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Capstone Seminar

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Antone's, a renowned Blues venue in Austin, Texas, stands as a testament to cultural resilience and historical significance within the vibrant and musical city of Austin. This paper explores Antone's through the comprehensive lens of Communication Studies, focusing on the club's self portrayal as an authentic home of the blues in its official website.

Rooted as a venue designed to host the genre of Blues, Antone's not only echoes celebrated music but also resonates with the nuanced history of the Southern United States. Beyond its cultural significance, Antone strategically intertwines cultural heritage with a strategized marketing approach, projecting itself as an authentic Blues haven.

This research aims to unravel the construct of authenticity meticulously cultivated by Antone's Blues venue on their website. The primary focus is a rhetorical analysis of its official website, studying the different sections of the page and dissecting how to construct an air of authenticity for club visitors. The paper proposes a breakdown of the website into discernible sections to understand how Antone's strategically molds perceptions of authenticity. Antone's deliberate efforts to project an authentic Blues experience, make it a fascinating subject for communication analysis. This paper will delve into the layers of authenticity portrayed by Antone's and contribute

perspectives accounting for the broader discourses on race, music, and communication.

This capstone project engages in a comprehensive rhetorical and site analysis of the Antone's blues bar website. The research hones in on the connected website, investigating how the media portrays and promotes an idea of authenticity concerning blues music and performance. The project's primary focus lies in dissecting different sections of the website and produced media, offering explicit explanations on how Antone's constructs and communicates the concept of authenticity. The research targets diverse audiences, including Blues musicians, the Blues community, black communities with an interest in Blues history, music scholars, authors, and Antone's music venue as well as other Texas venues in Austin.

By categorizing the website into merchandise, historical context, and advertising of shows and artists, the analysis aims to unravel how Antone's strategically molds perceptions of authenticity through branding, historical narratives, and promotional efforts. This project contributes valuable insights to the broader discourse on the rhetorics of authenticity within the Blues genre, fostering a deeper understanding of how media representation shapes the perception of this historic musical form.

Now that there is an overall understanding of the research object and the components that make it up, the process of deciphering deliberate choices made in branding, scheduling, and historical representation need to be discussed. The goal is to unravel not just what Antone's claims to be authentic but also how it strategically communicates this authenticity to its audience. This analysis will work to expand the ideas surrounding these questions and answer them accordingly. To propel this

research forward, a series of research questions have been formulated to navigate the complex terrain of Antone's Blues venue. These research questions are designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary landscape of the club, shedding light on the evolution of its musical programming, the emphasis on specific artists, and the alignment between its online representation and physical existence.

1. Exploration of Current Performers:

The first research question delves into the groups of musicians currently gracing the stage at Antone's. While the venue has historically been synonymous with blues, it has, over time, diversified its musical offerings to include a broad spectrum of genres. Understanding the present lineup is crucial for contextualizing the evolving nature of Antone's musical programming and addressing authenticity concerns tied to its historical association with blues.

2. Identification of Prominent Artists:

The second research question focuses on deciphering the artists prominently featured and celebrated by Antone's. The merchandise section on the website offers a glimpse into the club's historical connections, showcasing shirts adorned with the names of iconic blues performers. Furthermore, the historical descriptions on the website highlight specific artists. Investigating these highlighted figures provides insights into the club's intentional construction of authenticity and the artists actively promoted to contribute to this narrative.

3. Depiction of the club:

The third research question involves a critical examination of how Antone's online representation, particularly on its website, creates a certain texture regarding the blues. Through this question the constructed authenticity of Antones can be better understood and explained. This question will also help direct a concrete idea of what authenticity at Antone's is, and how authenticity is defined for the purpose of this analysis. .

