

Echoes of Memphis

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Public Education

I am approaching my last week as a fellow for the Rhodes Institute for Regional Studies. Although I plan to continue working on this website for the rest of my time here at Rhodes, it is still daunting to think of how little of the Memphis music story I have covered. I mean, I have had some opportunities to talk to some great people, and I am beyond grateful that these talented and busy musicians have taken time out to speak with me, a 20-year-old college kid who was just interested.

Throughout this process, I have learned a lot. I have certainly learned more about computers, and through research, I have gained a deeper understanding of music being made in Memphis. I have also learned things about interviewing that are hard to grasp without having experienced them yourself. For instance, I've learned when to nod my head to encourage the interviewee to keep talking and when to ask a follow up question versus when to move on to a different subject. But the most important thing I have

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The Outsider

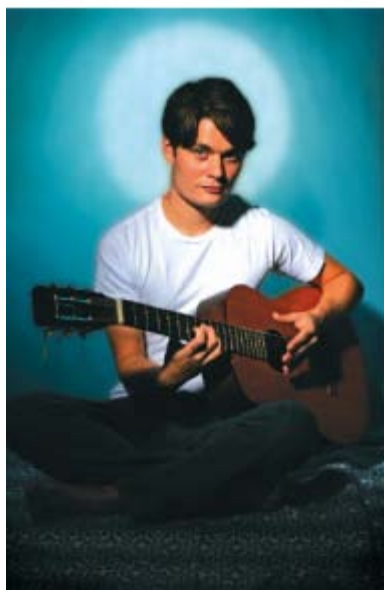


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beginning of this week started out with some exciting interviews. On Monday and Tuesday, Paul Taylor and Steve Selvidge, respectively, each took time out of their schedules to visit with me.

Taylor is a multi-instrumentalist who has played with everyone from his close friends Luther and Cody Dickinson to legendary Hi Records star Ann Peebles. Taylor's father, Pat Taylor, was also big on the Memphis music scene, playing in bands like The Breaks. Selvidge is currently playing guitar with the band The Hold Steady, but has previously played with local favorites like Big Ass Truck and The Bloodthirsty Lovers. His father is the late Sid Selvidge, an extremely talented musician who co-founded Beale Street Caravan. For these two guys, there was no question about their roots or why they got into music. They are musicians and they are Memphis.

As Taylor was leaving the Audubon house on Monday, he turned to me and asked, "Where do you fit into all this?" I racked my brain and mumbled, "I'm making a website. I'll tell you when it's up." Obviously, that wasn't a proper answer, but he pretended to accept it. Later, as I was trying to figure out where it was that I did fit in, I couldn't stop wondering if I was an outsider in Memphis. I'm not from here (my home is Little Rock,



Arkansas), in fact I've only been here for about two years since I started college. Yet, I still refer to "we" when I

talk about the city and, as you can tell from the last post, I feel okay about criticizing the city. From my point of view, the criticisms are okay because I believe in Memphis and think of myself as one of its citizens.

Maybe I will spend the rest of my life in Memphis, and maybe then I wouldn't feel like such an outsider, but until then, I'm afraid that people will think I'm intruding on a world that I'm not really a part of. I know that I am collecting stories that have nothing to do with me and sometimes, it feels weird. However, outsiders might be the ones who will eventually put Memphis back on its feet. I'm not romanticizing Memphis and I can see it for what it really is. I don't have delusions that everyone in America, or even in Memphis, respects Big Star (let's be real, the majority of Memphians probably don't even know the band ever existed) or that Stax and Sun were the best things to ever happen to music (okay, this one might not be as much of a delusion). I can look at Memphis from the outside and try to point out where we are slipping up. That's right, I said "we" again, because while I may not be a native Memphian, this city is my home now and I, like every other Memphian, only want to see this city thrive again.

