community without fear of judgement. Moshing originated in punk rock and was originally slam dancing. To an outsider not involved in the scene, moshing may just seem to be senseless, lawless violence for the sake of violence, but if one were to seek the opinion of a moshers, they would realize there are actual rules to the pit. The first and foremost rule in moshing is that when someone falls down, you pick them up. Although people are swinging violently at one another, the goal is still to keep people as safe as possible. If someone falls down they are at an increased risk for being stomped on by other members of the crowd, so it is up to the rest of the pit to get the fallen man back up as quickly as possible. The next most important rule in the pit is no fighting. People in the pit are going to get hurt no matter what, so one cannot take it personally. People on the edge of the pit typically just lift their arm up to deflect the people that are bouncing around in order to protect themselves.

The most basic form of moshing is the push pit, where participants shove each other back and forth. Another common dance move found in the pit is the two step. Two stepping occurs during a part in a song where the drummer is playing in a basic 4/4 time signature, with snare hits on beats two and four. To two step, one simply swings one foot in front of the other in time with the snare hits, while the opposite arms swings forwards. One of controversial forms of moshing is crowd killing. Crowd killers are moshers who intentionally target individuals on the fringe of the mosh pit who are not actively



participating. This style of moshing leads to far more injuries than other forms as its sole purpose is to hurt people. The rise of more aggressive metal influenced hardcore has also seen the rise of crowd killing. The rise of crowd killing has also seen a fundamental shift in the way a mosh pit works. In earlier days, the crowd would be packed in the front of the stage, shouting along to the music and grabbing the microphone. Crowd killing has seen the introduction of “horseshoe pits” to the hardcore community. In a horseshoe pit, there is an empty, horseshoe shaped patch of space at the front of the stage where crowd killers will flail without regard for the safety of those around them. Horseshoe pits have been controversial in the community with many claiming that their rise has corresponded with a decline in crowd participation at shows. Directly related to moshing is stage diving. According to punk lore, the stage dive was invented by legendary musician Iggy Pop. In a stage dive a crowd member or band member climbs onto the stage and violently hurls themselves back into the crowd to be caught. It is the physical embodiment of the support that the members of the hardcore community have for one another.

This support extends far past keeping stage divers from hitting the ground. This support comes in a variety of forms, the most obvious being monetary. Many fans and members of this community have extensive collections of merchandise they have purchased from bands. Many members of this community also offer to put up touring bands in their house, as the bands simply cannot afford to stay at a hotel. The hardcore community is essentially a nationwide network of fans and artists who continually help each other out.

Merchandise is an integral part of the hardcore community. The most obvious form of merchandising in the hardcore community comes in the form of t-shirts. This has since gone along an obvious progression, with bands expanding their clothing offerings to sweatshirts, hats, shorts, jerseys, sweatpants, and even occasionally underwear. Other typical offerings include stickers, pins, patches, lighters, and wall flags. Bands have also expanded to even more exotic offerings, such as the custom hatchet that West Virginia

band Left Behind offered as merchandise. Many members of bands also design merch for other bands as a way to make money, for example Jacob Lilly of Chamber has designed merchandise for both his band and other Nashville act Thirty Nights of Violence.

One aspect of hardcore that flies directly in the face of the rest of the music industry is the continued importance of physical music to the scene. In September, Knocked Loose held the number one spot of *Billboard's* vinyl record chart with their newest release, *A Different Shade of Blue*. This album also broke new ground for physical releases in hardcore, as it was available at Target. For the most part, music this aggressive is continually snubbed by mass merchants and nationwide retailers, so for a hardcore act to have their CDs on a shelf right next to Taylor Swift proved that this genre and this release in particular are slowly growing in popularity. Hardcore bands typically release multiple variants of their records using different colored vinyl. Cassette tapes are also prevalent in the hardcore community, with many collecting them as a cheaper alternative to records.

