

My Jam

A game of music, magic, and high school drama

by Jeff Dieterle and Eric Mersmann

To Allison, who gave me all my good ideas. -Jeff

To Jess & Augustus, thanks for playing. -Eric

Intro

Thanks for facilitating a game of My Jam! You're doing an awesome thing for your friends, so we'll try to make this as painless as possible. This first section contains a pitch (in case you need to describe the game), some pre-game instructions that ensure you're ready to play, and a summary of what you'll be doing. This material is for the facilitator, and the rest is presented as a script that you can read verbatim or paraphrase, depending on your comfort level.

The Pitch

My Jam is a larp in which players embody high-school musarchs — magicians whose powers are focused through music — at the biggest dance of the year. During the dance you'll be able to hang with your friends, pick arguments with your frenemies, and moon over your crush, just like any other high school dance. But when your music is playing, you become the most powerful being on the dance floor — and maybe the entire gymnasium! At the end of the night, one of you will be elected Dance Monarch and enact a powerful ritual that can permanently change the world.

Supplies

Here's what you'll need to run this game:

- A facilitator (probably you!)
- A computer or phone with access to some kind of streaming music service
- A speaker loud enough to be heard over a medium-loud crowd
- The printed character sheets, My Jam slips, and Dance Monarch Vote slips
- The intro/outro scripts
- A bunch of folks (10-20, give or take) who want to play My Jam
- A pretty big room with Internet access (Bonus points to the first group to run this in a high school gymnasium)
- A laurel headband or something equally visible to signify the character whose song is playing
- Enough pens and writing surfaces (e.g., tables or clipboards) to accommodate all players
- Name tags for each player

Running the Game

Here's how you run the game:

Get to the pretty big room a half hour early and set it up. All you need to do is set up the sound system, connect to the Internet, and put some chairs in a corner, but if you want decorations and a punch bowl and stuff, that's great!

Gather a bunch of folks and read them the intro script. During the part where they're creating their characters and covens, collect the My Jam cards and start building the playlist. It's fine to be pretty random with the playlist, but try to spread out the covens' jams if you can (nobody wants a block of three melancholy songs). If you have lots of time, you can curate the playlist for maximum emotional and tonal whiplash.

One or two people will pick songs that are seven minutes long or longer. If you're running the game in isolation, this is fine. If you're running the game at a convention, or time is otherwise limited, let these players know that you'll cut their song after about 4 minutes so they're not surprised when it happens.

The first song on the playlist will be nobody's jam, and it should be "I Want You Back" by The Jackson 5.*

Around two-thirds of the way through the playlist, you'll announce that voting for Dance Monarch will begin in a few minutes, and they should start thinking about who they will vote for. After the last player's Jam, play "Countdown" by Beyoncé* and have everyone queue up to cast their votes. One at a time, players will write the name of the character they support on their vote slip and hand it to you. If voting takes longer than the length of "Countdown," play "Dancing Queen" by ABBA.* Tally the votes. Once you have figured out who the Dance Monarch is, quietly let them know they've won and ask them what the Last Dance song should be. Let them give a short speech and conduct a ritual, and then play the Last Dance song. Try to approach them as early as possible to let them know they've won, and make sure you have their song queued up.

*If someone has chosen one of these song as their Jam, you may choose a different song for the appropriate part. But you've got to start it off with a positive jam.

Then read the outro script, and you're done! You did it! You facilitated My Jam! Please let us know how it went!

Scripts – Read to the players

We've written this script to be read out loud so that the game can be run with minimal input. If you feel more comfortable summarizing, we won't stop you; there is a summary at the end of this document.

Intro Script

Hey everyone. Thanks for choosing to play My Jam! I'm [NAME], and I'll be facilitating the game. This is a larp about music, teenagers, magic, and drama, and I hope you have fun!

We're going to spend 10 minutes or so introducing you to the game in a large group, then another 10 minutes or so talking about safety techniques in the same large group. Then we'll start getting ourselves moving and dancing. After that we'll spend some time making characters individually, and another working on covens in small groups. Finally, we'll come back together and spend another 15 minutes or so creating relationships, crushes, and rivalries between the characters.

I'll ask if anyone has any questions at the end of each of these sections, but if you have a pressing question at any time, feel free to shoot your hand up. I'll pause and we'll figure out what we need to figure out.

Any questions so far? [Pause for questions.]

Awesome! I'm gonna start by talking about what we're doing in this game:

You will be playing Robert Johnson Memorial High School students attending the [current season] dance, for whatever reasons high school students go to dances. Some of you are here to dance, some of you are here to hang out with friends, some of you are here to cause trouble, and some of you are here because you have nothing better to do. But all of you are also here because music is magic.

