

The Newcastle music industry: An ethnographic study of a regional creative system in action

Phillip McIntyre and Gaye Sheather¹

Abstract

This paper presents detailed preliminary findings from an ethnographic study of the Newcastle NSW music industry. It argues that in the midst of seemingly continuous change primarily wrought by the advent of new global trade regimes and associated digital technologies there are also fundamental continuities at work for local music industries. These continuities are evident in the idea that these industries are part of a dynamic system of choice-making agents constituted by musicians, promoters, media operatives, venue owners, educators, policy makers and many others. They compete and collaborate within the structures of a gift and financial economy which exists in a regional and global framework with a dynamic history that has helped shape this creative system in action.

Keywords: Creative system, creativity, music industry, field, ethnography

1 Introduction

Prior to the turn of the millenium "*fundamental ideological changes in the global political arena led to the creation of pro-market international trade regimes*" (Thussu 2000: 82). As the processes of deregulation, privatization and the opening of borders to rapid flows of capital "*combined with new digital information and communication technologies*" (ibid.) the impacts these produced have been felt across all economies internationally, from advanced to less well developed ones. This certainly happened in Europe and America but other regions, countries and localities have been living through the continuities and changes these developments continue to bring. As studies into regional creative and

¹ Phillip McIntyre is Head of Discipline, Communication and Media, in the School of Design Communication and IT at the University of Newcastle, Australia (phillip.mcintyre@newcastle.edu.au). Gaye Sheather is a doctoral researcher in the Discipline of Communication and Media at the University of Newcastle, Australia (gaye.sheather@uon.edu.au).

music industries indicate (e.g. Gibson 2002) there have been unforeseen transformations to the livelihoods of a variety of music industry players. This must also include those in places such as Chile, Greece, South Africa, India and China.

In Australia, a mid-level economy located geographically in the Southern Hemisphere on the edge of South East Asia and ostensibly removed from the mainstream of Eurocentric hegemony, these effects are being felt not just at the national level but they are occurring in a lived way for musicians working at the regional and local level. The ongoing changes were highlighted by the NSW State Treasurer Mike Baird who recently stated that *"in the 30-year period of the opening up of the Australian economy to international competition, perhaps no other city has been asked to make more painful adjustments than Newcastle"* (Parker 2013).

In order to help cities such as Newcastle, similar in many ways to Apeldoorn in the Netherlands and Odense in Denmark, cope with the global and local forces at play the NSW State Government in Australia appointed an industry-led taskforce to develop *"a 10-year Industry Action Plan to deliver economic growth and support a sustainable creative industries sector"* (NSWDTII 2012). This creative industries taskforce is chaired by Dan Rosen, CEO of the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA), who has experience in digital media, law, policy, and music. While *"the increasing influence of digital technologies"* (NSWDSRD 2009: 7) is implicated in the profound changes occurring in the recording, publishing, live performance, retail and media arms of the music industry locally and globally, in terms of the continuities involved this industry still depends on *"creativity, skill, and talent to create wealth and jobs"* (ibid.); in which case the phenomenon of creativity is important to understand in order to gain an insight into how these creative industries function and, in particular, how it works within the music industry. To shed light on these changes and continuities this paper is structured to present detailed preliminary empirical findings from an ongoing ethnographic study of the Newcastle music industry.

2 Structure of the paper

This paper presents, in sequence, a methodological approach, a literature review, a lengthy discussion section and then a conclusion which links the material presented back to the original introduction. In detail it, firstly, introduces the topic under discussion by giving a broad overview which places the empirical detail the reader is about to encounter against a significant macro perspective. The theme this paper is based on is an examination of the relationship between the structural continuities of creative systems and the concomitant changes that enable and constrain agents in their pursuit of musical activity. Secondly, the paper presents the methodological approach taken which in this case is ethnography. Thirdly, the paper briefly summarises the extant literature on creativity and music industries. In concluding this literature review section the paper looks at the specific regional studies done to this point on the Newcastle music industry. The fourth section, the discussion section, deals specifically with the empirical material uncovered by the ethnographic data collection methods. This discussion section has been broken down into a number of subsections. These cover: educational structures and their ongoing relationship to the industry; recording studios and record labels in Newcastle and the lack of publishing houses in the city; the necessary connection between the industry and the media in Newcastle; how local musicians are organising themselves in the face of the opportunities and threats that both enable and constrain their activities as choice making entities in this particular system of music production; the importance of the field of live performance in Newcastle and the effects of state and local council regulation on it; the competition the industry faces from the development of festivals and the tourism industry; and the advent of new entrepreneurial systems. Finally the paper concludes by summarising the changes and continuities revealed in the presentation of this initial empirical material and points to the implications this may have for further research. Firstly, we will turn our attention to the methodological approach.

