

# **The History of Live Music in Britain since 1950**

**Matt Brennan, Martin Cloonan, Simon Frith and Emma Webster**

**Volume 1: From Dance Hall to the 100 Club:**  
The History of Live Music in Britain 1950-1967

**Volume 2: From Hyde Park to the Hacienda:**  
The History of Live Music in Britain 1968-1984

**Volume 3: From Live Aid to Live Nation:**  
The History of Live Music in Britain 1985-2009

Book proposal for Ashgate Publishing © 2010

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Volume 1: From Dance Hall to the 100 Club: The History of Live Music in Britain</b>	
<b>1950-1967</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Chapter 1. Getting back to business .....	6
Chapter 2. Live music and the state .....	7
Chapter 3. The Musicians' Union .....	8
Chapter 4. Do-it-yourself! .....	9
Chapter 5. Youth .....	11
Chapter 6. The recording industry .....	12
Chapter 7. Audiences and venues .....	13
Chapter 8. Live music in 1967.....	15
<b>Volume 2: From Hyde Park to the Hacienda: The History of Live Music in Britain</b>	
<b>1968-1984</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Chapter 1. Live music and the record business.....	18
Chapter 2. The professionalisation of the live music business .....	19
Chapter 3. Live music and the state .....	20
Chapter 4. The return of DIY .....	21
Chapter 5. From disco to dance club .....	23
Chapter 6. Being a musician .....	24
Chapter 7. The ideology of live music .....	26
Chapter 8. Live music in 1984: Britain in the global market place.....	26
<b>Volume 3: From Live Aid to Live Nation: The History of Live Music in Britain</b>	
<b>1985-2009</b> .....	<b>30</b>
Chapter 1. A new oligopoly .....	31
Chapter 2. Live music and digital technology .....	32
Chapter 3. A new power structure.....	34
Chapter 4. Live music and the state .....	35
Chapter 5. Live music and the media .....	36
Chapter 6. The musician's career in the 2000s.....	38
Chapter 7. Live music as local music.....	39
Chapter 8. The value of live music.....	40

## Introduction

The aim of these three books is to provide a social history of music in Britain since 1950. The books are designed to fill an obvious gap in the academic (and non-academic) literature—there is presently no general history of British music in this period. But in writing this history we will adopt a particular focus: we are interested in the role which live music has played in British cultural life since 1950. There are several reasons for taking this approach.

First of all, we want to shift attention in socio-economic studies of popular music from the recording industry to the business of live music. Our starting point here is that most present accounts of “the music industry” (which are often derived from Adorno’s analysis in the 1940s of “the culture industry”) over-privilege the recording sector at the expense of the sector in which most musicians in all genres have been located historically, the live arena. These books will chart the changing symbiotic relationship between the recording and live sectors in the last 60 years, a relationship that is neglected in popular music histories organised exclusively around record releases and sales charts. Among other things this means that we will examine the key role of the promoter in musical life: the three books chart three eras of promotional activity. We believe that a proper understanding of the live music business is necessary for a proper understanding of the recorded music business.

The second advantage of a music history written from the perspective of live musical activity is that it draws attention to the importance of place. Live music, by its nature, must happen in a particular locality, and our second concern in these books is to look at the changing sites and venues of musical performance, from the post war dance hall to the contemporary rock club circuit, from the state-run arts centre to the pub back room, from the coffee bar to the stadium, from the original jazz and folk festivals to Glastonbury and T in the Park. The history of live music is also a history of leisure and the night-time economy, of city geographies and holiday destinations, of fans’ movements around towns and musicians’ movements around and between countries. Throughout these volumes we will draw material from three cities, in particular, Bristol, Glasgow and Sheffield.

Third, live music involves the state—and thus politics—much more directly than recorded music. On the one hand, live musical events of all kinds are subject to regulatory frameworks, to national laws concerning public performance, health and safety, the sale of alcohol, noise nuisance and so forth, and to the decisions of local licensing authorities. On the other hand, both national and local authorities have been active in promoting live music, building and funding venues and, through arts councils, directly supporting musical groups and organisations and

sponsoring tours and performances. A history of live music is necessarily also a history of cultural politics, and one theme that we will develop through these three books is that the live sector involves a complex relationship between three kinds of promoter: the state funded, the commercial and the enthusiast. The last of these may be driven by various motives (love of a particular kind of music, bohemianism, artistic or political vision, friendship) but such musical activists will be central to our history.

It has been the orthodox view in the academy for the last forty years or so that the live musical sector is in decline, as a matter of both economics (the sector's inability to compete with other music media in price terms) and sociology (the sector's declining role in people's everyday use of music). As Glenn Gould famously remarked in *High Fidelity* in 1966:

“In an unguarded moment some months ago, I predicted that the public concert as we know it today would no longer exist a century hence, that its functions would have been entirely taken over by the electronic media. It had not occurred to me that this statement represented a particularly radical pronouncement. Indeed, I regarded it almost as self-evident truth ...”

Our books clearly challenge this view and it is a paradoxical effect of the digital revolution that the live music sector is now seen as increasingly significant both economically (as record companies' long established ways of money making no longer work) and sociologically (as the live musical event seems ever more important for music lovers in all genres). We intend to explain this paradox—to explain the value of live music—through a historical investigation. In broad terms we will argue that it is through the history of live music that we can grasp the changing relationship of the public and private in an era of great technological, industrial and social change. It has always been through the live—public—experience of making and listening to music that it has been most deeply embedded in people's everyday lives and in their understanding of their personal and social identities.

In telling this story we will draw on a range of methodologies and sources. We will use case studies, local ethnographies and historical snapshots. We will draw on systematic reading of the musical press, archival work (especially in the previously unavailable Musicians' Union archive) and a series of interviews with promoters from a range of different musical genres, eras and locations within the broader music industries. We will bring together material from a wide range of non-academic secondary sources—musicians' autobiographies, local histories of particular venues and fan memoirs—as well as from specialist academic studies in economics, sociology and social history. On the basis of this research, which was carried out as part of a three year AHRC funded project, we will provide a rich, critical and entertaining account of the changing relationship between British society and its music.

We should note, finally, three issues of scope and definition.

First, our definition of 'live' music includes music on record provided by disc jockeys for dancers and audiences gathering in public places. This might seem a distortion of terms (though even the Musicians' Union eventually agreed that a DJ was a musician) but venues combining live and recorded music (or, earlier, bands for listening and bands for dancing) are an important part of our story.

Second, although popular music is at the centre of our work we will also be concerned with the history of classical and art music performance. This is, again, because the different sectors have overlapping histories (in terms of venues, for example, or promotional practices) but also because we are interested in the ways in which people's understanding of the live musical experience is affected by the ideologies of 'high' and 'low' music.

Third, our use of the term 'musician' is very broad, as already indicated. In the live music sector the distinction between professional, semi-professional and amateur performers is blurred both in performance settings themselves and in musicians' individual careers. One of our concerns is thus how changes in the live music scene change (and are changed by) the ways in which people and institutions (such as the Musicians' Union or grant giving bodies) understand what it is to be 'a musician'. There are issues here that touch on some of the most significant aspects of social change in Britain since 1950, in terms of social variables such as age, class, gender and ethnicity.

## From the Dance Hall to the 100 Club

### The History of Live Music in Britain Volume 1 1950-1967

The Second World War obviously caused a huge disruption to everyday life in Britain and hence to the organisation and enjoyment of live music. The immediate postwar period thus involved attempts by the various established players in the live music world to get back to normal. In the first part of this book we will examine this from three perspectives—commercial promoters, the state and the Musicians' Union. By the mid-1950s, though, it was becoming clear that new social and musical forces were creating new forms of musical entertainment for new kinds of audience organised in new ways. In the second part of the book we will examine the rise of 'do-it-yourself' music making and promoting and the impact of jazz, folk and skiffle; the emergence of "the teenage consumer"; and the increasing importance of the record industry in British musical culture following the technological changes that introduced the vinyl record, the single and the album. By 1967 a map of live music in Britain shows a very different picture to that of the early 1950s. In the final part of the book we will describe this in terms of venues, spaces and audience experiences, on the one hand, and from the perspective of promoters and the live music business, on the other.

#### Chapter 1. Getting back to business

This chapter will provide a map of the live music business in Britain in the early 1950s as entrepreneurs tried to return to their ways of working in the 1930s, before the disruption of the Second World War.

In broad terms the sector was organised around three kinds of venue. First, then, we will examine the **music hall and variety circuit**. Although the heyday of the music hall predates the advent of cinema, music halls and variety theatres, as venues for performance that made up a commercially sustainable national touring infrastructure, continued to be important to live music in Britain until well after the War. We will use case studies of key figures in the management of this circuit, such as impresario Val Parnell and agent Lew Grade (as well as his brothers Leslie and Bernard), to consider how the establishment of pre-war live entertainment sought to return the British live music scene to pre-war ways. Second we will describe the **dance hall circuit** and, in particular, the ballroom chains, Mecca and Rank. We will show how their owners, Carl Heimann at Mecca Dancing and J. Arthur Rank of the Rank Organisation, consolidated their dominant position in the post-war dance industry. Finally we will consider the **concert hall circuit**. Our interest here is the place of classical and 'art' music in

post-war Britain and the ways in which the concert hall sector involved both state subsidised and commercial concert promotion.

The chapter will also explore the relationship of live music promoters to other players in the music industry, such as record companies, publishers, the BBC and the newly emergent commercial television companies. Our central argument will be that the institutions that managed to survive pre-war recession and post-war austerity, seeing off or absorbing their competitors, companies such as Mecca, Rank, EMI and Decca, individual entrepreneurs such as Parnes and the Grades, seemed by the mid-1950s to have a controlling grip of the British music industry. Their apparently dominant position was, though, deceptive. In the second half of the decade it became clear that the live music business couldn't get back to normal if that meant looking to the 1930s as some kind of ideal. There were new social, musical and commercial forces that didn't fit into established ways of doing things.

