



# **INTRODUCTION**



# The People of the Helping Friendly Book

*Oren Kroll-Zeldin and Ariella Werden-Greenfield*

A massive kosher hot dog hovers over the atrium of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio, greeting visitors to the building's central lobby. The airborne frankfurter, topped by classic yellow mustard and relish, earned its place in rock and roll history on New Year's Eve 1994 (fig. 0.1). As midnight loomed, Phish glided around the Boston Garden atop the formidable wiener in an iconic gag that stands out amid the band's storied tradition of annual New Year's Eve antics.

In the days leading up to the concert, bassist Mike Gordon invited a rabbi to bless the now famed hot dog, thus making it proverbially kosher.<sup>1</sup> The blessed, encased meat that soared above the crowd was not the only perceivably "Jewish" element of the Phish show that New Year's Eve; in the second set the band played a rendition of "Yerushalayim Shel Zahav," a popular Hebrew folk song.<sup>2</sup> Though most of Phish's listeners are likely unaware that the hot dog is kosher, the band's ride above the Boston Garden is part of their fans' lexicon. Since then, the hot dog has also become a relic of rock and roll, one that offers a taste of Phish's unique balance of humor and musical expertise and of the complex relationship between the band Phish, the live Phish experience, and contemporary American Jewish identities.



**FIG. 0.1** Phish's infamous hot dog now hangs in the atrium of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Photo: Hwy61Revisited.

Years later at Phish's New Year's Eve concert at Madison Square Garden in 2017, observant Jewish fans gathered during a set break for evening prayers, as they often do, most frequently at venues along the Eastern Seaboard. After the "set break minyan" concluded, the group danced and sang upbeat and joyous Hebrew songs, filling the lower-level concourse of MSG with sounds and movements associated with synagogues, not concert venues.<sup>3</sup> While the initial group who gathered for prayer was small, their song and dance captivated Jews and non-Jews alike who happened to walk by. Word of the gathering spread around the arena, drawing a crowd of participants and observers. On that particular New Year's Eve, fans carried a profoundly Jewish encounter with them as they headed back to their seats for Phish's next set.<sup>4</sup>

Phish is wild, wacky, and incredibly innovative. Although they infuse each show with a touch of theatrical absurdity, it is on New Year's Eve that the band most fully embraces playfulness through extravagant gags. Indeed, exactly twenty-three years after riding through the Boston Garden on a flying hot dog, the band's passion for theatricality emerged in a particularly elaborate visual display. As the clock approached midnight, Phish transformed Madison Square Garden's stage into an immense pirate ship as the band belted out heartfelt lyrics to a new song called "Soul Planet": "Everyone is together in this great big ocean / And the ocean is love."<sup>5</sup> Attendees enjoyed a graphic depiction of the high seas (plate 1). Yet it was the band's message of togetherness that made this New Year's Eve particularly meaningful. As fan reflections on this New Year's out-at-sea reveal, the Phish experience is fun, but it can also be emotive, love-filled, and personally transformative for those in the crowd.<sup>6</sup> As 2018 arrived

and fans danced in the “ocean of love,” the stage crew loaded cannons with blinking disco ball bombs, which exploded above the crowd in a confetti-filled countdown to 2018.

Phish does not limit their use of outlandish props or goofy hijinks to New Year’s Eve. Drummer Jonathan Fishman wears a blue and red donut-patterned muumuu whenever playing with the band. He also occasionally solos on the Electrolux vacuum. Bassist Mike Gordon and guitarist Trey Anastasio jump on trampolines and perform elaborately choreographed dances from time to time. Such moments exemplify the band’s whimsical persona, one that has endeared them to fans since 1983.

### **Live Phish**

Though listening to a recording or reading about the band can provide a window into the world of Phish, the best way to fully understand the Phish phenomenon is through the live experience. A Phish show is more than a concert; it is a performative spectacle, one that invites attendees to become participants. Phish shows provide an opportunity not only to see and hear a talented rock band play exceptional music, but also to immerse oneself in a carnivalesque atmosphere that eschews the normalcy of everyday life. Some fans dress in elaborate costumes and some paint their faces. Others wear their most sparkly attire. Some sport dreadlocks and patchwork clothing, though admittedly less frequently today than in the 1990s when the band experienced a stratospheric rise to fame. Instead of strapping on high heels or loafers, fans don their favorite “kicks” for a night of dancing. Even those who wear street clothes to shows might opt to add an element of festive attire before heading to a concert. Others are gifted flair midshow from people they have never met. Fans bestow strangers with gifts of decorated Uno cards, homemade stickers, and pins as they pass joints and vape pens. Concertgoers share glowsticks and bags of white powder with friends old and new in an environment where excess is the dominant mode of being.