3 Methodological approach

From a methodological point of view ethnography is a research tool grounded in a constructivist ontological and epistemological position. In line with these methodological foundations (Crotty 1998; Grix 2004) and the focal theory being employed for this project, that is, the systems model of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi 1988), it is recognised that social organisations such as the music industry "*must be understood as whole systems, not isolated parts*" (Priest 1996: 25). As a music industry ethnographer herself Sara Cohen, the Director of the Institute of Popular Music at the University of Liverpool, argues that "*only in the light of such detailed knowledge are we justified in making more general statements about lived culture*" (Cohen 1993: 127).

Ethnography is "*framed within the assumptions and characteristics of the flexible design approach*" (Robson 2011: 132) which allows the researcher to become immersed in the industry's activities over a period of time collecting a variety of data "*to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research*" (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995: 1). The design of this ethnographic process involved the implementation of a number of practical research methods or techniques (Bryman 2001: 291). These methods encompassed:

- the systematic documentation of artefacts pertinent to venues, studios, media sites, posters and archive material relevant to the industry, and
- the observation in the field of multiple activities occurring within the industry which were recorded in field journals.
- In-depth recorded and transcribed interviews with key informants are at their preliminary stage.

This triangulated approach follows the key methods and principles of ethnography in its research design (Bryman 2001). As such it reveals a wealth of descriptive and meaning filled data. However, before data can be collected in the field an ethnographer must answer the question 'what do we already know about this topic?' which necessitates a literature review.

4 Literature review: Creativity and the music industry

Peter Tschmuck in his book *Creativity and Innovation in the Music Industry* (2006: 193) declares that *"the various approaches of (economic) innovation theory begin their explanations of the process of innovation at the phase of invention without, however, accounting for the causes of invention"*. In this case economic literature *"has dealt with the phenomenon of creativity only superficially"* (ibid.). After surveying the literature on creativity, primarily from psychology and sociology, Tschmuck (2006: 195) concludes that *"creativity is not merely a mental but also a social process"*. In surveying similar literature Phillip McIntyre (2008, 2010, 2012) also asserts that creativity is crucial to the music industry and the way it is enacted and understood has significant effects on the way it has been practiced and theorised. For him creativity and cultural production can best be theorised using Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (1988) systems model of creativity. This model proposes that three major factors, that is, a structure of knowledge manifest in a particular symbol system (domain), a structured social organisation that understands and acts on that body of knowledge (field), and a choice making entity (an agent) who makes changes to the stored information that pre-exists them, are necessary for creativity to occur. McIntyre (2008) argues that the systems model is comparable to the empirical sociological approach to cultural production undertaken by Pierre Bourdieu (1993, 1996). Tschmuck has taken a similar position on creativity to Csikszentmihalyi in relation to the music industry. He asserts that creativity is therefore *"not only attributable to individual thinking and action but is embedded in collective processes and in a wider sense in a social context. Thus the social context is not just contingent but constitutive for the emergence of newness"* (Tschmuck 2012: 269). Furthermore, Tschmuck has argued, in line with the notion of 'possibles' proposed by Bourdieu (1996: 236) and reinforced by Jason Toynbee in his book *Making Popular Music: Musicians, Creativity and Institutions* (2000), *"that the music industry provides the framework for their actors' thought and behavioural processes. It separates the thinkable from the unthinkable and makes actions possible or impossible"* (Tschmuck 2006: 216).

Patrik Wikström (2009: 48-50) has delineated a number of ways the music industry has been conceived. Two appear important. Firstly, Leyshon's model of the music economy is made up of a set of overlapping networks consisting of, at their core, a network of creativity. The other overlapping networks outlined by Leyshon are those of reproduction, distribution and consumption (ibid.: 50). Secondly, Burnett and Weber's model is "*structured as two loosely connected systems of production and consumption*" (Wikström 2009: 51). Wikström asserts that the connection between the production and consumption of music in this model takes place "*through the media, concerts and an economic act: the purchase of music*" (ibid.). Both of these models point at aspects of the industry which are shared by the three interlocking and interdependent subsectors of the music industry, that is, the recording industry, the live performance industry and the publishing industry (Wikström 2009, Hesmondhalgh 2007). This tripartite arrangement can be augmented by retail, manufacturing and increasingly media in the form of nontraditional online operators (McIntyre 2011: 85-86). Furthermore, while the recorded music industry, as defined by Negus (1992), still represents approximately 70 per cent of the broader music industry as identified by Williamson & Cloonan (2007: 314-315) it is clear that there are now dynamic shifts occurring that have begun to alter this figure.