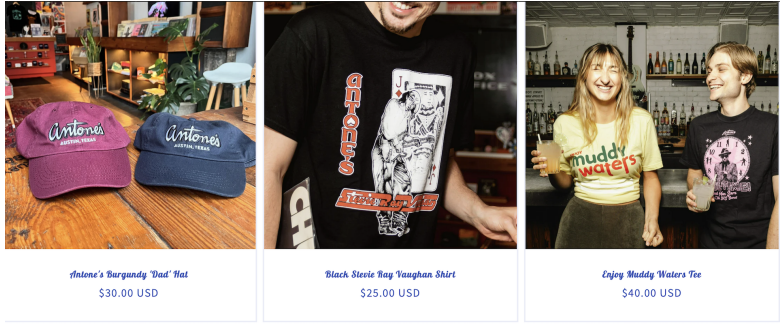
In essence, these research questions collectively form a strategic framework that will guide the investigation into Antone's Blues venue. By addressing these queries, I aim to unravel the nuanced layers of the club's identity, understand its contemporary musical landscape, and critically assess the alignment between its online portrayal and the lived experience within its physical walls.

Antone's website presents itself as a modern representation of a vintage past that continues to exist in the present. Through analyzing the methods by which Antone's constructs this identity, there are certain trends that continue throughout the website. These trends can be observed in the three different sections of the website, those being the merchandise section, the performance listings section, and the historical context section. Through the analysis of these components, Anton's club methodology of constructing a concept of authenticity becomes apparent.

First let us look at the merchandise section of the official website. Below is what the website section actually looks like and the available merchandise listed.

Here we see three images from the “Store” section of Antone's website. The first two images simply list the merchandise, however in the bottom image we see the headline for the store page. The store selling the merchandise for Antone’s blues bar is actually a record store called “Big Henry’s Vinyl and Gifts”. Below this large heading we see the statement “A collection of wearable designs inspired by the past 47 years of Antone’s Nightclub history.” The listed merchandise primarily consists of shirts featuring acclaimed musicians or promoting the club, however we also see hats, sweaters, and jackets. An important takeaway from this section is that there is lots of merchandise listed on the website that is not necessarily blues music. In the selected images, we see a “Black Pumas” shirt listed in the center of the third image directly under the website heading. This particular group originated in Austin Texas giving it a level of authenticity to Texas, however the genre of music made by the group is soul/R&B music.

Furthermore, the band features a black lead member and creates music that stems from black communities historically. This connection is an important one as it shows the idea of authenticity circulating around the idea of race. However it is important to note that there are also white blues players who are advertised through the merchandise sold at “Big Henry’s”. One of the most prominent of these is Stevie Ray Vaughn, arguably one of most famous blues players to come from Texas. Through this connection, we see a parallel between the merchandise and the club's origins. Similarly to how Antone’s was opened under white ownership as a space for black musicians to come play the blues, we can observe a similar conflict in the current promotion of merchandise. This is an important concept to consider when regarding the historical origins of the blues and in regards to Antone’s methods of constructing authenticity.



Antone's Burgandy 'Dad' Hat
\$30.00 USD

Black Stevie Ray Vaughan Shirt
\$25.00 USD

Enjoy Muddy Waters Tee
\$40.00 USD



Filter: Artist Price Size Fit Color

Sort by: Featured 30 of 62 products

- Artist: Albert Collins x
- Artist: Barbara Lynn x
- Artist: Black Pumas x
- Artist: Clifton Chenier x
- Artist: Denny Freeman x
- Artist: Jimmie Vaughan x
- Artist: Jimmy Reed x
- Artist: Little Walter x
- Artist: Muddy Waters x
- Artist: Peterson Brothers x
- Artist: Soul Man Sam x
- Artist: Stevie Ray Vaughan x
- Artist: Texas Tornados x
- Artist: The Fabulous Thunderbirds x
- Artist: Walter 'Wolfman' Washington x
- Remove all



Antone's Champion Crewneck Sweatshirt
\$60.00 USD

Texas Tornados Shirt
\$30.00 USD

Antone's 'Work' Shirt
\$30.00 USD



Funk not only music. It can remove... dig!

Apparel Gifts Clearance Posters Gift Cards **Big & Henry's** VINYL & GIFTS

Apparel
A selection of wearable designs inspired by the past 47 years of Antone's Nightclub history.