The visual impact of the crowds and their embellished outfits is enhanced by the smells of a Phish show. Cannabis smoke fills the air and commingles with the scent of sweaty, gyrating fans, many of whom wear patchouli oil or natural deodorant, if any at all. The prevalence of mind-altering substances is in and of itself jarring. Drug and alcohol use are rampant at Phish shows, as many fans indulge to enhance their musical and bodily experience. People move in uninhibited ways, twirling and bopping in freeform step. For such fans, drugs encourage such release. Others need no chemical encouragement to shed the expectations of general society and join the Phish experience.



**FIG. 0.2** Shakedown at the Gorge Amphitheatre, George, Washington, July 2016. Photo: Carley Lauren Eiten.

The carnivalesque essence of a Phish show extends beyond the walls of a concert venue. In the parking lot before and after, fans sell everything from T-shirts to grilled cheese sandwiches and veggie burritos along “Shakedown,” the main thoroughfare of “the lot.”<sup>7</sup> Colorful tie-dye banners draw customers to makeshift booths where vendors, who travel from show to show to sell their wares, peddle handblown glass jewelry, fan concert art, and vegan *bánh mì* (fig. 0.2). You might hear calls of “Molly!” and “Doses!” resound through the busy marketplace as dealers promote their goods in a shockingly public way.<sup>8</sup> After a show concludes, such calls are drowned out by the hiss of nitrous tanks filling up balloons. The party doesn’t stop when “the lot” is shut down. You just need to know which hotel lobby or campsite to visit.

Phish regularly turns cities and small towns across America into music-loving utopias and havens of countercultural activity. Hotels accustomed to hosting staid business luncheons during working hours become late-night discos. Attendants at gas stations for miles around are left wondering about the people inundating their usually quiet businesses. Even after fans leave the concert venue or festival field, their presence reverberates through communities who benefit from the financial boon of Phish’s presence while recoiling from the fans themselves, who are often judged too liberal, too hairy, and too smelly. Undeniably, sometimes Phish and their throngs of fans wear out their welcome, as they did in 1996 in Morrison, Colorado,

home of the famed Red Rocks Amphitheatre. The band returned only in 2009 after a thirteen-year ban due to fans' unruly behavior. While admittedly boisterous, Phish concerts are unique ephemeral spaces wherein enjoyment, freedom, and connection reign. Coupled with fans' deep love for the music itself, the visual, olfactory, and auditory experience draws fans to the band, helping to establish their incredibly large and loyal following.

### **“We Are Everywhere”**

In the 2002 *Simpsons* episode “Weekend at Burnsie’s,” Homer is issued a medical marijuana card by his unnamed home state. He quickly becomes a pro-marijuana activist when his access to medicinal cannabis is put in jeopardy. Homer plans a rally to garner support for the cause and hires Phish to entertain the crowd. The band, who gladly guest-starred in the episode, plays “Run Like an Antelope” on a stage decorated with marijuana leaves, closing out their set with a bit of the secret language they developed with fans in the 1990s.<sup>9</sup> Anastasio plays a few measures of the series theme song, which cues fans in the audience, of whom there seem to be many, to shout in response Homer’s catchphrase, “D’oh!” It is easy to miss this cartoon conversation between band and audience. Most viewers likely chuckle about the episode’s prominent association of Phish with marijuana and recognize that the band plays *The Simpsons’* main title theme. But only Phish enthusiasts know the secret language for what it is: Phish having a private dialogue with their fan community. Though not the first time the cartoon referenced Phish, upon the episode’s release fans were thrilled by the band’s involvement and by their quiet nod.<sup>10</sup>