### **III. Nashville:**

The demographics of Nashville's hardcore scene present a picture of a heavily male, mostly white audience, as is seen throughout the hardcore scene nationwide. That is not to say that other groups are not represented within the scene as well though. The band Great Minds is fronted by an African American male, and Bazookatooth is fronted by a white female. The LGBT community is also represented in bands. Nashville hardcore truly does seek to be a haven for people from all walks of life, especially for those who feel that they are looked down on by society. It seeks to bring in the outcasts and make them feel as if they are a part of something bigger than themselves. Lyrically, the bands in Nashville do not overtly reveal a distinguished political slant, but typically would appear to be considered left leaning as they push issues such as LGBT rights, anti-racist sentiments, and pro-woman issues through benefit shows that various bands have hosted.

#### **IV. Venues:**

The venue that serves as the heart of Nashville Hardcore is The End, a small dive bar located on Elliston Place in Nashville. Located on Nashville's iconic "Rock Block," the building that currently houses The End has a storied history. For years it operated as Amy's, a dive bar and pool hall. It later changed hands and was reopened as a music venue, Elliston Square. This bar yet again changed hands and was opened as The End by Bruce Fitzpatrick in 1999. By this time, Bruce was already a fixture in the underground music scene in Nashville, having worked as a talent buyer for years and helping to break acts like R.E.M. before becoming the manager for the legendary Exit/In, located directly across the street from The End. Bruce's support for the local underground scene has had an immeasurable effect on the Nashville hardcore scene, making him one of the single most important people in the community. What most people would view as just a typical grungy dive bar, the hardcore community recognizes as being a true home to the misfits and outcasts that make up the scene.

Directly across the street from The End is Exit/In. Opened in 1971 as a venue meant to cater to non-country acts playing in Nashville, Exit/In has played host to a plethora of legendary punk, new wave, and indie rock acts such as The Ramones, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Talking Heads, and many more. Although larger than The End, many touring bands still choose to play at The End instead due in large part to Exit/In's restrictive policies towards moshing. The venue does not typically book shows that consist of entirely local acts, but touring acts will often add a local support act to the bill.

Café Coco is a restaurant located around the corner from The End and Exit/In and has been open for over 23 years. Although it does not currently book many hardcore shows, it has seen its fair share including heavy hitters Knocked Loose (Louisville), Orthodox (Nashville), and Varials (Philadelphia). It is not that the venue refuses to book hardcore shows anymore, but rather the scene has shifted to other spaces that fit the same

amount of people, such as the newest iteration of DRKMTTR. Today, it is seen as more of a post-show destination as it is open 24 hours and offers some vegan selections alongside their regular menu.

DRKMTTR Collective is a venue that has existed in three different iterations in Nashville. The current location is at 1111 Dickerson Pike, a space that doubles as both a performance venue and a vegan café. Previous iterations of the venue were not accepting of the hardcore scene and refused to book bands of the genre, catering to more of a traditional punk crowd. They claimed that hardcore shows were too destructive and refused to let bands of the genre perform at the venue, even though the hardcore scene had helped to raise the money needed to open the venue. The third iteration of the venue has changed that policy, thanks in large part to the efforts of Chris Lane and AM/PM booking. Before Chris, a California transplant, started booking shows with them, AM/PM booked almost exclusively at The End. Since he was not a part of the drama that occurred between DRKMTTR's proprietors and the hardcore community, Chris reached out to the venue and began booking hardcore shows there, starting with a sold out show featuring Kublai Khan (TX), Vatican (GA), Left Behind (WV), and a new iteration of Nashville's own Condone. Since this first show, AM/PM has gone on to put on many well attended shows at the small venue.

House venues are also an incredibly important part of the hardcore community, not just in Nashville, but around the country. The main house venue in Nashville is That 70's House, located near the campus of Belmont University. That 70's House was first opened as a venue by Tate Mercer, who would later go on to become one of the most sought-after producers in not only the Nashville hardcore scene, but nationally. The venue is currently run by Zan Greene, the guitarist for Moru. That 70's House is the quintessential house venue, becoming a mainstay for both local bands and touring acts. It is a rite of passage for Nashville bands to play at the house and is traditionally the venue where a band plays their farewell show. When Hanging Moon played their farewell show

at the house, 181 people crammed into the basement to say goodbye to the band. In December 2018 the house hosted its 100<sup>th</sup> show, an informal event that everyone was encouraged to wear formalwear to. The house also hosts more than just hardcore shows, with bands such as Better Off (emo) and The Low Blow (pop-rock) having headlined shows at the house.

