



POP MUSIC, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY

Popular Music Scenes

Regional and Rural Perspectives

Edited by
Andy Bennett
David Cashman
Ben Green
Natalie Lewandowski

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Pop Music, Culture and Identity

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Pop music lasts. A form all too often assumed to be transient, commercial and mass-cultural has proved itself durable, tenacious and continually evolving. As such, it has become a crucial component in defining various forms of identity (individual and collective) as influenced by nation, class, gender and historical period. *Pop Music, Culture and Identity* investigates how this enhanced status shapes the iconography of celebrity, provides an ever-expanding archive for generational memory and accelerates the impact of new technologies on performing, packaging and global marketing. The series gives particular emphasis to interdisciplinary approaches that go beyond musicology and seeks to validate the informed testimony of the fan alongside academic methodologies.

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INTRODUCTION: POPULAR MUSIC SCENES IN A REGIONAL AND RURAL CONTEXT

The concept of the music scene has been in use for many years as a means of describing 'situations where performers, support facilities, and fans come together to collectively create music for their own enjoyment' (Peterson and Bennett 2004: 3). Throughout much of the twentieth century, music scene was primarily in use as a vernacular terminology among musicians, audiences and others invested in live music, such as music promoters and music journalists. Towards the end of the twentieth century and into the early 2000s, the music scene began to gain traction as a theoretical concept, initially in the work of Straw (1991) and later in studies by, for example, Shank (1994) and Bennett and Peterson (2004). As illustrated in much of the scenes literature being published at that time, the concept of the music scene has characteristically urban roots, with many cities capitalizing on their strong association with the evolution of a particular musical style or genre and the crystallization of a distinctive local scene around this. Although some of the musical genres now strongly associated with urban scenes, notably blues, have origins in regional and rural locations (see Guralnick 1977), it was the transition of these genres to urban spaces that gave them global prominence. In other cases, the defining characteristics of particular music genres are depicted as distinctively urban, their style and sound bound up with particular aspects of city life. Examples here include heavy metal's dark and over-driven sound being associated with its origins in the British Midlands city of Birmingham during the industrial era (Harrison 2010) and hip hop's evolution as part of a do-it-yourself (DIY) street culture against a background of poverty

and youth disenfranchisement in the housing projects of New York's Bronx (Rose 1994).

Although existing work on the metropolitan experience of music scenes has contributed significantly to understandings of both the cultural and economic importance of popular music, the dominance of its predominantly metro-centric focus is increasingly out of step with the growing prevalence of popular music scenes outside urban settings. In many respects, the evolution of popular music scenes in peri-urban and non-urban contexts should not come as a surprise. Given the strongly mediated nature of popular music as a cultural form, particularly from the 1950s onwards (Frith 1988), access to popular music via radio, television and cinema has led to its wide trans-local appeal (Peterson and Bennett 2004). Irrespective of their location – urban, regional or rurally remote – music fans have been drawn in by the iconic appeal of popular music artists and the cultural scenes with which they have been associated. With the advent of digital media and the increasing connectivity afforded by such technology, where one lives has become increasingly less important in many respects in terms of the practice of music-making and dissemination. Indeed, an increasing number of commercially successful artists are situated in locations on the global periphery (e.g. see Prior 2015). The same applies to the broader music industry, with many record labels, studios, festivals and so on taking pride in the fact that they are able to sustain a successful business footing in regional and rural locations. At the same time, more conventional face-to-face music scene activity also manifests in regional and rural locations. Live music continues to be a sought-after form of entertainment, with regional tourism serving to further bolster this demand in many places. Similarly, just as research on the creative and cultural industries has demonstrated the integration of music into the cultural economy of cities, so it is becoming increasingly clear that equivalent trends exist in regional and rural settings (Waitt and Gibson 2013). A salient aspect of this is that local councils and funding agencies are now realizing the value of supporting local music and nurturing live music ecosystems in regional and rural locations (Green and Bennett 2019).