You know this because each one of you is a musarch, able to transform the energy of your favorite music into incredible magical effects. The nature and presentation of this magic varies by individual, but regardless of manifestation, you are the most powerful musarchal willworkers: teenagers. Tonight, this gymnasium is your place of power.

Your magic is powerful, but is limited by the music playing. If this were your house party and you had full control of the playlist, you'd be holding court. At the dance, everyone here gets to request music, so your power will wax and wane as the night goes on. When your chosen song (your Jam) is playing, you have virtually unstoppable power. You will wear or brandish these laurels [show laurels] to symbolize your authority and power. Your word is law. A word from you can change the course of another's night, and maybe their life; affecting the will of another requires nothing more than explaining your desire. You are the arbiter of all disputes, and your decisions are binding. For those brief minutes, you are the god of the dance floor.

You also have a **coven**, a group of people united by a common relationship to music. We'll go over this more in a bit, but the covens are: **Aggro, Chill, Hype, Melancholy, and Fanatic.**

When anyone else's music is playing, you're as hopeless as your parents or teachers, and you're subject to the whims of the powerful musarchs around you. Exactly how to interpret and carry out the musarchal effects is up to the recipient, but I encourage you to let magic change your story arc and push your character in unexpected directions. This is a high school dance! The people around you are the most powerful musarchs in the world! Bowie help you.

At the end of the dance, someone will be crowned **Dance Monarch**, and will enact a ritual that affects the whole school for the rest of the year, harnessing the power of the emotions and hormones released during the dance toward their own magical ends. Think of this as an opportunity to make a magically binding declaration that has a large and lasting effect on your world. During the dance, you will all cast a vote for the character you believe should be Monarch. Although you may not tamper with the ballots directly, using promises, threats, and magical interference to sway the minds of voters is expected and encouraged.

OK, that was a lot! We'll go over each of these things in a bit more depth, but does anyone have any questions about the overview?

Safety

OK, cool. Now we're gonna talk about safety! This is a high-energy game about teenagers and feelings and powers, and it can be a lot of fun, but the physical and emotional safety of each of the people in this room is more important than any of those themes, and even more important than the fun we're having.

In other words, *people are more important than the game.*

With that principle in mind, we're going to use some specific techniques we as players can use to make sure that we have the tools to take care of ourselves and each other. The player tools are: **open door, cut, slower, and check-in.**

As I describe each of these tools, try to imagine yourself using them, and imagine yourself responding to other people using them. Imagine yourself and others being grateful that these tools are being used to make sure that players are treated as more important than the game.

First, **the door is always open**, even if the literal door to the room happens to be closed! If you need to step out for a moment or leave entirely for any reason, you should feel free to do so. This includes stepping out to use the restroom, get a drink of water, or take care of yourself in any other way. If you leave and decide to come back, that is 100% fine! If your jam comes on while you're gone, I'll move it lower in the playlist, and everything will be cool.

Your leaving will almost certainly not ruin anyone else's game, and if it does, *people (including you) are more important than the game.*

Next, we have “**cut!**” This is a tool you use to immediately stop play. It’s great! It can be used for physical or emotional safety reasons! Maybe you see someone is about to trip over a cord near the DJ booth! “Cut!” Maybe a song starts playing that brings to mind a traumatic experience and you need to stop it now! “Cut!” Simply say the word “cut” and make an X with your arms over your head [demonstrate this gesture], because it may be difficult to hear over the music. If you see someone making the cut gesture, follow their lead to amplify the message. We’ll stop the game, turn off the music, and address the concern. It’s OK to stop the game to take care of someone because *people are more important than the game.*

Another tool we have is “**slower.**” This tool is useful when you’re beginning to feel overwhelmed or a scene or individual is beginning to get too intense. When that happens, you can say “slower” and put your hands up with your palms out, like you are telling someone to stop in the name of love [demonstrate slower]. When someone uses slower in a scene you’re in, do the following: 1) take a step back and 2) continue play at a decreased intensity. It’s OK to want a scene to be less intense because *people are more important than the game.*

Finally, as players we have a tool called “**check-in,**” which allows us to check to see if another player is doing OK or not. You can use the check-in tool when it seems like another player is agitated or upset or not having fun. You use the check-in tool by making eye contact with someone and making the “OK” sign with your hand. This represents a question: “Are you OK?” When someone checks in with you, you have three responses: thumbs up, meaning “Yes, I am OK”; thumbs down, meaning “No, I am not OK”; or a so-so sign, meaning “I’m not sure,” or “I’m both OK and not OK.” The player who initially checked in should then respond accordingly. If the subject of the check-in gave a thumbs up, meaning “Yes, I am okay” then play can proceed! If the subject gave a thumbs down, meaning “No, I am not okay” or so-so gesture, meaning “I’m not sure” then play should stop and the player who initiated the check-in should say, “What can I do to help?”