One of the first texts to look solely at the industry in Australia, *Music Business and the Experience Economy: The Australasian Case* (Tschmuck et al. 2013) deals with the production, distribution and consumption of popular music in Australia and explores the interrelationships between legal, aesthetic and economic factors that contribute to the emergence of new business models, as well as the transformations occurring for the live music sector in regard to management practices. While Tschmuck et al. (2013) place these activities within a global framework their work succinctly illustrates Homan's (2003) argument that the local and the global are interrelated. Homan (2003: 10) suggests, in reference to the mainly inner-city musical cultures of the capital cities in Australia, that "*the interplay of internal (radio stations, record stores, venues, music press, record collecting) and external influences*

complicate portrayals of 'closed' metropolitan cultures". Further to this Chris Gibson argued that "it is clear that corporate activity in music tends to position a small number of sites as production centres (Sydney and Melbourne in Australia) [and] the cultural milieu surrounding music industry activities and subcultures has tended to grant critical cultural capital to bands and scenes in the inner-city" (Homans 2002: 343).

However, Gibson (2002: 343) goes on to argue that:

"... the advent of new technologies suggest that regional areas ... are well positioned to become the new 'breeding grounds' for bands and artists for the national and international market (see, for example, McCormack, 1991; Hesmondhalgh, 1998). While most successful Australian acts are still 'discovered' in Sydney and Melbourne, there is some recent evidence to support the idea of a decentralisation of cultural production: Silverchair, one of Australia's most successful music exports, and The Screaming Jets, are both from Newcastle (New South Wales)."

In this case, it would be difficult to argue that regional creative industries are also 'closed' cultures isolated from both metropolitan and international influence. These ideas were confirmed historically by Gaye Sheather (2013) in her study of the specific history of the Newcastle music industry, 1973-1988.

5 Literature review: Specific studies of the music industry in Newcastle

Gaye Sheather's extensive study of popular music in Newcastle investigated the development of 'mainstream' popular music in Newcastle between 1973 and 1988. At the start of this period, known in Australia more generally as the Oz/Pub Rock era (Zumeris 2003: 495-496), there were approximately 17 local bands that could be identified as performing mainstream music styles in licensed music venues in Newcastle. By 1987, the total number had increased to approximately 148. Across the period there were 151 licensed venues operating. Sheather's history reveals that demographically there was a large population of young pe-

ople who attended these venues, and the unique way in which Newcastle suburbs originally emerged historically in Newcastle and its proximity to Sydney, played a significant role in patterns of participation in these live music venues. A few of the many bands playing at this time managed to move beyond renown in the local scene. For example The Heroes secured a recording contract with Alberts Music in Sydney being the last band to perform on the night of the Star Hotel riot, where, "*[b]ottles and bricks flew, blood flowed and vehicles burned when 2000 to 3000 drinkers clashed with police and pelted firemen*" (The Newcastle Sun, 20 September 1979: 1; Homan 2003) (Sheather 2013: 156). The Heroes went on to some national success facilitated in part by their ongoing appearances on the national television program Countdown. "*Once you were on that you had a national profile and you could actually tour nationally*" (Tinson quoted in Clott 1997: 8). Others, such as DV8, continued to draw very large crowds to their compelling live performances.

As Sheather (2013) suggests, what was largely common to all these musicians, and the many who were content to work locally and draw big crowds in their home town, was the depth of social and cultural capital demonstrated in a willingness to support each other, share knowledge and equipment and mentor others in what was in large part a gift economy (Bell 1991: 155-167). Peter Anderson, after establishing a touring circuit on the north coast of NSW and recording with his band Atlantis, then saw an opportunity to professionalise the local scene at the grass roots level starting a promotional agency for select local bands and setting up a recording studio and equipment retail outlet. Michael Porteus writing for The Newcastle Sun and The Post and, most importantly, Leo Della Grotta writing for The Newcastle Sun, The Newcastle Herald and The Post, were crucial media supporters who were influential in the success of the local industry at this time.