Phish’s musical prowess and their ability to create a boisterous and free-spirited atmosphere that actively engages their audience has created a devoted fan base who use the band as a point of connection and community building. To this end, fans are delighted by references to the group. Similarly, they thrill in identifying other fans in contexts beyond Phish concerts. Though infrequently, Phish occasionally appears in major network programming, including on NBC’s *Community* and Comedy Central’s *South Park* and *Broad City*. Fans relish such instances, even those that poke fun at their favorite band. On occasion, parents watching *Sesame Street* with their children excitedly note a red-and-blue circle-patterned muumuu magnet hanging on Elmo’s fridge, which they then mention on social media as proof of the band’s ubiquitous albeit sometimes discreet presence.<sup>11</sup>

Enthusiasts react similarly when Phish’s music plays during major sporting events as a transition to commercial breaks; they share the news eagerly via Facebook and Twitter, accompanying their announcement with the proclamation “We

are everywhere!” borrowed from the dedicated fan base of the Grateful Dead. The phrase is not unique to jam-band fan bases, as it is often used by minority communities to indicate their integral presence in the American mainstream.<sup>12</sup> In noting the ubiquity of Phish enthusiasts in public spaces, the saying creates an insider-outsider dichotomy, enabling fans to feel as though they are in on an incredibly special joke and to connect with one another in meaningful ways.

Most sports viewers don’t know that they are hearing Phish. But Phish fans celebrate the occasion as proof that they really are everywhere, even in the Fox TV production booth, where Phish fan Jake Jolivette programs music for live broadcasts.<sup>13</sup> MSNBC news correspondent Katy Tur is conceivably the most lauded publicly facing Phish fan, however. Her Phish references are blatant and her lyrical inclusions inconspicuous. During her final broadcast of 2020, Tur included lyrics from Phish’s “Julius,” “Sample in a Jar,” and “Down with Disease” in her closing remarks, the latter of which was playing in the background as she spoke.<sup>14</sup> The average MSNBC viewer might likely find Tur’s language poetic while missing the Phish references included in her end-of-year message. Tur’s broadcast contained multiple levels of meaning, one of which is intelligible only to the Phish insider.

Fans, along with their beloved band, have fashioned a unique language all their own, one built on participation in the Phish cosmos. Individuals mark themselves as part of the in-group when they, like Tur, include lyrics in their speech or excitedly share her most recent Phish reference with friends. They mark themselves when they wear Phish-related clothing and when they adorn their vehicles with donut bumper stickers. They mark themselves as insiders when they join chat boards and social media groups focused on the talented foursome from Vermont. In defining themselves as fans, they declare their love for a band and also their participation in the accepting, debauchery-filled, and freeing world of Phish.<sup>15</sup>

Though Phish fans may be everywhere, the band is decidedly not for everyone. Their songs are lengthy, and many of them, especially the classics, boast nonsensical lyrics and exploratory improvisational sections that render them unfit for commercial radio play. Phish fans who try to hook others on the band are often rebuffed by hesitant or confused listeners turned off by a song’s lengthy instrumental sections. A recent episode of FXX’s hit show *Dave* involves such a scenario. In the episode, titled “Hypospadias,” Mike, who is a major Phish fan, shares a live stream of a Phish concert and some marijuana with GaTa. GaTa, who has never heard the band, affirms that he likes what he is hearing before asking “But when they gonna stop warmin’ up, though?” Even the most devoted Phish enthusiast can understand GaTa’s confusion. Yet Phish fans enjoy the exploratory musicianship so deeply that the mere



mention of the band's name evokes a palpable excitement that echoes the energy of the concert venue.

### **Jewish Identity and Phish**

Over the past four decades, Phish has developed a diehard fan base with a voracious appetite for all things related to the band—concerts, musical recordings, films, articles, internet memes, books, and more.<sup>16</sup> It is not unusual to meet a fan, or “phan,” who has attended hundreds of the band's concerts. And much like the followers of the Grateful Dead, a dedicated community of Phish enthusiasts follows the band around the country, attending *every* show. Even when fans can't attend shows in person, they often stream concerts through the band's LivePhish website, enjoying what they colloquially refer to as “couch tour” and the creature comforts that come with it. Though streaming a concert from the friendly confines of one's home is quite different from being at the venue, “couch tour” allows individuals to feel connected to the Phish community even when they cannot be physically present.

Despite the many benefits of a couch tour, fans generally do their best to make it to as many shows as possible. Some worry that if they skip even one, they could miss an elusive song (known among Phish fans as a “bust out”). People attending the Phish show at Alpine Valley in East Troy, Wisconsin, on July 14, 2019, were treated to one such track. The band played “Avenu Malkenu” for the first time in almost four years—a 147-show gap—proving the popular Phish fan adage “Never miss a Sunday show.”