OK, so here’s a quick recap of the tools we as players have:

- Door is always open — You can dance if you want to, or you can leave your friends behind
- Cut — We can dance if we want to; we can call for play to stop
- Slower — We can dance if we want to; we can tell our friends “slow down”
- Check-in — We can dance if we want to; we can ask our friends “OK?”

There’s also an in-game way to mediate your play experience by way of the **circle of protection** [point to corner with a few chairs set up]. This area has been warded by the helpful faculty of Robert Johnson Memorial High School, so even the incredible power of a musarch won’t fully penetrate. In other words, you’re safe from magic there. Of course, magic use anywhere in the game always depends on the consent of the players, so while the circle of protection is one way to avoid magic, you can also ignore or reinterpret magic as a

player.

I want to emphasize that last point: when someone inflicts a magical effect on you, they are communicating what they want to see happen. The most straightforward way to respond is to go along with it, and it is often fun to play along, but *you never have to do anything you don't want to do*. If you need a fictional explanation for why the magic didn't do what the caster wanted, you could say it didn't work because they were not clear in their intent, or because you didn't hear them, or because you are immune to ska. It doesn't matter what fictional excuse you use, because the real reason is that players are more important than the game.

OK, that's it for safety techniques. Any questions? Anything I could go over again?

Boundaries – The Three Jam Commandments

In addition to safety tools, there are three additional principles that are always in effect for this game: the Three Jam Commandments.

Jam Commandment The First: Touch only with consent. Remember, consent is an ongoing process, and any party can define or redefine their boundaries throughout the game (and outside the game, too). The flip side of this is no touching without consent. No surprise touch, and no surprise escalation of intensity of touch.

An example of how this is likely to come up in this game is dancing. Dancing often implies touching. Whether it's a mosh pit or a slow dance, the main imperative here is no surprise touching. This means that you must telegraph touching beforehand, and give other players the opportunity to opt out or de-escalate. If you want to dance with someone, ask. Be specific about what you want. This might be different from how you learned to ask people to dance, but it's how people ask each other to dance at Robert Johnson Memorial High School.

Here are some examples of how you might ask someone to dance:

- Can we dance together without touching?
- Can we dance while we hold hands?
- Can we dance with my hands on your shoulders and your hands on my hips?
- Can we dance as we embrace with our arms around each other?

If someone asks you to dance, check in with yourself and see if you (as a player) and you (as a character) are willing and interested in dancing and how. The character question might be influenced by the presence of magic, but the player question is *never* influenced by magic.

We also take no for an answer, and we check in with ourselves to make sure both we (the players) and our characters are willing to be touched. It's OK to make a different suggestion if you want to dance, but not in the way proposed, and we thank people for saying no and enforcing the boundaries that make them comfortable. Because people are more important

than the game.

But there's more! When we said that "consent is an ongoing process," we meant that either party can withdraw consent at any time by verbally indicating their desire to stop or simply disengaging from the dance. Just because someone agreed to dance with you before does not mean they consent to dancing with you later, and just because someone asked you to dance before does not mean that they consent to dancing with you later. Always ask, and don't act unless you have received affirmative consent.

Jam Commandment The Second: Celebrate cultures with respect. Music and culture are inextricably intertwined, and we're going to be celebrating both in this game. There are a couple of ways we're going to make sure we're showing respect for each other's cultures:

No singing along with words that are slurs. When we say slurs, we mean any words that are used in any context to reinforce oppression along racial, gender, sexuality, disability, or any other lines. Even if in the context of the song the word is not being used that way! It's OK to not sing a few words; you can hum a couple of syllables or just be silent.

Characters not caricatures. It's OK to portray a character with a different cultural background from your own, but it's not OK to portray a caricature of a person with a different cultural background from your own. Practically this means no affecting dialects, accents, or stereotypical voices from another culture.

Jam Commandment The Third: Rivalry without hate. We all know that teenagers can be incredibly cruel. But the students at RoJo have cultivated that cruelty to a razor's edge. Gone are the blunt taunts that rely on homophobia, body shaming, slut shaming, gender norms, classism, misogyny, and racism. None of this hatred is permitted in My Jam. If you're going to hate each other, it had better be for a good reason, like what kind of music you like.

Those are the three hard boundaries of the game. If you cannot abide by them, I encourage you to remember that the door is always open and find another game. Any questions?

Dance workshop

OK, let's get everyone comfortable with our bodies, the space, and one another. Spread out at least an arm's length away from everyone else, more if you can. Now close your eyes. I'm gonna put on some music.

[Start song. Song Suggestion: "Genius of Love" by Tom Tom Club. Take your time between steps, and use player reactions as a gauge.]