Sheather's study concludes, in line with Bourdieu's understanding of cultural production, itself an effort to reconcile agency and structure (Swartz 1997: 9), that the structural conditions that were peculiar to Newcastle during this period and the way the various actors performed

their roles within those conditions, contributed to the way popular music developed in local spaces in Newcastle from 1973 through to 1987.

After a lengthy period of growth, consolidation and internationalisation (McIntyre 2004: 169) the music industry, both nationally and locally, went through a period of contraction. An ethnographic study of published songwriters working in Newcastle at this time (McIntyre 1994) confirmed Sara Cohen's assertion that *"contemporary popular music is characterised by increased globalisation on one hand and an increased localisation on the other, as developments in communication and technology allow local populations greater access to music production and consumption"* (Cohen 1991: 346). This dialectical position allowed Newcastle songwriters to participate at a local level in an increasingly globalised industry (McIntyre 1994: 78).

McIntyre's study determined, in part, that the socio-economic context Newcastle's songwriters worked in leant a complex web of mediations to their song's creation and these were now subject to a whole range of social, political and economic pressures. In 1994 these included contractual imperatives, technological possibilities, audience dynamics and the changing market for live performance, booking agents' need for certain styles to match venue requirements, costs of live production, low budgets to self-finance recordings, little to no local and effective distribution systems and limited radio play.

In 1998, Jane Groeneveld (1998: 28) asserted that many regional musicians *"travel to the capital cities for much of their 'big business' dealings in sound recording and publishing, because the largest recording studios and all of the main multinational record companies are located in Sydney or Melbourne"*, but she, like Sheather (2013), also noted that regional music industries like Newcastle's *"have been almost entirely based around live performance"* (Groeneveld 1998: 28). However, as Deborah Stephenson's 1994 draft report to the Cultural Review process for Newcastle City Council indicated, musicians depended on local venues for income but increased noise restrictions had led to a contraction in the number of venues in the city. For her there was also *"a dearth of alcohol-free music venues, given that not only is the potential underage*

audience considerable, but more and more musicians are themselves underage" (Stephenson 1994: 48). Stephenson cites the case of the Innocent Criminals who, despite the problems faced by underage musicians in the city at that time, went on to become Silverchair, "one of Australia's most successful music exports" (Gibson 2002: 343). Stephenson outlined further structural problems indicating that "increasingly the local popular music industry is under threat from an expansion in the number of national and international acts coming to the city. Also of concern is the preference of club and hotel owners to employ cover bands rather than musicians playing original music" (Stephenson 1994: 49).

This art versus commerce divide assumed that "the process of routinising production and standardising the product, only describes what large companies do—as if small capitalist enterprises were somehow non-capitalist" (Frith 2000: 390). These developments prompted a number of organisations to form, such as the Hunter Music Industry Development Board, to promote, support and stimulate the Newcastle music industry as it attempted to navigate its way through significant structural changes.

These structural changes are still having an effect and the next major section examines the way the current industry continues to navigate these continuities and changes. The discussion is based on six broad themes revealed through the data collection and analysis process. These six themes are focused on the links between educational structures and the industry, the place of recording studios and record labels in Newcastle, the connection between the industry and the media, the case of local musicians as choice making entities operating within structures that constrain and enable their activity, the importance of the live performance industry and the continuing threats it faces, and the competition from new entrepreneurial practices and systems. We will start this discussion by looking at the educational institutions in Newcastle and their relationship to the local music industry.

6 The Newcastle music industry

6.1 Educational structures

All creative action takes place within social structures (Wolff 1993). Wolff suggests these same structures not only constrain but they also, at one and the same time, actually enable creative activity. This is just as true of educational structures as it is of legal and economic ones (Peterson 1982). At the national level the peak industry body AUSMUSIC negotiated a training process that was then delivered at state level by the Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE) institution in Newcastle. The Basic Music Industry Skills courses run at TAFE, initiated and run by Jane Groeneveld, operated for a number of years and they continue to be taught by local industry experts. The TAFE songwriting and sound production courses included, as students, the members of the internationally successful band Silverchair, signed at the time to Sony Music through their Murmur subsidiary. These industry based courses are now run in the Newcastle School of Music, part of the Creative Industries Faculty at TAFE, with Les Hall from the nationally successful Ted Mulry Gang, Mark Tinson from The Heroes and Grant Walmsley from the Screaming Jets contributing their extensive cultural capital to the teaching of these programs. The operation of cultural capital occurs not only through the actions of institutionalised education settings but is also accumulated over a long period of inculcation through the informal pedagogical action of the social formation (Johnson in Bourdieu 1993: 9).

