

## Introduction to the Special Issue: Contemporary Issues in Live Music

**Chris Anderton and Sergio Pisfil<sup>1</sup>**

The past ten years has seen significant global growth in the live music sector and, prior to the lockdowns and restrictions of the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic of 2020-21, many musicians were generating more revenue from their live performances than from their recorded music sales and music streaming. Concurrent to this growth has been a burgeoning interest, from academics, industry organizations, and local and nation governments, in examining aspects of live music business, history, culture, technology and space (including Jones and Bennett, 2015; Webster *et. al.*, 2018; Anderton, 2019; Holt, 2021; Waksman, forthcoming).

This special issue of *Arts and the Market* will be published ten years after the journal was launched in 2011 (under the name *Arts Marketing – An International Journal*). The second issue of the journal was guest edited by Professor Simon Frith under the subheading *The Business of Live Music*. The articles were drawn from a conference held at the University of Edinburgh in 2011, which was one of the first academic conferences to focus specifically on live music. Many more have followed, with recent conferences focusing on Covid-19 recovery plans and issues, as well as on the growing field of concert and festival livestreaming. We argue that the growth in research that has been seen since Frith's special

---

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to the Universidad de Ingeniería y Tecnología – UTEC, particularly the Centro de Impacto y Responsabilidad Social (CIRSO), for their generous support in the editing of this special issue.

issue for this journal in 2011 can now be characterized as the consolidation of the interdisciplinary field of Live Music Studies (Anderton and Pisfil, in press).

The articles selected for this special issue foreground the social, cultural, and political contexts of live music concerts and festivals. Live music from this perspective appears, as Steve Waksman (2020) argues, “as a critical space where struggles occur over who can claim space in the public sphere, and how different constituencies should be represented”. Events provide, therefore, a strong outlet for questioning contemporary social issues, such as those related to gender violence, environmental sustainability, state policies, and matters of social and economic inclusion and exclusion. This is particularly the case because live music events are commonly lauded for their ability to break down barriers between different groups of people, and to raise issues in an open and non-combative environment. Yet, while there is indeed evidence of accessibility and inclusivity initiatives in the live music industry (Bossey 2020), the supposed benefits of concerts and music festivals as open, inclusive, egalitarian, and positive are undermined by reports of sexual assault and the need for safe space policies within those same sites (Arnold, 2018; Hill *et al.*, 2019).

In her article, Louise Barrière traces a concern with gendered violence to the punk-inspired queer and feminist festivals and events related to the Riot Grrrl, Queercore, and Ladyfest movements, and focuses her research on the French and German Ladyfest networks. Rather than examining the safe space policies of venues themselves, she draws on ethnographic and documentary discourse methods to explore how short-term festival events seek to construct safe spaces in venues that may not ordinarily host them. She argues that festival organisers use their events as a transformational force towards broader goals of a safer night-time

economy and society, and effectively enrol participants of these events into the fight against gendered violence.

The interconnectedness of event promoters/managers and their participatory audiences are also a key concern for two of our other contributors. Marisol Alonso-Vazquez and Christina Ballico analyse the sustainability practices of festival promoters in Australia to show how they engage festival visitors in eco-friendly and pro-environmental behaviours. This is achieved by the use of environmental psychology to embed relevant messages and expectations into pre-event marketing communications, and by the use of on-site talks by experts from environmental NGOs or from local Indigenous peoples. The authors show how a particularly effective method is to foster a sense of belonging and camaraderie through the use of green wardens, social prompts, and the exemplar behaviours of past attendees. Indeed, it is perhaps the behaviours and social policing of regular festivalgoers that offers the greatest uptake to the adoption of sustainable practices. In another article focused on Australia, the musicologist Robin Ryan engages in a dialogue with Jasmin Williams of SE Arts (funding expertise) and Alison Simpson of Twofold (a local Indigenous organisation) to discuss the formation, management, and meanings associated with the inaugural 2018 Giiyong Festival, held on the Far South Coast of New South Wales. In their discussions they raise the importance of music, dance, and language as renewable resources that work to sustain Indigenous identities through performance. The collaborative work of an external funding organisation and a local community organisation fostered an authentic sense of ownership for attendees at the event, allowing discussion of matters related to sustainability and social justice.