## **Chapter 2. Live music and the state**

This chapter starts from the position that the state – both national and local – has two roles in the organisation of live music in Britain, as **promoter** and **regulator** and charts the changing ways in which it played both roles in this period.

In the immediate post-war years the state's role as promoter (or sponsor) of live music was the most prominent. The Arts Council of Great Britain was established in 1946, as the peacetime successor to the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts that had been created in 1940, and its effect on the live music sector (later to be mediated by regional arts boards) was immense. In this chapter we will argue that in the post war period its main effect was to preserve and legitimate established cultural hierarchies by promoting high culture while at the same time broadening access to it. Under Arts Council music policy western classical music received official funds and sanction, other forms of music did not. Importantly, in the 1960s, as Britain entered the era in which the recording industry was dominant, Arts Council focus remained on the provision of live music—to this day, of the four UK national Arts Councils, only Scotland's has a recording budget. However, as the 1960s progressed, the model of exclusively supporting what were originally termed “the fine arts” was to prove unsustainable and the Arts Council's remit was broadened. One result was that public funding for live music was extended to include more popular forms such as jazz. Nonetheless, the national state's main role as promoter of live music in this period was to provide subsidy for the sorts of music that would struggle to reach a sustainable audience through a purely market-based approach.

This role was replicated at a local level. The chapter will also discuss the changing pattern of local government support for musicians in this period, focussing on our case study cities, Glasgow, Bristol and Sheffield. We will show that besides venues such as city halls, the local state also provided extra-musical facilities (such as youth clubs and community centres) that in some circumstances become key sources of live music. In this respect indirect subsidy was as important as direct subsidy. The provision of music education (both within and beyond formal education) will also be considered and examination made of the links between this and local live performance.

A recurring theme of our history of live music is the importance of locality in its provision and enjoyment. Thus while national legislative frameworks provide a backdrop to the regulation of live music, the unique constitution of the UK, which involves three distinct legal systems, has meant that such frameworks have varied across the country. Added to this have been two further factors: (i) the discretion given to local licensing authorities in interpreting national legislation and (ii) the fact that many important venues have been owned by local authorities.

In terms of regulation it was apparent during the 1950s and then increasingly in the 1960s that changing patterns of live music consumption were rubbing up against existing legal frameworks. Local authorities had to interpret national legislation in new ways while also trying to maintain order within their own venues. While problems here primarily concerned the rise of new forms of popular music (such as rock'n'roll) they also included new ways of listening to familiar forms, such as the weekend jazz festival. This chapter will examine regulation as both a local and national phenomenon. At a local level it will focus on examples of interventions that were the result of local state-owned venues being used for forms of music (and thus forms of audience behaviour) for which they were not designed. The result was often the "banning" of certain acts or forms of music from local authority halls. Nationally acts such as the 1967 Theatres Act had a mixed effect on music, but they can be seen as part of a broader trend whereby laws that are not specifically focussed on live music nonetheless have an important impact on its provision.

### **Chapter 3. The Musicians' Union**

Our central concern in this chapter is to explore what it meant to be "a musician" in this period. We will therefore examine the range of career options that were available to musicians, using a variety of sources including contemporary press accounts, musicians' memoirs, previous academic literature and archives. Our starting point here is that for the majority of musicians across all genres live music has always been a highly significant - and usually *the* significant - source of



income. Even after the emergence of recording in the early twentieth century (and its rapid development in the 1950s) it has always been live music that has dominated musicians' lives.

In examining how there were, nonetheless, significant changes to musical careers in this period we will focus attention on the Musicians' Union and its resistance to such changes. We will describe, for example, the MU's continuing attempts to restrict the supply of musical labour by excluding foreign musicians from the UK and curbing the performance opportunities of military bands. The Union's initial success and eventual failure in preventing 'alien' musicians (primarily from the USA) from performing live in Britain is particularly significant for an understanding of how the 'Americanisation' of British popular music (through jazz, blues, rock'n'roll and r'n'b) had its effects on live music making.

We will pay equal attention to the MU's ongoing attempts to counter the detrimental effects of technology on its members' employment. We will focus here on its role in maintaining "live" music on radio and its attempts to secure the provision of live music on television. We will show that while the MU's corporatist approach succeeded in maintaining employment opportunities for those working in classical and art music, it also served to alienate those working primarily in newly emerging musical forms such as rock and roll.

#### **Chapter 4. Do-it-yourself!**

In *Understanding Rock'n'Roll. Popular Music in Britain 1955-1964*, Dick Bradley, like other commentators on the period, suggests that the central transforming aspect of British musical culture in the 1950s was the rise of amateur music making. In this chapter we will examine this claim and its implications for the live music business. For Bradley, like other rock historians, the first great do-it-yourself musical movement was skiffle (the Beatles thus famously started out as a skiffle group, the Quarrymen). But we will argue that the emergence of skiffle itself depended on the earlier revivalist jazz movement (Ken Colyer's music making life began in 1949), not simply in terms of musical sounds and styles (as with Lonnie Donnegan's work in the Chris Barber band) but just as importantly in terms of venues and ways of organising gigs. We will trace various consequences of this.

First, the revivalist jazz movement did not simply involve making music for the love of it (both classical and popular British music cultures have always had rich seams of amateur music making) but was explicitly, ideologically, anti-commercial (it was in part a protest against what was seen as the commercialisation of jazz). This associated the music with left/Marxist activists and, in particular, with a similarly ideological—and often Communist Party affiliated—folk movement, and, more generally with bohemia, an anti-

establishment mix of artists, students, petit-bourgeois intellectuals, etc. And it meant developing new kinds of venue and performance space—the jazz club, the folk club, the street and the demonstration (CND marches, for example), the festival and, later in the period, the art school and the student union. And this meant, in turn, the emergence of new kinds of entrepreneur, agent and promoter, from outside the existing music establishment and its discourse of ‘light entertainment’.

Second, this was music making by reference to a primarily non-European, African-American musical tradition (even the 1950s folk movement had a strong element of blues, an aspect of folk performers’ political solidarity with the colonised and oppressed). It was music made without reference to existing music institutions, to music lessons or music teachers, to band managers or radio producers. This meant that different kinds of people became music-makers in terms of age and class (although such music making was still primarily a male activity) and new kinds of music networks formed (National Service was, initially, an important catalyst here).

Third, if one aspect of this was a new account of a performers’ musical “authenticity” in terms of their understanding and truth to the musical forms they used (this was an essential part of Ken Colyer’s ideology, for example), musicians also developed a new kind of social authenticity, measured by their relationship to their audience. As Humphrey Lyttelton wrote in 1958: “No pundits were on hand to help Buddy Bolden or King Oliver or Jelly Roll Morton or the young Louis Armstrong along the straight and narrow path of ‘pure’ jazz. Their only guides were the dancers, who applauded them if the music was good to dance to and flung them off the stand if it wasn’t.” This sense of communion between musicians and (dancing) audiences became a key aspect of the live music performance.

Finally, for all the vague left wing and/or bohemian contempt for the market, these musicians wanted to make a living and needed intermediaries, people to help translate local to national success, to develop new venue circuits and promotional strategies, and we will show how in this period a new generation of promoters emerged to take advantage of new money making opportunities. The chapter will suggest, in conclusion, that the do-it-yourself music movement of the 1950s, together with the emergence of the youth culture discussed in the next chapter, contained the seeds of what, by the end of the 1960s, was the business of rock music.

## Chapter 5. Youth

Mark Abrams', *The Teenage Consumer*, published in 1959, was designed in part to draw entrepreneurs' attention to a new market. Abrams measured the extent of teenagers' disposable income and showed how their pattern of expenditure was quite different from that of adults. By then this was a taken-for-granted aspect of the music business. In his account of the marketing of Tommy Steele, Britain's first teen pop star, John Kennedy remembers his co-manager, Larry Parnes, "sitting at the dressing-table working, as usual, at figures and studying letters he was writing to various manufacturers offering Tommy Steele's name on their products." In this chapter we will describe how the emergence of the youth market affected (and was affected by) the live music experience. Discussion will be organised around three topics: the emergence and development of new kinds of venue; the emergence and development of new kinds of show; and the emergence and development of a new kind of audience.

According to Abrams' research the new teenage consumers wanted places of their own in which to gather (and spend money)—hence the 1950s significance of coffee bars and youth clubs. Such venues needed appropriate music: on the jukebox, from live performers, provided by someone spinning records, or through a combination of all three. By the early 1960s the right youth setting could also mean taking over existing venues or using them at certain times in new ways (as in the lunch time sessions in Liverpool's Cavern or in the intervals between bands in dance halls, when a new kind of MC turned DJ like Jimmy Saville played records). As the teenage consumer became the youth consumer (and thus old enough to drink) licensed premises could also become youth venues, whether in the new phenomenon of the music club cum disco, like Stoke's Scene, or in the easy conversion of jazz and blues clubs into r&b and rock clubs. By the late 1960s young people were becoming dominant in the night time city centre economy, particularly on the new kinds of dance floor.

Teenage consumers also spent money on their own kind of performer, initially the pop idol. Pop idols were novel not so much in terms of the music they played (rock'n'roll as such was a relatively short-lived phenomenon) than because of the relationship they had with their fans. Mediated by teenage radio shows such as *Saturday Skiffle Club* (which was soon retitled *Saturday Club*), teenage TV programmes like *Six-Five Special* and *Oh Boy!*, magazines like *Rave* and *Fabulous*, and above all by the new phenomenon of the hit single, stars like Cliff Richard and Adam Faith were marketed as knowable pin-ups with whom fans thus expected a new sort of performing intimacy. In seeking to service this new market nationally, pop managers like Larry Parnes began by using established routes, putting together teenage package shows for the variety circuit, booking acts into Butlins holiday camps, but it was soon clear that they needed a different sort of setting (cinemas became vital for the live pop circuit in the 1960s) and had to be

scheduled according to the rhythm of record releases rather to fit in with, say, the holiday season. The live show as a mix of star-making and record selling became the norm.