The cultural capital acquired and passed on by the teachers at TAFE is now used by TAFE to attract and maintain student numbers. For example, the Screaming Jets toured Europe and the United States a number of times, where they were released on Atlantic Records. They continued to tour nationally until 2012 and their guitarist and main songwriter Grant Walmsley draws on this accumulated professional knowledge to mentor his students who in turn take this knowledge back into the local industry. Mark Tinson also continues to produce and record and Les Hall still finds extra time from his teaching functions at TAFE

to write songs for, and produce, young dance artists for the European market.

Not only is the TAFE institution involved in mentoring younger performers in the city, although under threat from the State Government funding cuts as of 2013, there are other educational forums linked to the industry. These include Rosie's School of Rock, run by former Screaming Jets' drummer Craig Rosevear, and the University of Newcastle's (UON) Conservatorium. Each provides an adjunct to the local industry. In 2012 the Newcastle Improvised Music Association (NIMA) began its life through the foundational work of Capree Gaul under the auspices of the UON Conservatorium. NIMA *"... was established in March 2009 to address the lack of performance opportunities for contemporary jazz and improvised music artists in Newcastle. The NIMA management group continues to develop links with the community, local businesses, 1233 ABC, Dungeon Jazz, UON, TAFE and Newcastle City Council"* (NIMA 2013).

These educational institutions provide spaces for mentors and mentoring to occur having an effect on the larger live performance sector of the industry and, importantly, the relatively small recording sector and its studios in Newcastle. We will now turn our attention to these.

6.2 Recording studios and labels in Newcastle

Impromptu Studios is owned by Terry Latham who diversifies his income through his involvement in the educational structures the city provides. He mentors students in guitar at the Conservatorium and sound production in the Bachelor of Communication program at UON, a program many local musicians have benefitted from. Latham's studio client base is diverse and includes classical ensembles, jazz and rock bands and his services also include file archiving, music tuition and at one time a record label.

In the absence of a successful publishing house in the city Latham, along with Grant Walmsley from the Screaming Jets, formed One Henry Records and signed the popular Hauntingly Beautiful Mousemoon to their label. This label is one of the few to have operated in Newcastle,

including Bloody Fist Records formerly run by Mark Newlands from an office in the city. Bloody Fist sold material for hardcore techno groups like Syndicate, Xylocaine and Memetic but is perhaps best known for Nasenbluten's recordings which sold well in Germany.

Robbie Long is now a musician/producer of note along with Mark Tinson and Gareth Hudson. Tinson no longer creates music solely in dedicated commercial studio premises but has located his recording equipment in his home as has Gareth Hudson. As Moorefield (2010: xvii) notes "*the creative involvement of the producer in the shaping of a record's sound also reflects how technology and artistic creation are increasingly interdependent*". While they still occasionally use the technology housed in local studios to track, overdub or mix, these producers generally hire Don Bartley from Benchmark Mastering in Sydney to add a professional sheen to their recordings. Mastering is also offered as a service by Tommirock, ostensibly a recording studio but run by producer Joel Black to offer a diversity of services in music production, studio recording, video production, mixing, mastering, professional photography, website design and artwork, CD and DVD manufacturing, songwriting, voice-overs and social network marketing.

However, few of the recorded works from these studios gain national exposure and the artists who work in them continue to be reliant on social media and, in particular, a strong relationship with the intermediaries of local traditional media.

6.3 The Newcastle industry and the media

The cultural intermediaries from the traditional media "*play an active part in the production, distribution and social consumption of popular music*" (Negus 1996: 67). They have been generally supportive to musical activity in the city. Apart from occasional news stories broadcast on NBN television, a local affiliate of the national Nine Network, and Prime TV, national commercial radio networks broadcasting into the city play few local recordings but there are a number of other outlets, such as the stories written by Jade Lazaravic in The Herald, that provide promotional space. That's Entertainment (TE), now largely written by Stephen Bissett,

is a lift-out section in the free newspaper The Post which has continually highlighted local acts.