Despite such vibrant growth, however, regional and rural music scenes remain an under-researched topic (Bennett et al. 2020). However, as regional and rural settings across the world become increasingly important as sites of popular music production, performance and consumption, there is a clear need for research that seeks to understand regional and rural music scenes in terms of both their distinctive qualities, as non-urban local

scenes, and their points of trans-local and virtual connection (Peterson and Bennett 2004) to other music scenes both nationally and internationally. This edited collection brings together a series of chapters by scholars from around the world that offer new insights on both the distinctive contributions made by regional and rural popular music scenes in Australia, Asia, Europe and North America, and their connections to national and transnational networks of popular music production, performance and consumption. Through invoking the dual concepts of regional and rural music scenes, we acknowledge the elasticity of such terms, given that the regional may often embrace smaller cities and larger provincial towns while the concept of rural may differ depending on proximity to larger urban conurbations. As such, the exploration of regional and rural music scenes presented in this book is also an exploration of such complex understandings in a context of economic and cultural globalization. The individual chapters in this book also reflect how such complex relations between urban, regional and rural settings in turn produce highly nuanced discursive constructions of space and place that also reflect back to varying degrees on the nature of music scenes in regional and rural locations.

This book is divided into four parts. Part I: People and Place focuses on the spatial aspects of regional popular music scenes and looks at how place and locality inform the perceptions and discourses of those involved in such scenes. In Chap. 1, Philip Miles focuses on the music scene in the county of Pembrokeshire, a regional area in the south of Wales. In particular, Miles focuses on one particular artist from the region, Gorkys Zygotik Myncci, an alternative rock band that drew heavily on 1960s-inspired psychedelic influences. Charting what is now becoming an increasingly common narrative, Miles notes how the rise of Gorkys Zygotik Myncci to national prominence while continuing to emphasize its local roots and remaining strongly a part of the local music scene became part of the band's core identity while also promoting its home town of Camarthon and the wider county of Pembrokeshire as a regional centre for music that promoted a strong sense of heritage, culture, localism, history, language, musicality, youthfulness and pride.

In Chap. 2, the focus shifts to regional Australia as Alexandra Blok examines the significance of hip hop for young migrants in regional areas of New South Wales and Queensland. As Blok notes, for migrant youth in regional towns such as Wagga Wagga (New South Wales) and Cairns (Queensland), hip hop provides a rich source of creative expression for these youth through which to explore issues such as identity, friendship

and exclusion. Existing research on hip hop and local identity has established how hip hop's global reach is matched by its capacity for localized forms of appropriation whereby its signature textures of rhythm and sound and spoken lyrics take on new local meanings as young rappers adapt the hip hop style as a means of engaging with local issues and challenges. Blok extends this discussion to consider how young migrant rappers in regional Australia are contributing to patterns of cultural transformation in their regions, drawing on their trans-local connections and cosmopolitan influences.

In Chap. 3, Graham Sattler offers a rich autoethnographic account of his own transition from an urban to a regional music scene in New South Wales, Australia. Sattler notes that such a transition can often result in significant upheaval for the individual music practitioner, as the availability of hard and soft music scene infrastructures with which to engage are significantly reduced in a regional setting. This, in turn, impacts opportunities for participation in a local live music scene and presents difficulties in securing a livelihood if one is coming into a regional music scene setting as a professional musician or with aspirations to become one. Likewise, Sattler notes other presenting challenges in terms of access to music education and training, which are often a feature of regional settings.

Part II: Technology and Distribution focuses on the technologies and forms of distribution that pertain whereby regional and rural popular music scenes exist, and in many cases coexist, in forms of trans-local connection with other scenes. In Chap. 4, Paula Guerra, Tânia Moreira and Sofia Sousa consider the rock scene in the peri-urban Tâmega region of Portugal, which includes a number of municipalities that together comprise one of the most densely populated regions of the country, with a relatively young population. Despite a lack of economic and cultural support, local young people have developed a rock scene (which can be seen as a patchwork of nano-scenes) with a significant degree of informality and DIY logic. The authors draw on substantial ethnographic research, including interviews and online investigations, to consider how Facebook and other social media platforms have contributed to Tâmega's musical (re)affirmation of recent years, including as avenues for distribution and advertising, without replacing local power and familial relationships.