Jul
07

Justin Timberlake, Memphis and the Nature of "Selling Out"

This past Friday (July 5), I got to sit down and chat with Elliott Ives, the current guitarist for Justin Timberlake. We talked a lot about how his life has changed—how he literally went from

all-together giving up on a career in music to appearing on shows like SNL and the Grammys because of the opportunities he got in Memphis. One of the most interesting things to hear about from Ives was his recollection of a time that he was in the studio messing with his laptop and when he looked up, he was in a room with Justin Timberlake, Jessica Biel, Pharrell Williams, Timbaland, Jay-Z, Beyoncé, and Missy Elliott. While this is undoubtedly an impressive room full of talent, it is also a long way from the dark clubs and local musicians of Memphis, Tennessee.

After
the



interview, I started thinking about Timberlake and Ives and what it means to "sell-out." There is a lot of local resentment towards Timberlake and the success he has found as a musician. Some of it may be jealousy, some of it may be because people think there are more talented artists who "deserve" it, and some of it may be simply because they think he isn't a part of the Memphis music story anymore. To that, I would say that at age 11 (when Timberlake first appeared on *Star Search*), you cannot be a sell-out and Timberlake was only 14 when he became a member of 'N Sync; can you

look a 14-year-old boy in the eye and tell him he left behind his city or that he isn't a real musician? I certainly couldn't and I would hope that most people feel the same way. In fact, I would argue that Timberlake can't help it if he's lucky and he certainly is not the talentless pop star that people make him out to be (you can't deny he has one amazing falsetto). According to Ives, who actually works with the man, he's one of the hardest working people in the business.

As for Ives, I think it's also completely false to call him a sell-out. He paid his dues in Memphis, he grew up here and played in various bands throughout his life, including FreeSol, a band that signed with Timberlake at Tennman Records, and Lord T & Eloise, a group he still plays with. When FreeSol was dropped by Interscope (the parent company of Tennman), Ives was prepared to enter the business world and even had an interview at a credit card company, but Timberlake called, saved the day, and the rest is history. Ives said in my interview with him that he doesn't consider himself the best guitar player around, and that may be true, but it doesn't mean that he doesn't deserve success or that he should have to spend his career making much less money playing in Memphis. People say that you have to get out of Memphis to really succeed in music (and by "succeed," in this case, I mean make a lot of money), and in its current state, that is completely true.



I think that most people would agree that there is no industry here. Ok, there are a few labels and PR firms, but a handful of people invested in music does not make an industry. And, I get it, Memphis does not want to be like Nashville. We don't want to produce a product, we want to produce great music. We aren't sell-outs, we're artists. However, we have become so consumed with the fear of "selling out" that we have forgotten how to compromise. And although I would never want to live in a Memphis that looked and felt just like Nashville, we should take lessons from them. We need more people invested in what it means to succeed and less concerned with looking cool and only making music with their friends all day. In the city that once had the perfect ingredients to create the King of Rock and Roll and make a label as successful as Stax, I say why can't we do that again? In short, we need professionalism to make this great city thrive again and we won't do that by disowning every Memphian that makes it big.

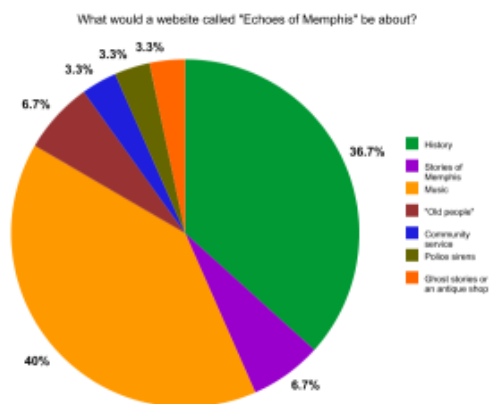
Tagged *Beyonce, Elliott Ives, FreeSol, Jay-Z, Jessica Biel, Justin Timberlake, Memphis, Missy Elliott, Nashville, Pharrell Williams, professionalism, Sell out, Tennman Records, Timberlake*

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28

Here We Go

The first couple weeks of “officially” starting this project (I really started working on it when I began doing interviews last semester) have been both incredibly exciting and frustrating. I began this knowing little to nothing about computer science and when I finally started on the technical side of things, I was even more confused. However, with a little patience and a lot of forums, I quickly learned the basics of WordPress and put up a “wireframe” of what I wanted the Echoes of Memphis website to look like.