By 1967 the idea of youth (and youth music) had taken on a much broader resonance than the original market-driven notion of the teenager, but from a live music point of view what still had to be understood was that performers somehow *represented* their audience. This relationship had a variety of effects on how music was staged, but also on the relationship between artists, their managers and promoters, on the one hand, and between promoters, venue managers and audiences, on the other.

## **Chapter 6. The recording industry**

This chapter will describe how the growth of the recording industry in the post-war era challenged both the prevailing power structures of the music world and the prevailing ideology of music production and consumption. It will examine what these changes meant for live music in Britain.

We will first chart the growth of the recording industry, starting with the emergence of EMI and Decca from the war as a duopoly controlling 80 per cent of the British record market, a market which was soon growing apace following the introduction of the new record retailing format of 45 rpm singles and 33 rpm vinyl LPs. One effect of the new significance of records in musical culture was a shift in the power balance between the PPL (Phonogram Performance Limited), which had been set up by the EMI and Decca to ensure copyright owners were paid for the public performance of records, and the Musicians' Union, which represented the interests of live musicians. The 1956 Copyright Act gave the record industry the upper hand in allowing the DJ and records to replace live music in venues that would previously have been required to employ live musicians. The change in industrial power due to the boom in record sales and the growing presence of records in public performance brought about a significant shift the ideology of music in Britain: recordings increasingly challenged live performance as the primary or ideal way to experience music, a shift which had a particular effect on the use of music by radio and television and their role in music marketing.

The continued growth of the radio and television industries in Britain, especially following the introduction of commercial TV in 1955, was as striking as the growth in record sales. We will show how entrepreneurs in the live music industry, rather than trying to compete with this new form of entertainment, reaped huge rewards by using their expertise and power to establish as mainstream TV entertainment the production of mass-mediated live musical

experiences. Eric Morley of Mecca ballrooms thus created the TV show, *Come Dancing*, while impresario Val Parnell (who created *Sunday Night at the Palladium*) and agent Lew Grade were instrumental to the success of the entertainment division of ATV.

The combination of a new record chart-oriented musical culture (the *NME* published the first British record sales charts in 1952), the rise of ‘disc hops’ displacing live dance orchestras, and TV and radio catering to a youth audience by organising shows like *Juke-Box Jury* around record releases (the most successful of these shows, the long running *Top Of The Pops*, was launched in 1964) contributed to the shift in the relationship between live music and recorded music. Instead of supporting the gradual construction of a national audience via intensive touring, these changes accelerated the speed with which an act could become a hot live prospect, causing tension with the conventional methods of concert promotion, and resulting in changes in the dynamic between record companies, acts, managers, agents, and promoters. Such changes meant contractual innovations like ‘charts clauses,’ such that an act’s fee could change between the time a gig contract was signed and the actual performance, depending on their position in the hit parade.

Finally, this chapter will show how in the second half of the 1960s American music industry practices began impacting on the British industry, whether in the diversification of British music radio (the offshore pirate radio stations that flourished from 1964-1967, many with the direct investment of US capital and expertise, were followed by the creation of the chart-based BBC Radio 1 in 1967), in the challenge posed to EMI and Decca’s dominance of the British record industry by the establishment of London offices by many American labels in the late 1960s, or in the ways in the much larger scale of the concert touring industry in America affected the British touring landscape following the international success of the Beatles and the subsequent ‘British invasion’ of the USA. Our concern here is not just the origins of the rock industry that was to become the dominant music business model in the 1970s, but also how live music promoters in other sectors—classical, jazz, folk—adapted to the new record-driven culture.

## **Chapter 7. Audiences and venues**

In the last two chapters we will provide an overview of how the live music experience changed in the 1950s and 1960s. In this chapter we will focus on the audience experience; in chapter 8 we will focus on the live music business.

We began chapter one by looking at the postwar variety, dance and concert hall circuits; all of these changed dramatically in this period. As traditional variety entertainment lost popularity in the 1950s, new music managers like Larry Parnes

briefly revitalized the circuit with pop package tours featuring youth stars such as Tommy Steele, Billy Fury, and Marty Wilde. In the 1960s, though, the variety circuit broke down completely even if some old venues remained significant as part of a new touring circuit of pop acts. Holiday camps such as Butlins and resorts such as Blackpool remained important seasonal venues in the summer months of the 1950s, but lost importance as audience demographics changed in the 1960s.

Ballroom chains such as Rank and Mecca, meanwhile, had to adapt from employing resident and touring dance orchestras to servicing the youth pop audience (and from 1961 Mecca began converting its ballrooms into bingo halls). As youth pop tastes changed from more dance-oriented pop in the first half of the 1960s to listening audiences in the second half of the decade a new concert circuit also emerged. Town halls remained popular venues (though local authorities were often reluctant to host youth-oriented gigs for fear of audience rowdiness or vandalism) and cinema chains became unexpectedly important (the Odeon cinema chain was also owned by Rank). In some places cinemas which were struggling to make a profit as cinema attendance declined were simply converted into music venues, as, for example, the ABC Ardwick in Manchester and Green's Playhouse in Glasgow, both of which became Apollo music venues. In parallel to these developments, the classical concert touring circuit was reshaped by Arts Council tour support policies and state investment (at national and local levels) in new venues (such as the South Bank) and events (such as the Edinburgh International Festival).

Of perhaps even greater significance in this period was the development of a much looser network of smaller local venues for both listening and dancing to music. In examining the evolution of music clubs (jazz clubs, folk clubs, blues clubs, rock clubs, dance clubs, discos) we will use case studies (Ronnie Scott's and The Marquee in London, the Cavern in Liverpool and the Scene in Stoke, equivalent venues in Glasgow, Bristol and Sheffield) but also draw extensively on contemporary accounts and audience memories. On the one hand, we will examine how the experience of listening and dancing to music changed in this period; on the other hand we will document the impact on live music of significant social change in local communities, in terms of age, gender and ethnicity, for example.

One important aspect of the shifts described here were changes in audience expectations. These partly concerned sound quality—we will examine the technology of live music—but also involved new audience ideologies and identities.

## Chapter 8. Live music in 1967

This chapter will summarize how the live music business described in chapter 1 had changed after nearly two decades. Our starting point will be the transformation of the record industry. By the late 1960s the biggest recording stars struggled to fulfil demand for concert tickets playing the kind of touring circuit that had existed in the 1950s. The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, partly influenced by their experience of touring arenas and stadiums in North America, stopped playing Britain after 1966 (although the Stones, of course, did resume UK touring in 1969, the Beatles ceased live performing altogether). British star acts that did continue touring Britain faced the increasing challenge of how to monetize a large-scale live rock audience, given the shortcomings of British venues in terms of size, sound, lighting, etc. At the same time small clubs struggled to cope with the increasing fees demanded by top artists and an economic model for concert promotion designed for large capacity venues.

The British live music business also had to respond to a fledgling international live music circuit. In the 1950s the Musicians' Union had sufficient power to restrict foreign musicians (apart from singers) from performing in the UK; from the mid-1960s reciprocal exchanges became commonplace, with significant coordination and interaction between British and American promoters, agents and managers. British audiences were now able to see most top American acts play live, while the most popular performers on both sides of the Atlantic were developing the first tentative steps towards a global touring circuit.

Despite these changes, a broad picture of live music at this time, including state activity and small local as well as large scale commercial promoters, suggests that certain essential characteristics of Britain's live music culture remained the same. Although the unprecedented international success of British beat groups had some obvious transformative impacts on popular music both in and outside the UK, there were also unchanging features in the British live music landscape during this time. The innovative role of do-it-yourself entrepreneurs had continuing importance, even if the sites of such activity had changed (for example, from small jazz club promoters in the 1950s to university social secretaries in the late 1960s). And although the ceiling of audience size got considerably higher, the 'micro' level of British live music stayed much the same: pubs and clubs such as the 100 Club on Oxford Street remained popular throughout this era and, despite changing tastes (from jazz and skiffle to r&b and rock) and the rise of DJs and discotheques, there was a clear continuity in the small gig experience, in popular music just as much as in the classical, jazz and folk worlds.

This is to make an argument that will run through all these books. At heart, live music promotion is an unchanging task: the promoter has to put performer and audience together in a particular place at a particular time. The essence of the

promoter's business skill, in other words, is to be adaptable, to adapt to changing tastes, technologies, regulations and social expectations.

This volume will also include a number of stand-alone inserts:

a) **promoter biography/profiles:** Val Parnell, Harold Davison, Harold Pendleton

b) **a description of a Rolling Stones performance—**Richmond 1962

c) **a snapshot/maps of live music scenes—**Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol in 1962



## **From Hyde Park to the Hacienda**

### **The History of Live Music in Britain Volume 2: 1968-1984**

By the end of the 1960s rock was the most profitable and fastest expanding music market in Britain and over the next decade rock ways of doing business became dominant. Within record companies this meant rock divisions became the source of power and investment; the classical sector was repositioned alongside jazz and folk as a minority interest. British rock acts now had a global appeal. In sales terms, international rock meant Anglo-American music, even as Decca and EMI lost their oligopolistic control of the UK record business. Rock shifted the music programming policy of radio and television broadcasters. By the mid-1980s, newspaper arts pages once dominated by the coverage of classical music (popular concerts or records getting only an occasional mention) had staff rock critics; classical music features were to be increasingly marginalised. The power of rock (and its reorganisation of the music industry's star making machinery) was encapsulated by the rise of the rock album, a much more profitable product than the pop single.