Further media support for local musicians has come from other unlikely sources. Ison Live Radio (ILR) has been one of the unheralded success stories in local media. Sean Ison set up a small radio studio in Bolton St in the CBS Building and since 1999 has syndicated his programs to various radio stations around the world. Each week his programs have a cumulative audience of over three million and cover most major western markets. In 2004 Newcastle band Texas Radio and the Big Beat's recording of their song Paris Island went to number one on the ILR Chart based on requests from the Australian Real Underground Music Show syndicated by ILR. Since 2004 ILR have also engaged in producing video segments and real time video products for the expanding international IPTV audience.

The University run community radio station 2NURFM has maintained a local music program for some years highlighting tunes such as Weld's For Rosie's Sake, while the 1233 ABC Music Awards run in conjunction with the TAFE supported Newcastle Music Week, organised by Christina Sykiotis's committee, recognised the successes of Newcastle musicians. One of the beneficiaries of these forms of symbolic capital was the group Supersonic.

6.4 Local musicians at work

Supersonic achieved its initial distinction through the accretion of symbolic capital from a number of prestigious local and national competition wins. According to Johnson symbolic capital "*refers to the degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge and recognition*" (in Bourdieu 1993: 7). As well as these competition successes symbolising their position in the music industry three of their videos were broadcast on national television program RAGE on ABC TV and national broadcaster Triple J put their single When You Fall on regular rotation. Supersonic's demographic ranged across 13-40 year olds but with a centralised bell curve bounded by 16-28 year olds skewed toward females. These figures remained reasonably

consistent and translated into sales for the band. George Davias, from the now defunct family-owned Sound World record retail group operating in the Newcastle market, stated that:

Supersonic are definitely one of our biggest selling local acts. They are always playing and promoting so they are selling a lot more than other local acts and when they do instores for us their sales are often more than current singles (Supersonic 2003: 25).

Peter de Jong, former singer with The Heroes and now Creative Director with Peach Advertising, a company that manages national advertising accounts, stated that *"Newcastle has a broad demographic make-up of socioeconomic factors that represents Australia generally ... This makes it ideal as a test market to launch new products"* (Supersonic 2003: 25). Supersonic maintained its activities in this test market through live performance income. However, in an early form of crowd funding they sourced finance from a large group of small local investors to enable the recording of the band's last album, the production of a video, the hire of Australian Music Biz (AMB) from Brisbane to promote an east-coast tour and CD release through MGM Distribution in Sydney. They garnered the attention of a record company in Indonesia but were advised through DFAT of the difficulties of repatriating royalties.

Supersonic disbanded in 2005 realising that without significant financial input, in Bourdieu's terms economic capital, from the venture capitalists that are the major record companies (Haynes 2013) located in Sydney, it would be difficult to expand their operations in the face of the wealth disparities created by an international 'winner takes all' market. In this regard the International Federation of Phonographic Industries (IFPI) claims success for it in terms of worldwide sales *"is primarily as an investor in human creativity. Record producers worldwide, independent and multinational, invest billions of dollars in local cultures. They underpin the livelihoods of a diverse array of artists across the world"* (IFPI 2003). However, there is a caveat. The IFPI states that *"only a tiny minority of these [artists] will ever prove commercially successful"* (ibid.). In addition, live performance income at the local level, adjusted for inflation, appears to have dropped steadily across the decades. According to

the Arts Council Don't Give up Your Day Job survey "in 2000-01, artists earned an average of just over AUD 24,000 from creative and other arts-related work" (Australia Council 2013). These figures are pre-tax with most earning "below the income earned by others in the workforce" (ibid.). Recognising this Matt Plummer moved into graphic design, Xanders went to the UK to perform as a solo artist and then took up professional photography when he returned to Australia, while Mark Wells is now well established in the country field.

After winning the Songwriter's Prize at the Tamworth Country Music Festival in 2008 Wells was funded to travel and write with Nashville based best songwriters and US music industry experts. The Mark Wells band now consists of performers who are sourced from a small coterie of notable journeymen musicians and as such they act as agents, or choice making entities, in the system of popular music in the city. Musicians like these have to make a series of decisions as to whether to buy this instrument, hire this FOH person, write a set list to suit a certain audience, decide on which note to play and so on. Simon Frith (1996: 52) asserts "*such decisions are both individual, a reflection of one's own talent (musical talent describes, among other things, the ability to make the right decisions about what's good), and social – only other people, other musicians, can legitimate your decisions*". This "*complex network of experts with varying expertise, status, and power*" (Sawyer 2006: 124), otherwise known as a field (Csikszentmihalyi 1988: 330-332; McIntyre 2001), not only influences the knowledge system, the specific cultural domain, but they also affect creative work practices through the decisions they make about what is good musicianship and what is not.