Now I want you to stay in place and dance like no one's watching, because no one is. Whatever you're doing? That's perfect, but I'd like you to try to make it bigger and more

expressive. Again, nobody can see this. Feel the music permeate your body and react accordingly.

OK. Good. You've got a solid groove going. Don't stop dancing. But open your eyes.

Look at all the other goofballs in this room. What they're doing looks kind of fun, right? Well, I have good news: you're doing the same thing, and you're doing it exactly right.

Now dance like you're proud to be dancing. You should be, because it's scary, and because you're really good at it.

Look around the room. Make eye contact with someone else, and don't break it. Dance toward each other, looking into one another's' eyes.

You shouldn't talk, though, because the two of you are rivals. You are competing to see which one of you is having more fun dancing.

One of you should do your best move. That's the one. Now the other person should top that move, just a little. Make it bigger. Make it louder. Add a flourish. Yup, just like that.

Keep dancing, and keep taking turns showing up your partner. You thought you started off with your best dance move, but each one is successively better and more expressive, and I love them all.

[Wait 30 seconds to a minute; watch the players and use your best judgment.]

OK. Don't stop dancing, but I have good news: you have all tied for best dancer. Congratulations! We haven't even started the game yet, and you've already won.

Since your partner is the best dancer in the room, stick with them. But you're not enemies anymore. You've put aside your differences because you know you work better as a team!

The dancer closest to me should be the lead. The lead should keep doing their best moves, and their partner should keep dancing, but focus on making the lead look good. Draw attention to their dancing. Punctuate it. Emulate it. Be their backup dancer. Do whatever you need to do to make them look great.

[Wait about 30 seconds.]

Awesome! Now switch roles! Leads, do your big moves! Partners, make your leads' big moves even bigger.

[Wait about 30 seconds.]

OK, cool. You've done it. Give your partner a high five or fist bump or whatever. Great job, shake it off a bit!

Jam Workshop

As part of character creation, you'll each pick your Jams. These are very special songs that your characters (and probably you) have a strong relationship with.

They are also literally magical.

When your song comes on, a few things will happen. First, you'll get really excited. You can even shout "That's My Jam" if the spirit moves you, but that's strictly optional. Then you'll look around and find the person with the laurel headband, take it from them, and put it on. For those few glorious minutes, you are the deity of the dance floor. Your word is law. You can alter peoples' feelings, manipulate their actions, or do whatever else you want. YOU are the game's conflict resolution system; if you come down on someone's side, they've won any conflict. If you can't be bothered, then the conflict is inconclusive. This is your time to shine, and you should use it to showcase how cool you are and further your agenda. But remember, anyone you affect will have the same ability later (or at least their friends will), so you should endeavor to use your power with the gentle grace exhibited by the typical high school student.

So I'm going to play a song, and I'm going to pretend it's my Jam. I'm going to show you a handful of ways to use magic in this game. So dance or mingle or whatever, pay attention to the things I say, and try to comply with commands in whatever way you find most compelling.

[Play music. Give players time to respond between commands. Song suggestion: "Gonna Make You Sweat (Everybody Dance Now)" by C+C Music Factory.]

- OK, everybody dance now!
- You love this song.
- You can't speak.
- Go talk to a friend.
- You two are best friends now.
- You should follow me around.

OK, now I want you to pretend that you, the player, **don't want to do the things I'm saying**. Find another way to interpret the magic that suits your needs. Remember, magic can be misinterpreted, have unexpected effects, or simply not work. Try to find fun ways to do this.

- Everyone do a handstand.
- Tell your favorite person in the room the thing you hate most about them.

- Roll around on the floor laughing.
- Kiss the person nearest to you.

OK, good job, everyone! There's no wrong way to avoid doing something that makes you uncomfortable, so don't worry about it too much; just remember it's always an option.

Now this is EVERYONE'S Jam. Come up with your own ideas, and try them out. There are no bad ideas; when in doubt, be obvious! Try not to step on each other's toes, but remember that this is just a demonstration and you'll have your chance to be cool later.

[Stop music.]

OK, so that was a little chaotic, but hopefully gave you a general sense of how Jams work.

Character Creation

OK, let's make characters! Keep that energy; you're gonna need it!

First let's sort into covens. Remember, your coven is a group of people with a similar relationship with music. You might like different genres or artists, but the emotional connection you have to music is similar, and you share a bond of kinship based on that, regardless of how you feel about one another individually.

The covens are: Aggro, Chill, Hype, Melancholy, and Fanatical.

- **Aggro**—The members of the Aggro coven relate to music because it reflects their inner rage!
- **Chill**—The members of the Chill coven relate to music because of the mellow feelings it evokes.
- **Hype**—The members of the Hype coven relate to music because it pumps them up and gets them energized.
- **Melancholy**—The members of the Melancholy coven relate to music because it echoes their empty hearts.
- **Fanatical**—The members of the Fanatical coven relate to the music they love because it's the best. Objectively.