In simple monetary terms the rock boom came to an end in 1978. The oil crisis and the rising cost of vinyl meant that record sales growth slowed globally; there was a 20 percent drop in record sales in Britain in 1978-9 and both EMI and Decca were taken over. The rock way of doing things, however, continued to dominate musical life for another decade (even if, ironically, the solution to the vinyl problem, digital technology, would eventually threaten record companies' music industry power) and in this book we will trace its effects on the experience of live music. We should stress here that we are using 'rock' less as a musical category (a particular sound) than to describe an economic model, an approach to the organisation of music money making in which album selling provided the central dynamic (an approach that therefore also drove business practices in other musical genres).

We will begin by showing how for musicians the value of live performance became tied into the rhythms of a recording career. Live performance mattered when bands started out—to establish a sound and an audience, to attract A&R scouts waving recording contracts—and then became primarily a means of promoting album sales, the scope and organisation of live tours determined by an album's sales budget. But even as these practices became familiar counter tendencies appeared. The progressive rock and record company emphasis on music listening left a gap in the provision of stars to look at and music for dancing: this period thus also saw the emergence of a new attention to the theatrics of musical performance (feeding into the new medium of music video) and, emerging from 60s discos, a new kind of club-based mass dance music

economy. At the same time, rock's commercial success, its role in the development of new kinds of multinational music corporation, inspired both localised alternative business structures—pub rock, punk, the ideology of 'independence'—and a shift in state music policy, as rock took on both economic value in terms of export earnings and cultural value in terms of its aspirations to art.

In making sense of this history in terms of live music we will develop three themes: *professionalisation* (as the live music industry developed a new technological and organisational infrastructure); *politicisation* (as live performance became the site for explicit ideological argument—whether at punk gigs or raves, Rock Against Racism carnivals or WOMAD festivals); and *the spectacular*.

## **Chapter 1. Live music and the record business**

In 1964 the music trade paper, *Retail Business*, made two firm predictions. First that the volatility of the teenage market would continue: "even the Beatles' expectation of life 'at the top of the pops' should be measured in months not years"; second that "the future of stereo would seem to be limited by the fact that its technical advantages can only be fully realised in the case of classical music." Both predictions were completely wrong but indicate how much music business expectations had changed by 1968. It was now taken for granted that the Beatles and other British beat bands had spread the appeal of rock far beyond its original working class teenage base, while more albums were now sold than singles (and all records were manufactured in stereo). The Woodstock Festival, which marked the beginning of the rock era, demonstrated not just the size of the rock 'community' (all those people in a muddy field) but also, much more importantly, the unprecedented commercial potential of the rock market. The stars of Woodstock had made four- or five-figure demands for appearance fees that far exceeded anything they had earned previously but which now became the norm, while following Woodstock the major record companies used their superior capital resources to sign, record, promote and control all successful rock acts. In this chapter we will describe the structure of the record industry as the 1960s became the 1970s and consider its effects on the economics of live music.

We will focus on one issue in particular, the nature of risk for record companies and how they addressed it. In the 1970s record industry capital investment per item was relatively small. Record companies had to maintain an infrastructure—pressing plants, recording studios, A&R departments and so on—and meet the initial costs of a particular album recording (musicians' advances, studio costs and producer fees, manufacturing costs) but once sales had covered these costs profits accumulated rapidly (this was also the period in which singles increasingly became radio-aimed promotional tools for album selling). This had two effects.

First, record companies issued far more records (and signed far more acts) than could possibly be profitable; this was the context in which performers assumed that getting signed up by a recording label was a normal aspiration; their live shows were a means to a record deal. Second, record company strategy was to maximise the returns on hits (minimise the losses on misses); this was the context in which all other sectors of the rock business became subordinate to the task of record selling. This was to have a number of consequences for live music. It was not simply that tours were now tied into record release schedules but also that each concert had to be coordinated with other local promotional work: groups had to do their bit for radio, retail stores, the local press, etc. At the same time, the increased amount of technology invested in record making in the stereo age meant new expectations of stage shows, which were now designed to showcase records as much as acts. Such additional costs were increasingly met by record companies out of promotional budgets. The Rolling Stones' 1976 European tour, for example, cost about £2 million to present—its purpose was less to make money than to add 300,00—400,000 copies to the sales of the latest album.

## **Chapter 2. The professionalisation of the live music business**

This chapter will argue that in the 1970s the live music industry was reorganised around solutions to problems that had begun to emerge in the 1960s: audience demand for tickets far exceeding supply for the biggest touring acts; a significant difference over concert promotion logistics between an old guard of 'pre-rock' promoters and a new generation of rock-oriented promoters; the changing relationship between the live and recording industries.

With regard to the third of these issues, record companies increasingly took control of their acts' live tours as an aspect of album promotion. This was discussed in general terms in chapter 1 and in this chapter we will examine in more detail how record labels subsidized concerts and touring costs to promote record sales in Britain. Record labels had a particular interest in *where* their acts played (they were interested not so much in ticket sales as in potential record buyers) and the early 1970s saw the maturation of a new touring circuit in British universities and colleges. Student Union social secretaries were increasingly expected to act as concert promoters, bringing rock acts onto campuses and giving record companies access to an extremely important record buying demographic. The college circuit also offered a new generation of would-be promoters a way into the live music business. Their understanding and experience of the new rock market was valuable to established promoters and rock record labels alike. This chapter will provide case studies of live music professionals who got their start this way, as social secretaries, including promoter Harvey Goldsmith, Chrysalis founders Chris Ellis and Terry Wright, and The Who and Rolling Stones tour manager Pete Rudge.

The emergence of promotional practices specifically related to rock involved among other things the development of ancillary industries such as sound and lighting, trucking, security, and merchandise. By the early 1970s the most successful rock acts were buying high-powered custom-built sound and light systems for use in American stadiums, which they would then sometimes try to use in much smaller British venues, such as town halls and converted cinemas, or in slightly larger though still problematic venues such as London's Empire Pool or Earls Court. Acts that couldn't afford their own high-end touring equipment (or who realized that such equipment was only needed occasionally, when they were playing the right venues) needed to rent it, thus creating a demand for new live music service industries, technologically adept enough to meet the new sound standards being set in recording studios. The increasing complexity of rock shows—whether in terms of amplification equipment or acts' personal demands—meant other kinds of service providers—trucking companies, security firms, caterers. Returns from merchandise such as t-shirts and programmes also became increasingly important in the 1970s, though the provision of such goods here was initially led by bootleggers who were often more successful and innovative in their band merchandising than the artists themselves.

In the long term, though, rock's transformation of promotional practices depended on new buildings, on the construction of arenas that could be used for rock/pop concert events. British bands had been touring arenas and stadiums in the USA since the mid-1960s, but few comparable venues, large enough to meet the demand for tickets, existed in Britain outside London, and even in London such venues started being used for rock and pop events much later than in the States (Wembley Stadium's first pop gig was a 1972 rock'n'roll revue with Bill Haley and Little Richard). Appropriately sized and equipped venues outside of London were few and far between, and this chapter will describe the gradual emergence of a workable arena tour circuit in the UK, resulting in bands being able to use similar equipment, standards, and economies of scale as in their US gigs.

We will suggest that all these changes can be understood as the steady *professionalisation* of the British live music industry (a development that culminated in the formation of the Concert Promoters Association and the International Live Music Conference in 1988). One of our interests here is how the overall promotional business (including the promotion of classical and jazz music) was affected by the new professional standards set by rock.

### **Chapter 3. Live music and the state**

This chapter is concerned with the state as both regulator and promoter.

In terms of regulation, this is the era in which a number of measures were initiated that would bear fruit in later years and are still having their effects today. Perhaps the most important at a national level were three government reports into live music festivals: these undoubtedly eased the path towards the festival boom of the early 2000s. This period also witnessed the emergence of raves (which have an ambiguous relationship to live music but some continuities with 1960s events) and national moves to counter their growth via legislation. Locally the most publicised regulatory actions by local authorities were their attempts to prevent punk bands from playing council-owned venues in the late 1970s. In all these cases state policy is disputed and involves political debate about the meaning and effects of particular musical styles.

In terms of promotion, we will describe state activity at both national and local levels. Nationally the Arts Council came under increasing political pressure to provide support for a wider range of music. Its response was hesitant, though the Council clearly maintained its focus on live music as it began to give tentative support to jazz and even certain rock performers. At the same time the arts were increasingly facing calls from central government to “marketise” and to “stand on their own two feet”. In the classical sector this meant state funded orchestras having to supplement public support with corporate sponsorship in what were *de facto* (if not *de jure*) public-private partnerships; in the popular music sector this meant the first appearance of arguments about state support of commercial enterprises in the name of cultural industries policy.

This was particularly significant at a local level, where previous attempts to promote live music continued but more systematically and with a clearer understanding of the local music economy. While often focussing on recording, councils in cities such as Norwich, Liverpool, Sheffield and, in particular, London began to develop popular music policies which included the provision of live music. Often beginning as attempts to circumvent the dominant role of the corporate music industries and to formulate a popular leftist politics based on popular culture, in the longer term these initiatives would develop into creative industries policy on the one hand (music was seen as a source of employment and the inflow of capital), and tourist and investment policy on the other (de-industrialised cities were rebranded as cool musical places to visit and in which to live and work). One interesting aspect of such policies, which this chapter explores, is the way in which such local initiatives meant offering alternative live music provision, often in direct opposition to central government policy.

#### **Chapter 4. The return of DIY**

The rock economy was organised around the making and marketing of rock albums, but the ideology of rock was rooted in the experience of live music and,

in particular, in the notion that successful rock musicians should have “paid their dues”, should have acquired their individual or band sound, skills and identity in the work of extensive gigging. From the perspective of the live music economy, then, rock was dependent not only on the emergence of a new venue circuit on which recording stars could promote their new releases but also on the continuing provision of small, local venues in which would-be stars could learn their craft. In this chapter we will explore the organisation of live music promotion at this micro-level. We will be interested in three aspects of such local scenes, in particular.