In Chap. 5, Devpriya Chakravarty explores the regionally located Electronic Dance Music (EDM) festival scene in India. Multi-day festivals such as Enchanted Valley Carnival and Sunburn claim regional spaces for ephemeral gatherings of mostly urban youth around the performance and

consumption of a global popular music culture. Chakravarty considers how social media networks are utilized to promote the events, in which local and regional characteristics are coopted, as well as how they maintain the connectivity of festival participants between gatherings. This enables an analysis of how social media networks aid in the formation of affective communicative ecologies.

In Chap. 6, Susan O'Shea examines *Other Voices*, a geographically dispersed Irish music festival and television series with a 20-year history in the remote peninsula of Dingle and a more recent presence in Ballina, as well as international programming in Berlin, London and New York. The festival contributes to regional economies and builds translocal links using new performance, distribution and participation technologies, while challenging stereotypes of Irish music. Using social network analysis, O'Shea maps the events and performers of *Other Voices* with close attention to place. In the core/periphery structure of these social networks, the Dingle and Ballina Music Trails are shown to be central, providing opportunities for music mobilities across Ireland and internationally.

In Chap. 7, Lachlan Goold focuses on the recording sector as a regional creative network and its function within and beyond local music scenes, presenting a case study of the Sunshine Coast region of Queensland, Australia. The reduced cost of recording technology and the associated proliferation of domestic studios has enabled small businesses in the region to capitalize on their appealing surrounds and to flourish outside the city. Broadband internet access, which remains unevenly distributed, is vital to these studios and in particular enables long-distance recording services and collaborations, including with national and international session musicians, tapping into a virtual global network. However, promotion is more reliant on word-of-mouth networks than online visibility, which is generally low.

Part III: Memory considers the importance of collective memory in how regional and rural popular music scenes, with their issues of isolation and smaller industry infrastructure, are constructed in both the past and the present. In Chap. 8, Phil Woollett examines the blues scene in rural Kent in the United Kingdom. Kent has maintained a flourishing rural blues scene despite the blues in the United Kingdom originating in the urban areas of London. Woollett, a professional blues musician, undertakes an ethnography of the Kent scene in the role of participant-practitioner. He finds that while the Kent blues scene comprises an ageing demographic, the scene is not dying off. Instead, many of his informants

find themselves drawn to the scene later in life. Local identity is important to the scene, with many passionate tastemakers running local clubs and festivals. In contrast, musicians are routinely drawn from further afield than just within Kent itself. Woollett finds that it is the consumers rather than the producers who maintain control over the scene. They speak of seeking an alternative to the perceived artifice of the *X-Factor* musical generations in a scene grounded in earlier music.

In Chap. 9, Nico Thom considers the jazz scene of Eisenach, a regional town in the state of Thuringia in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). Despite its small size, Eisenach casts a long shadow within the history of German jazz. During World War II, jazz enthusiasts ran illegal jazz jams, and the first jazz club of the GDR opened here in 1959, followed by the establishment of the International Jazz Archive of Eisenach in 1999. Thoms ethnographic work focuses on stakeholders and their cross-generational interaction within this glocalised scene.

In Chap. 10, Janne Poikolainen and Mikko Salasuo examine rural punk scenes of Finland in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These punk scenes seemed a world away from the better-known scenes of London and New York, but they are of particular interest as rural versions of urban scenes. Their development coincided with the modernization of Finland in the 1970s. However, this modernization was largely an urban development; regional towns and areas were still conservative, sparsely populated, under-developed and spread over large areas. Poikolainen and Salasuo consider the social and cultural meaning and the national characteristics of the first wave of Finnish punk culture in rural municipalities and towns. Punks DIY aesthetic permitted the development of small local scenes comprising those seeking to reach out to the cities. It disconnected with the conservative past and embraced modernist contemporary youth culture.