There are other house venues that have played host to Nashville hardcore bands, especially in Murfreesboro. One of the most important house venues to the scene was Dad's Garage, where touring bands such as Judiciary and Joy played. Sadly, the venue ceased to operate once the people who ran it moved out following their graduation from MTSU. Eagle Street, Crossroads, and The Kitchen are all current Murfreesboro house venues that book hardcore shows. Another nontraditional venue in Murfreesboro that has played host to hardcore bands from the Nashville scene is Media Rerun, a small storefront that sells used media such as records, video games, and movies. Located next to a Walmart, this store does not seem like the place that would serve as a DIY music venue, but it plays host to both touring bands as well as locals only shows.

## **V. Labels:**

There are three main record labels that work with the Nashville hardcore scene: Pure Noise Records, Unbeaten Records, and Delayed Gratification Records. Pure Noise is the largest and most important of these labels. Headquartered in Berkley, California, Pure Noise has been putting out punk and hardcore influenced records since 2009. They are currently the largest and most successful record label in hardcore. Their roster includes Knocked Loose, who are currently the largest hardcore act in the world, as well as other heavy hitters Counterparts, Terror, Year of the Knife, Inclination, Rotting Out, Sanction, Stick to Your Guns, and Left Behind, among others. In 2019, Pure Noise released Knocked Loose's sophomore full length *A Different Shade of Blue*. The record was an immense success, charting at number 26 on the Billboard 200, as well as hitting

number one on the vinyl, current hard music album, current rock album, and independent record label current album charts. Also in 2019, it was announced that Pure Noise had signed Nashville's Chamber. Their first release on the label was *Ripping / Pulling / Tearing*, which was a re-recording of the band's first two EPs alongside one brand new song. This release was mainly recorded at Schematic Studios in Nashville with Tate Mercer, while Jacob Lilly (vocalist) recorded his parts for "Severed," "Every Blade," "Skin," and "Vessel" (the songs that were rerecorded from *Hatred Softly Spoken*) in his native South Carolina with producer Jeremy White. The EP was received with positive critical reviews and respectable sales for a band's first label release.

The next label of importance to the Nashville scene is Unbeaten Records. Based out of Troy, New York, Unbeaten is headed by Buddy Armstrong, formerly of the band Stigmata. Unbeaten's first venture into Nashville came with their signing of veteran straight edge act Orthodox. They released the band's sophomore full length *Sounds of Loss* to positive reviews in 2017. In 2018, the label worked with Chamber to put out a limited run vinyl of their debut EP *Hatred Softly Spoken* along with a small line of merchandise for the band. In 2018, they also signed new Nashville act Thirty Nights of Violence after the band had only played two shows, thanks in part to lobbying by Orthodox's vocalist Adam Easterling. Unbeaten put out Thirty Nights's debut EP *To Die in Your Portrait* in October 2018. At the time of this writing, Both Orthodox and Thirty Nights of Violence are currently preparing to release new music through Unbeaten.

The last of the three main labels involved in the Nashville scene is Delayed Gratification Records, based out of Ohio. DGR was formed in 2013 by Vladimir Necovski. Since its formation, the label has mainly focused on underground bands from the Midwest, such as Church Tongue from Indiana and Deathsong (who also features Shiloh Krebs of Orthodox) from Ohio. They recently started taking an interest in the Nashville scene, signing both Moru and Offhand in 2019.