Two further articles examine the role of managers in the way live music is framed and regulated. Beate Flath and Maryam Momen Pour Tafreshi examine events in Germany, and focus on the intersection between managers' self-conceptions of their roles, and the potential impacts of this on the cultural participation of "vulnerable customers" (VC): those who may be or feel excluded from events due to a lack of economic, social, cultural or symbolic capital. They found that younger, academically trained, managers focused more on participatory methods for enabling their cultural offerings, but that there was still a disconnect with VC who felt that they did not receive enough information/encouragement to engage, or for whom there was a lack of a sense of belonging in relation to the venues and entertainments on offer. They conclude that managers must further enhance their knowledge and understanding of the needs and challenges of VC. Moving to live music regulation practices, Jacopo Costa's article examines Espace Django, a French concert venue that benefits, like many French institutions, from state funding. He shows how the cultural policies involved in bringing this venue to life do not fit comfortably within the accepted notions of a "music city" or "creative cluster", but do resonate with notions of eventification and the experience economy. Through interviews with key managers and state actors he analyses how the venue operates through local networking and what effects this has for programming policies.

The final two articles in this special issue take the discussion to different issues of representation. Isabella Oliveira Medeiros, Simone Evangelista and Simone Pereira de Sa focus on genre and taste-based tensions emerging at the Rock In Rio Festival in Brazil. They show how the festival draws on rock ideologies in its marketing, and how these conflict with its booking policies which are broader than simply rock. They analyse social media conversations to show how these tensions play out between fans of the event, with a

particular focus on heavy metal artists Agona and Nervosa, and the pop-funk artist Anitta. In doing so, they show how arguments about authentic versus superficial, rock versus pop and so on are played out in the social media sphere, which is used for the performance of taste and the materialisation of genre disputes. Finally, Arno van der Hoeven *et al.* analyse the methodologies used for measuring the value of live music, and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these. They argue that economic impact studies, mapping/census activities, and research in the social sciences field are not a neutral activity, but are themselves representations of a series of decision-making processes that, for example, might privilege specific research designs to support particular policy-making outcomes. In doing so, they build an exploratory model for measuring and categorising the different approaches, which can be used to identify gaps in practice, and to open up discussions about the extent to which different actors and approaches are involved.

## **References**

Anderton, C. (2019), *Music Festivals in the UK. Beyond the Carnavalesque*, Routledge, London. DOI: 10.4324/9781315596792.

Anderton, C. and Pisfil, S. (in press), “Live music studies in perspective”, in Anderton, C. and Pisfil, S. (Eds), *Researching Live Music: Gigs, Tours, Concerts and Festivals*, Routledge, London

Arnold, G. (2018), *Half a Million Strong: Crowds and Power from Woodstock to Coachella*. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv75d6ch.

Bossey, A. (2020), “Accessibility all areas? UK live music industry perceptions of current practice and Information and Communication Technology improvements to accessibility for music festival attendees who are deaf or disabled”, *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, Vol 11 No 1, pp. 6-25. DOI:10.1108/IJEFM-03-2019-0022

Hill, R.L., Hesmondhalgh D. and Megson, M. (2019), “Sexual violence at live music events: Experiences, responses and prevention”, *International Journal of Cultural Studies* Vol 23 No 3, pp.368-384. DOI: 10.1177/1367877919891730.

Holt, F. (2021), *Everyone Loves Live Music: A Theory of Performance Institutions*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago:. DOI: 10.7208/9780226738680.

Jones, A. and Bennett, R.J. (Eds). (2015), *The Digital Evolution of Live Music*, Elsevier, Oxford. DOI: 10.1016/c2014-0-01417-7.

Webster, E., Brennan, M., Behr, A., Cloonan, M. and Ansell, J. (2018), “Valuing live music: the UK live music census 2017 report”, Live Music Exchange, University of Edinburgh/Newcastle University/University of Turku, Edinburgh, available at: <http://uklivemusiccensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/UK-Live-Music-Census-2017-full-report.pdf> (accessed 19 May 2021).

Waksman, S. (2020), “A homecoming: why Beychella matters”, keynote paper presented at the IASPM UK & IRELAND Online Conference, 19 May-31 July, available at

<https://london-calling-iaspm2020.com/session-9-theme-live-music/a-homecoming-why-beychella-matters/> (accessed 19 May 2021).

Waksman, S. Forthcoming. *Live Music in America: A History from Jenny Lind to Jay-Z*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.