First, while small venues and promoters were necessary for rock careers and the record industry’s infrastructure, they operated, by their nature, outside corporate networks and thus also became important as sites of ‘alternative’ ways of making music and doing business. Hence the early 1970s emergence of ‘pub rock’ and the subsequent development of punk and post-punk artists and audiences explicitly opposed to the dominant rock business. One of our concerns will be to document how local live music became the setting for a new kind of musical politics. This was also the period in which cultural politics (such as certain strands of socialism and feminism) were articulated through live musical events and practices.

Second, we will investigate how local promoters and venues challenged the generic musical distinctions taken for granted by record companies and record retailers. On the one hand, local venues in this period—whether clubs, pubs or public halls—were often dealing with folk, jazz and rock musicians and audiences who formed overlapping communities; on the other hand, the developing state investment in art centres and musical events encouraged the emergence of local artistic and avant-garde communities and musicians’ collectives in which creative experiments were encouraged and labels like ‘punk’ or ‘jazz’ or ‘contemporary’ music became increasingly difficult to disentangle from each other.

Third, we will examine the ways in which local music scenes in this period were shaped by local populations and population histories. This was the period in which the second generations of Caribbean and Indian and Pakistani Britons began to have a significant impact on local music making in particular cities, and in which musical events became important for anti-racist activity.

Overall this chapter will show how the concept of ‘independence’, vital for the subsequent history of British music, was created and nurtured above all in the local organisation of the live music experience. In illustrating all these points we will draw material from across the UK while paying special attention to our case study cities, Sheffield, Bristol and Glasgow.

## Chapter 5. From disco to dance club

It might seem paradoxical that a chapter in a book on live music in the rock era should be devoted to dancing to records. In the 1970s, in particular, disco was taken to be antithetical to live music (a view most virulently expressed in the pages of the Musicians' Union's members magazine) and to rock (as can be seen by the plethora of ads for Disco Sucks! t-shirts in the back pages of *Rolling Stone*). The evolution of 1970s disco dancing into the 1980s rave and club scenes is, however, an important strand in the history of live music in Britain for two reasons. First, the suggestion that there are two kinds of music venue—places for live entertainment, places for recorded-based entertainment—is misleading. The origins of disco in the UK lie in 1960s music clubs in which DJs and live acts shared bills, and venues organised around both kinds of activity remain central to urban leisure. Secondly, if in the 1970s disco did develop as a mainstream, pop alternative to a rock night out, in the 1980s its version of 'alternative' culture came together with the 'alternative' culture of postpunk to create a new kind of club scene (exemplified by Manchester's Hacienda) in which live bands and DJs and their audiences were part of the same musical world.

In this chapter we will explore this story by examining the impact of the changing organisation of the dance floor on the broader structure of public musical gatherings and the idea of a 'good night out'. We will begin with the continuing significance of dancing in British leisure even as rock shifted focus to a new kind of concert experience. The needs of young Britons who wanted to dance were met, on the one hand, by 1960s clubs that continued to play 1960s sounds (as in the Northern Soul movement) and the new phenomenon of soul all-nighters and, on the other hand, by new urban discos which catered to mainstream pop tastes (and, in particular to girls—rock was developing as a dominantly male culture). The appeal of such venues rested in their mix of the mundane and the spectacular: they were open for business as a weekend routine but they offered a quality of sound, lighting and hedonism which was more reminiscent of a working class dance hall chain such as Mecca (from whose premises they were sometimes converted) than that of a 1960s music club. Such discos became the basis for a business model that was to be developed to its full in the super-club model of the 1980s and 1990s and which had its own effects on what customers expected from a musical night out.

We will focus, secondly, on the role of discos and dance clubs in reflecting changing sexual mores. Dance halls in Britain had historically been the sites for sexual encounters and romance (it was common in the pre-war period for working class married couples to have met at the dance hall) and by the end of the 1970s specialist discos and club nights were the most public settings for the articulation of gay and lesbian identities.

We will address, finally, the way in which dance culture came to embody arguments about musical pleasure, musical imagination and musical culture that aligned it in certain ways with strands of indie or alternative rock. This was in part institutional: 1980s dance movements such as garage and gatherings such as rave drew on hippy utopianism (and the use of drugs) that aligned them with other politico-cultural movements (as discussed in chapter 3). There were also technological and aesthetic factors at play: experimentation with new digital recording technology brought dance music producers and DJs into new networks with electronic experimenters in rock and contemporary art music. But above all dance culture in the 1980s was important for developing public spaces in which taste communities were formed independently of dominant market forces and expressing a great variety of sexual, ethnic, political, musical and artistic interests. Such spaces would eventually implode, become over-commercialised or be dogged by the criminal aspects of the night-time economy, but in this chapter we will examine the claim that in the 1980s the utopianism that was a strand of rock's origins in the 1960s found a more welcoming home on the dance floor than in the stadium.

## **Chapter 6. Being a musician**

The starting point for the discussion in this chapter is the emergence of a new kind of musician: the rock star. The media image of the rock star (embodied in the early 1970s by the Rolling Stones) focused on excess, whether of money, drugs, sex, fame, hair or sheer noise, and this is certainly the period in which the mythology of the rock tour was established, with its supporting cast of roadies and groupies, its trail of trashed hotel and dressing rooms, its ludicrous 'riders' and pumped-up stage effects (all definitively parodied in *Spinal Tap*). There is certainly no doubt that this new generation of performing stars had a level of wealth and power unprecedented in British musical history and our initial concern is to examine how this affected the live music experience itself.

Our suggestion here will be that the unprecedented international success of bands like the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin removed them entirely from the everyday world (and geography) of their fans. Such acts' live shows thus took on an increasingly symbolic value for audiences and developed into what we will call a *standardised spectacle*, a show that was identical in all locations while offering each audience something extra-ordinary. The new theatricality of rock shows in the 1970s partly reflected the resources that acts (and their record companies) could now put into lights, sound, costumes, etc, but also came to express the musicians' artistic self-consciousness (as was most obvious in the shows mounted by Pink Floyd, David Bowie or Kate Bush). Increasingly in the 1970s the major acts became, in effect, 'brands', with a distinct visual as well as sonic sensibility



(something which then fed into and was shaped by the new medium of video promotion). Ironically, such an approach was equally apparent in the scaled-down 'anti-rock' shows of punk and post-punk performers as well as in the increasing theatricality of pop stage shows (compare the staging of a 1970s pop act like the Bay City Rollers to that of a 1980s pop act like Michael Jackson).

If our first concern in this chapter will be to trace the evolution of the spectacular touring show we will be just as interested in musicians who weren't stars. As we suggested in chapter 1, the logic of the rock economy was that record companies signed up far more acts than could possibly be profitable. This meant that young musicians could quite realistically start their careers with the aim of getting a recording contract. The fact remained, though, that the vast majority of such signed acts failed to cover the costs of their recordings and could expect, sooner or later, to be dropped. We will consider both ends of this career trajectory. On the one hand we will look at the role of live performance for bands starting out, at the reality of the 'support act', at 'pay for play' and other forms of exploitation; on the other hand, we will look at the live performance careers of ex-recording acts, of those musicians—the vast majority—who didn't 'make it'. Such performers became in this period essential members of the local scenes described in chapter 4, as mentors for younger musicians, as studio and club owners, as promoters and writers (and, often, as the most articulate critics of corporate rock, as we will discuss further in chapter 7). We will be particularly interested to show how often such musicians crossed genre divisions. In the early 1970s, in particular, the record industry was sufficiently buoyant to risk investment in musicians of all sorts—jazz, folk, avant-garde—who in due course returned to the 'specialist' performing circuits from where they'd come, disillusioned but still with a new sense of musical possibility.

This chapter will examine, finally, the effect of the evolution of the live rock and pop show on the promotion of other kinds of music. It is certainly arguable that rock set new standards of what it meant to 'put on a show' and that this affected the thinking of classical promoters such as Raymond Gubbay. This was also the period in which rock musicians' artistic ambitions saw them working with orchestras and employing classical musicians in their own bands. In the end, though, what was most significant about rock performers was simply that they went on performing. At the end of the 1960s it was still not clear how rock, as 'youth music', would develop. By the mid 1980s an act like the Rolling Stones had been playing for more than twenty years and the rest of the music world had had to adjust to a situation in which, whatever was happening to record sales, the rock audience looked set to dominate ticket sales and venue use for the foreseeable future.

## **Chapter 7. The ideology of live music**

This chapter provides an overview of what can be seen in retrospect as an era of the *politicisation* of live music. As an important part of the 1960s counterculture, popular music had been at the forefront of a number of social issues including drugs reform, the peace movement and feminism. As harder economic times came in the 1970s popular music both celebrated consumerism (in glam rock, for example, and in the rise of video-pop) and condemned it (in punk most obviously). As described in earlier chapters, the 1970s economic downturn meant a specific crisis for the recording industry: its main form of profitability, the ever-increasing sales of vinyl records, was endangered. This was the context in which the live music scene seemed to provide an alternative rock ideology through a pub rock circuit which was, in part, a reaction to the emergence of ever-bigger gigs (of which The Rolling Stones' Earls Court gigs, discussed elsewhere, are the paradigmatic case). The purpose of this chapter, then, is to develop the suggestion that live music in this period offered a particular kind of political space, a space in which a critique of corporate rock (and by extension of market capitalism and its political supporters) could be enacted.

This notion can be supported by the development of two important phenomena, the free concert and festival movement (exemplified by the annual concerts in Hyde Park and the Glastonbury Festival, first staged in 1970, becoming a key countercultural space) and Rock Against Racism, which deliberately used the live music experience as a political tool, and in this chapter we will examine the ways in which live music came to be used in the late 1970s and early 1980s in particular for socially progressive causes. The historical context for these developments was the 1970s crisis in British capitalism and the political solution, Thatcherism, which valorised the market in new ways. If musicians thus saw live music as a site on which to enact opposition to aspects of Thatcher government policies, for politicians live music was an activity to which new economic principles (and old political arguments) could be applied. We discussed the effects of this on state music policy in chapter 3. Here we want to examine the consequences of Thatcherism for cultural discourse, as the differences between economic and artistic value were blurred and high arts institutions were expected to behave more commercially. What interests us is the way in which live music became something more than a matter of fun or pleasure: how gigs were organised, financed and marketed now took on explicit ideological significance.