In Chap. 11, Robin Kuchar, noting the absence of academic study of rural German scenes, seeks to contextualize the influential rural record label Glitterhouse Records and the associated Orange Blossom Special festival within the German independent music scene. The former was a significant mail-order house and record label launched in 1984 in Beverungen in east Westphalia. It promoted both American independent music and local artists, and has continued to gain significance within the German scene. The Orange Blossom Special festival has been held annually in the garden of the label since 1997, gathering an annual crowd of 2000–2500 festivalgoers. Glitterhouse is a significant German rural-based label, that

has sought to build a community around music, shared attitudes and has been in existence over three decades.

Part IV: Industry and Policy examines themes of industry and policy in relation to culture and music, as these impact on the nature and identity of rural and regional popular music scenes. In Chap. 12, Leonieke Bolderman explores participation in music-making workshops and how such workshops form their own trans-local music scenes. Based on ethnographic research across three contemporary music workshops conducted in Europe in 2016, Bolderman argues that although the workshops themselves are temporary, the scenes they create form long-lasting connections between participants. Music workshops are a niche tourism product, generating interest and income for geographical areas that may otherwise have been overlooked by conventional tourism. Perhaps unintentionally, the workshops offer a unique entry point into a music scene that could otherwise be unavailable to participants. Bolderman posits that, through their structure and location, these workshops demonstrate translocality.

In Chap. 13, Benjamin Düster further extrapolates on this idea of translocality through focusing on self-organized and grassroots musicians around Nagoya and Fukuoka, Japan. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in 2018 and 2019, Düster recognizes that expatriates play an important role in these smaller music scenes. By drawing on a Western DIY ethos, he suggests that expatriate scene participants allow for the creation of overseas tour opportunities and song and album releases for Japanese musicians that may not be considered in the larger milieu of Japanese record labels. As in Bolderman's chapter, the role of the tourist is highlighted as an aid to promote the scene, creating recognition and connection among scene participants. Düster states that engagement with expatriate communities in the Japanese DIY scenes, such as those in Nagoya and Fukuoka, provides meaningful connections between Japan and international independent music scenes.

In Chap. 14, Otto Stuparitz also builds on this idea of translocal music scenes in regional and rural areas. Stuparitz analyses how small jazz festivals held in Indonesia present a way for nationally recognized jazz artists to play in remote locations while at the same time providing opportunities for local jazz musicians and organizers to interact with their metropolitan counterparts. By tracing the establishment of Yogyakarta's jazz community, Stuparitz provides us with a further example of how a place can influence and serve as a guidepost for smaller and lesser-known music communities. Similar to the communities discussed in Bolderman and

Düster's chapters, Stuparitz highlights that those who engaged in Yogyakarta's jazz community continued to be active in the scene, even if it had physically dissolved or moved on. Stuparitz also touches on the notion that in regional and rural areas, there are not always the venues and facilities that typically would be needed to facilitate live music, with hotels and resorts providing options for musicians and audiences alike.

In Chap. 15, Andy Bennett, David Cashman, Ben Green and Natalie Lewandowski similarly identify this infrastructure as a common point of contention for regional musicians and venue owners in Queensland, Australia. In this final chapter, the authors reflect on how regional and rural scenes throughout Queensland have been affected by policy, tourism and the recent pandemic. The chapter highlights that geography and cost go hand in hand with the kind of live music offerings provided in these locations and note the practical consequence of the pandemic in forcing both audiences and artists to think outside the box (as demonstrated by the Queensland Music Trails festival). Building on the ideas presented by Bolderman, Düster and Stuparitz, the authors use a broader lens to demonstrate how tourism, infrastructure and lifestyle choices can shape live music scenes now and for years to come.

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