Filter: Artist Price Size Fit Color Sort by: Featured 62 products

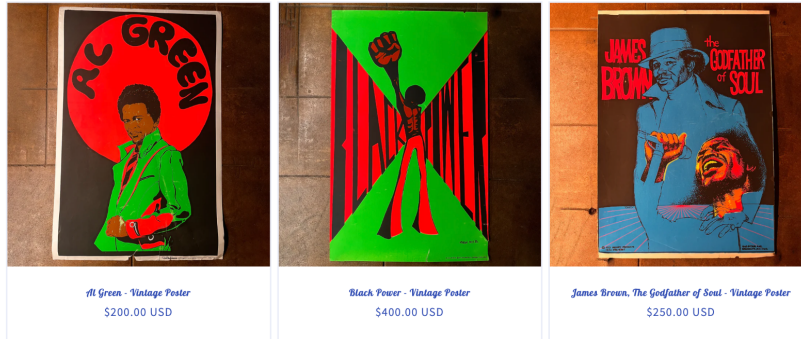


There is also another section of the merchandise portion of the website that is important to consider.

In a separate section, we see a wide list of well

known artists and affiliated merchandise. By applying filters to the search engine, there are filters for 15 different artists of various genres. The results for products show a wide selection of shirts for the aforementioned artists, many which feature vintage style designs or shirts which are graphically designed to appear aged.

The third relevant subsection of the merchandise page is the poster store. In this subsection there is a wide variety of posters for purchase. While there are posters representing white artists, the posters representing black artists make the majority. Some examples of the listed posters can be seen below.



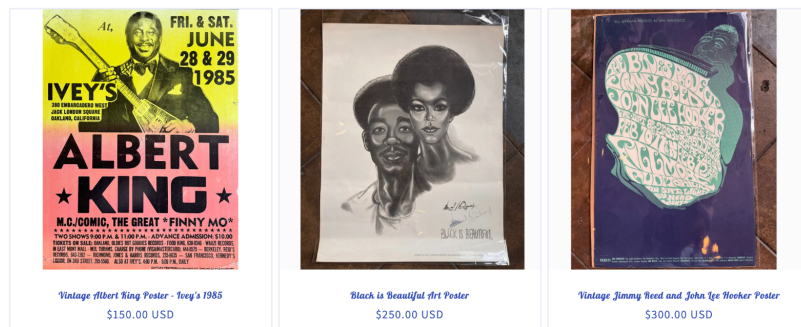
Apparel Gifts Clearance Posters Gift Cards