Each of these professional musicians, and many others listed on the Newcastle Music Directory website, have also supported long term instrument retailers Musos Corner and Jacks Music and contribute significantly to the recording and live performance sectors of the industry in Newcastle. The live sector of the field of popular music continues to be important for local musicians but its current form of operation is under threat.

6.5 The live performance sector in Newcastle

The live performance sector of the industry is a crucial driver in the arena of social contestation and creative collaboration that is the field of popular music and *"remains a primal popular music experience, which intensifies global debates about stagecraft, individual virtuosity, favourite live performers and sites"* (Homan 2003: 9). According to the AUSMUSIC Staying Alive Report, this sector fulfils a number of key roles in the music industry including; acting as a major employer for the industry in regional centres, providing a training ground, being a promotional tool for recording artists, and as a source of income to allow sole traders and partnerships typical of the regional industry to develop their performance, songwriting and business skills (Groeneveld 1998: 21).

While the number of performance sites in Newcastle has decreased since the seventies and eighties a number of venues still cater to the local music industry. However, a large number of the venues that serviced live performances in the recent past in Newcastle are being demolished or re-purposed. A number of derelict nightclubs were included by the Lord Mayor in a list of places *"we weren't so proud to drive friends past"* (McCloy 2013: 11). He stated that:

"All cities go through periods of rebirth. And for Newcastle, it's now our turn for change! I am thrilled to see progress at all of these sites. A development application has been lodged for the former Star Hotel for adaptive reuse of the existing buildings. The plan is for a series of low level apartments and terraces – development sorely needed in that part of the city. Just up the road, demolition work is due to start this week at the former Jolly Roger/Hunter Village site. The Joint Regional Planning Panel has approved 17 levels of residential apartment but just clearing the site will be a marked improvement. The benefit of a clear site can be seen where the former Empire Hotel stood. This derelict site was purchased and cleared by the NSW Government".

The iconic Newcastle Workers Club, which hosted Crowded House on the night before the 1989 earthquake caused it to collapse, leading to a number of deaths, failed to regain its level of popularity and was bou-

ght up by the Panthers group of clubs from Sydney. It now hosts concerts from national touring bands as well as international artists from the UK and USA. The King St Hotel, once a late night home for rock bands, now promotes EDM artists making this venue extremely popular with the student and tradesperson demographics. It hosts appearances by out of town EDM proponents such as Propaganda, Our House and Sampology. On the night of 7 June there were queues of attendees lined up around the corner and down the next block waiting to gain entrance into the venue. Like all other Newcastle nightclubs, the King Street Hotel is subject to a 1.30am curfew and a 3.30am closing time.

One security guard asserted that *"people pulling guns, knives, stabbing – all these things are out there and they do happen and you can't sweep them under. In my twenty years I have probably seen all of it. Every year it evolves into something more sinister now with needles, bloody syringes"* (Tomsen et al. 2003: 95). Tomsen et al. (2003: 2) suggest that *"serious conflict and violence at licensed venues is not yet uncommon in the local region"*. These circumstances resulted in a curfew and lockout being instituted from March 2008 which

"were instituted by the former Liquor Administration Board after a public disturbance complaint was lodged by NSW police against hotels with high levels of assaults. They were bitterly opposed by hoteliers, who now say the measures have caused insolvencies and harmed Newcastle's night life. "No one thought the measures would be so devastating to business," says Newcastle publican Rolly de With, who is president of the local chapter of the Australian Hotels Association" (Dusevic 2010).

It was claimed that the curfew approach was *"unique internationally"* (ibid.) which provided the possibility for policy implementation around the world. *"The trend internationally has been to longer trading hours. This study presents a bold challenge to that trend"* (Dusevic 2010).

7 Ongoing developments for the music industry

Having outlined the problems besetting live music, as the venues cope with urban renewal and struggle with necessary innovations in security, we can now mention the ongoing proliferation of other avenues of seeking economic benefit. For example, intermittent day time festivals have become increasingly popular. As one example the Fat As Butter festival *"has attracted international and Australian acts to Newcastle each spring since it began in 2008"* (Tarala 2013: 3) and audiences of 11,000 plus to each performance, leading the promoters to

"create a temporary camping precinct for 1500 festival-goers at Stockton's Ballast Ground from October 18 to 20 ... Ms Ross said the application for the 750-site camping area was under review, including reports on security, transport, police surveillance, first aid, noise management and environmental impact and safety. She said the Fat As Butter camp was expected to bring between \$120,000 and \$145,000 in business to the Stockton community and could provide low cost camping-style accommodation close to the city for future events" (Tarala 2013: 3).