## **VI. Producers:**

Many of the bands in the Nashville hardcore scene like to stay local when it comes to finding a producer for their work. One of the first names that comes up when bands start talking about who they should work with is Tate Mercer. Tate moved to Nashville from Illinois and studied audio engineering at SAE. The first heavy band he worked with in Nashville was Orthodox. He recorded and mixed their EP *Give Me a Reason* in 2014, shortly before moving to the West Coast. In 2016 he returned to Nashville and picked right back up where he left off, helping Hanging Moon to record drums for their EP *Cast Out*. In 2018 he recorded what he considers one of his landmark releases, Chamber's *Hatred Softly Spoken*. This EP, as well as their follow up *Final Shape/In Search of Truth* led to the band signing to Pure Noise Records, the preeminent label in hardcore right now. Their first release on the label was another Tate Mercer production, 2019's *Ripping / Pulling / Tearing*, featuring re-recordings of the band's first EP with new vocalist Jacob Lilly, as well as a new song, "Replacing Every Weakness." Impressed by his work with Orthodox and Chamber, Nashville newcomers Thirty Nights of Violence also sought out Mercer to record their debut EP, *To Die in Your Portrait*. This EP wound up being released through Unbeaten Records, a small label from Troy, New York which also releases Orthodox's music. Moru also just finished recording their label debut for Delayed Gratification with Tate. Tate's continued success with Nashville hardcore acts has allowed him to work with hardcore and metal acts from around the country such as Dying Wish (Oregon) and Bloodbather (Florida), as well as non-hardcore acts like Nashville emo bands Better Off and Daisyhead.

Another in demand producer in the Nashville scene is Daniel Colombo. Daniel is one of the heads at LFT Studios, where he wound up after spending a decade managing other studios in Florida. He currently plays guitar for Glimmer, a band who he also works with, having produced all of their releases up to this point. Orthodox also moved their production to Daniel following Tate's move out West. Their upcoming release through

Unbeaten Records was recorded entirely at LFT with Daniel and is expected to be released in early 2020.

## **VII. Bands:**

### **Orthodox:**

The most successful of the Nashville hardcore bands is Orthodox. Formed in 2012 by vocalist Adam Easterling, Orthodox is a straight edge hardcore band. Orthodox has had a long list of members, with Adam being the only consistent one. Their lineup currently consists of Adam on vocals, Austin Evans on guitar, Shiloh Krebs on bass, and Mike White on drums with different guitarists filling in to add a second guitarist on tour. Adam is the only current member of the band who actually lives in Nashville, with the other members coming from South Carolina and Ohio. In the past, members of Knocked Loose, Counterparts, Hanging Moon, On Point, and Chamber have all played with Orthodox. As the main lyricist of the band, the majority of Easterling's songs deal with themes of mental illness, personal loss, the things that led him to pursue a straight edge lifestyle, and criticism of religion.

In 2013 the band released their debut album *End of My Wit*. This attracted the attention of Clear Minded Records (later rebranded as Hypergiant Records) who released the band's follow-up EP in 2014, *Give Me a Reason* as well as their split seven inch with Michigan act Breaking Wheel. Produced by Tate Mercer, *Give Me a Reason* marked a shift from the more straightforward, traditional hardcore sound of the band's first release, and saw the incorporation of more heavy metal elements, something that would stick with their sound through their next releases. Their unique sound helped to shape future bands in the Nashville scene. The band relies heavily on "panic chords," a tritone chord played on the high strings of a guitar that produces a dissonant, siren like sound. Panic chords, as well as lower dissonant tritones, have since become a characteristic of the Nashville



sound. Even bands from outside of the scene have begun to mimic these sounds of Nashville. The main example for this would be Knocked Loose, whose music has a distinct difference from before and after they toured with and worked with Orthodox. This release brought the band attention and allowed them to tour nationally with acts such as the then unknown Knocked Loose from Oldham County, Kentucky. Orthodox is one of the few acts from Nashville that has had the opportunity to tour internationally rather than just sticking to the United States.