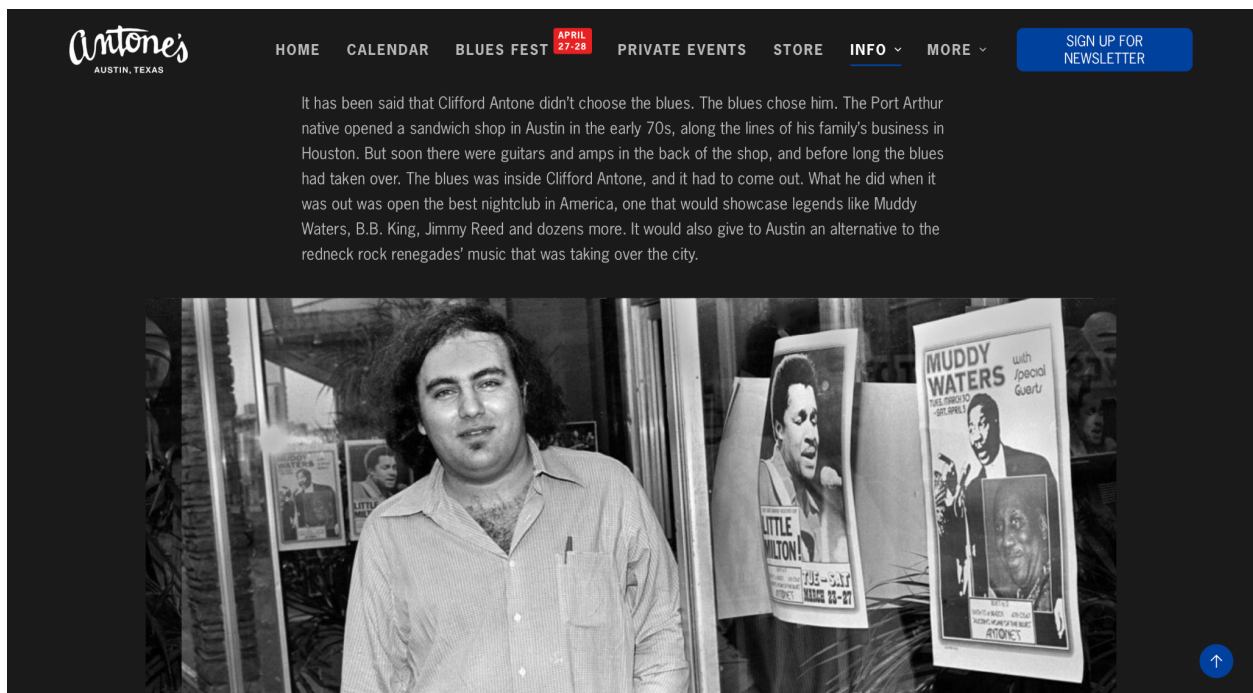
Posters

Filter: Artist Price Color

Sort by: Date, new to old 45 products



From these photos we see a much more predominantly black representation of merchandise. In the posters, we see artists such as Albert King and Al Green, show a conflict of genre but a united representation of black culture in music. Furthermore, there is a single poster with the phrase “Black Power” in the middle of the first selection of photographs. Such products show that Antone’s presents itself as an institution that stands against systemic racism and the oppression of non white groups, however it is worth noting that such media is still sold for the profit of the club. Through this media, we see the idea of race being connected to Antone's construct of authenticity, and the sale of this construct for profit.