## **Chapter 8. Live music in 1984: Britain in the global market place**

In this chapter we will provide a map of the live music business in the UK in 1984. We chose this cut-off date as the year which most clearly marks a turning

point in the way the UK live music industry is best conceived—from an international rather than a national perspective. In symbolic terms this is the moment of the final abolition of the MU's 'reciprocal exchange' arrangements for the import and export of musical performers (which dated back to the 1920s). From a recording musician's perspective the effect of video promotion and the increasingly global reach of MTV was not simply to open up new ways of marketing (leading to the 'second British invasion' of the USA) but also to provide a promotional base for new kinds of multinational sponsored global live tours (as exemplified by the success of Michael Jackson and Madonna—sponsored by Pepsi and Coca-Cola, respectively—whose live stage performances were developed in conjunction with video clips and globally marketed cinema and TV specials). And for record companies (still talking in terms of a sales crisis) the success of cassettes (which briefly, after the decline of vinyl and before the triumph of the CD, became the best-selling music carrier) also marked the beginning of what was to be a long (and still unfinished) campaign against piracy, against the problem of unregulated foreign manufacturers 'swamping' Western markets with illicit goods—the global market threatened to be a global black market, and music industry lobbyists increasingly focused on international law makers and trade negotiators.

This was the context in which British artists, promoters and agents began to think routinely in international terms. Although British acts had played many of the developed countries in the world (particularly in the Commonwealth) in the 1950s and 1960s, and although big name classical performers had long made their living on an international circuit, it was in the rock era that global touring became the norm for successful popular music stars. The major record labels were multinational operations and the maximisation of global record sales meant coordinated international promotion. Artists and their managers also realized that they could exhaust their audience by over-touring the same territories and once the North American-British touring circuit was firmly established (by the mid-1970s) moving into new territories became the obvious next step for the expansion of the industry. Global touring also grew during this time following the gradual stabilization of countries that had previously been too politically and/or economically volatile to target safely. Initially, then, acts touring the UK might also perform in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, France, and Scandinavia (with the central coordination of these tours often being managed by London-based agents and promoters). However, by the beginning of the 1980s, territories such as Spain, Italy, and Greece were also important and some agents broke unlikely new markets: countries behind the Iron Curtain, such as Hungary and the Czechoslovakia; countries with sufficient economic capital but unique political and border challenges, such as Israel; countries expensive to reach but with a growing and voracious record buying public, such as Japan.

The live music business thus took its part in the broader developments in global trade. Multinational corporations of all sorts sponsored live tours but electronic communication and media companies, in particular, used musicians to promote new technologies and new media services. As already noted, the global distribution of the video clip—and MTV itself as a global outlet—was tied into the development of the global touring circuit. The corporate sponsorship of music had had, of course, a much longer history, and at a national level the mid-1970s marked a key moment in the relationship. The Association of Business Sponsorship of the Arts, founded in 1976 as an independent national, non-profit association, involved corporations such as IBM UK, Imperial Tobacco, Legal & General Assurance, and Midland Bank. Such blue-chip companies were less keen to associate their brands to rock music, which was perceived as drug-oriented and unrespectable. However, the creation of the US company, Rockbill, in the same year indicates how such perceptions were changing. Rockbill sought to link acts to advertisers, making a breakthrough deal with Rolling Stones and Jovan Perfume, which sponsored the Stones' Tattoo You tour of the USA in 1981. By 1984 putting sponsors into place was a normal part of tour planning.

In this chapter we will explore the effects of all these developments on promotion as a business, paying particular attention to the contradictions between its local and global concerns, on the one hand, and between its obligations to audiences and sponsors, on the other. But we will also consider here another aspect of the internationalization of live music that was obvious by 1984: the increasing presence of 'world music' acts on the British live circuit. This development had a number of strands. First, there was the increasing popularity of reggae, with Jamaican acts touring British Caribbean venues and then, following Island's success with Bob Marley and the Wailers, being marketed as rock stars. Second, live music became a feature of local authorities' new activities around 'multiculturalism': the Greater London Council became particularly significant in the promotion of African music, for example. Thirdly there was the (record company led) development of 'world music' itself as a promotional category. WOMAD, the World of Music, Arts and Dance was founded in 1980; the first WOMAD festival took place in the UK in 1982; by 1984 the range of performers accessible to UK gig goers was by comparison with what had been available even a decade earlier quite remarkable.

This volume will also include a number of stand-alone inserts:

a) **promoter biography/profiles:** Harvey Goldsmith; Vince Power

b) **a description of a Rolling Stones performance—**Earls Court 1976

c) **snapshot/maps of live music scenes--**Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol in 1976

## From Live Aid to Live Nation

### The History of Live Music in Britain Volume 3: 1985-2009

We now live in a digital age and this volume will necessarily examine the impact of digital technology on music making and performing, on music selling and listening, but in this book we will begin by suggesting that some of the most significant changes customarily attributed to digital devices predate their mass take-up and, indeed, had a significant effect on the shape of digital music business. As we suggested at the end of the last volume, by the mid-1980s live music businesses in Britain already had a sense of themselves as part of a distinctive international and professional industry sector. A trade and lobbying body, the Concert Promoters Association was thus formed in 1986; an international get-together, the International Live Music Conference, became an annual calendar event from 1988; a specialist live music trade magazine, *Applause*, was launched in 1989. The British live music industry was already consolidated, in other words, when it was further transformed at the end of the century by the rise to dominance of two US based multi-national companies, Live Nation and AEG Live, whose move into the British scene was remarkably rapid not least because it involved only a small number of take-overs.

We will begin with this organisational story but to understand it fully we will need to make reference to the digital context. For the live music industry itself the most direct effect of digitisation was on ticketing—digital seat booking and ticket distribution made possible the emergence of a new sort of global ticketing business, and this was an important strand in the development of a global promotional business. But the growth of this business also reflected the transformation of the music industry power structure that had been established in the rock era and unravelled in the digital era. As record companies found it difficult to sustain (or adapt) their business models in the world of file sharing and (free downloads), as record retailers closed and record selling became less profitable, the price people were willing to pay for concert seats rose dramatically. Live music took on a new financial and cultural significance and this had consequences beyond the music sector. We will therefore examine here the developing importance of live music for the media in general and broadcasters in particular (following the phenomenal success of Live Aid) and we will trace the continuing importance of the state for the live music economy.

But this is not only an economic story. The value of live music to promotional corporations depends on the value of live music to audiences, to fans attending shows in a variety of particular settings and circumstances. There's a paradox here that has run throughout these volumes: for audiences live music matters because it seems to offer a social and cultural experience that is not commodified;

for the promotion business the challenge is to sell such experiences as commodities. In this book we will explore this paradox directly by examining the history of the Glastonbury Festival, but we will also approach it more indirectly, from three other perspectives. First, we will look at what it now means to be a performing musician and at the complex relations between amateur and professional, between public and private music making. Second, we will provide a close comparative analysis of live music at the local level, in our three case study cities, Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol. Here we are interested in what we call the ecology of live music, the ever-shifting cooperative, collaborative and competitive relations between state, commercial and enthusiast promoters at a local level. One of our arguments here is that for all the global consolidation of live music business practice, local differences (demography, politics, history) remain highly significant for the live music experience. And, finally, we will consider audiences themselves, and what live music means to the people who pay for the tickets. We will begin here with some of the odder live music successes of the last twenty five years—tribute bands and karaoke nights. These (along with other ‘retro’ musical phenomena) suggest that part of the value of the live music experience for audiences today is the way it embodies traces of the music’s—and their own—histories.

## **Chapter 1. A new oligopoly**

In an era that is commonly characterised as one of globalisation and corporatisation, the live music sector in Britain is no different. At the end of the 1980s the live music industry was dominated by a handful of UK-based independent promoters; by the end of the 2000s the live music landscape was dominated by two foreign-based multi-nationals, Live Nation and AEG Live. This chapter documents the change and what it has meant for live music in Britain.

We will show how, on the one hand, the tendency towards consolidation of power has been a constant feature in the British live music industry over the past 100 years. Oswald Stoll, Edward Moss and the other music hall magnates of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century did their best to keep the costs of hiring musical talent down through mergers and syndicates, guaranteeing artists employment across the nation but for lower pay. From then on, whether it was the ballrooms of Rank and Mecca, the live leisure empire of the Grade brothers, or the national ambitions of Paul Gregg, who developed Apollo Leisure by taking over old theatres and cinemas and revitalising their role in urban entertainment, attempts to create an oligopoly in the British live music industry have been commonplace.

We will then examine how, on the other hand, new developments in the US live music industry came to have a massive impact in the UK. American Robert

Sillerman had built an empire on the buying and selling of media companies before making similar moves in the live industry in 1996. By 1999, Sillerman and his company SFX were able to employ a similar strategy in the UK, buying up several of the most powerful live music companies in Britain (Apollo Leisure, Barry Clayman Concerts, MCP) and selling them, along with a convincing rhetoric of the profits to be reaped by a consolidated, globalised live music industry, to American media conglomerate, Clear Channel, in 2000. (Clear Channel quickly acquired many of the other most powerful British live music companies for itself: Solo, ITB, and Sensible). Precisely because much of the power in the British live music industry was already consolidated in a small number of companies, in the space of a year an American multi-national corporation was able to become the most powerful concert promoter in Britain (and the world) by making a only a handful of key acquisitions. As a promotional company, Live Nation was created by Clear Channel spinning off its live music interests in 2005, after it realized that Sillerman's profit model was at best a long-term vision and at worst a falsehood. However, Live Nation's development strategy continues to be based on maintaining its status as the dominant British (and global) concert promoter.