### **Hanging Moon:**

It is impossible to discuss Nashville hardcore without bringing up the now defunct Hanging Moon. Hanging Moon was formed in 2014 by drummer/vocalist Josh Landrith, guitarist/vocalist Gabe Manuel, and bassist Christian Smith. The lyrics of Landrith and Manuel dealt heavily with themes of mental illness and, particularly from Landrith, criticism of religion. They released their debut EP *Cast Out* in 2016. *Cast Out* was recorded by a mixture of producers, including Tate Mercer, Blake Hardman, and Ritta Baker. In 2017, the band added a second guitarist, Taylor Stephenson, and released a second EP, *Deathbed*. *Deathbed* was recorded by Trae Roberts at Like Minded Recordings in February 2017 and released in May. On the strength of these EPs, they toured around the country with bands such as Orthodox and Breaking Wheel. In 2017, it was decided that Hanging Moon would break up. This was due largely to Josh's desire to be there for his new child, as well as issues he had reconciling his lyrical content and role in the band with his newfound conversion to Christianity. Before they played their final set, Josh announced to the crowd "For the record, you're all gonna laugh about this one, everything I've said about God the past two years, I was wrong. I am a proud Christian boy now!" to cheers and laughter (Easterday 1:16-1:29). He further went on to say, "The past two years of my life were some dark shit, and without this music scene and without this band and too many people here to name, I definitely would've fucking killed myself."

So thank you to everyone who played a part in all this” (Easterday 1:51 -2:08). Hanging Moon played their final show on November 17, 2017 to a crowd of 181 people in the basement of That 70’s House. “It means the world to me and like, us, that anyone ever gave a fuck about this. I don’t know. Thank you so much” Gabe declared before the band launched into the last 25 minute set they would play (Easterday 0:22-0:31).

Following the breakup of the band, Josh, a former fixture of the Nashville hardcore scene, left it entirely. After about a year apart from the scene, Josh started coming to shows and getting involved in the scene again. In early 2019, he and the members of Hanging Moon reunited in the form of a new band, Final Level. Final Level recruited Ethan Young of Thirty Nights of Violence to play drums so that Josh could focus solely on vocal duties. Final Level’s sound is a departure from Hanging Moon’s as it is more of a traditional hardcore band, rather than the metalcore influenced music that their previous band played. Since Josh’s return to the scene there have been rumors of a Hanging Moon reunion, but as of yet it has not come to fruition.

### **Chamber:**

The same night Hanging Moon left the scene, a new band entered it: Chamber. Formed by the remaining members of Hanging Moon (Gabe, Chris, and Taylor) the band recruited Taylor Carpenter to play drums and Sam Fleming as a vocalist. While never officially announced as being a part of the show, Chamber played their first set, a short two song run, as a surprise start to the show. They played their first officially announced set the next month, at On Point’s farewell show. Following this, Chamber released their debut EP *Hatred Softly Spoken*, which they had recorded at Schematic Studios with Tate Mercer, in March. The recording process for this EP was a departure from typical recording sessions, as Tate decided not to have the band play along to a click track or time align the music in order to try and capture more of the band’s raw energy. In summer of 2018 Orthodox took Chamber out on their first national tour, much as they

had with Hanging Moon. While on this tour, Chamber kicked vocalist and founding member Sam Fleming out of the group, and Orthodox bassist Jacob Lilly finished the tour for them. After the conclusion of the tour, Lilly left Orthodox to become a full-time member of Chamber. His first release with the band would be *Final Shape / In Search of Truth* which came out in November of that year. After a year of extensive touring and underground success, guitarist Taylor Stephenson grew unhappy with the constant touring and the band announced his departure in early 2019, with his final show being the band's set at LDB Fest in Louisville, KY on February 9 2019. He was replaced for a brief period by Tyler Williams (Counterparts, On Point, ex-Orthodox) before the band found a permanent replacement in Mike Moynihan. Following the stabilization of the lineup, the band signed with heavyweight label Pure Noise Records and released their label debut *Ripping / Pulling / Tearing* in July of 2019.

### **On Point:**

While not the most successful band on their own, On Point has the most externally successful members of the Nashville hardcore scene. Guitarist Tyler Riley now plays in Tuscaloosa, Alabama Christian hardcore act Gideon. Blake Hardman now plays guitar for Canadian melodic hardcore legends Counterparts and formerly played with Gideon. Bassist Tyler Williams also plays in Counterparts alongside Blake. Former member Luke Granered also played guitar in Gideon for a time, but since left to focus on his projects Better Off and Cash Basket.