The character sheets have more evocative descriptions, but you get the drift, right? Covens don't need to be the same size, and we don't need to use all five covens in the game, although having five roughly equal covens can be fun, too! Choose the coven based on what appeals to you, not because you feel like you need to fill a vacuum. Let's take a few minutes and self-organize into covens. If anyone needs help or clarification, come ask me.

[Designate corners of the room for covens to gather, with one gathering in the center of the room.]

Great! It looks like everyone is organized into covens. Everyone should take a character sheet, which are organized by coven, and a Jam sheet, which are the same for everyone.

[Allow players to grab the appropriate papers.]

The first thing to do is select your Jam. This is a song that represents your character in some way. Think of it as the foundational concept of your character. You can pick any song that I can find on [streaming service]. Write down your Jam on a slip and bring it up to me, the Blessed DJ, and I'll begin compiling the playlist. If you're not sure what song you want right now, you can wait a few minutes, but the sooner I get all the Jams, the better the playlist will be.

Now let's take a look at the character sheets! Notice that it's split into two pages. The first page is information that pertains to just your character. You can create that by yourself. Remember: you are a teen, you are special, and nobody fully understands you. Take about 5 minutes, and don't hesitate to ask if you have any questions. When in doubt, look to your Jam for inspiration.

[Wait for players to create characters, encouraging them periodically to submit their Jams. Start building the playlist.]

Great! Now that everyone knows who their characters are in isolation, it's time to figure out how you relate to your covenmates. Gather your coven and take turns introducing your characters. You can do this in or out of character, and reveal as much or as little as you want, but remember the more your covenmates know about you, the more cues they have to work with.

Now that you know the people in your coven, start working together on the second page of the character sheet. Some of the answers will be the same for everyone in the group, and some will be different for each character, but all of these questions should be created in collaboration with your coven. Take another 5 minutes to complete this part. I'll be here if you have any questions.

[Wait, help, and continue assembling the playlist.]

Great! It looks like everyone is done with their characters and covens! Let's move on to the last step of character creation.

Relationships

Let's all form a circle in the center of the room. The last thing we need to do is establish our relationships. Since everyone in the school is at least an acquaintance, we'll go around and each of us will give a one-sentence summary about our characters. This should be the kind

of information that everyone would know about you and your reputation in general. Who would like to start us off?

[Let everyone give their summary. Pay attention to the length of the first few responses and encourage brevity if required.]

Great, thank you all. We're going to establish some relationships in more detail, but first let's get into character.

Think about your character and their attitude. I'm going to play some music, and while it's playing, walk around the room the way your character would move through a crowded dance floor or the halls of Robert Johnson Memorial High School. When I stop the music, stay put.

[Play music for 30-60 seconds. Song Suggestion: "Age of Consent" by New Order.]

OK, stop! Cluster up with the group of four or more nearest you. Five is fine. Three is not enough. You've got this.

Cool. Now you're going to reintroduce yourselves, maybe letting the other players know a little more of your character. Then you're going to engage in a time-honored method of establishing truths about interpersonal relationships: by playing Fuck, Marry, Kill.

In case you're not familiar with this rigorous scientific activity, here's how it works: each of you will choose three separate people in your group and choose which one you'd most like to fuck, which one you'd most like to marry, and which one you'd most like to kill.

You don't have to take this literally! In fact, you almost certainly shouldn't. As a general rule, Fuck indicates an intense but possibly transitory relationship, like a crush or a fixation. Marry should indicate a more established, generally positive, relationship, like a close friendship or an existing romantic relationship. Kill should indicate a generally negative or hostile relationship, like a rivalry or the relationship between frenemies. You're free to interpret these as you wish.

When you choose someone to fuck, marry or kill, briefly explain what that relationship looks like to you, and give the target of that designation the opportunity to refine or add some information to the relationship. Nothing needs to be reciprocal: you might think someone who hates you is your best friend! Remember: this is high school. Take a few minutes to sort out your relationship.

[Wait about 5 minutes, providing time updates every couple minutes. This part tends to run long without guidance.]

OK, let's walk around the room again. Embody your character, and maybe your

relationships. Walk around until the music stops.

[Play music for 30-60 seconds. The same song is fine.]

OK, stop and gather into groups of four or more. It's OK if you have the same person in your group again. Relationships can be complicated. Introduce yourselves, and go through a final round of Fuck, Marry, Kill.

[Wait another 5 minutes and provide guidance.]

Jam Visualization

OK now let's think about how your character will use their jam.