“Avenu Malkenu” is a classic Jewish prayer whose hauntingly beautiful melody and somber words express submission, service, and dedication to God. When Phish plays the prayer, they honor the composition's traditional melody and message while reshaping it with funky rhythms in an arena rock setting. Hearing Phish play “Avenu Malkenu” is exciting for most enthusiasts due to its rarity. But the experience can carry special significance for many Jewish fans; a Phish show momentarily transforms into a synagogue, a sanctuary filled with collective, joyous prayer. For some Jewish fans, the occurrence of catching “Avenu Malkenu” feels special and familiar, while for others it feels no different from hearing any other rare Phish song. But there are also those Jewish Phish fans who describe hearing Phish play the prayer as a powerful spiritual experience.

Beyond the band's performance of Jewish songs, there are numerous elements of the musical, communal, and sometimes transcendental world of Phish that can be interpreted through a Jewish framework and offer Jewish meaning. Two members—bassist Mike Gordon and Jon Fishman—were raised in Jewish households.



**FIG. 0.3** The “Antelope Moses” design by Josh Brady and Andrew Luttrell has appeared on T-shirts and pins.

Jewish fans celebrate that heritage with great excitement. Phish concerts attract people from particularly privileged socioeconomic situations and geographic areas, a reality that encourages a Jewish presence at Phish concerts and increases the chances of Jews enjoying concerts in the company of other Jews.<sup>17</sup> At shows, Jewish fans engage in Jewish activities as varied as praying during set breaks, as at the 2017 New Year’s Eve show, and donning shirts with “Phish” written in Hebrew script.

Although most Jewish fans do not wear Jewish- and Phish-themed clothing, nor do they pray while at shows, Phish has nonetheless amassed a considerable Jewish following over the course of their career. For some Jewish fans of

the band, going to Phish shows is actually part and parcel of what it means to be an American Jew. While poet Andrew Lustig does not self-identify as a Phish fan despite having attended numerous shows, his notable poem “I Am Jewish” includes the line “I am going to all three Phish shows this weekend.” Phish is an important aspect of the Jewishness of many in his community, and so Phish attendance is, for Lustig, a fundamental aspect of his American Jewish identity.<sup>18</sup>

To that end, this book asks a simple question: “What is the connection between Phish and Jewish identity?” Perhaps unsurprisingly, the answer is not so simple, as a complex mosaic of religious and cultural ties link the band’s music with Jewishness. As evidenced by the chapters in this book, Phish shows are alternate sites of Jewish cultural production and religious connection. So too, Phish is one of many avenues through which Jews find Jewish cultural and spiritual fulfillment outside the confines of traditional and institutional Jewish life.<sup>19</sup> Put simply, in and through Phish, a multitude of Jews are creating innovative Jewish rituals, building Jewish community, and engaging with and producing Jewish culture. Phish fandom and the live Phish experience act as a microcosm through which we see American Jewish religious and cultural life manifest in unique and disparate spaces.

For much of the twentieth century, American Jewish life centered around institutions, including synagogues, federations, and community centers.<sup>20</sup> In recent decades these mainstays of Jewish institutional life have become less attractive, in particular to younger Jews. Today, fewer American Jews identify as “religious” than in decades past and fewer American Jews belong to synagogues. American Jews are increasingly

choosing alternative Jewish spaces and seeking new and meaningful points of Jewish connection or eschewing Jewish connection altogether.<sup>21</sup> As a result, innovative and adaptive American Jews have created new models and organizations for engaging Jewishly. The past two decades have seen a proliferation of niche organizations offering opportunities to participate in Jewish life. Contemporary Jews have the freedom to choose from a wide tent of Jewish activities, institutions, and approaches, all of which offer Jewish cultural and/or religious connection.<sup>22</sup>