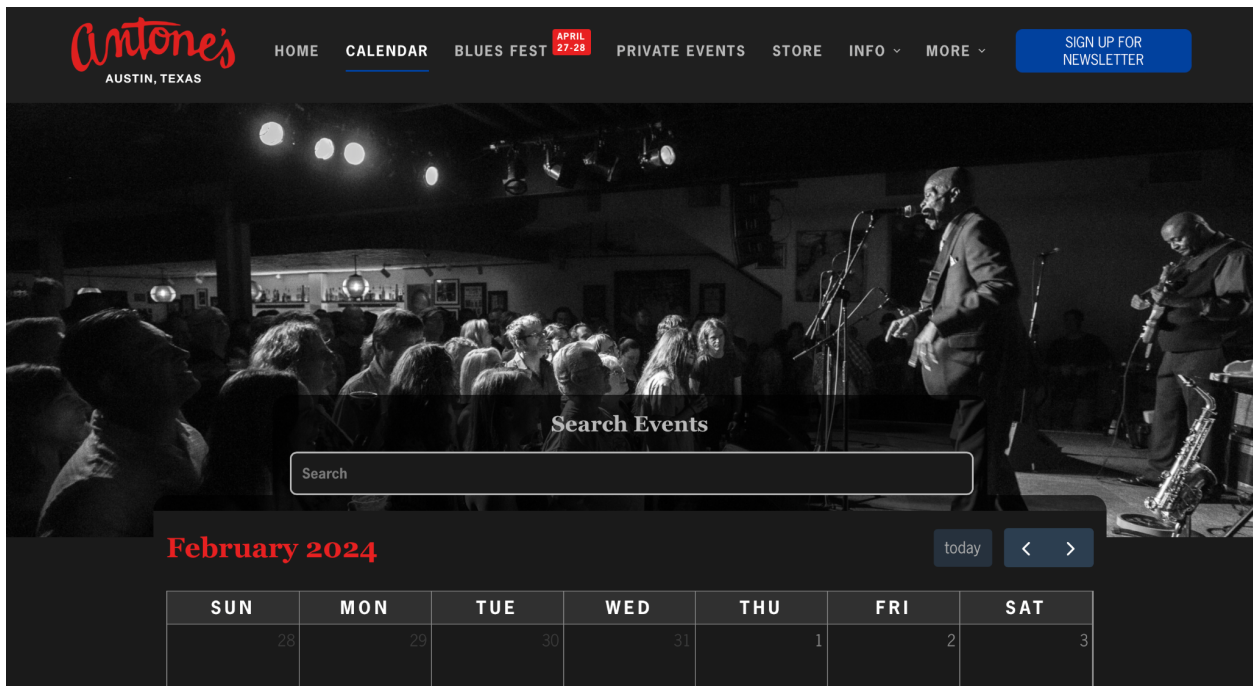


The second site of analysis is the historical context of the website. The descriptions of Clifford Antone paint him as a man who “had the blues inside him” and

let them out through the creation of Antone's. The website's historical description quickly switches from descriptions of Antone himself, and expands on his name as reference to the club. All the Austin locations of the club are discussed, from the opening on 6th street in 1975, the Austin Northside, Riverside, Guadalupe, and to the South at fifth street and Lavaca A. In-depth examination of the merchandise section on Antone's website. This context is important as it shows the physical alterations of the club and how rhetorical context in a public digital space is important for a claim to authenticity. Furthermore, the historical reference on the website paints all of these relocations as evidence that the club has been in Austin long enough to be authentic to the area. This particularly relies on time, with the historical section mentioning several times how Antone's was affected by the rapid economic growth of Austin. By discussing the growth of the city and its existence prior, the club is able to identify as an adaptable home of the blues that has evolved to be relevant in modern Austin. One of the ways the club explains how it has stayed relevant is through the hosting of music outside of the blues. Although this will become more apparent in the performance section, it is also mentioned in the historical context as well as the merchandise. Antone's is an authentic home of the blues, but it has certainly grown to host more than just one genre. As quoted from the website "Different musical styles needed to be explored on the club's stage, but like all things, there's always a new approach for those open enough to try. The club rolled with all kinds of music, always insisting on authenticity." From this short historical segment by Bill Bentley, we see an idea of authenticity that surpasses the club's historical identity as a blues bar. Antone's is constructing an identity that is Authentic to the city of Austin and the hosting of local

music, while at the same time holding on to a vintage home of the blues identity. The website boasts the hosting of artists such as Willie Nelson and the word authenticity to describe it, showing that the writer expands the idea of authenticity to surpass a single genre.

We see this in the scheduling portion of the website especially. In this section of the website, it is clear that Antone's venue is home to much more than the blues. In fact, there seems to be a disparity between the amount of blues artists performing compared to the wide range of other genres. This section of the website begins with a heading featuring a black and white photo as seen below.



The screenshot shows the website for Antone's in Austin, Texas. The navigation menu includes: HOME, CALENDAR, BLUES FEST (with a red badge for APRIL 27-28), PRIVATE EVENTS, STORE, INFO, and MORE. A blue button for "SIGN UP FOR NEWSLETTER" is on the right. The main content area features a black and white photo of a live performance with a "Search Events" heading and a search input field. Below this is a calendar for February 2024, with "today" highlighted and navigation arrows. The calendar table is as follows:

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

The below calendar goes on to list the upcoming performers, with genres ranging from rock, jazz, pop, country, and even cover bands. With a wide range of genres and artists to appeal to, the club's construct of authenticity is well over the genre of blues. In the ever growing city of Austin, we see the club having to rely on the use of identity construction while at the same time needing to broaden what that identity is. The implementation of vintage black and white photos for instance attracts the viewer's eye and creates an aesthetic of credibility, however just below this we see a lack of blues performances scheduled for the venue. In this contradiction it becomes apparent that Antone's venue creates a construct of authenticity around vintage aesthetics and historical claims. However, it continues to lay claim to being an authentic venue by addressing all of its performances as authentic music be it from Austin or outside.

Works Cited:

<https://antonesnightclub.com/calendar/>

<https://bighenrysvinylandgifts.com/collections/apparel>

<https://www.citationmachine.net/apa/cite-a-website/confirm>