After the mock-up was up, the big issue became whether or not I would keep the name. I mean, I liked it, but I wasn't sure what it meant to other people. So, I polled 30 people to see what they thought. Thankfully, the majority said they thought the website was about music, but a close second was that people thought it would be about history, which is true too really. I finally decided that I would stick with “Echoes of Memphis,” but some people (I won't name names...) kept sending me suggestions and trying to get me to change it to something they thought was better. But, eventually, you just have to go with what you like, because you don't want something that started out as your vision to change into something made from the half-hearted and convoluted opinions of others.



Another thing that has recently presented itself as a challenge has been adding content to the website because, I don't know if you've noticed, but there is a lot of music that has been and is still being made in Memphis. Currently, I'm working on summaries to put up of some major Memphis-based acts working today, but how do you put the work of bands like the Oblivians into 200 words? I imagine that this is an art that will take a while to perfect.

With the death of Bobby 'Blue' Bland earlier this week, I feel all



the more motivated to preserve a living history of Memphis music, which is essentially what I am trying to do here. While I may annoy artists and their managers with 17 phone calls in one week or struggle to find the words to describe a garage rock band without being cheesy, I still feel like what I'm doing is important. With another Memphis great passing away, it reminded me that we need to record these stories before they are forgotten. I look forward to seeing what I can accomplish in the weeks to come.

Tagged *BB King, Bland, Bobby, Bobby Bland, Memphis, Oblivians, Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, Wordpress*



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Welcome to *Echoes of Memphis!*

Hi, I'm Molly. When I started this project, I was imagining what Memphis sounded like. But the only problem was that I couldn't hear it. Or maybe I could hear it, but I couldn't quite make out what it was saying. It seemed to be jumbled between two worlds, one from the past that has become legend and one from the present that has not gotten the proper praise it deserves. I was hearing Otis Redding and the Staples Singers, Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis Presley, Big Star and Jay Reatard, The Memphis Dawls and Al Kapone, and I wanted every one to get the recognition they deserved. It's hard to talk about Stax without talking about Goner, because it is all part of the same story—Memphis music. Often people romanticize the past and ignore what's going on in the present or locals turn their back to museums and tourists and claim that what's being made now is what's "real." This website is about listening to both sides. To

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acknowledge the great things that happened in the past, but to also hear what is happening in Memphis now. Reflecting upon one another, all of these sounds create the echoes of Memphis.

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One of the largest components of *Echoes of Memphis* are the interviews done with modern Memphis musicians. In them, they reflect on their careers, talk about what projects they are currently working on, and discuss the state of the Memphis music industry and what they think can be done to improve it. Though the website has an archive of interviews done with people in the Memphis music community, the main focal point of this section of the website is the "Special Collections" subhead. Each of these "collections" is centered around one theme, such as the "Like Father, Like Son" collection which focuses on interviews with second-generation Memphis musicians, alongside interviews with their fathers from the archives.

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Throughout this process, I have learned a lot. I have certainly learned more about computers, and through research, I have gained a deeper understanding of music being made in Memphis. I have also learned things about interviewing that are hard to grasp without having experienced them yourself. For instance, I've learned when to nod my head to encourage the interviewee to keep talking and when to ask a follow up question versus when to move on to a different subject. But the most important thing I have

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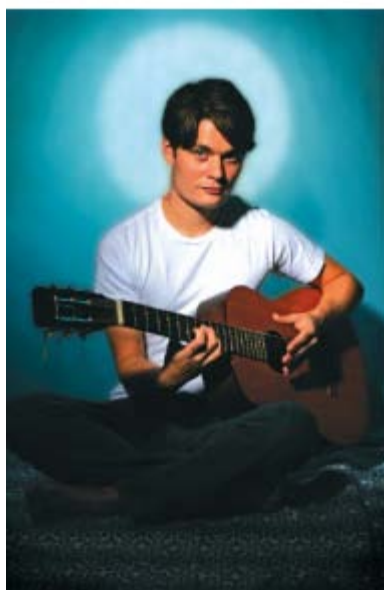
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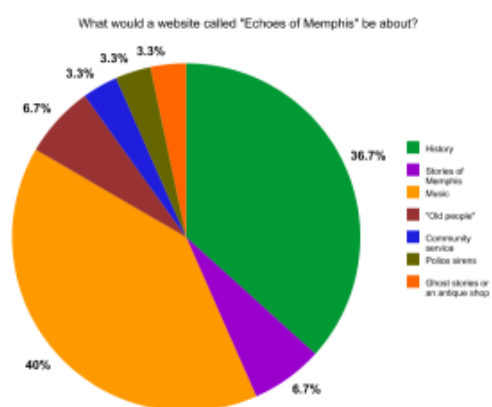
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Here We Go