For example, Wilderness Torah and Hazon structure their environmental activism and outdoor education on a Jewish ethical foundation, while Be'chol Lashon and Jews in ALL Hues advocate for a full recognition of Jewishness that includes and celebrates Jews of Color. Organizations such as Moishe House and Tribe 12 offer social opportunities for Jews in their twenties and thirties as a means of fostering community and lifelong engagement. Even beyond these groups, American Jews craft Jewish experience in independent ways, carving out their own unique forms of Jewish expression. Younger Jews in particular are increasingly seeking out exciting and hip ways of being Jewish. Many want to connect to a Jewish past, to Jewish community, and even to Judaism and religious belief in ways that feel fitting and culturally relevant within their contemporary lives. They may embrace pickling, or perhaps they bake artisanal challah and post pictures on Instagram. They may be active in a Jewish cappella group. They might meet weekly with their Jewish improv troupe, or monthly with their women's circle. Or maybe they gather with Jewish friends whenever they have the chance to see their favorite band. Though at first glance some of these activities might seem devoid of Jewish significance, for those engrossed in them, they represent methods of engaging with and performing Jewish identities in deep and meaningful ways.

These robust points of Jewish connection allow Jews to engage in Jewish life in ways that feel personally relevant. Indeed, there are myriad ways in which Jews live meaningful Jewish lives outside the auspices of Jewish legacy organizations and synagogues. Attending Phish concerts is one such method. As the relationships between Phish and Jews exemplify, younger generations of American Jews are connecting Jewishly in unexpected ways and in unexpected places, a reality that shapes the ways in which Jewish fans listen to and participate in the Phish experience.

Using a broad and inclusive understanding of Jewishness, this book counts all who identify as "Jewish" as Jews and all who identify as Phish fans as such. For some who identify as both, the experience of attending Phish shows feels distinctly Jewish, while for others it does not. Yet even Jewish fans who don't feel Jewishly inspired at Phish are often aware that Jewishness permeates the Phish experience for those who choose to seek it out. For many Jewish Phish fans, the band's music and the

surrounding scene serves as a space within which to connect with other Jews, celebrate tradition, and even engage in behaviors typically associated with the synagogue setting.

In recent years, Jewish studies scholars have expanded understandings of American Jewish identity and religiosity, thereby providing a framework of analysis for examining Phish shows as a site for cultural connection and religiosity.<sup>23</sup> As Rachel Gross proposes, “American Jews participate in a broad array of ostensibly nonreligious activities . . . that are properly understood as religious.”<sup>24</sup> According to Gross, nostalgic activities that take place outside of traditional Jewish spaces like synagogues and JCCs should be understood as religious endeavors. The appreciation of such “unrecognized religious practices of American Jews,” and the unexpected places in which they can occur, such as Phish concerts, expands conceptions of what Jewishness looks like while “complicating notions of a divide between Judaism, the religion, and Jewishness, the culture.”<sup>25</sup>

Our position is that religion and culture are inseparable from each other. As such, this book offers an expansive and inclusive understanding of lived expressions of Jewish religious and cultural identity in and through Phish. At the same time, we recognize the value that Jewish Phish fans place on these categories, and thus we use them as an analytical tool to understand the relationship between Phish and Jewishness. Phish concerts and the Phish scene offer opportunities for Jewish connection for those that seek it out while also functioning as an attractive and comfortable space for nonaffiliated, unaffiliated, and self-identified “secular” Jews to connect both Jewishly and in other ways. A point of connection with other Jews might not be a driving force behind a fan’s decision to attend a show, while for others it might, as Phish is an intrinsic part of their relationship to and experience of Judaism.

When Jewish fans listen to Phish play “Avenu Malkenu” and then discuss their feelings about the rendition outside of the concert setting, they reshape Jewish practice and identity. So too do the Jewish members of Phish when they play the prayer at one of their concerts. Further, when Jewish Phish fans have Jewish experiences at Phish shows, they define what Jewishness can look like, urging us to reconsider how we understand contemporary American Jewish identities. Concert attendees foster new forms of Jewishness at Phish shows, forms that feel authentic and that match personal identifiers beyond just “Jewish.”<sup>26</sup>

In his 1981 hit “You Can’t Kill Rock and Roll,” Ozzy Osbourne declares rock as his religion.<sup>27</sup> Some Phish fans do the same, noting that their relationship with the band fulfills that which childhood religious affiliation left wanting, a perspective that confirms the power of fan communities while affirming the work of notable scholars of popular music.<sup>28</sup> Yet, for many Jewish fans, Phish is far from a surrogate for

traditional religious belonging. Instead, the band and the world surrounding it foster distinct Jewish meaning-making. For many, the Phish phenomenon amplifies and enhances Jewish identification and spirituality.