For the established music industry in Newcastle these one-off events tend to contribute little income to the local industry itself since local acts, if they are added to the bill, are paid little in comparison to the out-of-town headline acts and production is often sourced from Sydney suppliers rather than local firms. What these festivals do contribute for local musicians are opportunities to study how professionals in other areas conduct their business and they thus present possibilities of action to them, as has occurred throughout the industry's history.

Watching these developments one of the city's long term promoters, Peter Anderson of Rock City Event Marketing (REM), now a diversified event organiser, rarely deals directly with local musicians due to the loss of crucial business drivers typified by the Australian radio quota system. However, after 30 years, REM continues to bring international artists to Newcastle venues but increasingly competes with concerts staged in the Hunter Valley wine region, part of the city's hinterland. Hope Estate, having just completed their purpose built 19,000 capacity

outdoor amphitheatre bought Fleetwood Mac to their venue in November 2013 and Bruce Springsteen appears in February 2014. These shows draw capacity crowds, and their discretionary entertainment income, from within the city and elsewhere.

With the demise in the sale of CDs the main local retail outlet Sound World has closed, as has Beaumont St Beat and now the Sanity chain store in downtown Market Square, leaving the JB Hifi chain in the suburban malls the only outlet for hardcopy recordings. Second-hand vinyl and CDs can be purchased at Snafu Records, Rices Bookstore and the Odditorium. Many music producers have turned to social media to promote themselves while most consumers of music in the city are familiar with downloads from itunes but also download material, for example, by accessing youtube clips and converting these to mp3 files via converters such as Video2MP3. As a recent insertion in a discussion paper for the Australian Law Reform Commission noted *"worthy individuals and citizens...are knowingly, ignorantly or indifferently finding themselves in breach of international and national copyright law. And they intend to keep on doing exactly as before"* (ALRC 2013: 46) necessitating a rethink of all related business models.

8 Conclusions

The changes wrought by the use of digital technologies have had an effect at the local and global level. The diminishing of income for international recording artists as a result of downloads, both legal and illegal, has meant these acts are chasing a more lucrative return from the live sector and are increasingly capitalising on markets traditionally serviced by local industries. Given the small recording fraternity and the limited set of studios operating in Newcastle, and overall income derived from recording diminishing globally, most local musicians income is tied to the regional live circuit. However, the loss of performance venues in the city as a result of urban redevelopment and the security issues which resulted in a night time curfew in the city, coupled with the rise of the festival touring circuit, has meant the opportunities for the local music industry

continue to shrink. This has resulted in musicians in Newcastle having to diversify the array of services they offer while also coping with a loss of income from their traditional sources. Promoters and agents have also had to diversify their business activities since the lucrative period of the eighties when structural features such as the national radio quota and appearances on nationally broadcast television programs provided central business drivers. Many of the key musicians from that period have found careers in education and now provide mentoring frameworks for younger performers that complement the ongoing gift economy of this regional centre.

In terms of continuities, the field of contestation and cooperation revealed in the Newcastle music industry can be best understood as a scalable interactive system not a collection of isolated parts. This field continues to be a dynamic network of interlocking choice-making agents who produce and circulate musical goods, ideas and knowledges across a wide variety of genres and styles. These domains of knowledge still present possibilities of action to each agent in the field be they musician, producer, DJ, venue proprietor, booking agent, promoter, media operative, policymaker or educator, and each brings something unique to this shared environment. They collaborate, compete, mentor and support each other through both a gift and financial economy trading various levels of the social, cultural, symbolic and financial capital necessary to operate inside this field. This basic framework has not changed.

The implications for further research into these continuities and changes are seen in the need to examine more fully the relationship between the structural imperatives for economic competition and a musician's professional disposition toward cooperation. The question of whether a *laissez-faire* neoliberal international market with its emphasis on a winner-takes-all approach (Thussu 2000) is the best environment to operate in for local musicians who premise their creative interaction both on and off stage on collaboration is a necessary one to ask.

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