Close your eyes. Imagine your favorite song starts playing. Try to hear the beat, or the lyrics, or whatever part of the song that you connect most to. Now imagine that the energy of that song is flowing through your body, filling you with its power and emotional resonance.

What does it make you want to do? How are you the deity of the dance floor? Will you shout broad commands to everyone, spreading the emotion you've summoned? Will you focus your magic on one or two people (maybe friends, lovers, or rivals) creating intensely personal effects? Will you sit back and react, holding court and judging all you survey? What would you do if you could do anything for three minutes and twenty-four seconds?

Open your eyes when you feel like you've got a good sense of how you might use your Jam.

[Wait until everyone has opened their eyes.]

I hope that's given you a sense of how your character will unleash their powers. And remember, while your character will have absolute control within the game, and other players should generally try to manifest the spirit of your magic, anything you cast is strictly dependent on the consent of the players, because people are more important than the game.

Don't forget that if you need an in-game way to take a break from the chaos of the dance floor, there's always the circle of protection.

OK. That's it! There's no more preparation! Let's all take 10 minutes for a bio break. Hydrate, and prepare for your hydration needs during the game. Once everyone is ready, I'm going to play the first song. It is nobody's Jam, in game terms, but also kind of everybody's Jam. And play will begin in earnest. See you in 10, and let me know if you have any last minute questions.

[Play the game! The hard part is over for you. Now just watch and let it unfold.]

De-Roleing

You did it! Thank you so much for playing! We'll do a brief retrospective and de-roleing and then send you on your way! First, is there anyone who needs any attention or space or anything else? If so, feel free to take a moment. Ask someone else for help if you need to. Music plus dancing plus magic is a potent combination!

[Pause to see if everyone's alright.]

OK. Now we're going to reflect on the game a bit, share something about the game, and finally get rid of our characters and embrace ourselves as players!

First, let's think about our own boundaries during this game, both the ones we were aware of and ones that might have surprised us. Let's reflect on times when play might have brushed up against those boundaries. Maybe there was a time when it would have been good to use one of the techniques to mediate play: slower or a check-in. If so, that's OK. Sometimes it's hard to remember to use the techniques in the middle of a game, but let's create an intention to use them if we find ourselves in a similar situation in a future game. Then, if it feels OK to do so, let's take a deep breath in, and as we let it out, release that moment and that intention into the world.

[Pause for a moment.]

Next, let's take a moment to reflect on the game and embrace any feelings gratitude to ourselves and our fellow players for this experience. Let's particularly foster feelings of gratitude for anyone who embodied the notion that players are more important than the game, whether by establishing and communicating a boundary, respecting a boundary, making a generous play decision, or any other way.

[Pause for a moment.]

OK, now we're going to say who our characters were, who we as players are, and each share a brief, meaningful moment for our characters from the game. We're sharing not to dwell or fixate on the experiences we had as our character, but to acknowledge them, put words to them, and then share them.

If it feels OK, try to talk about your character in third person. So I might say "I'm [NAME] and I played the Blessed DJ, and a meaningful moment for me was when [MOMENT]." Let's keep them to a couple sentences and limit cross-talk. I might raise my hand if we start to stray down the primrose path of interactive war stories! It's also perfectly fine to pass. Who wants to go first?

[Let players speak in turn, stepping in as necessary.]

Appendices

Appendix One:

Play Materials

(Character Sheets, Jam Slips, Dance Monarch Ballots)

These are the materials you will need to print to play the game. You will probably need to print multiple copies of each page. A good estimate is to divide the number of players by five and double it, and print that many character sheets (pages 16 through 20.) Just divide players by 10 to figure out the number of Jam Slips & Dance Monarch Ballots (pages 21 and 22.)

Melancholy

Everything sucks. You're surrounded by assholes all day long, nothing makes any sense, and nobody understands you. Well, almost nobody. There's this song, or artist, or genre that just...yeah.

Every genre has its sad songs and its sad sacks, from the goths gazing into the abyss and hoping for it to gaze back, to the country kids yearning for their lost loves or dogs or trucks down at the honky-tonk, to the white collar children of blue collar parents pining for a New Jersey they don't quite understand looming on the periphery of a Springsteen concert. They're everywhere, and they can always spot one another, because misery loves company.

Name:

Pronouns:

I try to present myself as:

People see me as:

The truth I'd be most embarrassed to reveal:

The world-changing ritual I would enact if I were elected Dance Monarch:

I share my pain with the world by:

Something no one understands about me:

What keeps me from falling into total despair is:

Our coven's role in the school:

Our coven is held together by:

My role within the coven is:

Fanatical

They've heard your song, but have they ever really listened to it? They'll have to when the DJ finally gets around to it, and then you'll have your eight minutes and forty-three seconds of bliss.