### **Origins and Intentions**

In May 2019, just months before Phish played “Avenu Malkenu” in Alpine Valley, over three hundred people gathered at Oregon State University for a three-day multidisciplinary conference dedicated to the academic study of Phish. The brainchild of Stephanie Jenkins, it was the first academic conference to focus solely on the broad Phish ecosystem. The tremendously successful conference drew attention to the academic study of Phish and encouraged the inquiries included in this volume. This book is an extension of a conference panel titled “The People of the Helping Friendly Book: Jews, Judaism, and Phish,” organized by Oren Kroll-Zeldin.

We intend for this book to give readers a window into the remarkable depth of Jewish themes within the Phish ecosystem. Bringing together notable Phish fans, academics, clergy, and journalists, *This Is Your Song Too: Phish and Contemporary Jewish Identity* provides an in-depth analysis of Jewishness in the Phish universe while also pursuing a deeper understanding of how spirituality, ritual, and identity function in the world of rock and roll fan communities more broadly. The title of this book, *This Is Your Song Too*, derives from the lyrics to Phish’s “Joy,” which invites listeners to embrace happiness as indicated through the band’s direct appeal in the song’s chorus, “We want you to be happy / Cause this is your song too.”<sup>29</sup> The presence of the word “too” in the band’s lyrics includes listeners as participants in collective delight. The presence of the word “too” in this book’s title alludes to Jewish inclusion in a countercultural space. Indeed, this book is about finding a joyful source of Jewish connection.

The title of this introduction derives from the eponymous book in Phish’s fictional “Gamehendge” saga and draws on the colloquial name of Jews as “the People of the Book.” Phish’s musical canon includes numerous tracks that playfully whisk listeners away to the mythical land of “Gamehendge,” where the prophet Icculus wrote the “Helping Friendly Book,” a sacred text that “contains the secrets of eternal joy and never-ending splendor.”<sup>30</sup> Almost four decades after Anastasio wrote about the pursuit of happiness, Phish continues to sing about finding gratitude and bliss in “Joy.” As this volume shows, many Jewish Phish fans locate a distinctly fun and spiritually significant Jewishness in and through the band.

This book contributes to the nascent academic field of Phish studies, a subject area that takes seriously the investigation and analysis of Phish’s music and fan

community.<sup>31</sup> It represents the first scholarly investigation of the wide-ranging connections between Judaism and Phish. As such, we anticipate that readers will come to understand some of the myriad ways that Phish can be understood, experienced, and analyzed through a Jewish framework. Jewish meaning-making occurs at Phish concerts and in the fan community, which, in turn, impacts the religious and cultural identities of Jewish fans.

### **Structure of the Book**

This book's structure mirrors that of a Phish concert; it includes a first set, a second set, and an encore. The first set centers on Jewish culture, while the second focuses on religious identification. We recognize that religious and cultural categorizations are arbitrary, as is the dichotomy between cultural and religious behavior and belief. Nonetheless, Jewish fans making Jewish meaning at Phish generally identify their connection to Phish as cultural and/or religious in nature. As such, we embrace these dominant modes of identification as they provide a framework through which to explore how Jewish fans connect to Phish while demonstrating how permeable these categories can be. The first two sections are followed by an encore that features prominent members of the Phish scene who each provide valuable insight into the world of Phish. The sections of this book each incorporate unique voices, much like Trey Anastasio's set lists, which habitually include varying types of arrangements.<sup>32</sup> Our contributors come from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. And yet, a love for Phish and a fascination with the Phish phenomenon draws together a wide-ranging group of academics, rabbis, journalists, musicians, and music industry insiders who each offer their thoughts to this conversation about Jewish identity, music, and popular culture.