The first couple weeks of “officially” starting this project (I really started working on it when I began doing interviews last semester) have been both incredibly exciting and frustrating. I began this knowing little to nothing about computer science and when I finally started on the technical side of things, I was even more confused. However, with a little patience and a lot of forums, I quickly learned the basics of WordPress and put up a “wireframe” of what I wanted the Echoes of Memphis website to look like.

After the mock-up was up, the big issue became whether or not I would keep the name. I mean, I liked it, but I wasn't sure what it meant to other people. So, I polled 30 people to see what they thought. Thankfully, the majority said they thought the website

was about music, but a close second was that people thought it would be about history, which is true too really. I finally decided that I would stick with "Echoes of Memphis," but some people (I won't name names...) kept sending me suggestions and trying to get me to change it to something they thought was better. But, eventually, you just have to go with what you like, because you don't want something that started out as your vision to change into something made from the half-hearted and convoluted opinions of others.



Another thing that has recently presented itself as a challenge has been adding content to the website because, I don't know if you've noticed, but there is a lot of music that has been and is still being made in Memphis. Currently, I'm working on summaries to put up of some major Memphis-based acts working today, but how do you put the work of bands like the Oblivians into 200 words? I imagine that this is an art that will take a while to perfect.

With
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death
of
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this



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the more motivated to preserve a living history of Memphis music, which is essentially what I am trying to do here. While I may annoy artists and their managers with 17 phone calls in one week or struggle to find the words to describe a garage rock band without being cheesy, I still feel like what I'm doing is important. With another Memphis great passing away, it reminded me that we need to record these stories before they are forgotten. I look forward to seeing what I can accomplish in the weeks to come.

Tagged *BB King, Bland, Bobby, Bobby Bland, Memphis, Oblivians, Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, Wordpress*

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TENNMAN RECORDS

Justin Timberlake, Memphis and the Nature of “Selling Out”

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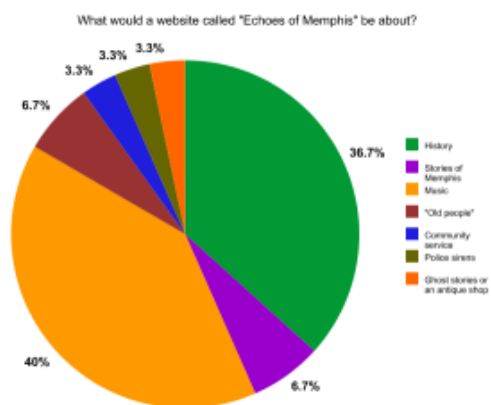
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BB KING