The one thing you and your covenmates have in common is the certainty that each of you evangelizes the one true audio gospel. The rest of them are wrong, of course, you gotta respect their devotion. Some of you are indie rock purists, others are rockists in general. You've got jazz aficionados and novelty music enthusiasts, and probably someone who straddles the middle and only talks about Frank Zappa. But who knows? Maybe you're all climbing different paths up the same mountain...

Name:

Pronouns:

I try to present myself as:

People see me as:

The truth I'd be most embarrassed to reveal:

The world-changing ritual I would enact if I were elected Dance Monarch:

I try to spread my fanaticism by:

My fanaticism has hurt me because:

My guilty pleasure is:

Our coven's role in the school:

Our coven is held together by:

My role within the coven is:

Chill

Who cares what you listen to as long as it makes you feel amaaaaazing. There's a tranquil pool in the center of your consciousness, and music is the best way to submerge yourself into that.

Maybe it's the hypnotic beats, or melodic arrangements, or vocal harmonies that get you into your happy place, but the point of music is to connect you to your truest self, and the truest selves around you, and the way you do that is through inner peace. Can't you just... feel it?

Name:

Pronouns:

I try to present myself as:

People see me as:

The truth I'd be most embarrassed to reveal:

The world-changing ritual I would enact if I were elected Dance Monarch:

I help others unwind by:

The source of my chill is:

The drama I'm trying to hide is:

Our coven's role in the school:

Our coven is held together by:

My role within the coven is:

Hype

What's the point of coming out to dance and listen to music if it doesn't make you feel GREAT!?!? Given the right soundtrack, tonight could be one of the best nights of your life, and you're here to remind people of that.

Maybe your DJ sets bring every rave to the next level, or maybe your playlists keep marathon study sessions going ALL NIGHT LONG. Music is all about ENERGY!!!

Name:

Pronouns:

I try to present myself as:

People see me as:

The truth I'd be most embarrassed to reveal:

The world-changing ritual I would enact if I were elected Dance Monarch:

I pump other people up by:

All my energy comes from:

I'm running away from:

Our coven's role in the school:

Our coven is held together by:

My role within the coven is:

Aggro

Fuck this shit. You have to go to school every day. Your parents are the worst. The entire world is falling apart. Relationships don't make any sense. Nobody really understand you and it's PISSING YOU OFF.

You might be into punk, rap, metal, or anything that reflects and amplifies the RAGE inside you. Maybe you have a cause, maybe you have dozens, or maybe you just like picking fights. Whatever the reason, you've got a lot of anger to work out, and your favorite music reflects that.

Name:

Pronouns:

I try to present myself as:

People see me as:

The truth I'd be most embarrassed to reveal:

The world-changing ritual I would enact if I were elected Dance Monarch:

I'm pissed off about:

What I'm gonna do about what pisses me off:

The only thing that can snap me out of my rage is:

Our coven's role in the school:

Our coven is held together by:

My role within the coven is:

My Jam:

Character Name:

Coven:

My Jam:

Character Name:

Coven:

My Jam:

Character Name:

Coven:

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Character Name:

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Appendices

Appendix Two:

Cheat Sheet

You can print this out as a quick reference for running the game. It's redundant with what's in the rest of the packet, but condensed for you, the customer.

Prepare and set up materials

Introduction – Pitch and basic play ideas

- Important concepts: Jams, laurels, Dance Monarch election

Safety overview – Explain importance of safety and tools:

- Door is always open
- Cut
- Slower
- Check-in
- (Bonus) Chill-out corner

Boundaries – Explain the Three Jam Commandments:

- Touch only with consent
- Celebrate cultures with respect
- Rivalry without hate

Dance Workshop

Jam Workshop

Character Creation

- Choose coven by grouping up
- Distribute character and Jam sheets
- Select Jams and give to facilitator (Facilitator should begin assembling playlist)
- Fill out first half of character sheet by yourself
- Answer coven questions together

Relationships

- Circle up and provide 1-sentence character summaries
- Walk around embodying characters while music plays
- Stop music and group up in groups of 4+
- Reintroduce characters and play Fuck, Marry, Kill with explanations
- Repeat the previous three steps one more time
- Jam Visualization

10 minute break

Play the game

- First song: I Want You Back, The Jackson 5
- Allow Jams to play. Make sure players grab laurels during their Jams.
- About 2/3 of the way through the playlist, announce that the election will be occurring soon. A second reminder before the final Jam may also be helpful
- After the last Jam, have characters come up and vote. Play Beyonce's "Countdown." Count the votes, playing ABBA's "Dancing Queen." Let the winner know they've won as early as possible. Ask them what they want as their victory song, and tell them to think about the ritual and speech they want to deliver.
- Announce the winner, and allow them to deliver their ritual speech. Then play their song.