Set 1 introduces readers to the ways in which Phish concerts and Phish culture more broadly can foster Jewish cultural connection. Kroll-Zeldin begins the first set with an opener that traces Phish fans from Jewish summer camps to summer tours. He introduces five key factors that contribute to disproportionate numbers of Jewish Phish fans relative to the general population in the United States. Jacob Cohen then considers the fan experience of hearing Phish's rendition of "Avenu Malkenu" and the consequent sense of belonging it provides for Jewish audience members. In chapter 3, Evan Benn moves from the auditory world of Phish into the culinary realm with a personal reflection that navigates the relationship between Phish, food (and Phish Food), and Jewishness. Thereafter, Isaac Slone explores dance as a means of connection, offering powerful reflections on movement, queerness, and Jewish masculinity while problematizing the male-dominated nature of the Phish concert

experience. In chapter 5, Caroline Rothstein negotiates troublesome elements of the Phish experience in her reflection on whiteness, Jewishness, and privilege at Phish shows. Rothstein wrestles with the tensions inherent in recognizing something problematic about a situation that serves you—or about a band that you love—while also celebrating the work being done by social activists in the Phish scene who work to make Phish shows a safe space for all. Finally, the set concludes with Ben David's personal reflection on the healing effects of Phish's music and the live Phish experience. Together, the chapters in set 1 demonstrate that Phish concerts, the surrounding Phish culture, and Phish's music itself offer multiple possibilities for Jewish connection, identification, and healing.

Between the first and second set, we invite the reader to wander around the “venue” of Phish fandom through a selection of poignant and playful images that summon readers further into the Phish cosmos to a vantage point from which meaningful Jewish experiences during the live experience make sense.

Imagine the lights dimming and a cacophony of cheers as you turn the page to begin the book's second set. The contributions to set 2 address some of the innumerable ways in which Jews connect and engage religiously through the live Phish experience and subculture. In the opener, Ariella Werden-Greenfield explores the religious roots of songs in Phish's repertoire and reflects on fan responses to their rehearsal. Werden-Greenfield reasons that the significance that Jewish fans assign to Phish's renditions of Hebrew songs is distinctive and demonstrative of a desire for societal acceptance and religious self-determination. Mike Greenhaus interrogates some of the ways in which Jewish faith and religious practice inform the lives of fans and the band itself. In Jessy Dressin's contribution, she compares the rituals and routines of a Phish show to those associated with the ancient Israelites' sacred pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. The second set continues with Josh Fleet's reflection on Shabbat observance, religious obligation, and the live Phish experience. While Fleet centers on halachic regulations and the logistics of attending shows as an observant Jew, Joshua Ladon considers how impactful the live Phish experience can be in the religious lives of ritually observant Jews. Ladon argues that such experiences can inform how Jewish religious and cultural leaders shape their own religious communities. Noah Munro Lehrman closes out the set with a poetic reflection on Phish tour and Torah, a piece in which he offers both textual exegesis and lyrical analysis.

Even after two sets of music, the crowd's anticipation builds as they wait impatiently for an encore, giddy with the promise of a favorite song or a rarely played tune. This volume's encore includes interviews with individuals worthy of similar excitement and anticipation. Shirley Halperin of *Variety* describes helping Phish learn “Yerushalayim Shel Zahav” and shares stories from her time in Israel with drummer

Jon Fishman; Rachel Loonin Steinerman discusses her love for Phish and the challenges and joys of attending shows as a religiously observant person; Marc Brownstein of the Disco Biscuits reflects on Phish's influence on him as a young musician; Jonathan Schwartz of SiriusXM shares insights about the music scene; and Mike Gordon, Phish's bass player, shares his thoughts about Phish, Jews, and Judaism in chapter 17. In the volume's afterword, Dean Budnick reflects on Jewish identity in the Phish ecosphere. Our inclusion of an afterword is an homage to the elusive second encore.

Some of the sentiments encountered in the following chapters may seem repetitive. Contributors to this book, much like other Jewish Phish fans, frequently cite their experiences with "Avenu Malkenu," discuss the Jewish identity of band members, and recount chilling, thrilling moments from concerts. These reflections and the voices of contributors echo one another, as they do the voices of other Phish fans, strengthening the claim that Jewish meaning-making in and through Phish is a significant form of contemporary Jewish practice. We anticipate that readers will approach this book in various ways. For that reason, this volume's contributions sometimes share thematic elements and are in conversation with one another. Some might read *This Is Your Song Too* cover to cover, while others will read chapters in a nonconsecutive order. Both approaches introduce readers to the phenomenon of Phish-infused contemporary Jewish identity.

Each chapter reveals Jewishness in and around Phish. Readers will encounter celebrations of the band's renditions of Jewish songs by Jewish fans as well as Jewish- and Phish-inspired merchandise available for purchase both outside of concert venues and online. From concertgoers gathering for prayer during set breaks to participating in Jewish fan groups on social media, Jewish fans are engaging in distinctly Jewish behavior as they celebrate their favorite band. The contributions to this volume individually and collectively explore Phish as a site for cultural connection and religiosity. Together, they beg you, our reader, to consider what Jewishness looks like, what constitutes religion, and how transformed we can be by rock and roll.