On Point plays a more traditional brand of hardcore, and brands themselves as the antithesis of a straight band, calling themselves party hardcore. The band formed in 2015 and released three self-produced EPs before signing with Dog Years Records based out of Springfield, Missouri. The only release handled by this label was 2017's *The Anti-Cool*. The band broke up in December of 2017 with a farewell show at That 70's House. After taking a little over a year off, the band got back together with a show at The End in

March of 2019. They have since gone on small tours again and show no sign of slowing back down.

### **VIII. Conclusion:**

Nashville has one of the strongest underground hardcore scenes in the country, with new bands forming while established acts sign meaningful record deals. Touring bands make sure to stop in town at one of the many venues, or even a DIY spot like That 70's House. Shirts and stickers from Nashville bands can be found across the country. Nationally known festivals recruit Nashville bands to play slots, and the bands from here tour all over North America, both in support of big-name acts such as Kublai Khan, but also on their own, smaller headlining runs. Bands from outside of Nashville draft the musicians from Nashville acts to join their larger, more successful acts like Counterparts and Gideon. Out of town acts come to Nashville to record with the hot up-and-coming hardcore producers located in our fair city. The labels and out-of-towners are starting to finally learn what the locals have known for a long time; Nashville hardcore not only exists, but it is thriving.

## Appendix:

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PG 16: Chamber; The End; March 15, 2019

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PG 18: Cloverfield; DRKMTTR Collective; First Show; October 18, 2019

PG 19: Condone; DRKMTTR Collective; May 3, 2019

PG 20: Death Card; Media Rerun; February 25, 2019

PG 21: Death Card; That 70's House; July 10, 2019

PG 22: Glimmer; DRKMTTR Collective; August 16, 2019

PG 23: Glimmer; DRKMTTR Collective; October 18, 2019

PG 24/25: Thirty Nights of Violence; Spinelli's Pizza, Louisville KY; shot on disposable cameras; May 24, 2019

PG 26: Great Minds; That 70's House; May 10, 2019

PG 27: Left: Jacob Lilly (Chamber, Ex-Orthodox), Right: Ethan Hutchinson (Cloverfield); DRKMTTR Collective; October 18, 2019

PG 28: Hard Reset; The End; September 28, 2019

PG 29: Idiot Promotional Photoshoot

PG 30: Idiot; DRKMTTR Collective; First Show; September 11, 2019

PG 31: Darius Ladd (Great Minds); Guest spot during Orthodox set; September 28, 2019

PG 32: Ishikawa; That 70's House; November 15, 2018

PG 33: Stage diver; The End; April 27, 2019

PG 34: Knuckle Dragger; That 70's House; November 15, 2018

PG 35: Knuckle Dragger; Eagle Street; December 13, 2018

PG 36: Moru; Eagle Street; December 13, 2018

PG 37: Offhand; Eagle Street; December 13, 2018

PG 38: On Point; The End; Reunion Show; Guest features Adam Easterling (Orthodox, middle left) and Ben Boyte (Idiot, Ex-Waste, bottom right) March 9, 2019

PG 39: On Point; The End; July 9, 2019

PG 40: Orthodox; The End; September 28, 2019

PG 41: Skill; DRKMTTR Collective; February 15, 2019

PG 42: Thetan; DRKMTTR Collective; Record Release Show; February 15, 2019

PG 43: Thirty Nights of Violence; rehearsal at storage unit

PG 44: Thirty Nights of Violence; The End; April 27, 2019

PG 45: Thirty Nights of Violence; The End; July 9, 2019

PG 46: Tate Mercer; Top: Home studio, Middle two: Schematic Studios, Bottom: Playing drums with Shoe; That 70's House; October 5, 2019

PG 47: Tom Violence; Eagle Street; December 13, 2018

PG 50: Basement of That 70's House

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