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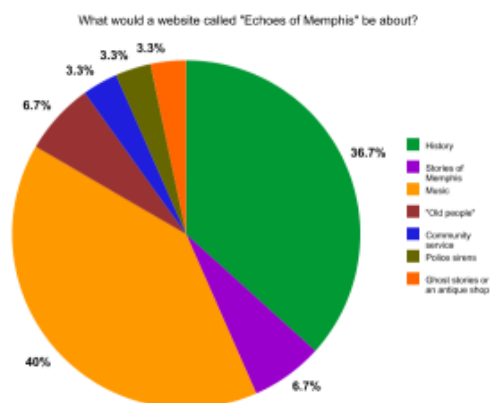
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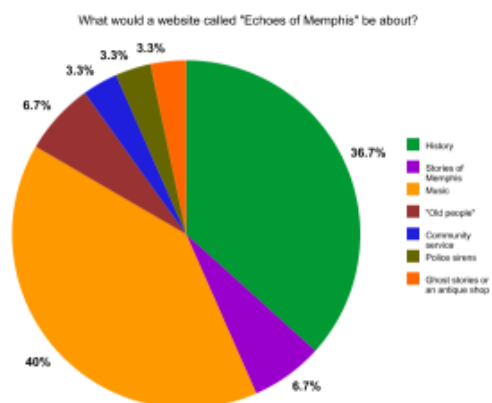
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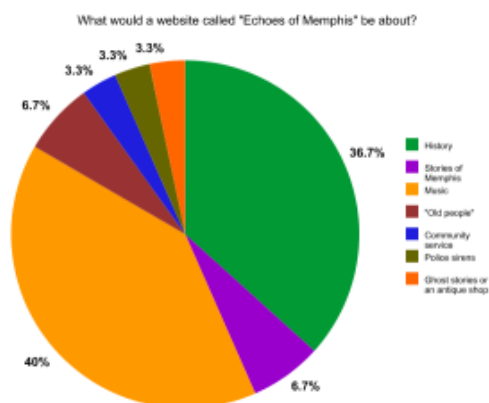
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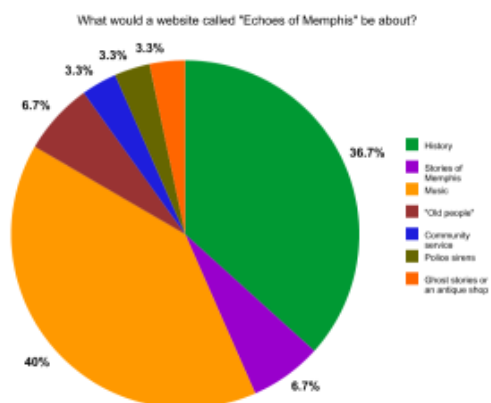
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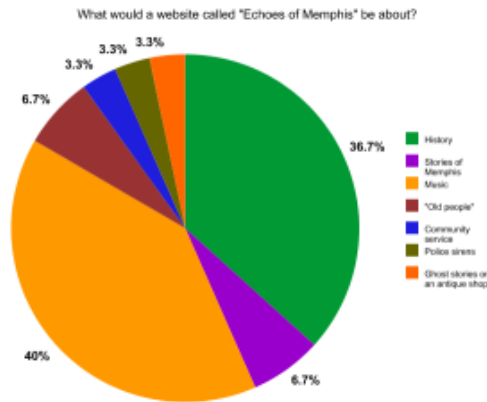
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With the death of Bobby ‘Blue’ Bland earlier this week, I feel all



the more motivated to preserve a living history of Memphis music, which is essentially what I am trying to do here.

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Tagged *BB King, Bland, Bobby, Bobby Bland, Memphis, Oblivians, Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, Wordpress*

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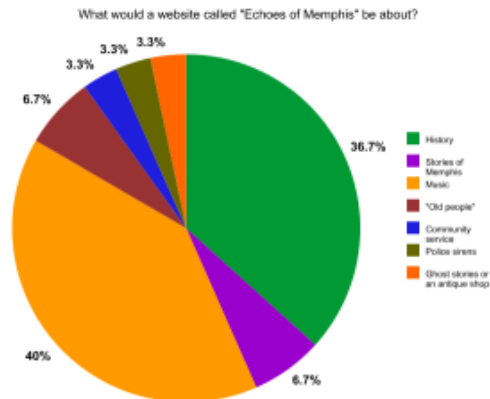
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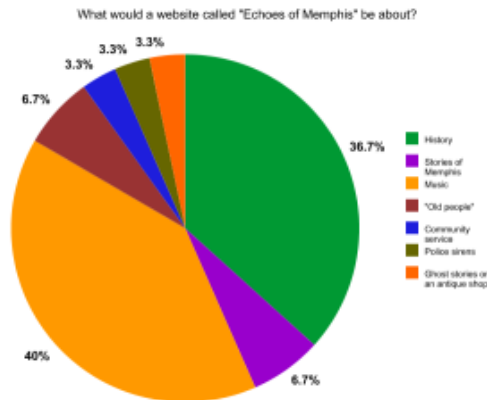
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