Through interviews with key figures within Live Nation as well as among its competitors (including its US-based competitor, the O2 Dome owner AEG Live, but also independent promoters) and archival research, this chapter will investigate the consequences of this new power structure for the UK live music industry. Is Live Nation a faceless corporation or simply a foreign-owned umbrella under which familiar figures in the British live music industry continue to work in ways they always have? Is the new promotional oligopoly harming the ecology of British live music or a necessary response to the profound technological and economic changes in the music industry that have followed digitisation? What is certainly the case is that Live Nation is not only the biggest concert promoter in the world but also, following its merger with Ticketmaster, almost certainly the largest music company (among the major record labels only Universal rivals it). This chapter will therefore have at its core the changing dynamic between the recording and live industries, an issue that will be examined further in Chapter 3.

## **Chapter 2. Live music and digital technology**

In the histories of popular musicians' interaction with technology the latter is cast as both hero (it allows musicians to do more and enhances the audience's experience) and villain (it undermines notions of musicianship and alienates audiences from performers). Within the recording sector, digital technology and, in particular, the simultaneous emergence of MP3 protocols and the internet are taken to have undermined established business models. But while it is these issues



that most attracted newspaper headlines it is arguable that equally profound changes took place in the digital era in the live music industry.

In this chapter we will focus on two technological issues. We will, first, describe how the use of digital sound technology at live performances made ever-larger events possible and changed audience expectations of the live music experience. To this end we will focus on the development of the music festival as central to both the economics and the ideology of twenty first century music. The irony of the most successful (largest) rock festivals like Glastonbury and T in the Park is that the new possibilities of mediating (and simulating) live sound to huge audiences would seem to make impossible the special direct relationship of artist and audience that had once been the live music ideal. The festival solved this problem (much more effectively than the stadium show) by transferring the 'aura' of liveness from the artist to the event itself. Audiences went to Glastonbury for its own sake (rather than going there to see a particular act); T in the Park began to sell out its tickets before announcing its bill. And, if on a smaller scale, festivals in other musical genres developed in this period for similar economic reasons and with similar ideological effects. Digital technology made possible, to put this another way, live music's increased economic and cultural value (reflected in prices people were now prepared to pay for it) even as, from the audiences' point of view, that value depended on live music offering precisely the experience—a sense of a material musical community—that downloads and digital social networking sites could not.

We will discuss, second, the economic and cultural impact of internet ticketing. The ability of consumers to buy tickets "24/7" had a number of effects on the political economy of live music. The most important was to centralise the ticketing process—tickets could now be bought and sold anywhere; there was no necessary relationship between venue and box office—and to provide a new source of income and profit (the added 'administrative' costs). We will trace the rise of Ticketmaster and examine the increasingly confused inquiry and debate—sometimes economic, sometimes ethical—about the role of the secondary ticket market. What is the status of a concert ticket? Is it a form of property or does it merely indicate a particular set of rights that exist only under certain conditions? Who, if anyone, has the right to 'set' its price? What is the role of the state in arbitrating this? What relationship does it establish between artist, audience and promoter? Our interest here, again, is how digital technology raised new questions about the 'value' of live music, in this case by changing the mechanisms through which it is accessed.

### Chapter 3. A new power structure

In this chapter we will examine how the relationship between the record industry and the live industry has been transformed in the last 25 years, a transformation best summarised by Irving Azoff, CEO of Ticketmaster Entertainment: “The way the industry is monetized has totally changed. The order used to be: first, records; second, live; third, merchandise. Now it's: first, live; second, third-party sponsorship; third, merchandise; fourth, publishing; fifth, records. So that's a big difference.”

It has been well documented that the British live music industry grew in the 2000s thanks to increases in the scale of concerts (and the proliferation of large festivals), ticket price rises well above inflation, the reformation of ‘heritage bands,’ and other factors. It is also well known that since the arrival of broadband in the UK in 2001 and the popularity of peer-to-peer file-sharing, record sales revenue fell significantly. Our starting point here, though, will be 1996, when (i) recorded music began to lose its ‘wallet share,’ (its percentage of the consumer’s disposable income)—five years before the advent of UK broadband; (ii) concert ticket prices began a prolonged period of rising much faster than inflation; (iii) Ticketmaster made its first internet sale; and (iv) Robert Sillerman moved into the live music market.

The changing power structure in the music industry meant that musicians and their managers were forced to restructure their own business models, relying more on touring, merchandise, sponsorship and syncing, and less on record sales. On the other hand, record companies also became increasingly interested in these other revenue streams and started to revive the notion of the ‘360° deal’ in which newly contracted artists would be expected to share profit from all their income sources. Many artists and their managers began to question what value a record contract could actually bring to them; some abandoned the traditional record contract altogether, finding innovative ways of creating, distributing, and marketing their music, not least via their live shows.

Finally, the chapter will consider the arguments that began to be heard in the late 2000s that the live music industry boom had run its course, as indicated by the failure of many 2009 music festivals and a marked trend for consumers to buy tickets for large rather than small or mid-sized events. The consequent closure of small and mid-sized venues and failure of small and mid-sized promoters were widely reported and artists certainly began to wonder how, without the support of record companies, they could build the fan base necessary for career longevity (and for live music ticket revenue). The power structure in the music industry is more equally balanced than it used to be between the live, recording and publishing sectors but it is far from stable, and in this chapter we will examine the possible crisis points.

## Chapter 4. Live music and the state

In this chapter we will be concerned, as in previous volumes, with the state as both regulator and promoter. In relation to regulation we will focus, first, on the anti-rave legislation that began with Graham Bright's Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Bill in 1990 and was further refined in the 1994 Criminal Justice Act. The result of this legislation was certainly a decline in the amount of unlicensed raves but also an incorporation of dance music into legitimate, licensed spaces such as music festivals, many of which now routinely featured dance tents. At the same time local authorities began to relax local licensing regulations and the rise of the 'superpub' presented further opportunities for the expansion of live music.

The intimate legislative relationship between drink and music licensing was brought home to the live music industry (in England and Wales) by the 2003 Licensing Act, perhaps the most significant change to the licensing rules around alcohol since the First World War. While not designed to deal with live music *per se* the legislation was soon perceived to have had a disproportionate effect on small gigs, in particular, following its abolition of the previous "two in a bar" arrangements whereby gigs of 1 or 2 musicians did not require a licence. The government was so exercised by the widespread criticism of the Act that it set up a Live Music Forum to monitor its impact, and the legacy of the Act and the Forum, at both national and local level (it was up to local authorities to interpret a rather poorly drafted bill), will be the second topic addressed in this chapter.

The role of the state as a promoter of live music will also be examined at both a national and a local level. Nationally, the role of the Arts Councils continued to be important though they were, increasingly, co-funders of events with a variety of other agencies and sponsors. The distinction between the public and private sector therefore got harder to maintain, particularly in popular music, a reflection too of the increasing confusion of cultural and cultural industry policy.

At a local level the provision of live music was affected by new attempts by local authorities to brand particular cities or regions as "cool" places to visit or in which to work. One strand of such policies was investment to make a locality the sort of place that large touring acts (and their fans) would visit. Hence the development of a new sort of civic venue, the multi-purpose arena of which the SECC in Glasgow (one of our case study cities) is a prime example. Owned directly by the public sector or involving private-public partnerships, these *local* venues became an increasingly important part of an *international* live music ecosystem. Such quasi-public local initiatives facilitated the emergence of the global promotional corporation described in chapter 1.

The second strand of local authorities' attempt to develop 'the creative city' was the public co-sponsorship of major musical events, of festivals and parties. Public money was spent (usually by private sector intermediaries) on such things

as the annual Celtic Connections Festival in Glasgow or the biennial Manchester International Arts Festival. Such investment was not entirely new, of course—the Edinburgh International Festival was launched with Edinburgh City Council support in 1948. What was new was that such investment now often involved a straightforward commercial calculation. When Scottish Enterprise invested a significant part of its cultural industry budget to bringing MTV’s European Awards Show to Edinburgh in 2003, for example, it was supporting a commercial enterprise that had nothing to do with Scotland in the hope that Edinburgh’s exposure to a large European television audience would be good for tourism. What interests us about such developments is that they draw attention to the ways in which in this period commercial promoters developed events (festivals, most obviously) that depended on local authority’s financial support and that may or may not have been beneficial for local musicians (and promoters) for whom local authorities also claimed some responsibilities.

## **Chapter 5. Live music and the media**

The 1985 Live Aid event has come to stand for many things, from the rise of pop politics to the globalisation of music television, but from our perspective what the success of Live Aid indicated most clearly was a new kind of symbiotic relationship between live music and the media. This relationship had had two dimensions, economic and ideological and in this chapter we will explore both these dimensions, paying particular attention to the increasing cultural importance of the music festival.

In economic terms, the broadcast of live events (whether on radio or television) solves one of a concert promoter’s problems, limited audience size, while providing broadcasters with a relatively cheap form of music programming. In Britain this kind of tie-up was first developed by the non-commercial broadcasting of live classical music concerts, most notably the BBC Proms. The Proms, an eight week season of around 70 concerts in London’s Royal Albert Hall, is a festival of classical music promoted by the BBC and used as programming by both Radio 3 (which broadcasts all the concerts) and (more selectively) by BBC TV. The Promenade concerts themselves began in 1895, with the BBC taking on their organisation in 1927, but in the last twenty years the brand has been much extended. The summer Prom festival itself now includes chamber concerts in the Cadogan Hall as well as Proms in the Park, concerts of popular classics staged in various outdoor locations across the UK; the term ‘Prom’ is now also applied by the BBC to non-classical promotions, such as the Electric Proms, staged annually in the Roundhouse.