De-Roleing & Debrief

Appendices

Appendix Three:

FAQ

These questions have been asked frequently. We have provided answers.

Q: How long does magic last?

Magic lasts as long as is dramatically interesting. It's fun to have your character manipulated, but it's also important to feel like you're playing a character that you want to play. We recommend that magic lasts at least as long as the caster's Jam, because it's that character's moment, but if the change is something you'd like to explore deeper, it can last the rest of the game, and if it's something you'd rather not deal with at all, you can use the safety tools to nip it in the bud, or just ignore or reinterpret it. Magic's a funny thing!

Q: When should we use two Jams per character?

In our experience, the game runs well with between 10-20 people. With 12 or fewer players, we strongly recommend letting each character have two Jams, and that everyone's first Jam is played before anyone's second. This creates an interesting two act arc, and gives characters the opportunity to exact revenge. It's a very different, but equally enjoyable, experience. This is also an option with more players, but you should probably talk to everyone about desired play length beforehand, and go with the longest game that everyone is happy with.

Q: What should I do if two players choose the same song?

Let the players decide. One or both of them could choose a new Jam, or they could share it. How would they react to sharing a Jam with someone else? Is it a bonding experience, or is it like showing up at a party wearing the same outfit?

Q: What if there is a tie in elections?

Do what seems appropriate. We've found that it can be great fun to just put the laurels on the ground and tell two characters they have until the end of Dancing Queen to work things out. You might have a better idea, and we'd love to hear it.

Appendices

Appendix Four:

Recommended Media

You probably don't have to have internalized all of these media to enjoy My Jam, but why risk it?

Books

Phonogram by Kieron Gillen and Jaime McKelvie. Required reading if you're even a little bit into music, or even this game. The concept of musarchs and the self-evident conceit that music is magic were... uh... strongly inspired by *Phonogram*, and this game is a love letter to this brilliant comic, especially the *Singles Club* arc.

Film

Dazed and Confused (1993) The best "one big night" movie ever made, *Dazed and Confused* captures a lot of the high school drama we want to evoke.

High Fidelity (2000) This game is about what record store clerks were like in high school, and the main character has about the level of emotional intelligence that we think the average My Jam character should display.

Games

Duck and Cover by Jacqueline Bryk. This game inspired the high school setting, and so many of the core elements. We probably should have ripped off the character creation rules wholesale, because they're fantastic.

The Long Drive Back from Busan by Clio Yun-Su Davis. This game's use of spin the bottle to develop character relationships inspired the use of FMK in My Jam. It's also a beautiful example of a game about the complexity of relationships with music from the performer side of things, and we tried to capture some of that from the fan side.

Monsterhearts by Avery Alder. The essential "high school kids with powers" game, and probably the best tabletop game ever made. We originally wanted to evoke the game's cynical approach to young emotions, and we pretty much failed utterly, which is a testament to this game's inimitable brilliance.

New World Magischola by Maury Brown and Ben Morrow. This larp's consent-based magic system is so clever that it feels obvious after it's been explained, and its assumptions and interventions suffuse this text.

Unknown Armies by John Scott Tynes and Greg Stolze. The perfect RPG text, and an absolute delight to read. It's impossible to read this game and not come out with a changed perspective on magic, and we couldn't help but crib from it a little.

Art & Design

Although their art is included only in the 'zine version of the game, these artists captured perfectly the feel of My Jam, and you should check them out:

Lawrence Gullo, Sadia Bies, Jessi Comstock, Whitney M. Delaglio, Eli Eaton, Kat Fajardo, Mabel Harper, Quinn Milton, Robert Richburg, Alex Rowland, Jabari Weathers, Drew Wills

The fonts used in this document are Cochin and Sincopa

Music

The official song of My Jam is “Stay Positive” by The Hold Steady.

There is a public Spotify playlist called “Songs that would probably be fun to play in My Jam.” It skews pretty heavily toward Jeff’s tastes, but each song could be an evocative framework for a character. Check it out if you’re feeling stumped!

Jeff panics at the idea of listing his favorite songs, so officially he only listens to The Mountain Goats.

Eric likes any music he’s heard three times, but officially he only listens to Carly Rae Jepsen.

Appendices

Appendix Five:

Acknowledgments

This game was inspired by media, but supported by people. Lots of people. All of whom have earned our profound gratitude.

Thanks to all our playtesters, especially those who played the messy early versions of the game. Special thanks to folks at Double Exposure conventions and Larp Shack for weathering our many iterations. Extra special thanks to those of you who stuck through multiple playtests and/or risked bodily injury to demonstrate the need to beef up our safety mechanics.

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Thanks to all of our Kickstarter backers, without whom this would still be a Google Doc floating around our extended social group. Extra special thanks to our moms.