## NOTES

1. Thompson, *Go Phish*.
2. Furthermore, in the third set, Gordon's maternal grandmother joined the band on stage.
3. Religious Jews pray three times a day in a minyan, or a quorum of ten people required for prayer.
4. Sylvan, *Traces of the Spirit*.
5. Phish lyrics included in this volume are based on those provided by Phish.net and verified by the band's management.
6. The contrast of the wackiness of riding on a flying hot dog in 1994 with the playful yet heartfelt "Soul Planet" in 2017 is



indicative of Phish's emotional growth over the span of their career and their remarkable musical and lyrical range.

7. This is a reference to the Grateful Dead song "Shakedown Street," track 3 on *Shakedown Street* (Arista, 1978).

8. "Molly" is a colloquial term for MDMA; "doses" refers to LSD.

9. Phish.net, "Secret Language Instructions," <https://phish.net/song/secret-language-instructions/history>.

10. The band appeared two years earlier in the episode "Lisa the Tree Hugger."

11. According to <https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Phish>, the magnet, which first appeared in 2018, can be attributed to set designer and Phish collaborator David Gallo.

12. Riemer and Brown, *We Are Everywhere*.

13. Orr, "Phish-and-Football Thursdays?"

14. Broerman, "MSNBC's Katy Tur."

15. Phish fans are not always accepting. Egos, attitudes, and prejudices surface in the Phish community, a reality addressed by several contributions to this volume.

Nonetheless, love and acceptance reign as dominant ideas emanating from the Phish community.

16. In 2016, Phish ranked twenty-fourth in highest-grossing touring acts for the year, ahead of such famed groups as the Dave Matthews Band and Pearl Jam. Meyer, "Phish, Dead and Company."

17. See Oren Kroll-Zeldin's chapter in this volume.

18. Andrew Lustig, interview by Ariella Werden-Greenfield, March 12, 2021.

19. Gross, *Beyond the Synagogue*.

20. Pew Research Center, "Portrait of Jewish Americans."

21. Kosmin and Keysar, "American Jewish Secularism."

22. Alpert, *Whose Torah?*

23. Dash Moore, *American Jewish Identity Politics*; Hahn Tapper, *Judaisms*; Horowitz, "Reframing the Study"; Aviv and Shneer, *New Jews*; Levisohn and Kelman, *Beyond Jewish Identity*.

24. Gross, *Beyond the Synagogue*, 4.

25. *Ibid.*, 5, 23.

26. Music is only one of many cultural pathways through which younger generations of American Jews are engaging Jewishly. The Jewish food renaissance, the recent rebirth of the American Jewish crafting movement, the celebratory resurgence of klezmer music, and the recent revivification of Yiddish theater are exemplary of such pathways. These cultural spaces are beacons of Jewish existence—and even observance—for Jews who identify as secular, and for others who are religiously observant. Gross, Myers, and Rosenblum, *Feasting and Fasting*; Eichler-Levine, *Painted Pomegranates*.

27. Ozzy Osbourne, "You Can't Kill Rock and Roll," track 3 on *Diary of a Madman* (Jet, 1981).

28. Till, *Pop Cult*; Hager, *Religion and Popular Music*.

29. Phish, "Joy," track 3 on *Joy* (JEMP, 2009).

30. Trey Anastasio, "The Lizards" track 3 on *The Man Who Stepped into Yesterday* (senior thesis, Goddard College, 1987).

31. Allaback, "Theater of Jambands"; Blau, "A Phan on Phish"; McClain, "Framing in Music Journalism"; Morris, "'Destroying America'"; Yeager, "Understanding 'It.'" A forthcoming special edition of the *Journal of Public Philosophy* is dedicated to scholarship on Phish. Additionally, an online Listserv of scholars called "University of Gamehendge" is dedicated to the exchange and circulation of scholarship about the band. Finally, Stephanie Jenkins, the organizer of the Phish Studies Conference and a pioneer in the field of Phish studies, teaches a course at

Oregon State University called “The Philosophy School of Phish.”

32. Remarkably, Phish has never played the same set list twice.

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