The Proms model became significant for the general development of music festivals in the 1990s and 2000s. This is most obvious in the financial growth and

increasing media impact of the Glastonbury Festival in the last twenty-five years. Glastonbury is an autonomous commercial promotion that commands considerable BBC airtime across both radio and television channels, while at the same time having a 'media partner', *The Guardian*, which provides sponsorship and extensive pre-publicity and day-to-day coverage. Other festivals have developed similar media links, if on a smaller scale. Specialist festivals like the Cambridge Folk Festival and Celtic Connections have thus done broadcasting deals with the BBC's specialist music shows while in Scotland footage from T in the Park is broadcast by STV and the festival can expect extensive coverage in the Scottish press, before, during and after the event.

Media coverage is an important aspect of festival finance not simply in terms of broadcasting rights fees but also as a way of drawing in sponsors and advertisers and in this chapter we will document how festivals became crucial to the live music business in all musical genres, but the media interest in live music also had ideological effects, in both drawing on and helping shape audience understanding of *why* live music mattered so much. There were ironies here. The television coverage of music industry celebrations of recordings (such as the Brits and the Mercury Music Prize) is focused on the awards show as a concert event; MTV, which began in the 1980s with the policy of playing a continuous programme of video clips, was, by the turn of the century, playing fewer and fewer videos, its music coverage more likely to be concert footage. MTV Europe's annual award ceremony, its major branding investment, is a celebration of stage not video performance.

The media's account of live performance—its build up to the event and subsequent retrospectives, its emphasis on *being there*, as a matter of atmosphere and exclusivity, its construction of community and excitement—has had its effect on how music festivals, in particular, work, but what's equally apparent is the way in which live music here is being covered much like live sport and in this chapter we will also be interested in the way in which musical and sporting events have become linked. This is obvious in terms of venues—from the emergence of sports grounds as concert sites to the developments of venues (from Exhibition Centres to London's O2) designed for both sorts of performance—but the last decade has also seen the development of concert promotion as an aspect of sports promotion, with live music becoming a necessary part of a sporting occasion.

The paradox of the mediation of live music (and sport) is that the media use live music (and sport) to represent the kinds of experience that the media can't usually offer: spontaneity, unpredictability, danger, good fellowship, and so forth. And if the media exploitation of live music has thus been good for live music promoters' finances, it has also led to a sense among music fans and festival goers that the essence of the live musical experience is under threat. In this chapter, then, we will also discuss the backlash against the commercialisation of festivals and the alternative staging of local festivals (such as Shambala), "boutique" festivals (such

as the Secret Garden Party), and the continuation of a range of free festivals and raves.

## **Chapter 6. The musician's career in the 2000s**

In this chapter we will provide an overview of the role of live performance in British musical culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We will start with a critical analysis of attempts to measure the extent of musical activities by various government, music industry and performer organisations, but the chapter will focus on the lives of musicians. We will approach these from three perspectives.

We will look, first, at music making as a *career*. One of the most striking aspects of popular music promotion in the last quarter century has been the increasing importance of so-called 'heritage' acts. The biggest grossing live acts in the 2000s had almost all been performing professionally for at least thirty years; the Rolling Stones, who topped the list, have been on the road more or less continuously since the early 1960s. At the bottom end of the live market there are, similarly, constant opportunities to see acts which first began performing thirty, forty or even fifty years ago, whether gathered together in package shows or billed as attractions in local pubs and clubs. For such musicians careers have come full circle and our interest here in the way in which live performance (rather than record release) seems once more to be the dynamic of a successful musical career.

Our second topic (which reflects in part the exigencies of the average musical career) is the complex relationship of *amateur* and *professional* music making. In the classical world, for example, there is an important strand of concert performance, choral singing, in which professional and amateur performers share the stage as a matter of routine, as they do in the jazz and folk worlds too. In pop and rock music the amateur/professional distinction is more likely to describe different moments in people's musical histories, and here live performance at local level is likely to be dominated by 'semi-professionals', by musicians whose income comes significantly but not entirely from their musical activities. The amateur/professional distinction has been further complicated by digital technology. There is now easy and affordable access to high quality record and video making equipment and to global publicity and distribution via the internet. In this way 'amateur' performers have been empowered, but the very cacophony of sounds and hustlers out there in the digital marketplace (uncontrolled by gatekeepers) has made it harder than ever for musicians to get a foothold on the rungs of the professional career ladder. Our interest here, though, is not just amateur and professional musicians but also amateur and professional promoters. We will examine, for example, the place of concert societies, community arts, music education and genre enthusiasts of all sorts in providing the infrastructure in which much musical performance takes place.

This leads to this chapter's third theme, the relationship of *public* and *private* musical events. In recent years there has been considerable publicity for the remarkable fees big stars can charge for playing millionaires' private parties or corporate jamborees, but at a more mundane level private gigs have always been important for musicians' earnings—weddings, for example, continue to provide a significant source of income for such varied performers as ceilidh bands, string quartets and covers bands. Our interest here is in the role of live music in everyday life and the place of such events in the live music economy.

## **Chapter 7. Live music as local music**

Browsing the music listings in the local press for any city or town in the UK in 2009 reveals the wide range of musical genres, venues, artists and promoters producing the live music experiences available to potential audiences within such locales. Whilst this book as a whole takes an historical approach to the promotion of live music across the UK, this chapter will provide a complementary examination of the role of contemporary promoters at a local level. Drawing on issues raised in the previous chapters alongside primary ethnographic research, this chapter aims to illustrate the ecology of promotion from the perspective that live music is, ultimately, local music, albeit functioning within national and international networks and frameworks. Primary research includes participant observation at a variety of venues across a variety of genres (including folk, classical, jazz, and dance/clubbing), case studies from Glasgow, Sheffield, and Bristol, and interviews with relevant industry personnel and audiences. Interviewees include a wide variety of activists, from a young dubstep promoter just starting out to the general director of a national opera company, from major national promoters to musicians organising folk sessions in the back rooms of pubs, from DIY free party organisers to venue managers.

The chapter will argue that despite the obvious differences between their respective events, all of these promoters require the same components: an artist, an appropriate technology, an audience and a venue. We can thus compare promotional strategies across musical genres and across operational scales and geographical remits and according to various topics. *Venues* are the bedrock for any promoter, and the case studies here will include King Tut's Wah Wah Hut in Glasgow, Fagan's folk pub in Sheffield and St George's concert hall in Bristol. Using these we will illustrate the complicated relationships between the public and private ownership of venues as well as the impact of Live Nation on the ecology of music promotion in particular cities. All promoters, whether individuals or organisations, enthusiasts or professionals, need *subsidy*, whether as local or national state funding, corporate and private backing or through independent, DIY and in-kind volunteerism, and relevant methods of *promotion*,

whether through local/national media, traditional methods such as posters, flyers, etc. or using digital means via the internet. Live music is heavily *regulated*, and different local government attitudes to and management of such regulation (of licensing, over-14s events, health and safety, noise, etc.) is one of the factors that makes the ecology of music promotion in Sheffield, Glasgow and Bristol unique to each city.

Local promoters function within both formal and informal networks, the Concert Promoters' Association, on the one hand, friendship groups, on the other, and the different social frameworks that exist in each city lead to different patterns of collaboration, co-operation and competition. We will explore the effects of this on audience and artist experience, while describing too how local histories (of venues, promoters and events) have an effect on audience and artist expectations.

## **Chapter 8. The value of live music**

This chapter brings to an end not just this book but our history as a whole. We will therefore use it to draw some theoretical conclusions from the story we have told. In particular we will address the issue of the *value* of live music as both an economic and a cultural problem.

Our first set of questions, then, will concern live music promotion as a business. What sort of business is it? What exactly is being bought and sold? What is the entrepreneurial value of live music and how can it be costed? In business terms, live music promotion involves particular issues of both trust and risk. On the one hand promoters have to establish relationships of trust with two quite different groups of people, musicians (and their managers) and audiences, whose interests may not necessarily coincide (in terms of ticket pricing, for example). On the other hand, promoters' understanding of risk has to take into account both short term and long term questions, not just will *this* concert cover its cost but also will people continue to come to this venue, will musicians go on working with me as their careers develop? The setting of ticket prices and profit margins, the calculation of the necessity or benefit of investment, depend on a complicated set of calculations (even if such decisions often seem hastily and casually made), calculations further complicated by the role of the state in promotion as at once regulator, competitor and investor. Historically what is apparent is that promoters occupy two different business worlds that have themselves changed dramatically over the last sixty years: the music industry (and record companies) and the leisure industry (and the night time economy). At the same time promoters have to be understood in relationship to both local and now international capital. Our conclusion in this section is that at the heart of the everyday practices of promotional companies, big and small, is an understanding that by its very nature the business of live music is, at one and the same time,



heavily regulated and open to an unusual degree of free market anarchy. Our history has documented how this has determined live music business practices and motivations.

Our second set of questions will concern the cultural value of live music to its performers and audiences, and our starting point here will be two (on-the-face-of-it) rather puzzling kinds of performance that have emerged in the UK significantly since the mid-1980s: *tribute bands* and *karaoke nights*. Our interest in these is less their economic significance (though tribute bands now provide a major source of promoters' income and karaoke nights are crucial to many pubs' survival) than the way they complicate the arguments in popular music studies about 'authenticity' and 'identity', about the relationship of live and recorded music, and about the nature of musical talent and pleasure. Both forms of performance also interest us because they point to the role of history itself in the way people understand *why* the live musical experience matters, and this links them to broader developments in music culture—the success of heritage acts, the live reconstruction of classic albums, the central role of live cover versions of old hits in TV shows like the *X Factor*. We can point to the similar significance of history (and memory) for live performance in other musical worlds—jazz, folk and, of course classical music. We will end, then, by considering how the history of live music in Britain we have been exploring is embedded in contemporary music culture.

This volume will also include a number of stand-alone inserts:

- a) **promoter biography/profiles**—Paul Latham; DF Concerts
  
- b) **description of a Rolling Stones performance**—a stadium show 2007
  
- c) **snapshot/maps of live music scenes**—Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol in 2007